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Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 10, No. 2
April, May, June
1978

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 10

April, May, June, 1978

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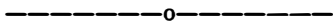
Theme for Second Quarter, 1978



In this quarter we will begin the study of Apostle Paul's life, and continue in the subsequent quarters until we finish most of his works. The lesson we need to learn from his life is that each person needs a like experience of deliverance from sin in their hearts. In the day that Paul lived there were many who were very zealous for the law of Moses; we find that he had a glorious experience when he met Christ, which was apart from the law, on the way to Damascus. Through this experience he was able to help those who likewise needed this experience. With firmness, Paul met the challenge of the Judaizing teachers who would have brought the Gentiles under the Mosaic yoke. In this and other situations, Paul's leadership in the church was wise, aggressive, and heroic.

No doubt the Apostle Paul has been the most influential man that has ever lived, aside from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The influence of his writings has been great down through the centuries. As we study his life, we will feel the influence of his sweet, gentle spirit, yet a firmness against sin and evil with a holy zeal that makes sin look exceedingly sinful. His boldness in the face of adversity causes us to see the need of a complete surrender to God and a dying out to self. He knew where he was going and what his calling was in this life and he accomplished his goal.

—Sis. Marie Miles



April 2, 1978

PAUL'S BACKGROUND

Acts 22:3 (And Paul said): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

25b Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

Gal. 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jew's religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Phil. 3:4b If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Acts 23:1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

Acts 26:9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

I Tim. 1:12 And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Memory Verse: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. I Timothy 1:15.

Central Thought: Paul was born and reared as a Jew and strictly taught after the religion of the law of Moses and the nation of Israel. When, as a young man, he began to hear of the teachings of Christ, he was persuaded that such were error and felt that it was his God-given duty to do all he could to stamp them out.

Word Definitions: *Free born:* The word *free* is not in the original text, but was supplied by the translators. It is implied, however, that Paul was born a free Roman citizen, which would mean that one of his parents was a Roman citizen. Yet he was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. One of his parents was a Roman and one was a Jew. *Stock of Israel:* kindred or nation of Israel. *Pharisee:* This word come from a Hebrew word which means "to separate." The Pharisees were a group

of people who were strictly religious and held themselves aloof from others. They were a Jewish sect who had great zeal for the literal keeping of the law of Moses, but possessed no spiritual vision whatever. *Blasphemer*: One who talks injuriously against God or His people. *Zeal*: From the Greek word *zeo* or *zelos* which means "heat." It is a warm and ardent feeling for or against anything.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From these Scriptures we can get a fair glimpse of what made Paul the sort of man he was when he emerged into view as a persecutor of the Church of God. It is a very important fact to realize that the law system coming from the Precepts handed down to Moses from God on Mt. Sinai, along with the system of worship and the traditions that had developed through the years, was not the ideal set-up God was desiring to have with His creation. A good understanding of the law makes us to realize that it was but a shadow and a "tutor" to bring us to the New Testament plan of salvation. The general run of the Jews failed to see this, Paul included. That was the reason for his persecuting the followers of Jesus Christ. It is to be understood that Paul sincerely and honestly believed that he was doing right. He believed that He was pleasing God, but he was in error as he found out later. God beheld his zeal for the law and for what he believed was right and had respect to what He saw in this man. If Paul had been indifferent and unconcerned, it is doubtful that he would ever have been saved. This is a lesson for us today. Many are not saved because they are dull and indifferent. They are scornful and critical of religion. With Paul it was different. It was zeal for God and a desire to please God that prompted his persecuting of the saints. For this cause God had great mercy and made special moves to awaken him and show him the truth.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Paul so strictly taught as a young man?
2. Did he accept such teachings?
3. Of what two nationalities was Paul?
4. What kind of trust did he call that which he had in his experience under the law?
5. In all his persecutions against the church, why did he obtain mercy?

6. Why does not God seek for souls today like He did with Paul?
7. What was His purpose in such a vivid and spectacular revelation to Paul as took place on the Damascus road?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." I Tim. 1:16. In viewing the past and all of God's dealings with him, Paul was persuaded that what had taken place in his own heart concerning the experience that he had gained with Christ was ordered of God for a pattern or example to be looked upon by all who would hereafter believe on Christ. Surely to us today who read and study the life of Paul it is a great blessing and testimony of the reality of the grace of God. When we consider how opposed and indignant Paul was to the doctrine and disciples of Jesus Christ, and then how quickly and thoroughly he was converted to that way which he had so opposed; when we consider this, it brings great certainty and assurance to our hearts. God had special reason for dealing with Paul as He did. He saw in Paul an honest and sincere heart. He saw that that man really wanted to please Him. Oh, the ignorance that Paul was in! Oh, the thoughts that he had that were contrary to Christ! Surely it is a great testimony to hear of a man like that becoming a follower of Christ. Look upon this and consider it well. No doubt Paul did much rejoicing every time he thought and considered the great change that had taken place in his heart and life. How dark the past looked when he saw it all in the light of the glory of Jesus Christ! He saw that all of his past achievements and gain were but for the flesh. They were to perish. His prominent place among the Jews and all the fame he had with the people were to be consumed before the blazing of the countenance of Christ. How about us today? Are we laboring and toiling for things that will be consumed before the awful face of the Lord? Surely we need to have a reverent and careful attitude toward ourselves. Let us not be conceited and self-assured. We are human, and the possibility of our being mistaken and deceived is very high indeed. Paul is an example not only of the greatness of salvation, but also he is a clear testimony of how greatly and sincerely a person can be deceived. As we consider the many creeds of men today that are going under the garb of religion and the profession of

Christ, our hearts are overwhelmed. How easy it is to be deceived! But God weighs the spirits. He weighed Paul's spirit and saw that divine intervention would pay off for His glory. In Paul's case it surely did. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul, or Saul, was one who in his pre-Christian life was definitely opposed to the name of Jesus and to all who bore it. Yet Paul distinctly claimed that at that time he was as truly conscientious as he had been since his conversion. He imagined, ignorantly of course (I Tim. 1:13), that in so opposing, hindering, persecuting, and destroying Christians, he was actually doing God a service. He did not avow that, though acting, as he believed, from conscientious motives, he was thereby free from guilt; otherwise he could not have written, "but I obtained mercy." Paul had by this time arrived at the perception of this fundamental principle in morals, that while man is responsible for acting in accordance with conscience, he is **no less accountable** for the education and enlightenment of his conscience. This is a thought that we must remember. We often hear people say that so and so, "doesn't hurt my conscience." It is only conscience enlightened by the Word of God which is an absolutely safe guide for the Christian. Some can give their lives for a wrong cause. They have allowed themselves to become deceived. Yet, they are not excused because they have the Word of God and access to the direction of the Holy Spirit by getting their hearts, minds, and life in contact with God through carefully obeying God's Word.

It has been explained the way a person can be ever so sincere and yet be deceived by an example of a man crossing a creek at night. The shadow of a tree lying across the creek caused the man to sincerely think it was a log. He stepped upon the supposed log which was a shadow and fell into the creek. Sincerity in letting God's Word work in the life, is the only thing that will count or bring us into the right path.

Paul concluded in obeying his conscience that he ought to carry out the Christians from Jerusalem and Judea and, if possible, they should be banished from the face of the world. With a furious passion he adopted every method he could to carry out his thought and desire. Being a member of the Sanhedrin he had power and he used it. But all of this was from a wrong motive and an unenlightened conscience. We need to take heed. —M. Miles

ROBERT KUHNS GETS LIFE

—As A Free Gift! "For the wages of sin is death; but the Gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23.

"I was born in Peoria, Illinois. My father died when I was six or seven years of age. I have had two stepfathers since my real father passed away. My first stepfather was not good to me. He beat me with boards, belt buckles, his fists, or anything that was handy. My second stepfather was somewhat different. He was not very active and didn't want to play baseball or do anything with me. He would always argue with me when I asked him to do something.

"The first time I ever got into trouble was in 1963, only two months after I came to California. I am ashamed to say it, but my police record shows 18 separate crimes from 1963 to 1968, taking me to a boy's camp, Chino, Tracy, and Y.T.S. in Ontario, California. I started using drugs in 1965. I started with codeine. I have tried methedrine, marijuana, heroin, L.S.D., S.T.P., and many different pills. I got hooked on Methedrine (speed) and was only able to stop after four horrible and painful months. I used narcotics to escape from the world around me. It was also a sort of rebellion against society. I have spent hundreds of dollars on dope. I am very sorry that I ever touched it. It makes me sick to think of all the terrible things I have done because of it.

"In February, 1968, I killed a man during a robbery, and am now awaiting trial on a murder charge and two counts of robbery. God in His great mercy sent Bro. Charles Panoyan to me in the Santa Barbara County Jail. He showed me through God's Word, my sinful condition. I turned to Christ with all my heart and asked for forgiveness of my sins. I know I have peace in my heart because God forgave me. Whatever the sentence is, life or death, I have complete victory through Christ our Lord. I have placed myself in His hands and nothing can separate me from Him.

"I am only 20 years of age, but I have lived so many of those years in sin. If only young people could realize that 'The wages of sin is death.' I would like to warn young people to stay away from liquor and to take Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. Again, I thank God for sending Bro. Charles to me when He did, or the next 20 years might have been lived in sin. He showed me the right way. He is the only person who has ever been able to get through to me. I

pray God will let me live and help all the young people who are on the wrong road. But I am not afraid to die, for Jesus has given me eternal life. He has gone to prepare a home for me in Heaven. It all sounds so wonderful, I wish I were there now."

—Robert Kuhns

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."
Isaiah 1:18.

"When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

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April 9, 1978

SAUL CONSENTING

Acts 7:50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

Memory Verse: But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Luke 12:5.

Central Thought: The stones cast by the world against Christ's witnesses are changed into the seed of new life for the Church of God, and into jewels in the crowns of the glorified martyrs, symbolically speaking.

Word Definitions: "*Tabernacle* should be 'habitation or permanent abode, like 'house' in verse 47." The *prophet* referred to is Isaiah. "By the disposition of the angels" is better rendered "as it was ordained by angels," or "as ordinances of angels." Read Gal. 3:19 and Heb. 2:2. *Gnashed* would mean that they "snapped their teeth against him." *Cut to the heart* describes a keener pang than "pricked" in verse of Acts 2:37. *Make havoc* denotes a continuous action or kept on laying waste. *Consenting* means "to agree; give permission or approval."

LESSON BACKGROUND

"It is well known that the Jews in the apostolic age had frequently two names: one Hebrew, the other Greek or Roman." Saul's name was both, but later he was called Paul, which in the Latin, signifies "little," which might indicate that he was a small child. We will call Paul, Saul, until we come to chapter 13:9, where his name is changed.

We are starting in our lesson at the last part of the sermon that Stephen preached "to the 71 Jewish members of the Sanhedrin, which consisted of Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and perhaps also Gamaliel, Nicodemus, and Joseph of

Arimathea, if the last two had not by this time withdrawn." Stephen started with Abraham and spoke of the Patriarchs before Moses or the age of the promise, rehearsing Abraham's call and entrance into Canaan. He then brought out the life of Moses and the law age, also the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan under Joshua, after their wanderings in the wilderness. Stephen then brought out the age of the Prophets or, the Age of the Temple, telling the simple tale of David's proposal to find a habitation for the God of Jacob, and of Solomon's building Him a house, in which Jehovah was worshipped while outside His prophets were disobeyed and persecuted. Stephen implied that like Joseph, who was sold by his brothers for envy, whom God used as their preserver, just so Christ had been rejected by them, even sold into His enemies' hands and put to death, yet God raised Him up to be their Saviour. He also brought out how they preferred the lifeless stones of the temple instead of the true tabernacle which was Jesus Christ. Stephen ended His sermon by pointing out how they had slain the "Just One," and were murderers.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Stephen preaching to and what were some of the things that pricked the hearts of the hearers?
2. Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost." Can we be partly filled with the Holy Ghost or what conditions in our hearts causes Him to work in a greater measure in our lives?
3. What can come from the "heavens" when they are opened to us in times of trial?
4. Did Stephen die, blaming his persecutors and with unforgiveness in his heart?
5. What effect do you think Stephen's death had upon Saul?
6. What effect do our lives have upon others when we go through trials, with grace, or when we go through them murmuring and complaining?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

One of the outstanding thoughts in our lesson is that Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost." Can we be partly filled with the Holy Ghost? Oh, dear ones, we might have yielded ourselves to the Lord and His Holy Spirit be dwelling within, but there must be a continual yielding! We can grieve and hinder the Holy Spirit from working in His fullness in our

lives by not continually yielding to Him. A lack of prayer can cause us not to feel the workings of the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon our hearts and lives. The flame can burn low and it will not be a help to burn up the darts of the enemy. They can pierce our minds, take hold, and then hinder our victory. Oh, how we need to watch and pray! One Scripture which comes to my mind is, "Seek peace and pursue it." Psa. 34:14. It means a little more than just finding peace, after seeking for it, but we need to pursue it. Pursue means to chase or continue to follow after. We can lose that peace if we do not put forth an effort to continue to watch and keep that peace. We are taught "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Isa. 26:3. You see, if a person doesn't watch his thoughts, his peace can be disturbed. Therefore, we need to daily watch and keep under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, ever listening to His small gentle voice checking and leading us. We can then be kept full of the Holy Ghost. If we ignore a guest in our home he will begin to feel we do not want him. If we ignore yielding to the Holy Spirit, do not pray and live close to God, we can be assured He will feel we do not want Him and He will not be working in us as He would.

Look stedfastly into heaven and away from the problems of life and the world. No cry for mercy was heard from Stephen by his enemies. He was calmly looking to God with an absolute composure, with a resignation to die for Christ. He had an unfaltering trust in Jesus Christ. With reverent humility he knelt down and prayed a prayer of forgiveness for his enemies. The heavens opened and the glory shown through. The grace of God came through the heavens and the spirit of Stephen passed through those opened heavens. The stones that were cast upon him became a monument of truth in this life to the shame of his enemies, but became jewels in his crown of eternal life in glory, symbolically.

We must take note of who was standing by while Stephen was being stoned. Saul was consenting to his death. Oh, the seed of truth and the perfect example of the first martyr to die for Christ surely made an impact upon Saul! Yet, he disregarded it by doing even more to bring in others to be put to death; but the seed had been sown to bear fruit later in his life. We never know what seeds we are sowing by being filled with the Holy Ghost and keeping our eyes stedfastly up toward heaven as the stones of the world are cast against us in various ways. It might be that some will

be permitted to "ride over our heads" so that their hearts can be pricked by the Holy Spirit.

We notice that trials and troubles had an effect upon the church and they were scattered abroad. God knew that others needed to hear the gospel and possibly no other way would this be accomplished. Let us trust God's wisdom as well as His power.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus in one place called the leaders of Israel "blind leaders of the blind." He furthermore said to leave them alone, and that if the blind lead the blind they would both fall into the ditch. (Matthew 15:14). In teaching the multitudes that contained the general run of people in that day, Jesus spoke in parables, not for the intent of revealing the truth, but for the intent of hiding the truth. For it was in the hiding of the truth, closing it up in parables, that man would be drawn to really seek after it. To His disciples He expounded the parables explaining that to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. To the multitudes He said it was not given. He furthermore stated that the people fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which said that "by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed," etc. Matthew 13:14,15. These Scriptures should wake us up to the fact that there is dire and eminent danger of us being blind to the real truth. Just think for a moment of the many doctrines that are flooding the land and air waves. Could it be possible that all are correct and according to truth? Why, any sensible man in his right capacity of thought would have to acknowledge there is no possible way they can all be right. What then? It is very clear that there are a lot of blind people running around in the name of Christ trying to preach His gospel. Their eyes have never been opened. Such was the apostle Paul before Christ was revealed to him. John Bunyan well wrote a truth when he expressed himself in *Pilgrim's Progress*: "Christ is so hid from the apprehensions of the flesh that He cannot be savingly known unless God the Father reveals Him." The blindness of Saul of Tarsus should be a warning, a serious warning to us. How meek and lowly ought we to be! Saul felt so very sure that he was right and was vehemently endeavoring to press his claim; but he was proven wrong and was deceived. Let this be a lesson to us, and let us

not assume an attitude that will hinder the Lord from revealing Himself to our hearts.

—L. Busbee

April 16, 1978

SAUL TREMBLES BEFORE THE ONE HE PERSECUTES

Acts 9:1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee:

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

9:7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

Memory Verse: And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. Acts 9:6.

Central Thought: All of Paul's former pride and prestige fades to nothing before the Christ whom he encountered on the road to Damascus.

Word Definition: *Prick:* a point or center. These pricks Paul was kicking at were not literal things, but they were points of truth and reality that He was trying to disregard and do away with. The points were pricking him deeply within, but his pride and vanity urged him onward in his contrary course.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The meeting of Saul of Tarsus with Jesus Christ whom he was violently persecuting, is one of the great monuments of sacred history. God and His Son were observing Saul all the time. Adam Clarke calculates that Damascus was 130 miles N. N.E. of Jerusalem. On foot this would be several days' journey. He was nearing the end of the journey, and no doubt Damascus was in view. Paul testifies in Acts 26th chapter that the great meeting with the Master took place at midday. He had the backing and legal authority from the rulers of the Jews at Jerusalem to vindicate him in this effort. Believing that this new faith of Jesus was a threat to the influence of God's nation, he was vehemently pressed in his heart and mind to carry out his grim plans. Look how quickly the scene changes! Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor and upholder of the law meets the Master! A blinding and intense light above the brightness of the sun breaks upon him from above. He wrote to Timothy later concerning God dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto. I Tim. 6:16. The Lord no doubt waited until he was near Damascus before striking him down so he could have a place to go and also so that the saints could reach him there. Oh, the longsuffering and faithfulness of God! See Saul now led by the hand to Damascus, perhaps to the home of people he had known previously. All desire for food is taken away. Think what solemn and gripping thoughts are going through his mind. He who has been so zealous against the Christ has been awakened to the grossness of his error. He is praying and calling on the name of the Lord. Certainly a different course of life is to be taken now. He can no longer pursue the course of persecuting the saints of the Lord. Saul has become a believer in Jesus Christ!

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was Paul's mission for journeying to Damascus?
2. What credentials did he carry?

3. How were his plans changed so suddenly?
4. What is he doing during the three days without food and no sight?
5. Who was it that appeared to him on the Damascus road?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Saul was persuaded that what he needed to do most of all was to rid the land of the religion and name of Jesus Christ. He saw Christ as an imposter who had blasphemed the religion of the ancient fathers, bringing the displeasure of Almighty God upon the land. He was full of zeal for the worship of God as he saw it. He was energetic to put his zeal into action. What he failed to realize was the great condition of error and darkness that he was in as a man. There is a lesson in this for us. We should never get so sure of ourselves that we go beyond the awareness that we could be mistaken. When you see a person who is willing to fight carnally for something he upholds, it would be wise to look carefully at the cause that he is upholding. The true cause of Jesus Christ does not call for carnal strife as a mode of its promotion. There is another element involved when anyone under the garb or profession of Christianity resorts to this kind of service. History is full of the folly and error of mankind in his vain pursuits of progress and promotion. Persuasion by means of preaching, backed by the influence of the Holy Ghost, is the only weapon used by the soldiers of Jesus Christ to promote the cause of God. The gospel itself is the power of God unto salvation. It needs not the props of man. In one moment all of Saul's zeal for the law and its system of worship vanished. This shows that it was all a mistaken fancy of the mind, and a deception.

What a sad thing that so many refuse to believe the truth of the gospel! How agonistic and full of strife the heart of man can be in matters that pertain to his never dying soul! In the case of Saul of Tarsus, his ignorance in unbelief was responsible for his actions, and God saw that if he could but be enlightened to the truth, he would serve Him as well and better than he had served the law of sin. God has not promised to strike everyone down like this, but He can and will to those whose hearts are deemed worth the action. We can see that in the case of Saul the persecutor, it was worth the action. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Damascus was about one hundred and thirty miles from Jerusalem. It would take Saul several days to travel that

distance on foot. I am sure that he had time to think as he walked down the dusty road and lay upon his pallet at night. I wonder what his thoughts were. Could it be that Jesus was truly the Messiah? Was Stephen "saved" and Saul "lost"? Had Jesus really been resurrected and now truly alive? Did Stephen see him, as he said, while the stones were hitting his body? On and on the questions surely arose in those quiet hours away from the hustle and bustle of the city of Jerusalem. Maybe the angelic face of Stephen would arise before him and he just had to admire the solid faith that he saw manifested in Christ. No doubt, as he looked up at the stars and thought of the God that he was defending, maybe he wondered if He truly was pleased with him. Then he thought of the times that he wanted to do good and what did he say about that in Romans seventh chapter? "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." It might be that he hated to hurt people but yet he thought he must to defend his religion. Then we read some more of his thoughts which are, "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. . . . I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Verses 15, 19, 21, 23, 24).

Saul hit the ground a sinner but as he submitted to the will of God, through being willing to obey Him, he arose a changed man. He no longer was wretched but had been delivered from the law of sin that held him a captive. He said in Romans 7:25, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," that he had been delivered from sin. —M. Miles

ATHEISM IS BANKRUPT

*An Address Before Congress
By Representative George Christopher*

"Until recent years [1961] I had thought the days of Christian martyrdom had passed. I never expected to live to read of Christians being compelled to face death and fates that are worse than death in defense of their faith. But since Communism has raised its ugly head, we seem to be returning to the Dark Ages.

"I have followed the trials of those accused of subversive activities but I am forced to the conclusion that while neces-

sary to protect our Country from the ravages of spies, that these methods alone will never eradicate the disease. A man does not become a Communist over night. Communism in the individual is the result of wrong thinking, faulty or unwise education that probably begins in the home and the school.

"As practiced in Russia and her satellites, Communism is the most absolute dictatorship the world has ever known. It destroys not only freedom of speech, freedom of the press, but seeks to destroy the home and frankly states that it cannot live with the Christian religion. . . .

"The training I received in my early youth made me so immune to Communism by the time I was twelve years of age that all the minions of hell could not change me. On our center table at home lay a family Bible. It was there as early as I can recollect. As soon as I was old enough to understand, Mother read to me the story of creation as given by Moses in the book of Genesis.

"Later the twenty-third Psalm was read and explained to me and the Sermon on the Mount. In the middle of that old Book, there were a number of ruled pages with two angels at the top of each page forming an arch. Written in faded ink were the records of the births and deaths of ancestors I have never seen. Births, deaths, and marriages were recorded there.

"We children were told that that Book was sacred and we should open it with care and reverence, because God had given it to us as a guide to right living and right thinking and that it contained all we needed to know in order to become good men and women and good citizens of our Country.

"Before I was five years of age, I became acquainted with both birth and death. My father was a Missouri farmer and Missouri farmers raise livestock. Because my father had learned that the hog market in August was higher than in December and January, he always planned to have the baby pigs come in early February. Early February in Missouri is seldom mild. Quite often the snow as fine salt rides on a forty-mile gale and seeks every crack and crevice.

"Many times I have gone with my father to bring the baby pigs in a cloth-lined basket to be dried by the stove so they would not freeze. The lambs had to be guarded from snows and cold rains and returned to their mothers. I was taught that it was my duty to save life, also that it was a privilege to help. My mother told me it was God's way. That He had so ordered it and that anything He ordered was well.

"When I was ten years old I got my first geography. On the second page was a chart covering the full page. In the upper left-hand corner of that page was a picture of a man wearing a loin cloth. On his left stood an orangutan, next to him a horse, then an elephant, than a giraffe, and so on back and forth across that page through the entire gamut of creation until at last in the lower right-hand corner there appeared a jelly-like spot, large at both ends and small in the center. This, the chart said was an amoeba, a form of life so low that the probabilities were it had been spontaneously generated. I took this chart to my mother. It had created in my mind my first doubt.

"Mother told me not to quarrel with my teacher about it but that I did not have to believe such things. I know what it is to doubt. I know what it is to have all the darkness of a thousand nights poured into one hour. But my home training and the Book of Books has conquered those doubts and driven them away. The place to fight Communism is in the home and in the school. A philosopher has said God realized He could not be with all of the children, all of the time, so He created Christian mothers.

"I remember my first serious illness. How my mother sat at my bedside night after night; how she turned the pillow when it was hot, . . . and with hands, long ago turned to dust, soothed my pains and with that voice that I will never hear again until by Christian faith and the grace of God I meet her in a better country, told me to never mind, I would be better by and by.

"What does atheism have to offer? Atheism is the hand-maiden of Communism. Any body that would take away from people in this old world of toil and strife their Christian faith, and offer nothing in its place, is too detestable for description. A man who would seek to destroy your faith in Christ is meaner than a man who would steal a cripple's crutch or take pennies out of a blind beggar's cup. On your sick bed, what does the atheist have to offer? He says, no use to pray, let the pain stab, let the fever burn, curse it and die.

"When we reach the end of life's journey as we all soon must do; . . . and the spirit is breaking away from the body, the atheist says the Bible is a myth, there is no God.

"My friends, I am not willing to adopt such a dismal theory. I am not willing to admit that my grandfather, a million times removed, was a water moccasin . . . or my grandmother might have been a mud turtle. With all my

weakness I still claim a nobler heritage. I still maintain that I am a son of God created in His image. . . .

"How the atheist must enjoy going to the young mother and saying to her: 'The baby that has just been lowered into the grave, you will never see again, there is no resurrection.'

"I tell you, friends, the places to fight Communism and atheism are in the home, school, and church. 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' "

—The Defender

April 23, 1978

THE PERSECUTOR TURNED PREACHER

Acts 9:10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Memory Verse: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. Acts 9:16.

Central Thought: The resources of Jesus the Lord are infinitely abundant for every emergency. He can at any moment turn the wrath of man to His own praise. He is mighty to save.

Word Definitions: *Chosen* means to "pick, select, or to make choice of." *Vessel* in a scriptural sense is "one into whom something is conceived or poured."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Ananias was a disciple and leader in the church at Damascus. In Acts 22:12 Saul himself declares that he was a "devout" man.

This incident took place in the year of 35 A.D.

History tells us that the city of Damascus was indeed a beautiful place. It is said that the people who lived there believed the Garden of Eden had been located there. It is an old city and historians say it was there in the days of Abraham and was old when the pyramids were young.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the Lord tell Ananias in a vision and what did Ananias do about it?
2. Does the Lord lead us definitely and intelligently today, as He did Ananias?
3. Will brave men experience any kind of fear?
4. What was Saul's future role in life?
5. In what way did Ananias instruct Saul? Did he follow Ananias' instructions?
6. What did Saul "straightway" preach and how was it received?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Our first impression of Ananias makes us think of Samuel, who was a child, eager and ready to move at any calling. What a shock it was to Ananias when he fully understood the request of the Lord. Brave men often shrink from danger. At first it may have seemed to him like he was putting his hands into the lion's den or a wolf's lair. When the Lord explained to Ananias that Saul "prayeth" and that he was a "chosen vessel" of the Lord's, we find that without delay the courageous Ananias took the Lord at His word and was on his way. We also notice how definitely Ananias was informed.

How true, when the call comes for us to move in some unusual way that we stop and want a little more assurance from the Lord concerning His leadings. How faithful the Lord is to make us know more about what He wants us to do. God deals with us in an intelligent way. We must have faith in His leadings.

I remember how shocked I was when the Lord spoke to me about coming to Guthrie, after my mother died, to help my father here in the printing work. I was praying earnestly for the Lord to send someone else, as it was farthest from my mind that I could come, although I felt for my father when I left him and went back to California, as in tears he told me the great need so the work would not be hindered. I was willing and prayed much before asking my husband and boys about moving. When I told them, I was surprised that they were willing to come. That made me know for sure that God was leading. The Lord will give added assurance, if we need it, when He calls.

It is wonderful to be a "chosen vessel" of the King, and part of the greatest company in the world, but we notice the requirements. "I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Acts 9:16. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." II Tim. 2:12a. Are we willing to suffer to reign with Him? Only the humble will make it through to glory. No wonder Paul said, as he came down to the end of his journey in this 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." II Tim. 4:7,8. What wonderful words! But, oh, the suffering behind them! We do want to receive that "crown of life" that is laid up for us, but we must be willing to suffer for His name's sake.

Notice the way the Lord led Saul right into the blessed second work of grace God has for all believers. He was filled with the Holy Ghost. We do not have much background but I am sure that Ananias preached Saul a sermon that day and he was ready to obey. He understood that he needed power now to face the rebuff that he would receive for his changed life from the Sanhedrin and other officials. He also was taught about being baptized and right away he obeyed. What a glorious day that was for Ananias and Saul! Also there must have been great rejoicing among the saints, when they heard Saul preach about the glorious change that will take place in a soul who will fall upon his face before God and repent, accepting Jesus as his Saviour.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is worthy and interesting to note that Saul was a chosen vessel for the Lord's work, and was selected for a particular and special calling rather than others who were already saved and established in the Lord. Here the Lord called upon Ananias, who was already a believer, to go and minister to Saul and assist him in getting started in the Christian way. Ananias could have felt that he himself could have been the chosen vessel that the Lord was needing. He no doubt was very conscious that the Lord was wise in His doings, and that it would be best to obey the voice of the Lord with regard to Saul. In a tool box there are many different sizes, shapes, and kinds of tools. The mechanic needs all of them, but he is not using them all the time. He wants the tools there, being used or not, so that if the occasion comes that he needs one of them, it will be there within access and ready for use. Sometimes the lid of the box will open and the hand will reach inside and pick up the tool the mechanic is desiring. All the rest has to keep still and remain. God wants us as children of God to be this way. He wants us to "stay put," as it were, being faithful to him in prayer, devotion, and obedience until the hour when He needs us. Ananias was a good example of this. We have never heard of him before this time, and we never hear of him after this. God needed a man as an assistant at this time to contact and help Saul. He found the tool he needed in Ananias. A bushel of apples usually has the better and prettier apples on top, but the smaller apples are underneath helping to hold the bigger apples up. We should settle it forever in our minds that God is running His own business, and we are but His unprofitable servants. Whether we be a Saul or an Ananias;

whether we be a planter or a waterer, let us let God have His sweet will and way with us. —L. Busbee

SETTLING A CONTROVERSY

In one of our California Junior Colleges, a Christian young man was studiously preparing himself for his chosen career. In this small college were a number of students who disbelieved the Bible and they eagerly embraced every opportunity to ridicule the Word of God.

One of the professors in this school also took part in these discussions and sought to rob the Christian youth of his faith in God and His Word. On one occasion, after a severe tirade of abuse had been heaped upon the Bible and its defender, the professor suddenly declared: "The only way to settle this matter is for this Christian boy to write an article in defense of the Bible and its teachings, and I will choose another from the class to present the other side." The professor, of course, was careful to select one whom he thought capable of refuting any argument his opponent would advance.

The date for the contest was set. Both students set themselves to their tasks with zeal and determination. The Christian youth sought divine guidance and wisdom from above as he searched the sacred page. Likewise the unbelieving student read the Bible, perhaps more studiously than he had ever thought of doing; in fact, he found himself pouring over the Book far into the night, as he sought for evidence to prove the Bible untrue and contradictory. The more he read, the more insecure seemed his position and a very heavy burden weighed upon him.

The day of the contest finally arrived. The classroom was filled to capacity with an expectant crowd. After the usual preliminaries the unbelieving professor called on the Christian youth to take the floor and present his findings. With calm fortitude, born of humble dependence upon the God of the Bible for his help, he walked bravely to the platform and read his paper which was composed largely from actual quotations from the book itself. He made few comments because the Scriptures quoted were clear and correctly applied.

The ostentatious professor now proudly called upon his favorite student to read his paper in refutation of the preceding article. Intense silence gripped the audience as the champion of infidelity walked briskly to the front of the room. He, too, faced his professor and fellow-students with unusual calm as he said in substance: "Honored Professor and fellow-

classmates, I thought it unnecessary to prepare a paper on the issue at hand, and will therefore give you, orally, the result of my investigation. First, let me assure you, I have spent many hours searching through the Bible in a most exhaustive manner, for evidence of its untruthfulness. I sought diligently for possible contradictions, but found none. That you may know how thorough was my search, I read the New Testament through three times and the Gospel by St. John sixteen times. The more I read and studied the book the more I became convinced that it was not of human origin. So sublime and so searching were the statements of the Bible that a feeling of condemnation crept over me. I seemed to be reading a book written directly to me and for me. I became convicted, saw my sin and folly and I am now a firm believer in the Bible as the Word of God. Not only do I believe the Bible to be the Word of God, but I have accepted Jesus Christ as MY Saviour."

The reader may well imagine the electric effect of this young man's confession upon that body of students as well as upon the suave professor, who had counted so much upon the defense. The audience was thunderstruck and dumb! After a painful silence, during which the professor collected his composure, he quickly dismissed the gathering.

Friend, have you, like this young college student, read the marvelous Gospel by John sixteen or even six times? Have YOU, like this young man, discovered YOUR "sin and folly?" God's Word declares, "ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3:23. Since you and I have sinned we need a Saviour, and how wonderful to read in this same book that "Christ Jesus came into the world to SAVE SINNERS." I Tim. 1:15. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Act. 4:12.

O friend of eternal destiny, permit one who loves your soul, to warn you that death and judgment lie across your very pathway. Every tick of your faithful watch brings you nearer and nearer to eternity. How swiftly days, months, and years pass by. You may fight against these inexorable laws of nature, but God's Word declares, "there is no man that hath power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." Eccl. 8:8. O be wise and for your own sake and safety "flee from the wrath to come." Matt. 3:7. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." The Saviour graciously invites you to come and declares, "Him that cometh to me I will in no

wise cast out." John 6:37. Will YOU COME? All heaven awaits your decision and welcome. —C. Umstead

April 30, 1978

NOT CONFERRING WITH FLESH AND BLOOD

Acts 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

Gal. 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

24 And they glorified God in me.

Memory Verse: And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 16:17.

Central Thought: Immediately after Christ was revealed to Saul came a time of counsel and instruction, a period in

which he was with the disciples at Damascus, preaching in the synagogues his new-found faith in Christ, and withdrawing into nearby Arabia to be alone with God. All this was before he went up to Jerusalem to meet Peter and the other apostles. This helped to prove the point that the doctrine of Christ he now preached was of God, and not of man.

Word Definitions: The expression "*separated me from my mother's womb*" shows the attitude that Paul had of his entrance into the world. He was part of Heaven's pre-destined plan. He did not just happen to come along. He was willed of God to be here. He is now called by His grace for a holy and blessed work. *Confer:* to consult or seek counsel from. The Greek word's original meaning is "to lay up in addition to." Saul was given a definite spiritual revelation of Christ and His truth independent of the aid and counsel of the flesh. Such a revelation every soul utterly needs to succeed for Christ.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The point that we want to emphasize in our lesson today is that Saul was given a revelation from God of Christ without conferring or consulting with man. He declares in his epistle to the Galatians concerning the gospel that he preached that he received it not from man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. We cannot say enough about this as we weigh the importance of this fact. This same truth that God revealed to Paul He wills to reveal to you and me. There is such a danger of the flesh, that is, the human getting mixed up in religious matters. God wants to keep His work divine and holy. The flesh can have no part. Peter declares that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. II Pet. 1:21. John also states that the ones who received Christ and who were given power to become the sons of God were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but were born of God. John 1:12,13. This is part of what Paul's main burden and concern for the Galatian Church was. They had started out for Christ by the Spirit, but had been influenced by the flesh. That is, they had been influenced by men. Certain ones had pulled them back under the law system, which Paul condemned by the Word of God as of the flesh. Paul was able to point right back to the mode of his conversion to Christ, and point out that it was God and His Spirit that wrought the great work and not man. As we shall

see, he eventually did contact the brethren and had fellowship and association with them. But he makes it clear that their association was not the foundation of his relationship with Christ and God. While he was in the Damascus area it is evident that he took a trip into Arabia. It is not fully known how long he was there, nor what all he did, but it is generally believed that this was a separation and a time of being alone with God in prayer and study of Scripture. —L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Paul preach to the Jews at Damascus?
2. Where else did he go while he was becoming established in the truth?
3. Why did he not go right on back to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles?
4. Do you think that it is important for every individual to have a personal revelation of the truth by the Holy Spirit?
5. Is there any danger of the flesh getting in and hindering the work of God?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is surely a wonderful and blessed experience for the Spirit of God to visit the heart of man and reveal the glorious and rich truths of salvation and the kingdom of God! This is the new covenant that Jesus brought to us, wherein the Spirit of God writes His laws upon our hearts and in our minds. To hear the voice of God speaking so clearly, bringing light, inspiration, knowledge, understanding, counsel, reproof, correction, guidance, and working in and through us for His glory and the good of man is the highest and most wonderful experience one can have in this life. Such a ministry has a marked contrast from mere human or fleshly zeal or talent. Many today can sing beautifully and preach with such eloquence, and this is being mistaken for Holy Spirit anointing. Also we see emotionalism deceptively employed as a guise for the Spirit of God. This is the peril of our age. Man is so prone to want to put out his hands upon the sacred things of God. It was said of one zealous young preacher who was trying to work for God: "He is not just content to preach the message, but he has to stomp on it." We need to learn this lesson. Unless God reveals the truth to a soul, our preaching has but little chance to do that soul much good. The same God that reveals the truth to us desires the same joy to reveal it to another. He reserves that joy for Himself. He will use us to

preach and He wants His truth declared through the mouths of holy men, but the real entrance of the truth into the heart must be by the Holy Spirit. Only then can it have its proper and rightful effect. There are too many preachers of our time who are pointing people unto themselves. Books are written, sermons are printed, names and addresses are promoted and made so clear, and it all has moved the human instrument out of his rightful place. God have mercy on us in this perilous deceptive age. It would be better for one to get his Bible, get alone with God, and pray earnestly for God's guidance than to send off for literature and swallow the doctrines of men without fully weighing them by the Word of God.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

One time a brother in the Lord faced two angry men who came to beat him up. He knew they were more than a match for him. He ran out the back door as they both came in the front door. They chased him, but he evaded them. Now what would you have done if you would have faced two large men who were bigger than you? Someone said they would not have run, but another said that God gave us a mind to use and we need to use it.

Saul was faced with the angry Jews. He had been sent down to Damascus to bring the saints bound into Jerusalem. God changed him through salvation and he was now preaching Christ. What should he do? Should he face the angry mob or should he run? No doubt he tried to slip through the gates but they were daily watched. So the disciples took a basket and let him down over the wall.

We find that at times God will tell us to face danger such as Daniel did, and then at other times he may give us another route. Sometimes we need to run. Surely the Lord will make known His will in all things. In other countries many Christians have secret prayer meetings and even though they have been found and beaten, they will still meet together. We never know when it might come to our country, but the Lord tells us to pray for peace.

One more food for thought is that we need to let the Holy Spirit be our teacher. Saul clearly brings out in our lesson that he conferred not with the apostles at Jerusalem but the Holy Spirit taught him the doctrines that He wanted taught. God uses different methods in teaching us. We also read that God has placed in the body different ones, some "apostles . . .

prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. 4:11,12. We learn from the Holy Spirit and also from those by which the Lord has given gifts to teach us. They will all agree. —M. Miles

May 7, 1978

PAUL AND BARNABAS BECOME MISSIONARIES

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

12:25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul (who also is called Paul), filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Memory Verse: And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:15.

Central Thought: A church on fire for God has a missionary spirit.

Word Definitions: *Fast* means "to abstain from all or certain foods; to eat very little." Web. Dec. *Ministered* refers to the rites of Christian worship, as prayer, exhortation, and fasting. A *prophet* was one who authoritatively uttered divine communications, whereas a *teacher* was one who had the gift of teaching and explaining what the prophet uttered. I Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11.

LESSON BACKGROUND

When Saul came to Jerusalem from Damascus after being let down over the wall in a basket, the disciples at Jerusalem were all afraid of him and did not believe he was a disciple. However, Barnabas found him and brought him to the apostles, telling them of his conversion and boldness to preach in the name of Jesus at Damascus. He was then accepted by the disciples. Soon after this Paul was sent to Tarsus and not much was heard of him but we are sure that he was busy for the Lord. Later Barnabas, who had been sent to Antioch from Jerusalem, sought out Saul in Tarsus and returned with him to Antioch where they remained a whole year teaching the saints there. They then went to Jerusalem for a season and later returned to Antioch taking John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas with them.

Simeon at Antioch was called *Niger* to distinguish him from both Simon Peter and Simon the Canannite. *Lucius* of Cyrene is supposed by some to be the kinsman of Paul. *Manaen* possibly was with his mother who was a nurse of Herod the tetrarch.

Barnabas was a native of Cyprus and was a Levite. He stood high esteem in the church at Jerusalem. He had lately arrived in Antioch on a mission for the church.

Many of the saints had gone to Antioch because of the great persecutions at Jerusalem. There was a large congregation at this place. We notice there were several "prophets and teachers" at Antioch. All prophets are teachers but all teachers are not prophets. Barnabas and Saul were both. The whole church took part in the ordination of them but no doubt only the prophets and leaders laid on hands. They were not ordained for the ministry as they were already ministers but they were appointed to the special business of carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. This was a big task as it meant the laying down of their lives for Christ's sake. They surely needed the backing of the church.

Paul and Barnabas began their missionary journey. We will call Saul, Paul from this point.

"Seleucia was sixteen miles distant from Antioch." It was a seaport and a fortress and was situated on a rocky eminence. The harbor was level with the ground. They sailed from there to Cyprus, which was the native land of Barnabas. After landing at the town of Salamis on Cyprus they preached the Word of God. Then they went to the city of Paphos which was about a hundred miles on the west coast of Cyprus. It was a busy city and had the infamous rites which were celebrated to the goddess Venus.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What lesson do we learn in the fact that Barnabas helped the saints to accept Saul at Jerusalem?
2. What did the Holy Ghost make the prophets and teachers, and the church know as they fasted and prayed?
3. Where did Barnabas and Saul go and what did they do?
4. What did Paul say to the sorcerer, Elymas and what lesson do we learn from this?
5. Will others believe when they see the work of God in the hearts of men, women, and children?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We note that Paul and Barnabas already were filled with the Holy Ghost and had a calling from God to minister to the Gentiles but they needed the backing of the church, therefore, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." They were ordained by the laying on of hands. It was just a verification of what God had already done.

As they went forth they surely needed the Holy Ghost to direct them and to give them authority over all spirits, also they needed to be qualified. We find that they right away met up with the evil worship of the goddess Venus, also a sorcerer named Elymas. He "pretended to have commerce with supernatural agents." He was a deceiver. He was in the presence of the governor, who seemed to want to hear the doctrine taught by the apostles. Apostle Paul was full of the Holy Ghost and had some discernment and he said that Elymas was a child of the devil, full of all subtilty and all mischief, and an enemy of all righteousness. He practiced deceit and pretended to have supernatural powers without possessing any. Through his cunning and possibly "sleight of hand" works he caused many to look upon him with admiration and awe. Apostle Paul saw through his evil works and that he was using his influence against the work of God. In asking him the question, if he were ever going to cease his perverting, seems to imply that he had been hindering God's work after being warned of Paul to cease doing it. Now the time came for judgment to fall, yet notice the mercy in it also. He was to be blind, yet it would not be permanent. The judgment was intended to awaken him to his need of God and soften his hard heart.

Often God permits things to come to people to awaken them to their need of getting right with their Maker. How sad to see many going right on over those reproofs and rejecting the Lord. We do thank God for those who will listen to the warnings and turn to the Lord.

I know a man who is still living, although in his eighties, whose heart was awakened by the Lord taking their child. He was in his twenties, at that time, and had gone over his parents' teachings and was living a worldly life. When God in His mercy reached down and took their child, he and his wife realized that they needed to turn to the Lord. They responded to the call of God through His judgment and gave their hearts to God. This brother has preached the gospel and has been a blessing to many. I could name other such incidents. Surely the Psalmist has said that His "mercy endureth forever." He will show His mercy in various ways as long as He sees a need.

Not only did this work of judgment touch Elymas but it touched the deputy and he believed. Thus we see a two-fold work of the Lord in this place.

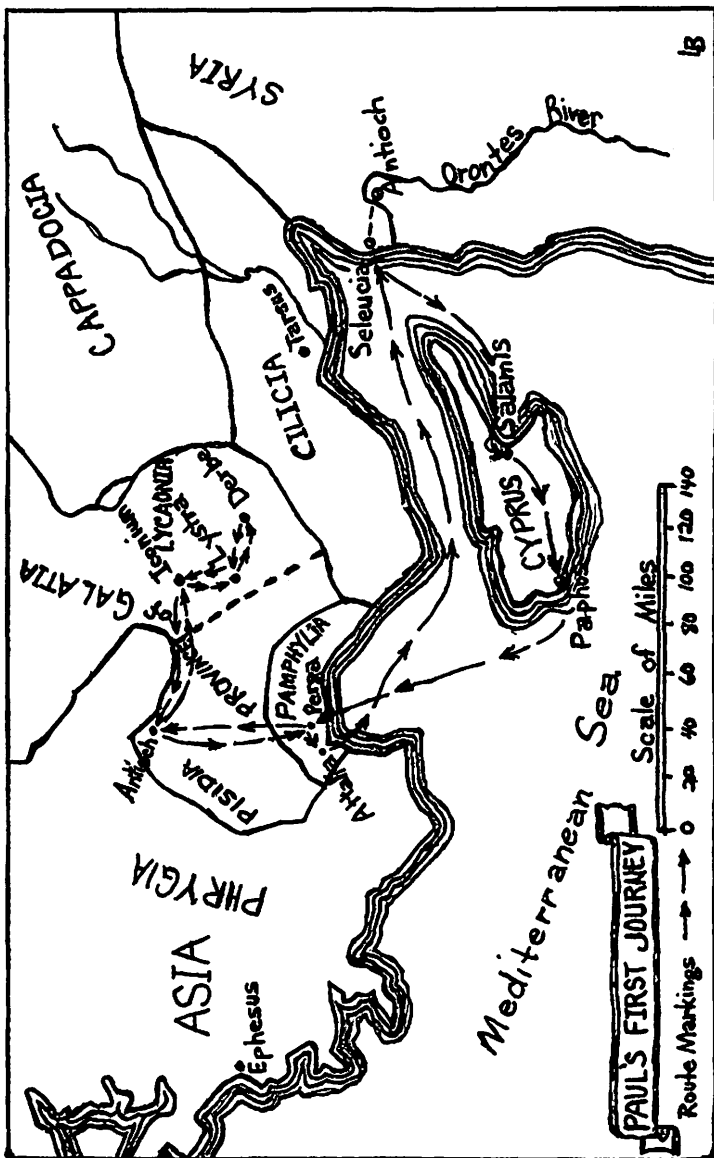
—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The setting of the sending forth of Paul and Barnabas is very important. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said. . . ." It is very important for us to minister to the Lord. It takes time to be holy. If one's time is all taken up with earthly cares and pleasures so there is no time for prayer, Bible study, deeds of kindness, and attentive listening to the Word preached, the Lord will not work with such a one. It truly takes ministering to the Lord in these acts and exercises of divine command. God wants us to assemble in His name, not just for the custom, but for the express purpose of helping one another in the Lord. The house of worship is a sacred place and should be kept in sacred honour. Not only that, but our entire being is the sacred temple of the Lord, and we should have a spirit of prayer and devotion to the Lord ascending from our hearts continually. The Lord will visit our hearts as He feels welcome and freedom to have His way. As we deny ourselves in a special outreach to Him, He will respond with spiritual blessings, joy, guidance, and deliverance. This ministering to the Lord is the key to what followed after. They could have gathered together, and organized on their own, feeling that they were commissioned to go forth. But they could not go forth on their own. This is the secret of success with God. One brother was anxious to get to a certain place where he had an appointment to preach. His wife was ill and other problems were hindering him and he was quite distraught in mind about it. Then the Lord spoke to him, and said, "If you will wait on me, I will go with you when you go to your appointment." That put things in a different light. That calmed him down quickly. Did not our Lord say, "Abide in me, and I in you, . . . for without me ye can do nothing"? John 15:4,5. Surely we need to wait on the Lord, and let Him go before us.

—L. Busbee

Note to Teachers: Have you placed your order for the next quarter? It must be in this office not later than June 1, 1978.



May 14, 1978

PAUL PREACHES AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

Acts 13:13 Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Memory Verse: I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Psalms 2:7.

Central Thought: Paul declared to the people that Jesus Christ is the Son of God according to the Old Testament prophecies, and that only through Him can we have justification from our sins.

Word Definitions: "We DECLARE unto you glad tidings." The word *declare* here is from the translation of the Greek word *euangelizo* from which our word *evangelize* is sprung. It means to preach and announce glad tidings. *Corruption* — this is referring to the decay and returning of the mortal body back to dust. *Justified* — to be rendered just or innocent.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The section of Asia (Minor) called Pisidia lay on the north shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and the city of Antioch lay inland perhaps about 100 miles. Even here in this city about 600 land miles from Jerusalem there was a synagogue devoted to the worship of the Jews and the reading of the law and the prophets. Paul and Barnabas are on a missionary journey to the Gentiles, but since the Jews should have first chance to hear the gospel, we see them now enter into the synagogue and take a seat. Here God opens the door for them to preach the gospel of Christ, and Paul is ready with a message. We have not space to record all of this message, but it would do one good to study it carefully. Here is a sample choice and model sermon. It is no doubt condensed somewhat in the record that we have of it here, but the essence of what Paul said to those people is for us to hear today. After a brief summarizing of the history of Israel from their exodus from Egypt to the days of David, Paul brought out that David, a man after God's own heart, was the progenitor of the Saviour who was Jesus Christ. He then brought out how Jesus was crucified, but that "God raised Him from the dead." The glad tidings that he was bringing to those people was that perfect salvation for their souls was offered freely in the power and virtue of Christ's death on the cross and His risen life. The risen Christ had received of God an eternal Sonship, a sonship that He freely wills to share with all who believe and trust in His name. In our next Sunday's lesson we will behold the reaction to this message that took place.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened at Perga in Pamphylia?
2. Where did they go in Antioch in Pisidia?
3. What opportunity was afforded them?
4. Who spoke to the people?
5. Could you in your own words recite the substance of the message given that day?

6. What were the glad tidings they were bringing the people there that day?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The manner in which Paul handled and applied the Scriptures from the Old Testament in the sermon that he preached to the people of Antioch in Pisidia that day in the synagogue is greatly worthy of our attention. He surely must have had a good knowledge of what was written in the Scriptures. This is very important. Every child of God needs to know what is written in the Bible. We need to acquaint ourselves with its sacred contents. It makes you feel sad when you mention a certain book of the Bible to someone, and come to find out they do not know where such a book is found, whether in the Old or New Testament. Especially this is true when you know the party has had an opportunity to know. We surely need to know just what is written in the Bible, but this is not enough. Saul not only knew what was written in the Scriptures, but the Holy Spirit had inspired and enlightened his heart to know just how to apply the Scriptures. We have many people today who have knowledge of the Biblical contents, but they greatly lack Holy Spirit enlightenment and understanding. We are aghast many times when we hear the pathetic way that Scriptures are applied. Many precious texts that the Holy Spirit has inspired within our hearts and applied to our experience now with the Lord are erroneously applied to the millennial reign or to literal Israel. Notice Paul's message to this people. He quotes from the second Psalm. He is acquainted with the Psalms and what they say. He reaches and gets hold of a particular text and quotes it word for word. There is much good in the Psalms, much spiritual good that needs to be applied to our lives today. It is one of the outstanding spiritual books of the Bible. Much of it is prophetic concerning Christ. Paul applies this text from the second Psalm to the resurrection of Christ. This is what it means. He quotes from Isaiah 55:3 and applies "the sure mercies of David" to the resurrected life of Christ. Then he quotes from Psalms 16:10 and applies it to Christ. In fact he is declaring that Christ's resurrection from the dead is the complete fulfillment of the plan of salvation. What a wonderful message went forth in that place that day!

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is a glorious message to give to others that we are serving a risen Christ. He is not dead but is alive. Stephen saw Him, just before his death, in heaven on the right hand of God. (Acts 7:55-59). When Jesus was on the cross He said to the dying thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43). We read in the twelfth chapter of II Cor. second verse to fourth about the Apostle Paul making us know that paradise is the same as the "third heaven." We know the Bible verifies the fact that dying saints depart "to be with Christ," and that they shall "live and reign with Christ." (II Cor. 5:1-8; Rev. 6:9-11). All of this is such a great comfort to us, and we love to tell others about it. Because Jesus arose we too will arise. He is the "firstfruits" of those that sleep. I Cor. 15:23. (The body sleeps in the grave.) Because he arose from the grave, our bodies too, will arise from the grave and be united with the soul that is in "paradise" with the Lord. The Apostle Paul teaches "absent from the body, present with the Lord." Since Christ is in heaven, the righteous go there at death. They are "comforted" (Luke 16:25) and "rest from their labours" (Rev. 14:13), awaiting their future and eternal reward which will be given when all the dead will hear the last trump and the "dead in Christ will rise." What a glorious day that will be!

Jesus' body did not see corruption as ours will. It was prophesied years before that this would be the fact and we know it came to pass.

Some teach that the whole person sleeps, body and soul, but the Bible does not teach that fact. It is a fact that only the body sleeps in the ground and comes forth and is reunited, a new body, to the soul and those who are saved live with God and Jesus forever in eternity, but those who are not saved are cast into hell with the devil and his angels. (I Thess. 4:13-18).

—M. Miles

THE MOST INTERESTING STORY I EVER HEARD

(From the American Civil War)

The most interesting story I ever heard was told me years ago by a man over eighty years of age. We were sitting together on a projecting rock of a mountain-side in Arkansas. He said:

"I was down in this country during the Civil War. Across on the other side yonder there were hundreds of tents where our soldiers were encamped. Measles broke out and many of

our brave lads died. The epidemic got so bad we stretched some tents farther down the valley and moved all the measles patients into these tents. This, of course, was done to protect as far as possible the health of well soldiers. I was wardmaster in charge of these tents.

"One night while I was on the ward, I passed a bunk where there was a very sick soldier who looked at me with a pathetic expression and said, 'Wardmaster, I believe I am going to die. I am not a Christian. My mother isn't a Christian. My father isn't a Christian. I never had any Christian training. I never did attend church. I did go with a boy friend to Sunday school class. The teacher seemed to be such a good woman. She read us something out of the Bible about a man—I think his name was Nicodemus. Anyway, it was about a man who went to see Jesus one night. Jesus told this man he must be born again. The teacher said all people must be born again in order to go to heaven when they die. I have never been born again, and I don't want to die like this. Won't you please get the chaplain so he can tell me how to be born again?'"

The old man hesitated for a moment. "You know, in those days I was an agnostic—at least, that is what I called myself. As a matter of fact, I wasn't anything but an old sinner. So I told the boy, 'You don't need a chaplain. Just be quiet now. Don't worry, you'll be all right.' I went on around the ward and in about an hour I came back to the boy's bed. He looked at me out of such sad, staring eyes as he said, 'Wardmaster, if you won't get me the chaplain, please get me the doctor. I am choking to death.' 'All right, my son, I'll get you the doctor,' I said. So I went off and found the doctor and he came, mopped out the throat of the lad so he could breathe just a little easier. I knew the boy was going to die. I had seen many other cases just like his. The boy was so sweet he literally climbed into my heart. He thanked me for my kindness. He thanked the doctor for being so good to him. The doctor and I left him.

"In about an hour I came back expecting to find the boy dead, but he was still struggling. He looked up out of his eyes of death and said, 'There is no use, Wardmaster. I have got to die, and I haven't been born again. Whether you believe in it or not, won't you find the chaplain and let him tell me how to be born again?' I looked at him for a moment and thought about how helpless he was in the grip of death. So I said, 'All right, my son, I will get you the chaplain.'

I walked away a few paces and then turned and went back to the boy's bedside. I said, 'My boy, I am not going to get you

the chaplain. I am going to tell you what to do myself. Now understand, I am an agnostic. I don't know whether there is any God, any heaven, or any hell, but I know one thing, my mother was a good woman. I know if there is a God my mother knew Him. If there is a heaven, I know she is there. So, I will tell you what my mother told me. You can try it and see if it works. It is in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." My mother said that I cannot save myself, but if I will believe in Jesus, He will save me.'

"I asked the boy to say the verse with me. I started and he followed with a weak, shaky voice slowly: 'For God so loved the world,' 'For God so loved the world,' 'that he gave his only begotten Son,' etc. 'Now, my boy, my mother said if a person will trust Jesus he will not perish but have everlasting life.' It works.

"I referred the lad to another verse my mother taught me, but he closed his eyes, stretched his hands across his breast and in a whisper he quoted slowly, repeating some of the words several times, 'For God so loved the world . . . that he gave his only begotten Son . . . that whosoever, whosoever . . . whosoever believeth, believeth in Him. BELIEVETH in HIM.' Then he stopped and said with a clear voice, 'Praise God, Wardmaster, it works. I believe in Him! I shall not perish! I have everlasting life! I have been born again! Wardmaster, your mother was right. Why don't you try it? Do what your mother said. It works, Wardmaster. This thing works! Wardmaster, before I go I want to ask you to do something for me. Take a kiss to my mother and tell her what you told me, and tell her that her dying son said, "It works." ' I leaned over and kissed him in the mouth and then as he drew his last breath he said, 'It works.' "

The old man, wiping tears out of his eyes and out of the wrinkles of his face, said, "The lad was right. **It does work.** Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but has now everlasting life. **It works. I know it works!**"

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23.

— B. Jones, Sr.

May 21, 1978

**THE EFFECT OF PAUL'S SERMON
AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA**

Acts 13:40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto I-co-ni-um.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Memory Verse: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one

that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
Romans 1:16

Central Thought: The gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ is welcomed and received by those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but is rejected by those who are content and do not feel their souls' need.

Word Definitions: *Religious proselytes:* These were people other than Jews who had been converted to the Jew's religion. They were religious, and the Greek word defines them as "reverent, devoted people." They no doubt were very sincere in their pursuit of truth, as it appears in our lesson. "Unworthy of everlasting life": The word *unworthy* is translated from two Greek words. The first means "no or not" which is the absolute negative adverb. The other word means "deserving or suitable." Thus it means that these people who refused to accept and believe the gospel of Christ were actually judging themselves to be unsuitable and undeserving of the gift of eternal life. "Ordained to eternal life"; *Ordain* from the Greek means "to arrange in an orderly manner, i.e. to assign or dispose to a certain position or lot." These people who believed and accepted the gospel that Paul preached had already been seeking the knowledge of the Lord, and were reaching out for truth. God had been working with them and they were ripe and ready to be harvested into the kingdom of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are looking at the effect of Paul's message to these people at Antioch in Pisidia. There are many important things to notice. The Jews were there and also converts to the Jewish faith. Other peoples, Gentiles, were there also. Note the warning Paul gives at the conclusion of his sermon. It is still a warning for us today. It is a quotation from Habakkuk 1:5. In his statement that they should turn the gospel to the Gentiles, Paul quotes from Isaiah 49:6 which is one of the rich Messianic prophecies of that prophet. Here we see the storm of persecution break forth, but not the cause of the persecution. They were filled with envy when they saw the multitudes taking an interest in the gospel Paul was preaching. It works that way even today. The greatest persecution usually comes from the religious people when they see some of their crowd getting interested in the real truth. The shaking off of the dust of their feet against the people has a very special and serious meaning. It refers back to what Jesus instructed His disciples in Luke

10:11 where He told them to say to the people of a city where they were not received: "Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye SURE of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." This was a testimony to these people who were rejecting the Word of God. It meant that their blood was upon their own heads. The gospel had been given and they had rejected it. Now those who had brought them the truth were free to go on to others without any grief or responsibility resting upon them concerning these people who had turned a deaf ear to the gospel.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the warning with which Paul concluded his sermon?
2. Who was it that besought that the same message be preached the next sabbath?
3. What did Paul and Barnabas exhort the people who followed them to do?
4. In rejecting the gospel of what did the Jews judge themselves unworthy?
5. What did the Gentiles do with the gospel?
6. How did they glorify the word of the Lord?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

To preach the gospel of Jesus Christ is a high, noble, yet serious, and responsible calling or vocation. To hear the gospel is also a serious thing. I think of the Scripture in Psalms 2:12 which concludes the entreaty given to all who hear the gospel: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." In other words, embrace and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ, and worship Him purely, for to reject Him, or even to put off and delay receiving Him will arouse His fierce anger. Jesus has suffered so greatly and paid such an enormous price for our redemption, and then for us to reject His love is a serious offense. You will notice in our lesson that these Jews were not begged and tantalized to accept the truth. When they fought against it and rebelled, they were turned aside from and the gospel was thrust toward those who were just waiting to get a chance to receive it. Oh, what a serious thing it is to turn away from the call of the Spirit. Sad to say, there are many people today who have rejected the Lord, and He no longer strives with them. If they could be awakened to their sad plight, and get down to business

and start seeking the Lord, there is hope for them that God will turn and be gracious and save them yet. The warning from Habakkuk holds true even today. "Beware." Take heed that this does not come true to you. God knew that His truth would not be widely and popularly received. It never has been and never will be. It is up to the individual. God compels none to serve Him. The gospel is to be proclaimed clearly and with the Holy Spirit anointing, and then man is given the privilege to choose for himself. That is the way it is set up. God wants people to hunger and thirst after Him, to choose from love and praise and honour in their hearts to serve Him. If they refuse, He will not grieve about it, because there are others who need Him and want Him and they need to be seen about. Samuel was grieving over Saul, but God was not. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?" I Sam. 16:1 These are serious thoughts. God desires men and women to take heed to His Word. Great blessings are willed to all who will obey, but destruction will be the lot of those who refuse.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Notice the words that Paul used when the Jews rejected the Word of God. He said that you "judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." How can a person "judge" themselves? Mostly a person judges himself by his own ideas that he has collected from what he has heard or seen. People will separate things they have read or heard from the things that they, in their own wisdom, think are right. This is a dangerous thing to do. We need more than our own wisdom or our own ideas to get us on the right road. We need to accept God's wisdom and God's plan or we will be lost. Some think they can just take the parts in the Bible that they want to live by, and leave the rest and make it into heaven, but that won't work either. When they do that, they are judging themselves. They believe that they have this right. Many times we hear the remark that, "I am not going to let anyone tell me what is right and what is wrong." In doing this they are judging themselves. This will bring condemnation to their souls and they will be lost.

Many times we have had people come among the saints who hear the whole plan of salvation, and the complete doctrines of the Word of God taught. Many times they will receive it gladly. Finally, they will hear something they do not want to measure up to. They begin to turn away. They have judged the whole thing that they have heard and judged

themselves. They do not want to accept all of God's truth. They turn away and walk no more with the saints who are rejoicing in all of the truths of God's Word. How sad!

We must use the Word of God or God's plan to form our life and walk in God's precepts or we will not make it into heaven. We cannot go in our own way but we must follow the ways that Jesus has taught us. It will bring soul peace, and it will also bring some cutting loose from the world and its follies. The joy that God gives to the soul will more than compensate for what a person has given up. —M. Miles

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May 28, 1978

PAUL PRAISED AND PAUL STONED: Part I

Acts 14:1 And it came to pass in I-co-ni-um, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

6 They were ware of it, and fled unto Lys-tra and Der-be, cities of Ly-ca-o-ni-a, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lys-tra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Ly-ca-o-ni-a, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mer-cu-ri-us, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Memory Verse: For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. II Cor. 1:5.

Central Thought: The gospel going forth meets much opposition as it encounters the darkness and ignorance of men, but brings great joy when it finds a welcome heart.

Word Definitions: *Impotent:* unable, weak, without strength. *Jupiter:* In Roman mythology Jupiter was the chief of all gods. *Mercurius:* In Roman mythology Mercurius was the messenger of the gods. *Garlands:* wreaths of flowers that adorned the oxen and animals for sacrifice. The people were so elated at the thought that the gods were come down to them that they were ready to offer sacrifice to them.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul and Barnabas are on their missionary journey together having been led forth by the Holy Spirit and commended by the Church. They are blessed in preaching the gospel and find great interest among the people, especially the Gentiles. But they are harassed everywhere by the Jews who follow up their labors by stirring up the people against them. Thus they have left Antioch and are come to Iconium. On the way you will find that Iconium is to the south and east of Antioch. Here they preach the Word of God and a great multitude both of Jews and Gentiles believe. But here come the Jews again and cause the people's minds to be evilly affected against the brethren. They are threatened to be stoned, but being aware of this they flee on a little farther south to Lystra. Here we see them praised as gods for the miracle wrought with the impotent crippled man who had never walked from birth. The Holy Spirit is leading and using them for the spread of the gospel to these cities. It is interesting to note the inconsistency of man to whom the gospel is preached. Emotionally elated at the miracle, they praise Paul and Barnabas as the gods, but shortly turn on them to stone them, being influenced by others. In all this there are a few souls who are finding the pearl of great price and are being blessed of the Lord, and the Holy Spirit is sustaining the apostles in the battles that they face.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is leading Paul and Barnabas on this journey?
2. Who is opposing them?
3. Why was the city of Iconium divided?
4. Why did the people want to stone the brethren?
5. What did the people think when they saw the miracle that God wrought with Paul?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The last verse of chapter 13 is the key that opens chapter 14. "And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost." The Lord is faithful in the midst of the tribulations that we meet in the work of the Lord, to fill us with joy and with the Holy Spirit in times of sweet refreshing. This will inspire, quicken, and empower us to preach more fervently and earnestly. They went on down to Iconium and "so spake" that a great multitude believed. Notice it said they "so spake." God was inspiring and anointing them and giving them utterance to sound forth the message of the grace of God. People were moved to faith and accepting the Lord. If this were all the picture, things might be different. Let us remember there is a Satan and he can always find people to work through to hinder and oppose the spread of the gospel and the advancement of the cause of Christ. Satan found instrumentality in the unbelieving Jews. That is the kind of people he works in today. People who are scornful and whose hearts refuse to believe the truth are being used today by the devil to withstand the work of God. Thus it makes it more treacherous and perilous. It also puts to the test and proves more gloriously those who are ordained to eternal life. One way or the other, we are going to be tried. The only real way to be tried is to be put under extreme, adverse pressure.

One brother told about hanging wallpaper for a woman who criticized and belittled his work all the time he was there. He said he got so full of criticism, but he had to stay there and bear it until the job was done. The next woman he hung wallpaper for was exactly the opposite. She praised him and bragged on his work until he got so full of praise that he could hardly stand it. But he had to stay there and take it until the job was done. That was a great lesson to him in the work of the Lord. Paul testified later that he had learned how to abound and how to be abased. We have to learn how to take both extremes in life. The cold and the heat, the hard and easy are both to be mastered. It is as the words of the poem:

*"Some will hate thee, some will love thee,
Some will praise thee, some will slight;
Cease from man, and look above thee,
Trust in God and do the right."*

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When a message is going forth and the minister is anointed, the same Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of those who hear if they will let Him. Many times people will just listen, but won't get into the Word with the minister. They are not prayed up and the Holy Spirit cannot work in them to anoint their spiritual ears so they can hear. We need to rejoice and eagerly listen and get into the Word as it goes forth.

We notice in our lesson that Paul was preaching. A man in the audience who was a cripple from birth, was "stedfastly beholding" Paul. I believe this would mean that he was letting every word sink deep into his heart. He was taking it to mean him. Surely Paul was telling how Jesus came to heal as well as to save a soul from sin. This man's faith soared and the seed of faith was planted in his heart and began to grow. No doubt he rejoiced to know that there was healing for him, and that it was in God's plan and he could have it. As his faith began to grow, and Paul looked at him, he "perceived that he had faith to be healed." Praise God! Don't you know that it did Paul's soul good to know there was one in the audience who was hearing and believing. It brought a joy to his heart and not only to him but when he said, with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet," the man's faith took hold. The healing virtue came right down from heaven into his soul, through his body, and he leaped and shouted. What a precious scene this was! It can be so today, dear ones. We will surely be blessed if we will listen to the Word and let it get right down into our hearts.

One time I was going to take a trip to So. Charleston, W. Va. and I was not well in body. I felt that unless the Lord would touch me I could not go. A group of young people were going with me to this campmeeting and I knew they would be disappointed if the trip were called off. While at the campmeeting at Neosho, Mo., a message was going forth on healing and having faith for healing. As I listened, it seemed that my faith took in healing for my body. I felt the healing virtue go through me and I was healed. I took the trip and made it fine. Oh, it pays to let the Word work in our hearts!—M. Miles

June 4, 1978

PAUL PRAISED AND PAUL STONED Part II

Acts 14:14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch.

22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

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. Philippians 1:29.

Central Thought: God wills that every creature have the gospel preached to them. Those who are engaged in this great work must be led and endued with power from the Holy Spirit to accomplish this. Paul and Barnabas on this first missionary journey exemplified God's working in this great task for the Church of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson last week closed with the priest of Jupiter in Lystra, where the apostles were preaching the gospel, bringing oxen to sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul because they took them to be Jupiter and Mercury, two of the Roman gods, come down in human flesh to them. Our lesson today begins with Paul and Barnabas in their answer to the people for this. It is precious to meditate on what they said to them there. It is a wonderful message in itself to us. These people were accustomed to worshipping the gods of the Roman mythology. They were desirous of showing their worship to those they believed to be their gods materialized before them. This showed the apostles as true men of God in that they did not accept what the people sought to give them. Think how quickly the scene changes. Here come the Jews. There is something about humankind that is easily affected by the influence of others. Many are like the man named Pliable in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He was easily influenced to go the Christian way, but when difficulty arose in the Slough of Despond, he was just as easily influenced to go back. The Jews influenced these people who had been ready to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, to turn on them now. Paul was stoned. Yes, the very treatment that he consented to have Stephen suffer has come his way now. But thank God, the scene changes again. It looks like he is dead, but the disciples will not give up. I am sure that they are not just standing around doing nothing. Doubtless many earnest prayers were going up. God heard, and Paul rose up, and was on the go again. On to Derbe, the next city, and then back over the journey that they had come, endeavouring to comfort and encourage those who had given their hearts to the Lord, to hold fast their faith. At last they returned to Antioch from whence the great journey had begun and were able to give a good report of what God had

done through them in opening the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

—L. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Paul and Barnabas react to the peoples' effort to make sacrifice to them?
2. What did Paul and Barnabas say?
3. What did the Jews do?
4. What did they do to Paul?
5. What was their message to the different churches as they retraced their journey back to Antioch?
6. What had been opened to the Gentiles?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God has not left Himself without witness to man. In so many ways He has expressed and manifested His loving-kindness and goodness. But mankind can be so blind and erring from the truth. The many vanities that men turn to are appalling. The gods of Greece and Rome were the imaginations of darkened human minds. Their descriptions and the stories related about them were appealing to the carnal mind. They find their manifestations in lewd and immoral statues and paintings, which add to their appeal to the flesh. Thus it was hard for these darkened people to accept that message of faith in the Invisible God and His Holy Son who ascended to the heavens out of human sight. The apostles had no statues, paintings, or human art to display. Their message was plain and simple, but it appealed to the heart that was hungering for righteousness. The witness and manifestations the apostles were pointing them to were real tokens of the love of a divine Heavenly Parent. The rain from heaven, the fruitful seasons, and all that can be enjoyed after a purely and righteously sort are undeniable indications of the gracious and lovely Being who created all and who watches over us in tender love.

Despite the stoning and the ridicule, the disciples are undaunted. They will continue their earnest pursuit to fulfill their course with the joy of Christ and the ministry that they had received. I do not believe Paul went down the road groaning and fretting about what had happened to him at Lystra. Neither do we need to speculate about trials and disappointments that come to us in life. We cannot change the law that God has set in motion. If we gain the crown and a home in heaven, we must suffer down here. There is no

mistake about that. Let us be as these brethren were. We may have a different kind of battle and trial to face, but it is principally the same kind of struggle. God is our help and our shield. Let us take courage and be faithful to the end.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In our lesson we notice how people can be influenced to change their minds. First they wanted to do sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas and honor them greatly, but then later they stoned Paul and drew him outside the city, thinking he were dead. The mob was probably in a sullen mood and half hostile because of having discovered their visitors were not gods but ordinary mortals. They had different thoughts about them and maybe had come to the conclusion that they were just magicians and impostors.

We also read in Luke 23:20-25 about the mob that wanted Jesus killed. Pilate told them that he found no cause of death in Him and said that he would chastise Him and then release Him. But the mob cried out that He should be crucified. Then we read how Pilate changed his mind. He “gave sentence that it should be as they required.”

In the world today we find people who are fickle. They are changeable. When they are with one person they will agree with him, and when with someone else they will agree with that person. This is a sad condition for a person to allow himself to fall into. Each person should have a base upon which to build his conclusions, a base to use as his guide. That is the reason it is needful to study God's Word and get it firmly fixed in one's mind and heart, and then, through prayer and guidance of the Holy Spirit a person can always take the same stand because he knows from what he has taken his decisions. We should not be “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” Eph. 4:14. We need to become established and settled in the doctrines of the Word of God.

—M. Miles

JAKE FINDS PEACE

Jack was big hearted, if he were a sinner. “Sure, I'll keep ye, think I'd turn anybody out in these woods at night? Not me. I've kept preachers all my life, but I confess I never kept sanctified ones before.”

The three men went up the hill to Jake's cabin, and the two ministers busied themselves writing letters while Jake

prepared the evening meal from his scant pantry. When they had gathered around the large goods-box that served as a dining-table, one of the preachers thanked God for the food and asked His blessings upon it. When the evening meal was finished, the three men sat in front of Jake's cabin until a late hour. The preachers expounded the Scriptures to poor, ignorant Jake and told him of the wonders of God's grace. Finally, when the big silvery moon stood in mid-heaven and the sound of cowbells on the hill had died away, Jake suggested that they retire for the night. By the light of the moon one of the ministers read his Bible. It so happened that he opened it at the 12th chapter of Hebrews. These words as they fell from this man's pious lips affected Jake deeply. He surely had read that same chapter himself many times, and doubtless during the twenty-seven years he had been a member of Mount Olivet Church he had heard his pastor read it. But there was one verse that sank right to the center of Jake's heart. It was the 14th: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Jake had always had a hope in his breast that he should some day see the Lord. He had had more than his allotted share of troubles in life, and deep in his heart he had a longing to go where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest."

Soon all was silent in the cabin attic, where the three men lay. The restless surgings of man's inner soul are invisible to all eyes, save God's, and silence is not always a proof that everyone is asleep. Jake lay on a bag of dried leaves, having given his own bunk to his guests. But his eyes refused sleep. The music of the katydids had lost its power to soothe his troubled breast and bring him sweet repose. His mind took a voyage over the past. Memory, according to her wonted ways, carried him again to his mother's knee. He recalled the sound of her voice as she sang, "When I shall see Him face to face and tell the story saved by grace." But that Scripture, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," took the sweetness out of that long-remembered song. Jake knew he was not holy. His heart was defiled by sin. His lips were unclean with blaspheming God's name. He remembered all the good resolutions he had made and broken the past quarter of a century. During these midnight musings he seemed to see two lily-white hands beckoning him to come somewhere, he knew not where. These hands he readily recognized as the hands of his own baby Rose, who had gone from him one day near the close of her fifth summer. Mentally he found himself again at the

bedside of his darling Rose. He saw again her ruddy cheeks glow with fever and heard the tremble of her voice as she said, "Daddy's Rose is going to heaven. Daddy come some day." Again he saw the death-glare in the sky-blue eyes when the little soul flitted away. He saw himself again as he sat and looked into the sweet and lifeless face of his darling girl, and he remembered how he resolved on that day to live in such a way as to be reunited with his child. His resolves had all been unfilled, and he saw the path of his past strewn with broken vows. In reality, God was speaking to the man's soul. Jake saw himself in his true condition, a lost sinner. His sins seemed like horrid black mountains rearing themselves eternally between him and his child. His profession of religion and his church-membership seemed to mock him rather than to comfort him.

Jake was silent. He said not a word with his lips; but how his bleeding heart did talk to God. Hot tears flowed from his sleepless eyes and dampened the dry leaves that formed his pillow. He supposed the two ministers were asleep. Their opinion of him was the same. Finally Jake was astonished to see, in the glimmering light of the moon that stole through the cracks in the clapboard roof, the two preachers slip from their bed, and kneel on the floor. His ear caught their whispering prayers that were heard in heaven. As nearly as he could hear, the prayers ran something like this: "O Lord, thou didst have a purpose in sending us through these wooded hills. May we be instrumental in bringing light and salvation to this lonely cabin. Lord, talk to the heart of this Mr. Benton, who sleeps on his bag of leaves. Bring something before his mind that will break up his heart; disturb him even in his sleep, Lord."

Jake's emotions overwhelmed him and he could keep silent no longer. He bounded from his bed, crying, "O my God, save me, save me, save me! Oh, do pray for me now! I am lost! lost! lost!"

Needless to say, the preachers were somewhat shocked, as people often are when their prayers are answered sooner than they expect. The convicted herdsman prostrated himself on the floor before the preachers and poured out bitter tears of repentance. He wept, groaned, and begged God to save him. But he seemed slow to grasp God's promises. He prayed until the morning dawned. The preachers prayed with him. Finally, just as the first grey streaks of the new day began to creep between the logs, Jake's faith was anchored in God's promises, and the glory of heaven flooded his soul. In the twinkling of

an eye he was made a new man. His joy knew no bounds. He leaped and shouted, sang and whistled, and laughed and cried, all for the joy of his new-found treasure.

When breakfast was over and the two ministers had bidden their new convert a happy farewell, Jake sat down to read his Bible, which the preachers had given him. His eyes fell upon these words, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Psa. 30:5.

—*The Deacon of Dobbinsville*

June 11, 1978

ANTIOCH CHURCH SEEKS COUNSEL

Acts 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judea [to Antioch] taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

Memory Verse: In multitude of counsellors there is safety. Proverbs 24:6b.

Central Thought: We should not go to the ungodly for counsel but to those who are in touch with God.

Word Definitions: *Council* means "mutual exchange of ideas, opinions, discussion etc.; to give and take advice; to discuss and deliberate." *Disputation* means "dispute; controversial discussion; debate." *Dissension* means "a dissenting in opinion, disagreement."

LESSON BACKGROUND

I am sure it is clearly understood that there are two Antioch's mentioned in our lessons. We find in today's lesson that Paul and Barnabas have returned from Antioch in Pisidia and back to Antioch in Syria, which is where he was sent forth by the church to the Gentiles.

A serious controversy arose in the Antioch church and the peace of the church was greatly disturbed. News had reached Judea, which was the center of the Jewish Christianity, that Paul and his missionary companions were making converts among the Gentiles. Some declared that unless the Gentiles were circumcised they could not be saved or accepted. There were some Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism but they definitely were kept on the edges of any fellowship. Even if they were circumcised and took the burden of the Pharisaic interpretation of the Mosaic code they still felt the barrier between them and the Jews. Now it seemed to those in Judea that Paul was accepting the Gentiles and brushing aside all of the Mosaic code. Some from Judea came down to Antioch boldly teaching that unless the Gentile converts were circumcised they could not be saved. As much as a person hates to face issues they have to. They cannot be dodged. Points of various views just have to be aired. Decisions have to be made. The problem of the Gentile converts to the rest of the believers had to be met. After the matter was vigorously argued to no avail, it became evident that the only way to preserve the peace of the church and settle the question was for the apostles and leaders to thresh the matter out and come

to some authoritative decision. This was done. A deputation was appointed to go to Jerusalem, where a notable conference was held.

In connection with this lesson we need to bring in a little background record which we find in Gal. 2:1-10. Briefly we find that this seemed to have happened when Paul and Barnabas were at Jerusalem. Paul had taken with him Titus, a Greek. Some controversy had arisen because Titus was not circumcised but he was not compelled to be. Paul gave no place to those who wanted to "spy out our liberty." Paul talked to the "pillars" in the church, James, Peter, and John and after some talk they gave Paul and Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship" that they should go to the Gentiles and Peter was to preach to the Jews or the circumcised. This was an incident that I am sure helped them with this question to be settled from the Antioch church.

You can read about Peter going to the Gentiles in Acts 10th chapter.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What serious question arose in the church at Antioch which was stirred up by some who came from Judea?
2. Can saints have disagreements or do all have the same knowledge of the Scriptures and of God's plan?
3. What do you think about minister's meetings and are they scriptural?
4. Had Paul faced the problem of circumcision before in Jerusalem and how did he handle it? (Gal. 2:1-10).
5. Discuss Peter's work and call which is recorded in our lesson and the thought of the Holy Ghost "purifying their hearts by faith." From what were they purified?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Some will say that we are to see "eye to eye" and that there should not be any questions arise among us. But let us think for a moment on this thought. God calls those whom He wants to preach and teach His Word and He gives them gifts according to their ability. We also know that the Word of God teaches us that we will "grow in grace and in knowledge." (II Pet. 3:18). God has various ways for us to grow. He gives us knowledge by direct dealings with our soul through the Holy Spirit and then He has another means by which to learn and that is from those who have the gifts of teaching and preaching. These gifts are exercised for the "edifying of the body of Christ: . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith,

and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4:11-13. We must remember that some are younger in the faith, some have less knowledge than others, and some are slow to perceive or understand truths. Through discussion and council there comes much good. We often hear the remark that a person should be able "to agree to disagree." This should be true with those who are slow in understanding all of God's truths. They should not have a push off, but prayerfully seek to understand, and while they are seeking, they can have love and kind feelings to that one with whom they do not agree or whose point they cannot see. The Bible lays down guide lines but many things are not just named out and we need to be willing to bring our decisions under the guide lines, even though they are not named. Ministers' meetings are very important if they are carried on in a right manner. We find in our lesson a good example of a ministers' meeting. If there had been a letting down on these questions, the Gentiles would not have received full salvation. They would have been brought under bondage. God worked in this council to take care of the problem and the work moved on for God. Today we need such counseling. Taking a firm stand for the truth and doctrines of God's Word is necessary. The Apostles, James, Peter, and John seemed to have a full understanding of the doctrines and they had weight among the brethren. God used them to hold the truths according to the direction of the Holy Spirit. May God help us to take heed to those whom God has placed to be leaders in the work of God. Yet those who are leaders are to be very careful that they are not "lords over God's heritage." It should be done with firmness and kindness. If all will keep filled with God's love it will all work out for good. —M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The rite of circumcision had been such an important issue with the Jewish nation throughout the previous centuries that it is no small wonder that it was difficult for those who had accepted Christ to relinquish it entirely. This was a great problem that had confronted the Church. It seemed to be even more serious and aroused more feelings than the issue that had arisen about Peter going unto the Gentiles like he did at the house of Cornelius in Act 10. This shows the weakness and difficulty human beings have in making changes and in receiving advanced light and knowledge. If we are not careful we can get into such a habit of doing things that we do them mechani-

cally, with little or no thought as to what their real purpose and significance are. It has been said that cows, horses, and other such animals are creatures of habit. They do what they do as a matter of course in which they have grown accustomed, and it is very difficult to get them to adjust to any change. That is true with animals. A cow does very well, generally, when the routine of milking and feeding is carried on according to schedule and usual operation. It is when you make a change in the schedule and operation that problems arise. Let us not look at the animals with contempt about this. For it is very plain that we as human beings are the worst creatures of habit there are. We get used to certain things and many times if some things happen to the contrary we get all frustrated and upset. What is the matter? We are creatures of habit. God designs for us to not be mere creatures of habit, but men and women of understanding, with the ability to learn and adjust to change and improvement according as our knowledge and understanding takes better shape and truer form. We need to be constantly advancing in the knowledge of the will of God. This is God's plan. God is going to call on you one of these days to make a move if you are truly being led of the Spirit of God. It is not going to be easily done every time. We as humans make ties with earthly things that are not easily broken. God sees fit to break these ties many times. Let us keep our eyes of faith fixed securely on Him and be willing for Him to lead us into deeper depths of wisdom and knowledge of His perfect will.

—L. Busbee

June 18, 1978

GOD USES JAMES

Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren;

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

Memory Verse: For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. Acts 15:28.

Central Thought: The leaders of the church can discuss and come to decisions on questions brought before them, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and God's Word in the Bible used as a guide.

Word Definitions: *Pollutions of idols* would mean for them to not eat meats that had been offered as a sacrifice to idols. See discussion in Rom. 14:14,15,20; I Cor. 8:9-13. *Things strangled.* This would be the flesh of animals not put to death in the ordinary way, which the Jews were not allowed to eat, because it was not properly drained of blood. Lev. 17:13,14; Deut. 12:16,23. *Blood:* The heathen often drank blood at their idolatrous feasts, and even at other times, mingled with their food. Moses declared that the Israelites were not to "eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood." Lev. 17:14b. *Fornication:* The heathen minds had become so corrupt that they seemed to have lost all sense of chastity as a virtue; and besides, in connection with their heathen festivals in honor of their deities, the most shameful licentiousness was frequently practiced.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We did not include the letter that was written to the Antioch church which was sent by Paul, Barnabas, and others but will put it in our Lesson Background.

Last Sunday we studied about the question that was brought to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to settle. This question was settled in the minds of Paul and Barnabas but they needed someone else to back them in this decision. They did not pull out from among the saints because some didn't seem to see the point in question, but stayed with them and worked for a settlement. When the council at Jerusalem came together they discussed the question from different angles. Peter told about how God had so marvelously revealed to him that the Gentiles were to be accepted and that God was no respecter of persons. He no doubt told of his trip to see Cornelius and how God blessed and the Holy Ghost was given to the Gentiles at that service. Then Paul and Barnabas related their experiences and how God so gloriously worked among the Gentiles and they were saved and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. After they had talked we see James, the Lord's brother, arise and it is said that all "held their peace." He seemed to be held in high esteem for his work's sake or for the gift that had been given him by the Holy Ghost. It seemed that he was the pastor there at Jerusalem. He referred to how God had used Peter among the Gentiles first and then he turned to the Bible and read of the prophecy in Amos 9:11; Isa. 54:1-5. After that, they wrote the following letter and sent it by Paul, Barnabas, and others to the saints at Antioch. "The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things

strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." Acts 15:23-29.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. At the council in Jerusalem Peter and Paul had told about their experiences with the Gentiles and how God had saved them from sin. At the close of Paul's talk, who arose and what attitude did the council take toward him?
2. What did James take for his basis to come to a final decision on the question of circumcision and what the Gentiles were to do?
3. What four things did the council feel were necessary for the Gentiles to keep?
4. What was written in the letter that makes us know that the Holy Spirit directed in the decision?
5. How did the Antioch church take the letter and did it bring peace?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Notice the letter that was sent states that the decision was made by those who were "assembled with one accord." Later we note that the letter states that the decisions "seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Also we want to note that when James rose to speak that he turned to the Old Bible to prove the Gentiles were to receive salvation.

When a group assembles to make a decision on a question, it is very necessary that prayer be made and that each one be filled with an anointing from the Holy Spirit. A carefulness should be prominent in each one's heart and speech. Others should be regarded as persons who have feelings and should be treated with kindness. Even if one doesn't agree with that person he can point out his error, that is, if it is an error, in a way that one can be won to the right with godly fear and kindness. Some might never be convinced, if they are not willing to come to more knowledge on the Scriptures. It takes a willingness to accept God's Word.

In the council at Jerusalem there were some who bitterly opposed the fact that the Gentile Christians were not to be circumcised. But the Holy Spirit so overruled that when Peter and Paul told how God wonderfully worked through the preaching of the gospel, the Gentiles were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, that those who opposed had to hold their peace. We find they came to one conclusion and were in "one accord."

How precious this is! Unity is what Jesus prayed for and we need to strive and do as Paul told us, to work at "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph. 4:3. This will take much "lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Eph. 4:2.

In the letter it brings out the fact that the Gentiles were given freedom from the ceremonial law of Moses but not from the moral law. It would mean that they were delivered from slavish obedience, but not from the service of self-denying love.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is a fool who chooses his way without considering counsel from wise sources. I am confident that as the work of the Lord went forth at the first, the saints and ministers did not think about circumcision so much as the burden and need of preaching the gospel to the world. But someone finally thought about it. "How can these people who have accepted Christ be saved who have never been ministered in the rite of circumcision?" That was the question that arose. Some were bold enough in their zeal for the law to assume that such could NOT be saved unless they were circumcised as they (Jews) had been. God knew that this was coming, and was working with hearts here and there to prepare them for this great advancement in knowledge of His truth. The rite of circumcision had been an important part of the Jews' religion since the day of Abraham, their progenitor. Although the major part had lost sight of the faith that Abraham had before he was circumcised, yet they held intently and stubbornly to the rite of circumcision itself. Paul brought out in Romans 4:11 that circumcision was a sign and a seal of the righteousness Abraham had before he was circumcised. Actually circumcision itself was of little value. It was the righteousness by faith that counted with God. We see some more of the change that took place from the law to grace. Literal circumcision was no longer needed. It no longer served a wholesome and vital purpose. Another circumcision was needed, and that was of the heart in the spirit. It made no difference now whether a man was circumcised or not. Is he a new creature? Does he have faith that worketh by love? Gal. 5:6, 6:15. Does he keep the commands of God? I Cor. 7:19. Thus the sacred rite of the law that the Jews very devoutly counted so vital to salvation becomes a dead ceremony with no purpose. It so faded into the background and past as far as spiritual things were concerned,

that Paul labeled it glorying in the flesh, saying that those who contend for it did so lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. Galatians 6:12,13. The cross of Christ was the end of these things. A new order, a new life, and a new and living way was opened before them. The shadows of the law had passed from view, and the substance of it all, Christ enthroned in the human heart, had burst upon their sight.

—L. Busbee

June 25, 1978

PROBLEM WITH JOHN MARK, A YOUNG MINISTER

Acts 15:33 And after they [messengers who brought the letter] had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles [at Jerusalem].

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still [at Antioch].

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Eph. 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Col. 4:10 Ar-is-tar-chus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him:)

11 And Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.

II Tim. 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

Memory Verse: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. II Tim. 2:15.

Central Thought: One's failure in Christian service may cause distrust and lack of confidence from others, but taking an humble attitude and applying one's self diligently to wisdom and understanding will restore the broken confidence and heal the relationship.

Word Definitions: *"And the contention was so sharp between them":* The Greek text renders this expression in somewhat a milder and simpler form. It says: "Therefore a sharp dispute occurred." In no way should we look upon this disagreement concerning the issue of taking Mark as having sinful roots. It is no sin to disagree. It is the reaction and the attitude taken in the heart that we must watch and be careful about. *Vocation:* The Greek word is *klesis* which means "an invitation." We have been invited to share with the glory and blessing and triumph of Christ. Let us walk worthy of this.

—L. Busbee

LESSON BACKGROUND

John Mark was the son of Barnabas's sister Mary, at whose house the Church met to pray for Peter when he was in prison. Acts 12:12. It is generally believed that he was the Mark who wrote the gospel of Mark. He lived at Jerusalem. He could have been the young man related about in Mark 14:51 who had a linen cloth wrapped about his body who was following and observing the arrest of Jesus, who, when he was laid hold of, fled naked leaving the linen cloth. At least Mark is the only one of the gospel writers who records this incident.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their mission in Jerusalem of helping the poor saints there. Mark accompanied them. Acts 12:25. We see him as an attendant to Paul and Barnabas as they embarked on their missionary journey. Acts 13:5. In the Isle of Cyprus at Paphos they ran into a false prophet who gave them trouble. Upon reaching the seaport of Perga, we see John Mark departing from them and

returning to his home in Jerusalem. Acts 13:13. This act of departing from them had its effect upon Paul. Upon embarking upon this second missionary journey where they planned to follow a similar route to the one before, Paul did not have good feelings of trust to take Mark with them. We can see why he felt this way, and he had good cause. Barnabas had tender and earnest feelings toward his nephew, and doubtless felt a desire to help him somehow. Both were steadfast in their convictions. John Mark was in the center of the whole thing. How do you think he felt? Satan doubtless was on hand to whisper many things. Yes, they separated. Luke, the writer of Acts, chose to follow Paul's journey in his account. Thus Barnabas and Mark leave the scene. From the writings of Paul in the Scriptures we have included in our lesson, we observe that no doubt Mark took the right attitude, and did not nourish hurt feelings toward Paul. No doubt Barnabas prayed with Mark and instructed him to try to hold confidence and understand why Paul felt the way he did. At any rate, Paul was able to observe in Mark after this the qualities that he longed to see. This is one of the greatest lessons in the book of Acts for us to understand, because it comes real close to home, don't you think? —L. Busbee

Barnabas is not mentioned again in Acts, but it is reported by one tradition that he preceded to Milan, and died as the bishop of its church; and by another to have spent some years in Rome and Athens. Luke continues to write about Paul and his labors in the book of Acts.

There is an Epistle of Barnabas which historians say the authenticity cannot be defended.

The commencement of this second journey with the purpose of visiting the brethren or young converts in every city on their previous missionary trip, took place about A.D. 51.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was John Mark to Barnabas?
2. What did he accompany Paul and Barnabas for on their first missionary journey?
3. What happened that made Paul feel distrustful of Mark?
4. Why did Paul not deem it fit to take Mark with them on their second journey?
5. Why was there a dispute between Paul and Barnabas?
6. Just because there is a disagreement on an issue, does that mean there is sin involved?

7. What must we guard against in such times?
8. Was this problem with John Mark finally resolved? How do you know that it was?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Young people who have a zeal and love for the Lord to work for Him, need much love and understanding from the saints and the older ministers. They possess a love and zeal that is keen, ardent, strong, and fervent. Their youthful energies are turned toward the joy, pleasure, and glory of the Christian service. But they lack experience, knowledge, and many times stability and steadfastness that older saints have acquired and developed in their experience. Thus they must be borne with and endeavored to be understood. The young saint should be aware of this situation, and not be discouraged if people fail to set them high in their confidence as they would like for them to. It takes time to build up confidence and respect in people's minds. The devil can really put pressure on a young person, when he or she meets the reverses and discouragements that come from older people's feelings about things. It is injurious, with great spiritual harm, to take offense to what others say and do about you. Many have failed the Lord right here. It is for us to humble our hearts, take a sweet and kind spirit about it all, and pray earnestly for God's help and grace in the matter. The devil can either hold us back or push us too far. It could have been that Mark's main mistake was not the returning home from Pamphylia, but it could have been that he was not spiritually prepared to embark on such a journey in the first place. This could very well be. It is better to go slow and be sure of your footing. Just because we are a relative to a preacher is no sign that we are prepared to walk by his side in the ministry. Even when young ministers do get ahead of the Lord, and problems develop, humility and the right attitude will repair any damage that is made. Let us gain valuable lessons from these things. John Mark came out with victory. He became a great blessing and fellow worker with Paul in later years. Paul wanted him near him as he neared the end of the journey of life. Praise the Lord for the way this all came out! Let us seek to be humble and God will truly exalt us in due season. —L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Many times young ministers, with all of their zeal, want to see things moving and do not use wisdom. When

they are admonished by older ministers they are tempted to feel somewhat discouraged. It is better to take a humble attitude and seek God for more wisdom. We don't know anything about John Mark's problem when he went with the older ministers, Paul and Barnabas, or why he returned home after going part way with them on their first missionary journey. It could have been from homesickness, or that the trip was too rigid, or it could have been that he thought they should move along faster and maybe had been admonished on some lines and he became discouraged in going any farther. One thing we do know; he did hold on to the Lord. Even through the problem of Paul refusing to take him, we find that he still held on to the Lord. This shows that he had a deep love for God. It paid off for him, as in later years Paul said that he was "profitable to me for the ministry." This is a good lesson for young workers. We also want to note that Paul afterwards alludes to Barnabas that he was a Christian teacher worthy of the fullest confidence of the churches. (I Cor. 9:6).

I am sixty-four years of age and have been working among God's people most of my life. I have watched many young ministers make starts, then get discouraged and give up the Lord. But I want to hasten to say that I have seen many who have endured hardships and are being used of the Lord today. One failing I have seen is, that a young minister seems to feel that he needs to get everyone straightened out and will hit hard at things that he sees with his eyes. Yes, it is true that we must preach the whole truth, but there is much needed wisdom, some experience is needed, also confidence built up before it can be effective. For instance, a young minister who has not been saved but a few years will get up and preach on sin and then make a remark such as, "you, on the back seat need to get saved." Those on the back seat will laugh and say, "It wasn't very long ago that you were here on the back seat with us." It is better to give out the Word and be careful about pointing out any one or group. Give out the Word and make it plain that it is not you speaking, but God's Word speaking. Oh, we want every young minister or worker to be encouraged and preach all of the Word. We pray that God will so anoint the vessel that only God can be seen and not the vessel. Take a humble attitude and not a boastful one. God will bless each one. We do pray that more of our young people will move out for God in the various phases of the work of God. We need song leaders, teachers, home missionaries, for such as visiting

nursing homes, bringing children to Sunday school, cleaning the chapel, handing out tracts or literature, workers in the nursing homes or printing work, helpers in campmeetings and tent meetings, money givers, prayers and testimonies in prayer meetings or at other times, missionaries to foreign lands, etc. God has a work for every sanctified child of God.

—M. Miles

