

1904

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 7, No. 4
Oct., Nov., Dec.,
1975**

**Faith Pub. House
Guthrie, Okla.
73044**

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 7

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**Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church**

Edited by Mrs. Marie Miles, and other co-workers.

**Subscription Price — 35c a copy for quarter of year, or
\$1.40 per year, issued quarterly.**

Second class postage paid at Guthrie, Oklahoma.

Published Quarterly By

FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE

920 W. Mansur Ave.

GUTHRIE, OKLAHOMA 73044

Theme For Fourth Quarter, 1975

We will finish the study of Second Corinthians this quarter. We trust that the Lord has made this study a blessing to you. We know that all Scripture is written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so it takes the Holy Spirit to reveal to you these precious truths.

It seems that, for the most part, the Corinthian church had obeyed the instructions according to 2nd Corinthians, given to them by Paul in the first letter. Paul meets Titus and is glad for the news from Corinth, which was mostly good. Titus had come to Paul, who was in Macedonia. —Sis. Marie Miles

October 5, 1975

PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD

II Cor. 6:14-18; 7:1; Rom. 6:19-22

II Cor. 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

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

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Romans 6:19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye now are ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

22 But now being made free from sin, and become the servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Memory Verse: For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. I Thessalonians 4:7.

Central Thought: God has promised to be our God and dwell within us if we will separate ourselves from all uncleanness and perfectly consecrate our all to Him.

Word Definitions: Holiness means: *Sanctity, sacredness, purity, perfection, complete dedication and consecration to God.* Concord means: *harmony, accord.* Belial is a Hebrew word which means *without profit and worthless.* It is generally indicative of Satan.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are now pursuing the continuation of the study of Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians. In this lesson we shall consider the Heavenly counsel He gives them concerning being separate from all other influence and fellowship except that which God is in fellowship with. This is a very important part of the Word of God. We have already learned from what Paul wrote, that evil communications will corrupt good manners. This is something in the wrong direction if we are not very careful. But the Lord has a provision of grace for this too. He can keep us from these things if we will join our hearts to Him in full consecration and allow Him to fill our hearts and purge us of all sin. In our lesson, a scripture is quoted from Isaiah 52:11,12—"Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her (Babylon, confusion); be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward." (God will gather or receive you, Heb.).

QUESTIONS:

1. Can there ever be any fellowship between good and evil? 2. What are the conditions under which God will receive us and be a Father to us? 3. How does a man yield his members to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity? 4. How does one yield their members to

righteousness unto holiness? 5. What is the attitude of a saint to his life before he was saved?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God is holy and is calling all who profess to know Him and receive of His grace to a holy standard of life and experience. The Word of God is as plain on this as it is about Christ dying and shedding His blood for our sins. How man can blindly deny this is certainly strange. There are so many evil and abominable spirits and influences in the world today. With the entrance and introduction of sin and transgression there came an ever increasing production of wrong and abomination of every sort. And it seems with the passing years of time that the tide rises higher. But God is still calling us to holiness. Regardless of how many false preachers tell the people that they do not have to live holy or be perfect, yet we must cling to the truth. God wants, wills, designs, and has provided for us to be holy in all manner of conversation. God yearns to embrace every soul and be to them everything that He has promised to be. But He cannot and will not meet anyone who does not come to His reasonable and just terms. One of the seals upon the foundation of God cannot be changed and it is this: "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." II Tim. 2:19. Some may say, "Oh, let us not be so negative in our thoughts." But we have to be negative and positive. Both are very important. You cannot serve the Lord until you have quit the servitude and bondage of the devil. Man cannot serve two masters. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Notice that God is calling for a complete separation from sin and all "filthiness of the flesh and spirit." God will not dwell in an unclean temple. We can't spare any of our own desires or lusts and please God. For God to be our Father, and us to be His sons and daughters, we must "come out from among them, (from sin and also fellowshiping false teachers) and be ye separate."

We think of Saul, who was sent down to Amalek. God told him to "utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not," but he "spared . . . the best . . . and all that was good," in his sight. I Sam. 15:3,9,17,20,26. He did not obey, but used his own judgment in the matter. When we come to God we

must not spare anything, but obey God, or we will be rejected as Saul did at first.

Solomon built a new building for God's Spirit to dwell in. But it was just a building until he moved in the same ark that was in the tent or tabernacle. Then God's glory came down and filled the temple. It became His dwelling place. When God's Spirit moves into our heart, we are then the temple of God.

We read that in the days of Jesus, the people rejected Him. He said, "your house (not my house) is left unto you desolate." God's Spirit had moved out because they rejected Jesus, who came to fill the hearts of those who would be saved.

The healthy, vigorous, spiritual life of a child of God will make a definite, far-reaching separation from the pleasure-seeking, worldly-minded person, or organization. Their life can't blend with the non-Christian, nor can they find joy in places, reading material, or association with the unbeliever. —Marie Miles

A FORMAL CHURCH MEMBER

I saw a formal church member die—a woman eighty years old. Formal church members will be at the judgment in great numbers. Church membership will never save you. *It will take the blood of Jesus Christ* to save you from all sin.

This woman's daughter sent for me. I hurried to their beautiful home. The mother looked at me as she walked the floor, wringing her hands and saying,

"I am lost, I am lost!"

I thought the Holy Spirit was awakening her and told her that she was just the kind of person whom Jesus came to save.

"No," she answered, "It is too late. I might have been saved but now I am lost."

She was then in good health, in good use of her mental powers, but as she walked the house, day and night, wringing her hands, she grew weaker. She took to an armchair, then to her bed. I visited her, but I could not stay. Her relatives said they could not stay and listen to her screams. Hired helpers would not stay. They could not endure the dying screams and cries of a good church member, wailing that she was going to hell.

If one despairing soul can make a place so unendurable, *what will it be like when the multiplied millions are assembled together in hell?*

Because no sudden calamity overtakes them, some people may not pray today nor tomorrow, nor for ten years. But sometime they will pray. They may pray when it is too late. Such are not going to turn to God. They will pray for rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the throne. —Rev. 6:15-17.

A mere *profession* of Christianity will not keep us out of hell. We must have the real thing. There are people who say, "If I go to hell, I will have lots of company." Don't believe it. Each man in hell will be so miserable with regret and rebellion of heart and anguish of suffering that he will be no company for you nor for him.

A day is coming (Rev. 20:12-15) when all around this world the dead will get up out of their graves. The sea will give up her dead. All the unsaved will be present on the great Judgment Day. Read it for yourself: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Now is the time to pray. Repent of your sins and get right with God. Will you pray today? —S. Rees

October 12, 1975

COMFORTED BY ONE ANOTHER

II Corinthians 7:2-13

II Corinthians 7:2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

Memory Verse: I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. III John 4

Central Thought: The spiritual progress and prosperity of the saints lies close to the heart of one toward another and it brings comfort to others when we are moving forward for God.

Word Definitions: **Comfort** and **Consolation** are translated from the same word in the Greek which means being called or drawn near (to the Lord). Is there not comfort in being very near to the heart of those you dearly love? **Mourning:** *lamenting*. **Indignation:** *being sorely grieved, afflicted, and sore displeased* (about something wrong). **Revenge:** *Just retribution*.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This is surely a precious lesson. Paul had been constrained by the love of God to write the Corinthian brethren an epistle. This was the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians. As we have studied, we found that he had to reprove and correct them in many things. As he put it in our lesson, "I made you sorry with a letter." He had to lay the truth down to these people. He regretted having to do this, but he did it so they would receive no spiritual hurt. No doubt he wondered how they would take it and prayed for God to help them. In the meantime, Paul was besieged by the devil in the work of

the Lord. Perhaps Satan tried to press upon him much misgiving concerning what he had written to these saints. But with the coming of Titus came great comfort, not only from Titus, but through the report he gave Paul of the great good his letter had accomplished and the great progress the Church had made through giving heed to his earnest counsel. Thus he rejoiced the more.

QUESTIONS:

1. What comfort did Paul receive from Titus? 2. Why was his comfort so great in the saints? 3. How did he make them sorry? 4. What does godly sorrow work? 5. What was wrought in the hearts of these brethren?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, the great care that God has for us! Oh, the great care that we as children of God have for one another! This is the plan of God and the true result of the love of God in our hearts. Ye are in the hearts of one another as he said in our lesson, "to die and live with you." This is the love that Jesus has for us. He was willing to die and suffer in our stead. He did this for our sake. And now He rejoices over us because of the love begotten in us for Him. What a great comfort to Christ are those who allow His blood and sacrifice to atone for their sins and bring full salvation to their lives. This is the great comfort of the saints, also. We all share a common interest and we all press toward a common goal. This binds our hearts into one.

A minister was preaching once in an open air meeting, and was having quite a struggle trying to preach the truth to a large crowd of people. As he was fighting the forces of darkness his eyes caught sight of another saint preacher walking up through the crowd. Oh, what comfort and courage it gave the brother! He began preaching with renewed inspiration. Paul was journeying to Rome, facing he knew not what. But when he saw the brethren that came to meet him on the way, he thanked God, and took courage. Thus are we in this world often tempted and tried of Satan. But what a blessing to know the comfort of God! He will always comfort us when we need it. Thus can we be a comfort to others. Cannot you think of someone who is a great comfort to your heart? Do they not mean much to you? What value can you place on them and the blessed fruit they bear? May

we ever seek to be vessels that God can employ to administer His comfort to those who need it. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Godly sorrow will work repentance. To have godly sorrow means that you are sorry for your sins—not just that you have been caught, but because you have offended a God of love. When we come to the realization that we have rejected Jesus Christ, who has died on the cross to take our punishment for sin, then it causes us to have godly sorrow. We have rejected His great act of love. Oh, there is no greater love than the love of Jesus for us. God loved us and sent His only Son to take the punishment for our sins. How we ought to love and serve such a great God of love! Being deeply sorry for our sins and confessing them to God will bring salvation.

In sanctification there is a definite cleansing of the sin principle, which is the completeness of holiness. There still is the cultivation of holiness. The first, God alone can effect; in the second, man works together with God and under His guidance with a complete reliance upon Him for help. The plant is not created in us full-grown. God creates in us what man must cultivate. Man must clear away the weeds and let the influences of air, sun, and rain work upon the seed sown in the soil. Man must feed the plant and guard it from injury, until it expands into a beautiful flower or fruit. So “what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” We must work upon ourselves with diligence and not let self raise its head to cause us trouble. Self-pity will move in if we are not careful. We must continually watch and pray to be ready to meet our God. We are ever learning more of the ways of the Lord. —Sis. Marie Miles

THE SKEPTIC’S CHALLENGE

Over the heads of the crowd the confident cry rang out, “There is no answer to prayer; it’s all imagination. Don’t be carried away. Use your own common sense. There is no hereafter. When we are dead, we are done for.”

The speaker was standing at the foot of a monolith erected in an open space of a busy city. A large crowd stood around listening as he tried to prove the nonexistence of God and the

inefficacy of prayer. He concluded his speech with a professed readiness to debate the question with any person in the audience.

Instantly a man was seen making his way towards the speaker, saying at the same time, "I will accept the challenge." The people eagerly made way for the champion of prayer. He was tall and well dressed. But he was no orator; he had not the winning, catchy demeanor of his opponent. For a moment he stood looking at the sea of faces before him, faces waiting with eager expectancy for him to open the debate. A flush of color spread over his features, and the sweat stood in beads on his brow.

"Friends, I am not a public speaker," he said. "I did not come to this meeting with the intention of disputing anything our friend might say, but when he denied that there was any efficacy in prayer, and challenged anyone to prove the contrary, I felt bound to come forward." The crowd cheered. He went on:

"You see standing before you a man who was once as big a scoundrel as it was possible to find in the city. I was a drunkard, a gambler, a wife-beater—yes, everything the word 'brute' implies! My wife and child dreaded the sound of my footsteps, and yet, bad as I was, unknown to me, my wife had for years been praying for me, and had taught my child to pray. One night I went home rather earlier than usual and by accident, sober. When I opened the door, my wife had just gone up the stairs to put the little one to bed. I stood listening at the foot of the stairs. My child was praying; she was praying for me. 'Dear Lord, save my dear Daddy! Save my dear Daddy, Lord! Dear Lord Jesus, save my Daddy!' And as she prayed in her simple child-like way, I heard my wife saying with a sob in her throat, 'Lord Jesus, answer her prayer.' I crept softly out of the house. Strange feelings were coming over me, and ringing in my ears was my child's prayer: 'Dear Lord Jesus, save my dear Daddy!' Was I indeed dear to that child? In what way? She had never known a father's love. I question whether she had ever known a father's kiss. And as I thought of it, a great lump came into my throat, tears filled my eyes, and I cried aloud, 'Lord, help me! Lord, answer my child's prayer!' **And He did.**

"Years have passed away since then. Today I am a respected member of society. The past is under the blood. I live in the present, a new creature in Christ Jesus, a living testimony to direct answer to prayer." He paused and then

said earnestly, "Friends, don't you think I should have been a coward if I had kept silent today? Can I do other than believe there is a God, and that He not only hears, but answers prayer?"

The skeptic made no reply and the people went silently and reverently away. —Sel.

October 19, 1975

THE FELLOWSHIP OF GIVING

II Corinthians 8:1-12

II Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit (or "we made known unto you") of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Memory Verse: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. Luke 6:38a.

Central Thought: Giving ourselves first to God and then to our brother brings us into a sacred fellowship far superior to any human system.

Word Definitions: **Liberality:** *giving with no thought of self.* **Forward:** *to be inclined to, to delight in, to be prompt, willing, earnest, and diligent.*

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

Notice that we have divided the blessing of giving into three lessons. Guide the class into the one thought in each lesson.

LESSON BACKGROUND

As we study about giving, we want to remember that the Apostle Paul was asking for the saints located at Corinth to give to the poor, distressed, and poverty stricken saints in Jerusalem. (I Cor. 16:1, 3b). We also want to note that the saints in Macedonia were very poor and in deep poverty. The civil wars of the preceding century had laid the country waste, and in Paul's day it had not recovered. They could have told Paul not to ask them to give, since they were so poor, but they gave of their little. So anxious were they to give, and so touched they were for the poor saints in Jerusalem, that first they gave themselves to the Giver of all grace and then gave of their possessions which had first been consecrated to God. "It was grace which has bred grace." Their open heart was an offspring of God's own great heart of giving.

Paul bears record to the Corinthians of the liberality of the Macedonian saints and their faithfulness in administering help to himself as well as to others. Their liberality in the midst of their poverty stood out as a noble asset to their divine calling and was a likeness of the spirit of Jesus, their Saviour. And in our lesson, Paul is counselling us to partake of this grace, also. There is a blessing in giving that one cannot receive otherwise. The blessing comes not from the giving of the money, only, but in the giving of ourselves. We find that it is not so much the gift that God is observing in us, but rather the spirit and the attitude that is there. Somehow the brethren at Corinth, like many today, had not yet entered in this blessed fellowship of giving like they should. Paul is endeavoring to give them understanding on this important Christian grace.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who are generally the most faithful in giving,—those who are rich or those in poverty? Why? 2. In what way does giving, when properly done, edify both the giver and the receiver? 3. What was God's great gift to us, and what effect did it have on us? 4. How can we through Christ's poverty, be made rich? 5. Is it possible to lose if we give?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The vital ingredient in the Christian life is giving. For God so loved that He gave. Jesus gave His cheeks to the smiters. He gave His life as a ransom for many. He gave Himself for us. He set the pattern for the Christian. And then He gave us the motion: "Freely ye have received, freely give." The New Testament believers as recorded in the book of Acts, reflected this spirit of giving when they sold houses and lands and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet for distribution according to every man's need. They had all things common and none lacked. This type of giving and helping one another helps bind hearts into greater love and fellowship.

Paul was not urging people to give for his own personal gain. But, rather, as he put it in another place, "that fruit may abound to your account." He knew the effect that giving would have upon the soul. God is going to care for His own and provide for those who have their trust in Him. He will do this faithfully regardless. But, sad to say, He has to do it many times by means that exclude many souls who could be blessed. Because of their unwillingness to share in the blessed fellowship of giving, their lives are void. But when we become willing and of a ready mind, God accepts our giving according to what we have, and not according to what we have not. Some say, "Oh, if I had a lot of money I would give." They use this to excuse themselves. But they miss the point. Giving is not enjoined to us for the need of money, for the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. But rather it is enjoined for us to be blessed and to experience the love and the care, and the goodness of a merciful God. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul said "to live is Christ." Christ was the center of his life. Just so, He should be the center of our life. Every plan and purpose should be derived from Christ. Jesus stood

before the Father with the attitude of, "Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Psa. 40:7,8. "I delight to do Thy will." Jesus did the will of the Father here on earth until He said on the cross, "It is finished." First, Jesus gave Himself to do the will of the Father and then He gave Himself to ministering to those about Him, and finally gave His life. First, we must give ourselves to Jesus and then He prompts our giving and ministering to the saints. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25:40. Christ is the one that prompts our giving, therefore we have a real fellowship with Christ. We abound in the grace of giving as well as in the other graces. Giving is good for saints, as it checks any tendency to selfishness and it keeps the heart tender. Blessings come from giving, therefore we fellowship Christ, who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we might have everlasting life. This brought joy to our Saviour. "For the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . . and is set down at the right hand of God." Heb. 12:2. He had joy in seeing us saved from sin and therefore was willing to endure the cross. We fellowship our Lord in giving because we love to see the joy in those that are given to.

One is ashamed of some of the motives and methods employed by sectism in trying to raise money for some religious purposes. They surely do not understand the fellowship of giving. —M. Miles

EMPTY HANDED

One night a laundry worker felt impressed of God to place a gospel tract in a rolling basket which would be used the next morning.

The next day he was summoned into the manager's office. The manager confronted him with the tract. He confessed that he was responsible for having placed it in the basket.

"Last night," the manager said, "I came here discouraged and disappointed with life. I wheeled that basket under the middle girder of the pressing room, intending to kick away the basket from under me. But I saw that paper in the basket and picked it out. That tract not only saved me from suicide, but it also saved my soul, for I have accepted Christ as my Saviour."

Must I go and empty-handed?

Thus my dear Redeemer meet?

Not one day of service give Him,
Lay no trophy at His feet?

O ye saints, arise, be earnest!
Up and work while yet 'tis day;
Ere the night of death o'ertake you
Strive for souls while yet you may.

Must I go and empty-handed?
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him?
Must I empty-handed go?

When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. —Ezekiel 33:8,9. —Sel.

October 26, 1975

THE EQUALITY OF GIVING

II Cor. 8:13-24

2 Corinthians 8:13 · For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack. (Read Exodus 18:16-21)

16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.

17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

Memory Verse: And all that believed were together, and had all things common. Acts 2:44.

Central Thought: Divine love within the heart constrains us to share of our abundance to help supply another's need.

Word Definition: Equality—*likeness in condition or proportion, equity.* Grk.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In this lesson we continue the discussion of giving, from another angle. Paul introduces the thought of equality that is produced among believers when the spirit of giving is having free course as God wants it to. He quotes from Exodus 16:18 where it tells of how the manna that God rained daily upon the camp of Israel was equally distributed among the people. Each person was entitled to an homer of manna for his day's supply. According to Exod. 16:36, an ephah amounted to almost 3 pecks or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a bushel, or 24 quarts. One tenth of this would be close to $2\frac{1}{2}$ quarts. Each person was allotted this much manna for the day. But here is the thought: Not everyone could gather that much and some easily gathered more than that amount. But there was a system of measuring out to each man an omer. This kept things on an equal basis. Paul used this in application to the spirit of giving. What good would it have been for any in Israel to have hoarded or sought to have more than was meted out? It bred worms and stank if kept longer than the day it was gathered for. Let us seriously consider this in our study.

QUESTIONS:

1. Does God design equality for men? 2. How was this equality carried out in Israel's time concerning the manna?

3. Is God yet concerned about equality today? 4. What is the underlying force that will only produce equality successfully? 5. Can man alone execute equality? 6. There is a person unnamed mentioned in our lesson. He is simply called "the brother". What was his responsibility and involvement in our lesson?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, that the Spirit of the Lord would enlighten our eyes to the great truth and depth of this lesson before us! Jesus instructed us to pray: Give us this day our daily bread. If every living soul in the world had this kind of attitude toward God and their fellow man, what great problems would be solved in our complex world! The world by their wisdom does not know God, because their wisdom is etching plans always for self and worldly pleasure instead of faith and trust in God who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Man looks out on the condition of things and rather than submit and humble to God for His will to be done, he seeks to figure out his own answer to the world's problems. He has put on paper a plan called Communism, an effort to get things down on a "common level." On paper it sounds good and appeals to the masses who are reaching for something better. But in practical sense and in reality, their plan for "commonism" does not fulfill the desired goal. This is because the men who seek to execute it are not filled with the divine love of God. It is only when men and women are filled with the Spirit of Christ and the love of God that they can be brought to a common level.

Equality is more than everyone having that which is the same. It is an attitude and desire within the heart, a love for one another. Divine love within the heart will cause us to look with pity upon another person's need and open up our heart and hand to them. Look closely at the function of the Church in those early times. See how they shared and helped one another, not because they were forced to, but because the love of God constrained them to do so. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is not known who the brother was that went with Titus, but he was a man who could be trusted. He was "chosen of the churches" to go with Titus. He was a trusted man as was Titus. There is no greater honor which can be paid to a person's character than to give him your trust. It honors the one who takes it and the one who gives it. The person who

seems to count it a virtue and boasts that he doesn't trust anybody any farther than he can see them, shows that he is not the best type of a person. When we think of how we pay great honor to God when we trust His word and character, and have faith in Him, we know that this is also a great honor to any person who has been given the same trust.

Those who are trusted with great responsibility must be men of honor and they should bear observation and examination. They must stand clear before their Lord, Jesus Christ. Those who minister in the financial affairs of the church should do it as unto the Lord and for His glory. As they do it in this manner, they become a glory of Christ. Those who take care of offerings should keep books and be willing for them to be examined. They should not be too sensitive about mere gossip or any undue criticism. This will come, but if they do it as unto the Lord, they will be honored by him and all who are seeking God's pleasure. We want to provide all things honest in the sight of God and man. —M. Miles

WHAT THEN?

"How are you enjoying the university, Harold?" enquired the lawyer, to a young freshman friend who had just called at his office.

"I'm crazy about it," responded Harold, in his enthusiastic manner.

"Tell me," said the kind old lawyer, "What are you planning to do when you graduate?"

"I'm going to law school," answered Harold.

"Fine," said the lawyer, "and what then?"

"Well, I hope some day to practice law," said the freshman.

"Very fine, and what then?" continued the lawyer.

"Well, Sir, I'm determined to make a success of it, hoping to be able to marry and have a comfortable home with a family," said the young man with a twinkle in his eye.

"That sounds good," said the lawyer, "And what then?"

Harold was not too sure now—"I suppose, when I get old I will retire."

There was a moment's silence and the question was asked again, ". . . and what then?"

Harold twisted in his chair, and after a pause said, "I'll die."

There was a longer pause, then the kind old lawyer, in all compassion, said, "And what then?"

The young man jumped up, shook hands with the kind old gentlemen, saying, "Thank you, Sir, I know what you mean." He went home. That night Harold opened his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving Him as his Saviour and Lord. For "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13).

Yes, "It is appointed unto man once to die." We cannot escape that fact, but God has made a way for us to escape the judgment we deserve. He has provided a perfect salvation as a free gift for those who will take it. Yet, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3).

November 2, 1975

THE BLESSING AND REWARD OF GIVING

II Cor. 9:6-15; Proverbs 11:25; Psalms 41:1

II Corinthians 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 (connects to verse 8) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

Proverbs 11:25 The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Psalms 41:1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

Memory Verse: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35b

Central Thought: Giving to others in need from a pure love and a free willingness in the heart will be greatly rewarded.

Word Definition: *Bountifully* means *with benefit and largeness*. *Cheerful* means *prompt and willing*. *Grudgingly* means *with sadness*. *Sparingly* means *being stingy*.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We take up now another angle of the subject of giving, and that is what Paul said about the reward given to those who will be faithful to give with the right attitude and spirit. Once more let us notice the scripture he quotes, and this is from the 112th Psalm and 9th verse. This Psalm is a description of the godly man and the beautiful aspect of his life in this world. His bountifulness and dispersing abroad is connected to the righteousness that he possesses that will remain forever. Surely there is enough in these two chapters to really enlighten and inspire every one to be dutiful and faithful in the wonderful grace of giving. It has much to do with the welfare of our souls. There are blessings to be received not only in a spiritual way, but also in a temporal way—with blessings poured upon us when we give from a willing heart.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the thing that God looks at when we give? 2. Describe how one could give grudgingly or merely of necessity. 3. Name some of the rewards that our lesson reveals come to those who give. 4. What else does giving do besides supplying the wants of the saints? 5. What beauty does the world see in holy giving?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The reward of giving is so sure and blessed that we cannot overlook or despise it. When our lesson says that God loves a cheerful giver, it is talking about a God who delights in blessing

and rewarding such people who sacrifice for the sake of others. There is a wise and faithful saying among God's people and it has surely been proven. "You can't outgive the Lord." When we give willingly and with love in our hearts toward those we give to, there is an all-seeing Eye observing and taking into account our doing. Blessed are those who have learned the fellowship and blessing of giving and who are awakened to the responsibility of giving. It is right that we give, but we give—not just because it is right,—we give because we desire to help those who are in need of what we give them. To seek the praise of men in what we give, or to give and murmur while we give because of the condition that necessitated our giving—all this will cause us to lose our reward in heaven. To give with the thought of gaining favor with God will be in vain. To give under pressure or constraint will reap no reward. Many churches and individuals of today pressure their people and make them feel that they owe God their ten per cent. They make like God needs their money, etc. Oh, such folly! God does not need our money. He needs our hearts. He directs us how to use the money that He places in our hands. The New Testament standard of giving is outlined in these three lessons we have had. We do not hear him enjoin the tithe here, but leaves it up to the individual and with God. Oh, this money matter can get out of hand quickly if the Lord is not allowed to control it. But God has a holy plan and we would do well to take heed to His Word concerning these things. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When my father, Bro. Fred Pruitt, started out to publish the "Faith and Victory" paper, over fifty years ago, he was in much prayer about this great venture. He thought of his six children and the many needs, the work that it would take, and the expense. It loomed like a big mountain before him since he had worked hard to support himself. A work of faith was new to him. As he was praying, the Lord gave him the verse in our lesson, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." God did supply the needs, even if at times he had to do much praying about it, just as prayer and faith in God keeps it going today. When we were faced with seemingly unjust back taxes, it became a mountain to me. But as I prayed, the Lord pointed out how that he had removed many mountains before in the work here at the

publishing house, and those thoughts inspired my faith. I knew God would take care of His work. We are thankful for how God has supplied the money to pay the huge bill.

I have often said that we can't outgive the Lord. A number of years ago, we were in a business meeting at our national camp meeting. They needed new women's dormitories and rest rooms. Different ones spoke and said they felt that it was too great an expense. Finally, an inspiration came over me to ask for an amount to pray for before the next camp meeting. I asked, but different ones hesitated to answer. Finally, I heard a brother whisper a figure to his wife and I asked if we should pray for that amount. Someone thought it might take a little more. Well, I told them that I felt that if so many would ask the Lord to help them to give a hundred dollars before the next time, it would be taken care of. Different ones said they would give a hundred dollars, but of course, there were not enough that promised. They decided to start the project. When I arrived on the grounds for the next camp meeting, the manager wanted me to see the new dorm and rest rooms. The Lord had supplied more than enough to take care of the cost. God is able to take care of our needs if we will but have faith.

—M. Miles

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November 9, 1975

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

II Cor. 10:1-7; Eph. 6:10-12; I Thess. 5:8

II Corinthians 10:1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

4 (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

1 Thess: 5:8 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.

Memory Verse: Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Central Thought: The Christian warfare is not a fleshly conflict of human against human, but rather a spiritual battle between our souls and the hosts of spiritual wickedness of this world.

Word Definitions: *Imaginations: reasonings of the human mind; thoughts. Thought: idea, perception, or disposition.*

LESSON BACKGROUND

In order for Paul to keep from having a bearing on others as though he was walking and warring after the flesh, he sought to beseech and entreat the brethren at Corinth by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The meekness and gentleness of Christ should clothe our every action and word whether it be a commendation or rebuke. This is to show that we are not fighting the individual but rather are endeavoring to rescue their never-dying soul from the evil that binds them. Paul had had some very pointed and difficult things to give to these brethren, and as much as he sought to use meekness, it seems that some felt that he was walking after the flesh. But the main point we want to get from this is what he said about the Christian warfare. He makes it plain that though the Christian warfare is not a carnal one, it is a real

warfare, a spiritual conflict warring against things that come to us through the avenue of our minds. The mind and the thoughts are the battleground that we fight these battles with Satan on.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul beseech the brethren by the meekness and gentleness of Christ? 2. Why do we not fight with carnal weapons? 3. Who was rebuked one time for defending Jesus with a sword? 4. What does it mean to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ? 5. What are some of the imaginations that will exalt against the knowledge of God? 6. Where are the strongholds of the devil and how are they cast down?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal. That is a true and wise saying and it is worthy of our serious thought and acceptance. Carnal weapons, however strong and efficient they may seem, can never accomplish the real victory for the Christian. It is because the real warfare is a spiritual warfare waged by the inner man in his thoughts and affections. The sword, the spear, the shield, the rifle, the tanks, the machine guns, and the bombs are futile weapons when it comes to really accomplishing the purpose of God. True, such weapons can conquer and destroy, but this is only in a civil and legal manner. When the smoke of the conflict is cleared away and the armies lay down their artillery, there is yet a victory that their fighting did not gain. And how much more important is this spiritual warfare than the carnal warfare? If the spiritual warfare were successfully waged in the hearts of men, there would be no need of carnal fighting. Self, greed, pride, prejudice, hatred, and darkness are the things that cause all wars and fightings among men. The Christian warfare engaged and accomplished, through the grace and leadership of Christ the Captain, the destruction of these enemies from the heart of man. Thus Jesus explained to Pilate—because His Kingdom was not of this world, His servants did not fight. He also told Peter that all who took the sword would perish with the sword. He said in Revelation that he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. We refuse to engage in mortal combat and to take up carnal weapons to fight against our fellow man. (Such a spirit that impels men to

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do this is contrary to the nature of Jesus Christ and the faith of which He is the Author. The warfare that we engage in pulls down the strongholds in the minds of people through the preaching of the gospel with power. It works a holy conflict within the heart of man against evil spirits and wrong thoughts and attitudes. It is that which keeps the heart and mind clear and clean for God. This, the Christian warfare, is the warfare that we enter when we enlist in the service of the Lord.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It has been said that imagination is the biggest nation in the world. Often a remark is made by someone and the more that remark is thought about, the bigger it grows. Then the devil is right there to point out an unintentional slight made by that person, and tries to make it appear intentional. Bigger and bigger the trouble grows. Self-pity moves in and even causes tears. The next time that person is met, a coldness and resentment is manifested. The other person feels it and wonders about it. Then the devil goes to work on that person and their imagination begins to work. Oh, how often dear friends are separated just because of one person's imagination being allowed to work. When remarks are made, the love of God just floods the soul and cleanses the mind of any hurt or any imaginations, and peace is established. We should try to overlook these things, but it takes God to help us. Have confidence that the person just didn't mean it that way, or that they were under stress or under a false impression. And further more, if they did mean it, we must ask God to give us a forgiving spirit and let the Holy Spirit fire fill us with divine love. That will keep us from being filled with imaginations. Strongholds will not be built up in our minds against any person if we watch and pray. —M. Miles

TREASURES HIDDEN

During the civil war, a woman had a silver tea set with a large silver tray. She was afraid that the soldiers who frequently came through the country would steal it from her. She took it and wrapped it up in a cloth and hung it down in the well. One day a group of soldiers stopped in her yard and went to her well. They let the bucket down into the well and kept drawing up water for themselves and their horses. She watched eagerly for she was afraid that at any time they would draw up her silver set. After they left, she

went out and brought it up. It had been dented, but was still there.

We have some greater treasures than the silver set that was preserved in that family and passed down to this generation. We have the Word of God. The Bible tells us where to hide the Word of God. The Psalmist David said, word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Psa. 119:11. The devil is right there all the time to steal the Word out of our hearts. We want to hide it there and keep it safe so the devil won't find it. Memorize the verses in the Bible so they will be a help to you in times of trouble, and strain. The Word is part of the Christian armour that we are to put on. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Eph.6: 17. When we have the Word hidden in our heart, we can use it as a sword against the devil when he comes to bring evil thoughts or false imaginations that will hinder our faith or cause us trouble. —Marie Miles

November 16, 1975

THE MEASURE OF THE RULE WHICH GOD HATH DISTRIBUTED

II Cor. 10:8-18; Rom. 12:3

II Corinthians 10:8 For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

9 That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

10 For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

11 Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Memory Verse: But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Ephesians 4:7.

Central Thought: In Christ we are what we are according to what God has individually bestowed of His grace upon us, and not by our own stretching to measure to what someone else is.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We find in this portion of Paul's letter to the Corinthians some very pointed and important statements that contain vital truth—truth that will enlighten us concerning the work of the Lord. Paul's authority was given of God for edification and not for destruction. This he makes clear. All the instruction that he gave to them and all the truth that he laid down in his letters was not to terrify them. He was giving assurance to them that he was going to stand back of what he had written to them, even when he would meet them in person. He had written some rugged counsel that seemed hard for some to get hold of, and it seemed that some had rather smarted for it, although most of them received his instructions. But he is now driving home to their hearts the point that his authority was from the Lord and he was not going to be as some who compared themselves among themselves, etc. He had come as far to them as preaching the gospel would allow him to come, and he was not going to stretch himself farther than what the gift of grace was working in him. The Lord was to be glorified in his ministry, and it was not going to be Paul who was promoting and pushing the work.

QUESTIONS:

1. Can you explain the danger that lies in us comparing ourselves among ourselves? 2. Does the Holy Spirit endow every man with the same working? 3. Is it possible for us to be so influenced by some spiritual person that we will try to stretch our experience to match theirs? 4. Can you think of any reason why God chooses to work in every person individually as He does? 5. Is it possible for us to get our eyes off Jesus and to get them upon each other?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is truly wonderful how the Lord is able to work and deal with each individual personally. To each man according to his several ability were the talents given, according to Matthew 25:15. Paul, in another place, spoke of the Spirit bestowing the gifts "to every man severally as He will." This is a lesson we should all learn and get a hold of. God has a measure of grace for you individually. Regardless of how many people fail and how many times they fail, this does not excuse you from the responsibility that God is holding you for in His plan. One very important statement of our lesson tells us that they are not wise who measure themselves by themselves. This will lead to spiritual ruin. Every one must look personally and individually to Jesus Christ for himself. He must keep his Saviour in his vision in all things. Only then can he be a blessing to his fellowman. Did not Jesus say, "Without me ye can do nothing?"

God has given to every man a measure of faith. This measure is given according to what God knows that we can handle. We are not machines, but human beings with mind, will, and reason. It is very easy for us to take upon us more than we can manage. It is a great secret of soul rest, soul peace, and soul victory to learn to let God work in us and to know that it is not ourselves. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called. We must not boast of things beyond our measure, but as God works within us, we can rejoice and serve Him with gladness. Many times we feel that we could use a greater measure, but it is not ours to get alone in the light of our own understanding. We must trust God. One brother expressed himself to God, regretting that he had no more power than what he had. But when the Lord dealt with him about it, he then wondered that he had what he did have. There is a difference in working in the fervency of

our own personal zeal and that which comes from being inspired, anointed, and used of the Lord. God grant each one guidance and understanding in finding and being faithful in the measure of grace that God gives to them. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sometimes young converts are troubled about not being able to testify like some older saint. But as the lesson tells us, we are not to measure ourselves by ourselves nor compare ourself with others. We are to testify like the Lord shows us, and just be ourself. The older saint has gone through many trials and has had a lot of schooling in the things of the Lord. They have a deeper depth than the young convert. So don't try to be like them. The young convert will be able to testify to more grace in his life as he continues to live for God. As the young convert continues to exercise himself, the Lord will add to his service for Him. We should desire to labor for the Lord, yet we must not go beyond our ability that the Lord gives us. We are not to "stretch beyond our measure." One elder minister said that every young minister should teach a class of little children and learn how to teach before trying to teach adults. I don't know if that rule would hold always, but there is something in it. If you can't feel an anointing, or get over a truth in teaching children, how can you teach adults? Teaching is one of the qualifications of a minister. "Apt to teach." I Tim. 3:2. I don't believe that the Lord calls a person to take the pulpit to teach others just as soon as they are saved. The qualifications of a minister are that they are "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." I Tim. 3:6. A novice is one, "newly come to the faith." What a young convert has to say can be said while he is standing at his seat. We then will not be going "beyond our measure."

"Zeal without knowledge" will get us into trouble, yet we must be busy for the Lord and move as the Lord leads. —Marie Miles

WHEN WILL YOU DIE?

Do you think this a foolish question? You count your money; you reckon your profits; you calculate your dividends; surely it is quite as important to number your days! Some have died—very suddenly, too—just about your age. It is possible that you may die very soon. A young man went to a friend and asked him how long before death a man ought to be

prepared for it. The reply was, "About five minutes." The young man turned away with relief, making up his mind to see life, sow his wild oats, enjoy the pleasures of the world, and then said the friend: "When are you going to die?" "I cannot tell," was the reply. "Then you had better be prepared for death now; you may not have five minutes to live."

Queen Elizabeth died crying, "Millions of money for a moment of time." How will you die? Sad, sad indeed, if that word comes true of you which was thrice repeated to some very respectable people a long time ago—"Ye shall die in your sins." One second after your death it will be a matter of no consequence to you whether you died in a palace or in a cellar. But your whole eternity will hang upon the state in which you die. If sin works such havoc, and sins have such fearful consequences in the world, what must they entail in the next? As men sow in this world, so they reap, but God does not definitely execute judgment upon sins in this life. "After death the judgment." In this world you can, in a sense, avoid God. Many live "without God in the world." But death dissolves all connection with the things of time by which God can be excluded, and beyond death you must stand before God.

The dying infidel, Charteris, said, "I would give \$150,000 to have it proved to my satisfaction that there is no place such as hell." His conscience was waking up to proclaim in that solemn hour that sins must be followed by the judgment of God.

You may die unsaved; you will not die unloved. The Son of God is for you; Christ died for you; eternal life may be yours. The love of God—the work of Christ—the Spirit's strivings—all urge you to repent and turn from the world and its delusions, which end in death, to the Son of God, whose soul-assuring words are—"He that heareth My Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. —Sel.

(Teacher, have you ordered lessons for the 1st quarter of 1976? The first Sunday of the quarter is Jan. 4.)

November 23, 1975

A CHASTE VIRGIN TO CHRIST

II Cor. 11:1-4; 13-15; Song of Sol. 4:7; Eph. 5:25b-27

II Corinthians 11:1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me.

2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Song of Solomon 4:7 Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

Ephesians 5:25b Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

27 That He might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Memory Verse: Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. II Pet. 3:14.

Central Thought: Seeing that we must be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ and that He gave Himself for us that we may be thus accepted of Him, we are warned against being corrupted from this purity by the craftiness of Satan.

Word Definitions: Jealousy—fervant zeal, ardor. Chaste: clean, pure, perfect, innocent, sacred, holy.

Simplicity: singleness, sincerity without dissimulation or self-seeking. **Beguile**—deceive; mislead by guile. **Guile**—crafty, cunning, deceitful.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The warning that Paul gives us here is one that we cannot afford to ignore. It is surely evident that Satan is at variance with God and the cause of the salvation of men and women. And, sad to say, one of his most effective tools is the means of false doctrine and religion that is propagated through false ministers. The ultimate end of Satan is to defile the heart of man and make it unfit to be a part of the pure and spotless bride of Christ. We will note the mention of Eve being beguiled by the serpent. Surely our Adversary the devil is still in the deceiving, beguiling business today, and it is for us to take heed lest we be snared in his trap.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Paul jealous over the saints? 2. Is this kind of jealousy right? 3. What does it mean to be a chaste virgin to Christ? Why does Christ desire a chaste virgin? 4. How did Satan beguile Eve? 5. How can our minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ? 6. In what manner does Satan make his approach in deceiving a soul? 7. Is there enough grace and power in Christ to keep us from the works of the devil if we retain a love for the truth?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

All who have been born again and are truly following all the commandments of Jesus Christ, are in the Church of God or are the "chaste virgin" that our lesson speaks about. The church that Jesus died to purchase does not fellowship the world, but has a different spirit. This is the body of people that the devil is after. God has a visible church in the world today and the devil is observing all. False prophets feel the opposition of the spirit of Christ and therefore, false prophets are some of the worst enemies of the people of God. They transform themselves into the "apostles of Christ" and are deceiving many today. This spirit worked in the days of Paul. John called it the spirit of antichrist. John said it "even now already is in the world." I John 4:3. It was in the world then and it is in the world today. "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work." This apostate, antichrist spirit is

a mystery. There are many hidden mysterious powers working and it has blinded and deceived millions in times past and is doing so today.

Paul says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." 1 Tim. 4:1-3. I am sure that many of you have read the history of the Roman Catholic sect, about its terrible tyranny, its superstitions, ceremonies, and rites. There you will find fulfillment of this prophecy. It is astonishing that intelligent people today would be staunch supporters of such an institution. The Catholics killed millions in the name of God. Protestantism also did the same. Their consciences were seared with a hot iron. Catholics are forbidden to eat meat on certain days and the clergy is forbidden to marry, although today some have broken away from that law. Today in Protestantism the people have "itching ears" and only want to hear amusing stories, etc. They want their consciences eased. They have a "form of godliness," but deny the power thereof. 2 Tim. 3:5. We should be on our guard lest the enemy deceive us. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The devil works in a very sly way to cause a person to leave the truth and become separated from the true saints of God. The devil will surround you with discouraging views of things that you see happening. Even though the Lord works, the devil will try to hide those workings from a person. He will even build up pressures around a person and work in every way he can to get one in a discouraged frame of mind. He will make small things look big, and etc. One time, a person wrote to my father and said that the church was going to pieces. My father wrote them back and said that the church was built upon a rock and the "gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18. We know that the church will always stand. The devil might try to hide it from view but God will always have a people that are clean, pure, and separated from the spirit of the world.

Many are caged up with those who are under false spirits and they need to hear the call to "come out from among them and be ye separate." God is calling His people into one body and one spirit. Holy Spirit rule is in the Church of

God. Anything out of harmony with the plan and spirit of God is false. Jesus Christ is the advocate between God and man, and the Holy Spirit is the executive officer in the holy trinity. If the Spirit of the living God is not in the church, it will not and cannot move forward. Surely God has a church today that is without spot and without blemish. Praise God for the true saints of God! —M. Miles

GOD OR SYSTEMS?

We all know that after the Apostolic day, Rome set herself up as God, or above all that is called God, and now her myriad daughters are universally repeating her sin, namely, making visible organizations and human authority to take the place of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Ghost. This is what the apostles call the mystery of iniquity. One writer says, "The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men of prayer.

Another writer of former years so beautifully expressed the sentiments of this article that I will quote at length, "In loving God himself, our individual souls have ample scope for the beautiful unfolding of our free wills, our consciences, our personal liberties, without being hampered by the tyranny of popes or cast-iron forms. God made every immortal soul to swing around Himself with an orbit, and a service and a destiny entirely unique and forever and particularly belonging to itself." Within this orbit is also found the only true spiritual unity; for, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all" (I Cor. 12:6).

To love God personally and perfectly will produce the most perfect obedience and the most perfect heroism, and the most perfect destiny of which the soul is capable. But when people put a system, or party, or organization in their devotion, they sell their individuality of thought and service to a committee, or a company or a system, and become like machine made bricks in the tower of Babel, instead of living stones in the New Jerusalem. Just look at it; no Romish priest is allowed to give an explanation of Scripture not sanctioned by the cast-iron rules of Romish theology. A certain Methodist preacher said he was afraid to preach on divine healing for fear it was not sanctioned by Methodism. These both must sacrifice truth and conviction to their sect idol, and so tens of thousands are fettered in their faith, their burning zeal, their service for God, and the exercise of their gifts, by the iron cage of some

stupendous "ism," which overshadows their souls and takes the place of God. To love God Himself, to commune with Him, to take His Word to ourselves personally, to obey Him with supreme personal loyalty, is our only true holiness and service. Keep yourselves from idols.

"We should not serve men nor systems,
That is not the Bible way;
But should follow Jesus,
Trusting Him to lead our way."

—L. Jarvis

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November 30, 1975

GLORY IN SUFFERING

II Corinthians 11:20-31

II Corinthians 11:20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

21 I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

22 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, (Acts 21:11) in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. (Acts 16:22-23)

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, (Acts 23:12) in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.

Memory Verse: For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for His sake. Phillipians 1:29

Central Thought: To suffer for the cause of Christ is hard for the flesh but glorious for the soul.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From Paul's own hand we have written in our lesson concerning the things that he met and suffered and endured as a Christian and as a minister of the gospel of Christ. To every man Paul could speak, for he had both suffered reproach to make him weak, and yet he had also many things to enable him to speak boldly. He would let no man despise him. He knew whom he had believed and knew of a certainty of the things that He suffered and what He was suffering for. Some of these things here mentioned we also have recorded in the book of Acts (ch. 16). In the next lesson we find the lessons that he gained from his suffering. Oh, how we need to be submissive to God and let Him lead us as He sees best even though it means that we have to suffer. The glory will always follow. Christ spoke thus of Himself: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" This is the route that the Lord took Paul as he journeyed through this world. Think of the perils that he underwent, especially those perils among false brethren! Read Deut. 25:3 concerning the law of scourging by Jews.

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to suffer? What are some of the things that bring suffering to us? 2. What was some of the glory that Paul found in suffering for Christ? 3. Will we prosper spiritually if we are not willing to suffer? 4. Is it possible to suffer something and not get the glory? 5. What attitude should we take in the suffering?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

One of the great and important aspects of the Christian vocation is that of suffering. This is one of the great things that the flesh draws back from. But suffering only tends to magnify the glory and the nobility of the Christian

endeavor. When you are willing to suffer for anything, it is full proof that it lies the closest to your heart. Suffering takes in permissiveness. That is, we suffer and allow ourselves to suffer without endeavoring to flee from the cause for which we suffer. We will not forsake the Saviour who died for us even though we are called upon at times to suffer for His name's sake. This suffering is inflicted upon us many times by our fellow man. It is when our profession of faith and our integrity with God crosses the pleasure and purpose of the carnal minds around us that we are given the opportunity to suffer. Such was the case of Jesus—such was the case of Paul. Robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen, and false brethren heaped upon his life many things that he suffered for the name of Jesus. They doubtless did not realize the suffering that they were causing. That was one of the things that he suffered,—the knowledge that they were doing it with little thought of his welfare. He loved them, but they were not mindful of the love he had for them, and then they threw back into his face the sorrow and pain that weighed down his spirit many times.

Words are very inadequate to describe and do justice to the value and benefit of suffering for Christ. But let us remember the apostles of old who rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. When you find some cruel thorns on life's pathway, instead of complaining and fretting, seek to look at it as they did, and count yourself blessed that He has counted you worthy to suffer for his name's sake. You find glory and praise and honour for Christ in it all and in that day when He comes in glory, we can be with Him, for we have suffered for Him, too. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are natural sufferings that we have to face in life. The Bible says that "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." Job. 14:1-2. There are the death of loved ones that touch the heart, the loss of possessions, disappointments caused by the unfaithfulness of friends, changes in the price of the cost of living, etc. Then there is another suffering that comes to us because of our living for Christ. Friends and relatives turn against us for this cause because the Spirit of Christ lives in us. In our lesson we read of all that the Apostle Paul went through because of his preaching the gospel of

Christ. He was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles, who were an idol-worshipping people. He was accused of "turning the world upside down" because he preached against idol worship. This brought him much suffering. Spies continually followed him, trying to cause a riot. Some were false brethren and this caused him much pain and trouble. All of this brought much weariness of mind and body. No wonder he said when he came down to the end of his journey in life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. 4:7,8. Praise God for that hope we have of someday leaving all trouble, heartaches and sorrow behind! We will be in the presence of the Lord and oh, what a joy that will be! We will be glad that we were true to the Lord in this life. —M. Miles

God Forbid That I Should Murmur

(I Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:14)

God forbid that I should murmur
Of the hardness of the way;
Of the foolish things that people do,
Of trifling things they say.

God forbid that I should murmur
When another causes pain;
All that ever fret and try us
Are not reasons to complain

They are only tools that shape us
After God's most Holy plan—
O such love as God revealeth:
O such mercy unto man!

God forbid that I should murmur
Anything that touches me,
First was suffered by my Saviour—
Suffered, O so willingly.

Little things that fret and try us,
Causing murmur and complaint,
If but borne, as He intended,
Are the makings of a saint.

His best timbers all are tempered
By the ragings of the storm;
And until the tool has chiseled,
The marble has not shape or form. —Sel.
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December 7, 1975

STRENGTH MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS

II Corinthians 12:1-10

II Corinthians 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he hearth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Memory Verse: And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9a

Central Thought: The more violently a person is afflicted or tried, and is upheld by the power of God, the greater the power of God is manifested, seen and acknowledged through that weak instrument.

Word Definition: *Visions are "symbolical representations of spiritual and celestial things: in which matters of the deepest importance are exhibited to the eye of the mind, by a variety of emblems; the nature and properties of which serve to illustrate those spiritual things."* **Revelations:** *"a manifestation of things not before known, and such as God alone can make known, because they are a part of His own inscrutable counsels."* " 'A thorn in the flesh' . . . signifies a stake . . . to be tied to a stake, by way of punishment, and is used . . . to signify the most oppressive afflictions." **Infirmity** signifies to be weak, infirm, sick, poor, despicable through poverty or suffering. It is never applied to inward sin and inward corruptions . . . Paul speaks of his sufferings, and of these alone. . . Would not the grace and power of Christ appear more conspicuous in slaying the lion, than in keeping him chained?—in destroying sin, root and branch; and filling the soul with his own holiness?"—Clarke's Comm. **Paradise** means *the place of the blessed or the state of separate spirits.*

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul had kept this vision a secret for fourteen years. Allowing that this epistle was written sometime in the year of 57, fourteen years counted backward would lead this transaction to the year of 42 or 43, which was about the time that Barnabas brought Paul from Tarus to Antioch, (Acts 11, 25, 26) and when he and Paul were sent by the church of Antioch with alms to the poor Christians in Jerusalem.
—Clarke's Comm.

The Lord has made me to understand that the three heavens are referred to as follows: 1. The first heaven would be the ecclesiastical heaven, which is the assembly of church people. This could be the true or false church. (Sitting together in heavenly places) 2. The areal heavens are where the stars, moon and sun reside. 3. The third place is the dwelling of the blessed, or the throne of divine glory.

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened to the Apostle Paul fourteen years before the writing of our lesson? 2. What are the three
- (39)

- heavens? 3. What was the Apostle Paul glorying in?
4. What was given to him so he would not be exalted?
5. How can a person be made perfect in weakness?
6. Should we be afraid to suffer for Christ since sufficient grace has been promised to us?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The Apostle Paul guarded against being exalted. He did not want his friends to be overly fond of him, yet he did not want his enemies to hold his gift and calling in contempt. He had the gift of knowing when and what to say and when to refrain. This is a rare gift. The Apostle had much glory and honor. Both Satan and his apostles were very envious of him. Yet Paul was weak and realized it. He knew that all that he was or ever could be would have to be only through the power of God. Therefore he needed God to defend him. It has been said that "grace alone can preserve grace." This is a worthy saying and truth which certainly needs to be remembered. When God gives us a particular blessing, we need another blessing to preserve that blessing. Without this, we would lose our strength and power to hold the first blessing. Therefore we need to continually be in much watching and prayer. We need to always remember that we are very weak within ourselves. The devil is more than a match for us. We are dependent upon the all-sufficient grace of God. We note that God has given the Apostle Paul great revelations and visions which were a great blessing. He needed another blessing of grace to help him stay in contact with God so the power of God would continue to work through him. God gave him a "thorn in the flesh", lest he become exalted. As he bore this "thorn in the flesh," he saw the grace of God working and gloried in his "afflictions" that the power of Christ would ever work. He saw the grace of God as being sufficient for him. Paul knew that the promise of the grace of God would never fail. After seeking for the Lord to remove the "thorn in the flesh" he knew that God would not let him sink beneath it nor would his enemies prevail against him. When Paul was first saved, God told him that he "would shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Acts 9:16. "Afflictions awaited him in every city."

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In the light of our lesson, we should be able to triumph above every distress, affliction, persecution, infirmity,

reproach, and necessity that we meet in life. When we say, "triumph," we do not necessarily mean to be delivered out of such, but rather to triumph in our souls right in the midst of such adversity. Let us face it—ease and prosperity are dangerous ground for us to tread on, while adversity and hardship are good for us. This should eliminate all murmuring and complaining. When things are seemingly against us, let us believe God and know that these things are working for us and not against us. The Bible is full of such accounts. Jacob said at one time: "All these things are against me." But they proved to be for his good. "Necessities"! These are times of need, when we are short of things that are necessary. It is hard to be out of something or to do without something that we are used to having. But look for the blessing in this trial. Take the right attitude and it will work for your spiritual good. But if you grumble and stew around and think only of your misfortune and need, you will get nowhere spiritually. Take a good look at this and all the other things that Paul learned to glory in, and prepare your heart for these things, also. They will come to all, especially those who are following the Lord. They are sent to help us keep an even balance in the spiritual life. They help us. Too many blessings and not enough trials will tend to make us "top-heavy." We might very well forget the source of these blessings. God is too wise to bless more than what is a righteous measure. No man was ever used of God that did not have a worthy share of hardship, sorrow, and adversity. It all goes along with living for God. But there is glory in these things, a glory that is beyond the human and shines in the divine. So may God bless us to see and know the value of these hard battles of life and reap the good for which they are sent our way. —L. Busbee

Dec. 14, 1975
TO SPEND AND BE SPENT
II Cor. 12:11-21

II Corinthians 12:11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

13 For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not your's, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

17 Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

18 I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you? walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

19 Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

21 And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Memory Verse: . . . Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35b.

Central Thought: The spreading of the gospel and doing good should be our main purpose in life, even if it takes much strength, time or money.

Word Definition: Compelled means obliged.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It seems that the Apostle Paul had been falsely accused so much that he had to vindicate his ministry and he had to speak of himself although he did not like to do this. It appeared like boasting which always comes from an empty, foolish mind. Paul was always apologizing for telling about what God had taken him through or how God had worked through his ministry, yet he felt it was necessary and begged them to understand and admitted that he was a fool for glorying and admitted that he was nothing.

"Many persons suppose that the words, 'being crafty, I caught you with guile' are the words of the apostle, and not of his slanderers; and therefore have concluded that it is lawful to use guile, deceit, etc., in order to serve a good religious purpose. This doctrine is abominable; and the words are most evidently those of the apostle's detractors, against which he defends his conduct in the two following verses."—17 and 18. —Clarke's Comm. Paul did not send Titus and the other brother (chap. 8:6,18) to get anything from them for himself or they did not take anything from them. He had been falsely accused and was trying to clear up that accusation so they would accept his letter as from God and profit by it. —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Apostle Paul have to glory in his work for God? 2. What did Paul ask their forgiveness for?—and why? 3. How did Paul feel toward them? 4. Are we stewards of the money that comes to us, and are we to leave it to children to squander? 5. Why did Paul send Titus to them and why did he show such love to them? 6. What was the Apostle afraid he would find when he came to see them?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Let us get into the spirit of this portion of the letter that the Apostle Paul has written to the Corinthians. They had some among them who had lived wickedly. It seems that those ill-disciplined few were allowed to go on without being restrained. On a whole, the congregation was made up of those who had virtues and vices. This surely was not a model for a Christian church. Those who criticised the

Apostle were being listened to and their influence was being felt by him and those who were otherwise living a godly life. This brought sorrow to Paul. He felt like a father to them. He did not seek money from them, even though it was their duty to have supported him as the other churches had done. He did not require it of them although he asked them to forgive him of this wrong. They had missed a blessing which he had denied them. He wanted to visit them sometime but still he did not want to be burdensome to them. He did not seek their property but he sought their souls for God. He wanted their salvation more than anything else. He had told them in I Cor. 4:15, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." Even though they had not supplied his needs, as a child does not his parents, yet he was deeply interested in their souls. He acted toward them as a father does for his own children. His love was great toward them. He would act toward them as a father does toward his disobedient children. The parable of the prodigal son brings out his feelings. Perhaps Paul thought of the one lost sheep and the ninety-nine and the shepherd's feelings toward it. Whatever Paul had written or whatever he did, it was done for their best spiritual interest.

It is the duty of parents to see that their children are equipped to earn their bread when they leave the home, but to lay up money for them to squander is not the thought in our lesson. When a child of God has helped the poor, the heathen in the regions beyond, and helped spread the gospel, then if something is left, it should go to them. Anything that is saved from not helping the poor and spreading the gospel, by the parents, will be made a curse by God and not a blessing to the children. We are stewards of the money that passes through our hands and are accountable to God for it.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As the Preacher in Ecclesiastes often said, "This is also vanity," in his many observations of things done under the sun so we see also vanity exemplified in our lesson. Paul was glad to spend and to be spent, but it seemed that the more he loved, the less he was loved. As the old saying goes, "Some are willing to carry the load and others are willing to let them do it." But there is a God that is watching and weighing

everything. Oh, how the true saints who seek to be humble, meek, and patient in spirit, have to suffer at the hands of those who never seem to realize the anguish that they cause. It seems rather strange that Paul would have to write, as he did in our lesson, to people who are supposed to be Christians. But so it is. As one brother minister put it, "That is just how much devil there is in the world." This brother has also passed from this life, weary and worn from the burden that he carried for the welfare of men and women's souls. Another servant of God suffered much from those who did not appreciate him while living. And it was said that those very people came and wept over his casket. This is vanity and an evil disease. How diligent should we be to appreciate and esteem the love and labour of those who seek our eternal good. How careful we should be with words of criticism that can be so easily said behind one another's backs! There is someone listening! Should we not rather give the roses while our brethren yet live, and comfort them with some words fitly spoken? Let us ask ourselves the question: "Am I part of the problem or part of the solution?" "Do I seek for peace and pursue it with my brother and my fellow man?" Just think how much Paul suffered for the gospel and remember that most of his suffering was from the hand of those whom he sought to be a blessing to. Let us take heed that we do not fall into this number. —Leslie Busbee

GOD IS DIFFERENT

Men love position;
God loves self-denial.
Men love display;
God loves meekness.
Men love revenge;
God loves forgiveness.
Men love to command;
God loves to serve.
Men love to out-wit and conceal;
God loves to make plain.

What we give, He takes;
What He takes, He cleanses;
What He cleanses, He fills;
And what He fills, He uses.

—Sel.

Dec. 21, 1975

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR IS BORN

Isa. 7:14; II:1-2; Psa. 89:27,29; Micah 5:2;

Luke 2:4,7-14

Isa. 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isa. 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Psa. 89:27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

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.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

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.

Memory Verse: A light (Jesus) to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. Luke 2:32.

Central Thought: Jesus came just as the prophets prophesied that He would come. He will come again as our judge.

Word Definitions: Swaddling clothes were formerly the long, narrow bands of cloth wrapped around a new-born baby. Immanuel means, "The strong God with us," or "God with us."

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have used some of the words of the prophets who prophesied of the coming of Jesus and even told where He was to be born. We read about the wise men asking where the new king was born, whose star they saw. The scribes and chief priests of that day said that it was written by the prophet that He was to be born in Bethlehem. They had read it in Micah, which is a part of our lesson today. Oh, the Bible is a wonderful book and we need to regard it as such. We need to search its pages and measure our life by it. We will be judged by what is written in it on that great judgment day.

We read that Jesus was to come from the "stem of Jesse". Jesse was the father of David. "Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." Acts 13:23. So Jesus was born to Mary, the virgin, who was a descendent of David. —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the miracle in the birth of Jesus Christ? 2. Did the prophecy of the old prophets come true and will the Bible continue to be fulfilled? 3. How will Christ's seed endure forever? (Read Gal. 3:16,29). 4. How was Christ from the stem of Jesse? 5. What kind of men do you think the shepherds were? 6. What joy do we receive from the knowledge of Christ' birth?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a glorious thought that God would condescend to let His Son take upon Him the human body and live among men on this earth! The union of the divine and the human flesh is termed a sign or miracle. Jesus had great power. The Revelator rejoiced when he saw that Jesus was able to "open

and to read the book . . . and to loose the seals." "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book." Rev. 5:2-5. Jesus brought salvation to mankind. But many, in His day, were not ready or willing to accept Him. They were so bogged down in sacrifices, rites and ceremonies that they were not in a condition to receive Him. Thank God, there were a few who dimly had a vision of the coming of Christ Jesus, who would be the perfect sacrifice. They were looking for Him. The shepherds, no doubt, were looking and waiting for His coming. They were the ones to whom the angels could break the glad news. They believed the message and went to worship the Saviour. There were others who were ready to accept Him. Anna, the prophetess in the temple, and Simon were ready to accept Jesus. Simon said, "Let thy servant depart in peace, . . . mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Today, many are so busy in the cares of this life and are being carried down the stream of time so fast by the tide of worldly pleasure that they do not see the love of God, or the Saviour who died for their sins. Their life will end and they will not have seen the salvation of the Lord. Oh, how sad!

We who have tasted and found that the Lord is good rejoice today that the Saviour was born. Without a birth there could have been no death and resurrection. Through Christ we can find peace to our souls and a life beyond the grave, in heaven. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus, the Saviour of men, was born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, and came forth from Nazareth of Galilee. Each one of these areas of his earthly dwelling was mentioned aforetime in holy prophecy. And for each one of these places, there was involved great reproach and peril. Thus the Saviour springs as a root out of dry ground, as was prophesied. Mary was great with child when they made the long, difficult trip to Bethlehem. She also found no convenient place to bring her first born child unto, but had to be content to lay his sweet little head in a manger. Here was reproach and dishonor, but it was to this place the lowly shepherds were directed by the angel who was sent from God to herald the glad news of the Saviour, which was Christ the Lord. Doubtless, Satan was on hand to present his discouraging thoughts ere the shepherds came with rejoicing to find them. But Mary had much to ponder about in her heart.

Warned by the angel to flee to Egypt, in order to escape the sword of Herod, the holy family went into exile. After a sojourn in that far off land where Israel had at one time been evilly treated, Joseph was called of God out of Egypt, and returned to Israel where he followed the Lord's directions and journeyed on north of Jerusalem and settled in Galilee. Here was reproach and dishonor, for that area of the country was thickly populated by many who were heathen and in darkness concerning the ways of the Lord. But the light shone in that dark place as God desires it to shine in this world today. "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world" said Paul to the Phillipians. Many times the Lord leads his children into places such as this—places the flesh wouldn't choose. But this is only an opportunity for God to show his works in us, and it is for us to be faithful to him and let our light shine.

THE GREAT GIFT

The first great Gift to man
Was hung upon a Tree.
It was not by a fireside,
Where only those could see
Who near of kin or friendship were,
And gifts exchanged would be;
But out upon a mountainside
For all the world to see.

He gave His all, His life, His blood,
That men redeemed might be.
Then what can man give in exchange
For love so boundless, free?
The debt of sin, He paid it all,
Nought in ourselves have we.
Nothing to bring unto our KING,
MAKER, REDEEMER, He.

Men of every race, and clime
Have come and looked, and lived
And cried out for forgiveness
And had their souls made free.
This glorious Gift of peace
That floods one's life with joy,
'Tis God's greatest Gift to man,
And was hung, for you and me. —Sel.

Dec. 28, 1975

PROVING OURSELVES LEST WE BE REPROBATES

II Cor. 13:1-14

II Cor. 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

2 I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all others, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

6 But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection.

10 Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

Memory Verse: Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. . . 2 Cor. 13:5a

Central Thought: We can know if we have passed from "death to life." We need not be reprobates.

Word Definition: **Reprobate** means "*depraved; unprincipled; rejected by God; a depraved, corrupt*"
(50)

person.” Examine means “to look at or into critically or methodically to find out the facts; investigate; inspect; to test.” —Web. Dic.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first verse of our lesson is a little difficult to understand in connection with the second one. Clarke’s Commentary explains it thus: “The first coming of the apostle to Corinth, was when he personally visited them and there founded the Christian church. By his second coming we are to understand his first epistle to them: and, by his being now ready to come to them the third time, we are to understand this second epistle, which he was going to send them. These were the two witnesses, and the apostle the third, which he gave to the Corinthians concerning the truth of his own ministry, or the falsity of the ministry of the pretended apostle.”

The proof of Christ in them was that, through the gospel that Paul preached, they were converted. God had given the Apostle Paul power with God and the Corinthians recognized it. Though it appeared to be weakness for Christ to be crucified, yet through his own weakness he now lives by the power of God and all things are subject to Him.

“All saints” referred to the Christians at Macedonia or Philippi from which he wrote. “In the primitive church, a saint and a Christian were the same thing; for the Christian religion calls everyone to be holy.” —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. How would the Corinthians being saved through the preaching of Paul prove that Christ was mighty in Paul? 2. Discuss the power and weakness of Christ. 3. How can we examine and prove ourselves to see if we are reprobates or not? 4. Are we to examine others? 5. Even though some called Paul a reprobate, how did he want them to live? 6. What were Paul’s final instructions to the Corinthians?

ADULTS’ AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S COMMENTS

Examine yourself, our lesson tells us. It didn’t say for us to examine someone else. How often that is the case and we leave the examining of ourself to go. Not only are we to examine ourself, but we are to prove ourself. Watch how you act in times of trouble or distress. How do you act when

others talk about you or cast your name out as evil? Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and told them that they were careful to pay tithes of mint etc., but that they had omitted the "weightier matters of the law," which were "judgment, mercy, and faith." Matt. 23:23. They were careful to pick mint and be sure that they gave the tenth sprig, but they were not careful to "judge righteous judgment." John 7:24. Some say that the Bible says, "by their fruits ye shall know them." This is true, but many do not judge "righteous judgment" when they inspect another person. We need to be careful about being fruit inspectors. We need to see that we have mercy and faith. We need to do as our lesson says for us to do—"examine ourselves." Many judge from the appearance, and that is not righteous judgment.

We can know if we are the Lord's. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we have passed from death to life. (Read Rom. 8:14-17) If Christ dwells in us, we are not reprobates, but have the power of Christ working within us. We can't mix the worldly spirit with the Spirit of Christ. We must reject worldiness and cling to the true spirit of Christ to be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. We can't mix truth with error. We are under the influence of the spirit of Satan or the Spirit of the Lord. Praise God! We can know if we are the Lord's and if we measure our lives to the Word of God, we belong to Him. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul spoke in Romans 1:28 about those who did not like to retain God in their knowledge and how that, for this cause, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient. A reprobate mind is a mind that is void of true and righteous judgment. A reprobate mind will allow a person to do and say things which are not convenient, that is, things that are not becoming or fitting or proper. It is very evident according to the holy scriptures that God has and will give people over to a reprobate mind. In Acts 7:42, Stephen told how that God turned and gave the house of Israel up to worship the host of heaven, when they rebelled against his servant, Moses. Paul, in II Thess. 2:11, tells about those who do not receive a love for the truth that they might be saved, and how God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie and be damned. These are serious thoughts. A reprobate mind thinks and feels that it is right. It is unconscious of its true condition. The individual's

eyes have been made blind and his heart has been hardened. The Bible warns us about these things. How careful and prayerful we ought to be in everything. The atmosphere of the realm of man is charged and peopled with evil, seducing and deceiving spirits. They fly about like vultures ready to light in and devour souls who reject the light and knowledge of God. There is but one way to escape and survive this awful peril that has come with these last days, and that darkens around us. Keep humble and draw close to God. Keep a watch against the inroads of Satan through the lusts of the flesh. It is people who have pleasure in unrighteousness, who pet and harbor sin and wrong, who will not depart from evil and do good, that fall prey to the deceptions of the devil. Rejecting the truth and not walking in the light will condition us for a reprobate mind. May we take diligent heed. —Leslie Busbee

MARY SLESSOR OF CALABAR

From early girlhood Mary Slessor of Scotland had dreamed of being a missionary to Africa. During her early life she helped her widowed mother support the family, but while toiling in the mills, she planned for the day when she would carry the Gospel to the lost in West Africa.

The time came when she exchanged the cold grey skies of her native land for the warm tropical breezes of Africa and she began to learn of the awful conditions of the heathen—their sin and ignorance, their superstition and degradation.

She knew the Gospel was the only power on earth to turn them from their degrading practices—and she made up her mind to do all in her power to help them.

There was one custom that grieved her—and that was against twins born in the home. Twins were not allowed to live, but were stuffed into containers and thrown into the bush to be eaten by wild beasts. The mother was also driven into the wilds and left to starve or to be eaten by wild animals because her body was supposed to be inhabited by evil spirits.

Devotion To Christ

Purity was unknown among them in those days and only the love of God in her heart could cause a girl, who had been brought up as had Mary Slessor, to live under such conditions.

But Mary did it for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the souls He had died to redeem, and so great was her devotion to Christ and to the people that she soon won the hearts of all and became almost supreme among them.

Her fame spread from tribe to tribe and from chief to chief, and far back into the jungles, and they sent her invitation after invitation to come and bring them the Gospel.

The life dream of Mary Slessor seemed to be realized when she at last landed among the people of a very needy tribe.

There she began in the same tender way giving them the Gospel and sacrificing her every comfort for their welfare. She won the hearts of these people and gained such power over them that they soon learned not to resist her wishes.

Many times when war seemed inevitable between tribes, and their wild passions ran high, she would throw her life into the situation and the trouble would be averted.

She did not attempt to save herself, but even when chiefs were heavily drinking and very dangerous, she did not hesitate to appeal to them in the interest of the people, and she nearly always won.

The tribe where she worked was especially cruel and was constantly fighting among themselves and with other tribes. They had practiced every horrible custom imaginable. Every man carried a defense day and night.

There are no words that can describe the depths to which these people had fallen in their social and moral customs. From the standpoint of men, they were beyond hope. But Mary Slessor did not depend upon human resources.

"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.

She knew the Gospel was the power of God—and the only power in the universe that could change the hearts of these people. It did change thousands of them from the cruel and benighted people that they were into new creations in Christ.

"Therefore 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

In fact, Mary Slessor had not been long among this tribe until she began to see changes for the good among them. Many of them accepted the Gospel and became wonderful Christians, upright, moral, clean citizens of their community, and thousands of others, moved by their example, left off their evil practices.

Mary Slessor's chief reliance was prayer. She said she did not believe there was anything that prayer could not

do. She had resorted to it on a thousand occasions, and it had never failed.

Yielded, In Every Fiber Of Her Being

She was powerful in prayer because she was yielded to God in every fiber of her being. Prayer had many times restrained drunken chiefs from their cruel purposes and kept them from those evil practices that they had long followed. It had done away with the wicked practice of twin and wife destruction.

She knew, in a way that only a few have known, that prayer is the greatest power that God has put into the hands of His people for service!

She often said that prayer is harder than work, but that it lies in the way of every advance in God's kingdom.

"I have no idea how or why God carried me over so many hard places and made these people subject to me, except it was in answer to the prayers of those in the homeland for me. It is all beyond my comprehension. The only way I can explain it is that I have been prayed for more than most."

That We May Learn The Meaning Of Sacrifice And Service

To Mary Slessor, Christ was real and even more real than any person. She said, "When I am out in the bush, I have no one to talk to but Him, and so I just talk to Him."

Yes, she talked to Him and He listened to her, because there was nothing in her life that she had not given up for Him.

She knew that He had given up all for her and why should she not give all to Him, such a wonderful and dear Saviour and Friend?

Thread Of Her Being

She had heard from childhood God's call to go, and she had obeyed with every thread of her being. There was nothing that she kept back from Him, and how small do the meager sacrifices of the average one of us seem when compared to those she made for Christ!

We are of the opinion that God gives us such characters as Mary Slessor that we may learn the meaning of sacrifice and service. There was no sacrifice that she was not willing to make for the Lord Jesus Christ who had saved her from the power of sin, and made her a member of His heavenly kingdom.

Instant In Service

There was no service too menial for her to perform. Her labor for those around her was incessant. She had rescued one of the twins sacrificed in the bush, brought it to her home,

and cared for it as tenderly as she would have cared for her own child.

She had in her home a number of these rescued children and she served and trained them as carefully as she would have cared for her own. She did as much manual labor as any man, always seeing the necessity of leading the natives in work, for without, they were always in favor of putting the work off until 'tomorrow' and we know tomorrow never comes. —Sel.

