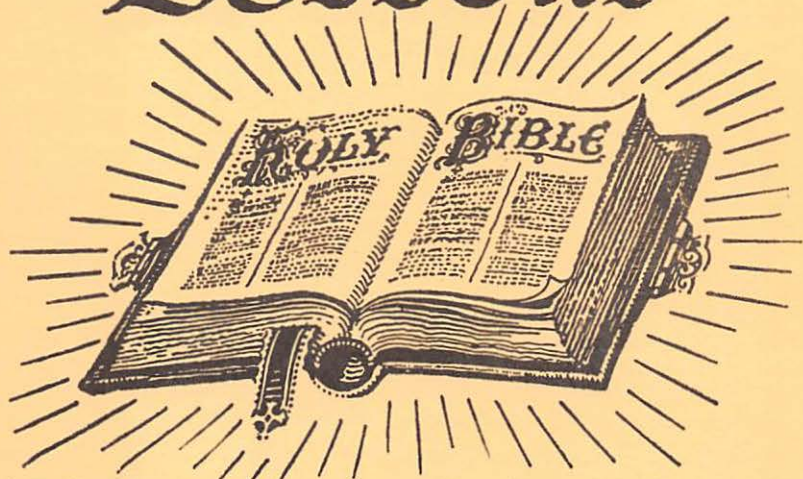


1963

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 12, No. 1
Jan., Feb., March
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 12

Jan., Feb., March, 1980

No. 1

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Theme for First Quarter

In our lessons of 1979, we established the fact that the Messiah was to be the King and a son of David. In the first book of the New Testament we read in the first chapter the genealogy of Jesus. It begins with Abraham, but the heart of the genealogical list is that Jesus is legally the descendant of David. This fact is dwarfed by the sublime proposition that Jesus has been begotten of the Holy Spirit and is to be born of a virgin—that He is in fact the Son of God. Joseph is His legal father, since Jesus was born after the marriage of Joseph and Mary.

In our lesson for this quarter we want to study the teachings of Jesus. The beginning of His ministry recorded in Matthew, while it seems very strange for a king's program, reveals inherent kingly authority over the minds and bodies of men. Jesus' preaching was mostly through parables. Some of them He explained. The parables revealed much to those who were interested in asking about them, but to those who were not interested enough to consider them seriously they meant nothing. This is the way our lessons will be as we study them. To those who are really interested in learning about Jesus and His teachings they will be a blessing. —Sis. Marie Miles

January 6, 1980

JESUS PREACHES IN GALILEE

Matt. 4:12 Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;

13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:

14 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

15 The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;

16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

19 And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

Memory Verse: And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. Matt. 4:23.

Central Thought: As we follow the record of our Lord's ministry, we see that His constant objective was to seek and to save the lost. This should be our objective as we study about His ways of working and note His great compassion for mankind.

Word Definition: *Gentiles:* "The word *Gentiles* is from *gens*, (a nation), which signifies the same. It was a traditional belief among the ancient Jews that the Messiah should begin His ministry in Galilee." *Follow me:* "Following a person in the Jewish phrase, signifies being his disciple or scholar." *Possessed with devils:* "This should be translated as 'possessed with evil spirits.'" *Synagogues:* "Synagogues, among the Jews, were probably not older than the return from the Babylonian captivity. They were erected not only in cities and towns, but in the country, especially beside rivers, that they might have water for the convenience of their frequent washings. Not less than ten persons of respectability com-

posed a synagogue, as the rabbis supposed that this number of persons, of independent property and well skilled in the law, were necessary to conduct the affairs of the place and keep up the divine worship. The chief things belonging to a synagogue were: (1) the ark or chest, made after the mode of the Ark of the Covenant, containing the Pentateuch; (2) the pulpit and desk, in the middle of the synagogue, at which the speaker stood who read or expounded the law; (3) the seats, or pews, for the men below, and the galleries above for the women; (4) the lamps to give light in the evening service, and at the Feast of the Dedication; (5) apartments for the utensils and alms-chests. The synagogue was governed by a council, or assembly, over whom was a president, called in the Gospels the ruler of the synagogue. These are sometimes called chiefs of the Jews, the rulers, the priests or elders, the governors, the overseers, or the fathers of the synagogue. Service was performed in the synagogue three times a day—morning, afternoon, and night.”—*Clarke's Commentary*.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lessons are about the teachings of Jesus. We will begin today's lesson with the preaching of Jesus in Galilee. This campaign took place several months after the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness by the devil, according to the account of John. Matthew did not give this account. John's gospel records that Jesus had gone to the scene of John's ministry, which was now at Bethabara just south of the Sea of Galilee. There He chose probably six of His disciples. At a wedding feast in Cana Jesus performed His first miracle, and at the Passover in Jerusalem He cleansed the temple, thus bringing upon Himself the bitter hatred and fury of the wicked leaders. Then followed eight months of growing evangelistic work in Jerusalem and Judea. Of its details we know only the conversation with Nicodemus and the talk with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. The latter talk probably was in December—"four months then cometh harvest" (John 4:35). When John the Baptist was arrested, Jesus appeared in Galilee to begin His great campaign there.

Matthew places the record of this Galilean campaign immediately after the record of the temptation, but he, too, states that it was begun after John the Baptist was imprisoned (Matt. 4:12).

Our lesson begins with the tragic news that John was cast into prison. It is hard to imagine the dreadful blow to the faith

and hope of John's disciples that this news brought. John's fearless condemnation of sin, in high places as well as low, had brought about his imprisonment and impending death.

Jesus leaves Nazareth and comes to Capernaum, which was a great city. It was the center of a populous section and of trade routes, and did not have the concentration of vice and corruption that filled Tiberias, the political capital. God had foretold to Isaiah where the preaching of Jesus would begin, and we find that this was fulfilled. Isaiah also looked across the centuries and saw the grand hope for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Praise the Lord! That takes us in.—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the preaching of John the Baptist as a background for the preaching of Jesus, and the impact his being put into prison had upon the people.
2. What message did Jesus have for those who "sat in darkness"?
3. What interesting spiritual angles does the figure of speech that Jesus used "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" have?
4. What does it mean to leave all for Jesus' sake today, and does God have a calling for each of us in the work of God?
5. What were the results of the preaching of Jesus?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The people indeed sat in darkness since John the Baptist had been taken from them. They sorely needed the Light of God which now shone in their midst. They had heard about it through John, but now they saw it for themselves. Jesus took up the same message, telling the people to repent. There was still an urgent need of the people's repenting, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Jesus needed helpers in His great work of teaching and preaching the gospel. Just so, Jesus needs workers today. He needs fishers. Just as Peter, James, Andrew and John gave up all to follow Jesus, God's workers must do the same today. They must put Jesus and His work first. How easy it is for a person to stay away from services when he feels a little badly. Many times a person will feel much better if he will exercise some faith and go to services. How easy it is to sit in services of the Lord and never say "Amen" to the truth, or act like the Word of God registers. Have we left all when we act in this manner? Oh, we need to forget what others will say about us,

or think about us, if we are to be "lively stones in the building" of God. Be so prayed up that some of your blessings will flow out. In a service it's the overflow from you that will bless someone else. This of course is only one thing that we can do for the Lord to be a fisher. Speaking for the Lord, spreading the good news, writing a letter of encouragement, giving out a tract, inviting someone to services, testifying for the Lord, giving of your money to help in the gospel work, taking someone to services, teaching a class, teaching your own children or brothers or sisters about the Lord, and being "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," are all included in being a fisher.

When the three heard the call, it is said they "straightway left their nets and followed him." Oh, God is calling for immediate service! Waiting makes it harder to obey a call or impression. Other things will enter in and cause your zeal to wane, or your time will be filled with other things. God is calling you now. This can be likened to jumping over the Mississippi River. At its source, where it emerges from Lake Itaska in Minnesota, one can jump across it, but in New Orleans I have marvelled at its great width.

Remember that providing food for the body is important, but giving nourishment to the soul is of supreme importance.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." This is a quote from Isaiah 9:1, 2. Why was Christ's ministry to be around Galilee? Why is it called Galilee of the Gentiles? Who were Zebulon and Nephthalim? And what was the darkness in which the people sat? Zabulon and Nephthalim were two of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the Old Testament they were called Zebulon and Naphtali. Their inheritance in the land of Canaan was up around the sea of Galilee. In the course of time, many people from other lands moved into that area. That is why it was called Galilee of the Gentiles. The darkness in which they sat and walked was spiritual darkness, ignorance, and error. There were several cities situated in that area around the sea of Galilee. Among these were three that Jesus upbraided because of their impenitent people. They

were Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Matthew 12:20-24. The Light had shined, but their darkness received it not. It was to be a witness against them in the day of judgment. How many people down the journey of life have refused to walk in the light and knowledge that was given to them. Jesus is the Light of the world, and He was giving these people light, just as He still wants to shine into our hearts today. Spiritual darkness is a terrible condition in which to be. Jesus said in Matt. 6:23 that if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! Truer words were never spoken. If what knowledge and understanding we do have is error, how great is that error wherein we are deceived. An evil eye will not allow the light of God to enter. A single or clear eye that has but one thing in view to please the Lord will allow the light and knowledge of God to shine within. Darkness is past and the true light now shineth. This is the condemnation of men. They no longer have any excuse or alibi for their sins. Although they still seek to cover their evil ways and justify their wickedness, the light and knowledge of God is sweeping away their refuge of lies and destroying their covering of falsehood. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free," said Jesus, and this will be fulfilled if we continue in His Word.

—Leslie C. Busbee

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—L. D. Pruitt, Publisher

January 13, 1980

JESUS PREACHES TO NICODEMUS

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Memory Verse: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, He cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3.

Central Thought; Spiritual life is impossible apart from a direct inspiration from God. To be born of the Spirit is to have a divine love created within that overthrows all love for sin and a sinful life.

Word Definition: *Born again* means *anew* or *reborn*. *Flesh* means our human nature considered in itself, apart from controlling spiritual power. It's our fallen humanity as it exists with its passions, feelings, etc., not governed by the divine law, and uncontrolled even by our own higher reason and conscience. *Listeth* is an obsolete word meaning *likes* or *wishes*.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, which was the supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ. (The number of Sanhedrin members is usually given as seventy-one.) Nicodemus lived in an atmosphere poisoned by the Pharisees' bitter hatred for Jesus. Nicodemus had to face peril to his eminent position and possibly even endanger his very life. He was a ruler, and came by night to shun being faced with great hostility. Rather than criticize, he is to be commended for overthrowing many obstacles to come to Jesus.

In the final months of Jesus' ministry, when the Jewish leaders in their national assembly plotted His death, Nicodemus challenged their right to condemn Him without a trial. They turned on Nicodemus with a fierce, bitter rejection of his protest. (John 7:40-52.)

In John 19:38-42, we read about Nicodemus' day of triumph when he finally threw off his timidity and secrecy, and boldly declared himself a disciple by assisting Joseph of Arimathea in burying the body of Jesus. —M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss Nicodemus and his background. Can we criticize him for his coming by night to see Jesus?
2. Being continually in the company of those who hated Jesus, what was Nicodemus' true feelings about Him, and how did he express them?
3. What does it mean to be "born-again"?
4. Why is so much jest being made today about a person's being "born again," and what is the devil's purpose in this?
5. Discuss the thirteenth verse.
6. How was Christ lifted up, and how can we lift Him up in our lives?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

"How can these things be?" This question is asked by many today. Many people try to figure it all out just as Nicodemus did, but it all has to come to us through faith. Faith in the Son of God opens the door of eternal life. "We have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16. This laying hold by faith is what brings results. Spiritual life is a direct inspiration from God. To be born of the Spirit is to have a divine love created within, overthrowing the tyranny of the present, the sensual, the sinful; being filled with heavenly hopes and aspirations; raising life above the downward, natural tendency to a life whose whole world is God, and God alone. It is a spiritual life, and is above the natural will, or the natural tendency and inclinations. Man cannot by mere efforts of his own, raise himself above the natural life. Until the flashings of the new life are felt within, he cannot know the peace that passeth understanding which will settle deep down within his soul. Oh, it is the power of the Saviour's hand that changes the inner man! The sinner heard His voice and responded to the call. The change was wrought by the power of God. God is brought near, prayer becomes inspired, and the repentant man is freed from the power of sin. His sins are blotted out as he confesses and forsakes them. The heart is light and free. It rejoices in the blessed light which streams from the throne of God. The new-born spirit of man lives in Christ, and his walk and conversation are in Him, because Christ lives in his heart. The Lord is openly confessed. His love for Jesus, who died on the cross to take his punishments, abounds. He can now lay his head on his pillow and know that all is well with his soul. What a wonderful salvation!

A born-again person must walk in all the light of God's Word. He cannot just say it in words, but the change must be evident in his life. Much today is said about being a "born-again Christian." Jest is made of this precious experience because so many profess to have the experience, but do not have the life to back it. How sad! The devil wants to throw a cloak of confusion over God's precious truths, but it's a reality in the life of those who truly have been born again.

—M. Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is interesting to note the meaning of the Greek word translated "again" in the term "born again." It is *anōthen* which means from above. In Galatians 4:26 Paul spoke of the Jerusalem which is above as being the mother of us who are of faith. This word *above* is *ano* which is the root word from which the above *anōthen* came. So it implies that to be born again is to be born from above. It also indicates that which was from the beginning. Being born again is receiving the life which is from above in the Spirit-realm of God and the Lord Jesus Christ whereto He has ascended in power and glory. Do we have that which comes from above? That which comes from above is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." James 3:17. That is the blessed New Jerusalem that John saw coming down from God out of heaven. John 21:2, 10. Think about the things that come up from the pride and strife of men. From beneath, from Satan and his captives arise the mists of confusion and strife. Job was smote with sore boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. That came up. That gave him a lot of pain and misery. Oh, the blessedness of being born from above. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore!" Psa. 133. When a soul actually experiences the birth from above, his heart becomes a fruition of the fruits of righteousness and peace. He is changed from the bondage and thralldom of sin and this present life. His conversation (citizenship, Greek) is in heaven, from which he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 3:20. He seeks those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. He sets his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. He is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is his life shall appear, then shall he also appear with him in glory. Col. 3:1-4.

—Leslie C. Busbee

January 20, 1980

JESUS PREACHES TO ZACCHAEUS

Luke 19:1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.

4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Memory Verse: But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matt. 6:33.

Central Thought: Christ demands that we give up whatever separates us from God.

Word Definition: *Sycamore tree:* probably a variety of fig, rather than the tree we know as the sycamore, as it could be readily climbed. *Publican:* Publicans were members of the class designated by this word in the New Testament who were employed as collectors of the Roman revenue. They overcharged whenever they had an opportunity. (Luke 3:13) The employment brought out the basest and most besetting vices of the Jewish character.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Just before Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the last Passover, He was carrying on a quiet ministry beyond the Jordan in

Perea. He had gone into Judea when he came to Jericho and met Zacchaeus. The healing of the blind man, Bartimaeus, and his blind companion at Jericho helped to stir the excitement in the crowd to an even greater pitch. (Matt. 20:30-34; Mark 10:46-52). Various members in the crowd viewed this journey of Jesus to Jerusalem with different emotions. The Zealots were exultant with expectation. The Pharisees were furious with hostility. The disciples were thrilled, but anxious with fear for what the future held.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the publican view from afar?
2. How is Zacchaeus honored by Christ?
3. How is the publican scorned by the crowd?
4. What does Zacchaeus give to Jesus?
5. How is Zacchaeus accepted by Jesus?
6. Are we to make our wrongs right?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Zacchaeus knew from long experience the advantages that wealth could bring in smoothing one's path and easing the monotony of life. He was able also to see something above and beyond. It was far off, but it was there. He wondered what life could be like for a person who had the miraculous power to create incredible luxury and ease for himself and yet chose to give himself so completely to serving the needy that He had no place to lay His head—no assured food, no protection over His head when the storms descended, no private possessions in which He could find security. What was it that Christ and His followers found in life that the rich did not enjoy? The tax collector must have pondered these questions deeply before he sought Jesus.

Death was unseen and seemed far off, but it was there, Zacchaeus knew. He knew that his end in this world was sure. He was concerned with what would happen after death. He was interested in heavenly treasures as well as earthly, but he was not sure how to obtain those heavenly treasures. How wonderful to think that Zacchaeus was master of himself through the drawing power of Jesus, and he was able to cast off the shackles of his earthly treasures. He began to seek after Jesus. He climbed up into the sycamore tree to see what kind of man Jesus was and to make up his mind as to what he should do. Oh, how precious it is when a person seeks after Jesus. We find that Jesus was touched and looked his way. It didn't make any

difference to Jesus that Zacchaeus was hated by the people and considered an outcast. He halted the headlong, thoughtless crowd and showed His love to Zacchaeus. Oh, how happy Zacchaeus was to have Jesus come to his house. Joyfully he accepted what Jesus taught him. Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house!" Zacchaeus loved Jesus so much that he was willing to help the poor and follow in Jesus' footsteps. He also wanted to make his wrongs right. This is the fruit of a justified life before God. "Restore the pledge and take back that which he has robbed." Ezek. 33:15. Some are hindered in the Christian race because they do not make their wrongs right, but this is a must in the sight of God.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The meeting of Zacchaeus and His Saviour came about so wondrously that we are made to marvel, and yet it was such a simple affair that we are made to realize that such an experience can be equaled by anyone. He sought to see Jesus, but this was not all. Why? Many of that day wanted to see Jesus for various reasons. Herod wanted to see Him, perchance to behold a miracle. Others went around the sea to meet Him, of which He said that they sought Him because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled. But Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus for another and a better reason. He sought to see Jesus WHO HE WAS. What made the difference? It was in his attitude. He honestly was curious and inquisitive to know just who He really was. We ought to have this kind of desire also. He had doubtless heard about this wonderful Man, and his interest was aroused, especially when an opportunity to see Him was being afforded.

"He could not for the press." Ponder these words. Is there a *press* today that will keep us from seeing who Jesus is? Be sure that there is. It is not a press of human bodies and natural landscape either. It is the hemming in of self and worldly pursuits. It is the obstruction of vanity and pride. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God must be pressed into. Luke 16:16. This is true today. If one will get a good look at Jesus he has to go against the press of these things. Otherwise He will remain out of sight. Many are not saved, and they know it, but they make no effort to do something about it. They refuse to go where they know Christ is named, preached and upheld. Their lives are filled with things that crowd out the knowledge of the Son of God.

"He ran before." Think of this. He had to do some moving, didn't he? Look at him hurrying along as fast as his short limbs could carry him to a place ahead of the crowd. We have to do this, too. We have to get ahead of the devil and his forces. He is out to hinder us. "He climbed up." He not only got ahead of the crowd, he got ABOVE it. This helped give him the view of Jesus that he needed. Christ knows all who are yearning and hungering to meet Him. He knows all the effort that is put forth, and his response will be accordingly, just as it was with Zacchaeus. He yearns to proclaim this message to all: "This day is Salvation come to this house!" —Leslie C. Busbee

DON'T WE CARE?

I left the tent where we were holding meetings down in Paris, Illinois, one night, and among the number who left last was a young man to whom I was especially attracted by his fine looks. I walked down the street with him, and put to him the invariable question, "Are you a Christian?"

He said, "No, sir; I am not."

Then I used every Scripture and every argument to get him to promise me to give his heart to God, but could not succeed. When about to separate, I asked him, "Are your father and mother alive?"

"Both are alive," said he.

"Is your father a Christian?"

"Don't know; he has been a steward in the church for several years."

"Is your mother a Christian?"

"Don't know; she has been superintendent of the Sunday school of the same church for some time."

"Do your father and mother ever ask the blessing at the table?"

"No, sir."

"Did your father, mother, or sister ever ask you to be a Christian?"

"Mr. Sunday, as long as I can remember, my father or mother or sister never said a word to me about my soul. Do you believe they think I am lost?"

I could not answer such an argument. It is six years this coming October since I heard this. I can hear his words ringing in my ears, "Do you believe they think I am lost?"

Can any of ours say that we do not care for their souls? May God save us from the crime of unconcern!

—Billy Sunday

January 27, 1980

CHRIST AROUSES OPPOSITION

Matt. 9:9 And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

10 And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

12 But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

13 But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

10:17 But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;

18 And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

21 And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.

24 The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

25 It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

Memory Verse: He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. **Matt. 10:39.**

Central Thought: The Christian will meet opposition and should not be surprised about it. The preaching of the gospel is in itself a declaration of war against the devil.

Word Definition: *Take no thought:* Be not anxious. "*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*" is the limited Hebrew negative: not only sacrifice, but also mercy. *Endureth to the end* means to the end of the person's life, or to the end of the world or age, whichever comes first. *The receipt of custom:* The customhouse, the place where the taxes levied by the Romans were collected.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The exact location of Matthew's place of business is not told. Perhaps it was a tollgate along one of the main highways near Capernaum. Here traffic could be halted, and the wares being transported by camels or by other means could be examined and the tax assessed.

The fact that Jesus aroused opposition in the early phase of His ministry merely reflects the primary objective of His coming from heaven to earth. He came to rescue fallen man from the prison camp of Satan. Jesus could expect that the devil would resist with every means at hand. Jesus uncovered to the people their real character. His divine person and authority stirred opposition. The Pharisees continually brought charges that Jesus was not keeping their precious traditions. Jesus pointed out that their traditions were of merely human origin, and that they used these very traditions to set aside the Word of God. (Matt. 15:1-20)

Jesus said He was sending forth His disciples as "sheep among wolves." The wolves would be the pious leaders of the synagogues who would vent their wrath against these disciples who were preachers of the gospel of the kingdom.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss Matthew's call and the call that comes to each of us.
2. How did Jesus equip the disciples to meet the opposition that they would meet?
3. What did Matthew have to face, and what do we face today?
4. Why are we going through persecutions and oppositions?
5. Are we above our Master?
6. What is our reward?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The first of our lesson records the call of Matthew, and the latter part teaches us what Matthew was to face, which was the same opposition that we will face.

Notice how quickly Matthew responded to the call. He was convinced that Jesus was truly the Son of God and the promised Messiah. He had been touched by Jesus' teachings and believed upon Him. Jesus had said to the disciples in John 15:3, "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." They were clean and free from their sins through the Word of Jesus. We read in the unprinted portion of our lesson that before Jesus sent them forth to go out as sheep among wolves He "gave them power against [or over] unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease." (Matt. 10:1) In the first verse of our lesson we notice that Jesus said, "Beware of men." Jesus knows the normal responses in man, and He warned them, as well as us, that those whom we might think would agree with us, or comfort us, will be the very ones who will fail us. He mentions that the law-keepers who met in the synagogues, the governors and kings, even your brothers, parents, and children would be those who would turn against you for "my name's sake." How sad it is that the devil can convince those who should love you to turn against you! But it's true, and all because you have committed yourself to Jesus and His cause. Jesus did not want the disciples to be surprised when these things happened. Neither does He want us to be surprised. Because we are saved from the corruption of the world, people want to take revenge. The spirit of God and the spirit of the world will not mix. We may as well know this fact and be ready to face it. Jesus said that we were not "above" our "master," and if people called Jesus "of the house of Beelzebub," or the devil, they will call us such. But there was comfort given to the disciples, which is for us, too. Jesus has promised to be with us if we are called up before the councils, and "it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak." He also says that "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Praise God for that promise! We will come forth victoriously! He will give us power to overcome and to be ready for that place prepared for the faithful.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If we could put our finger on the main area of the opposition that Christ met, I believe it could be evolved in what He said in Matthew 9:13. He quotes from Hosea 6:6: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." He uses this thought to refute the Pharisees' criticism of His eating with the sinners. He used this

Scripture in Matt. 12:7, saying that if they had known what this meant, they would not have condemned the guiltless. In that place they were finding fault with the disciples for plucking corn on the Sabbath. "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Think carefully here. The whole crux of the reason why Jesus is rejected or accepted lies right here. The sacrifices of animals rendered under the law had their purpose as a type and shadow of the true Sacrifice, which was Christ Jesus Himself, as the spotless Lamb of God. Outside of that, there was no benefit in the ceremonial sacrifices. To lose sight of their true purpose was the downfall of the Jews. Pride asserted itself in the ever vulnerable heart of man, and their religion became a formality of "do's" and don'ts." They felt snug in their outward observance of the Law, forgetting the corruption of their own hearts. This caused them to despise and look down on others. It made them unmerciful and cold-hearted. It bred covetousness and vanity in their hearts. Thus Jesus met opposition with the self-righteous, who sensed not their need of His cleansing blood. But to the sinner who felt the enormous weight of guilt and condemnation upon his soul because of his sins, the message of Christ was a ray of hope and escape from the wrath to come. Christ was sent to bind up the brokenhearted, but what if a man was not brokenhearted? Jesus came to set the captives free from sin and condemnation, but what if a man does not sense his woeful bondage or the impending doom? Jesus wants to give beauty for ashes, but what if a man in his pride does not sense that his mortal life is but dust and ashes? What if? Instead of welcoming Christ and giving Him room, such will do just as the Pharisees—they will reject the Son of God. As it was back then, even so it is now.

—Leslie C. Busbee

February 3, 1980

JUDGMENT AND INVITATION

Matt. 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Memory Verse: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matt. 11:28, 29.

Central Thought: Only the boundless love of God could inspire an invitation to all the world. Mercy precedes judgment.

Word Definition: *Hell:* The place of the damned. *Sodom:* An ancient city infamous for its moral degradation. (Gen. 18:17). "*I will give you rest.*" This means ultimate satisfaction and peace. It does not mean a state of inactivity. *Yoke:* Servitude. (We must learn of Jesus before we can help souls find

Christ.) *Sackcloth and ashes*: The ancient method of expressing extreme contrition. The great discomfort of the body tortured by the annoying ashes and the prickly sackcloth suited the mood of the souls.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We are still talking about the teachings of Jesus. In our lesson today we hear Him teaching about mercy and judgment. He spoke with the authority of heaven. Many did not believe, but their unbelief did not change God's Word. Today many do not believe, but it's true anyway, and all will stand before God in the Judgment to give an account of the deeds done in their bodies.

Jesus had been teaching in the populous centers on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. These people had the utmost in opportunity; they could not avoid the utmost in responsibility. Awesome to contemplate would be their fate in eternity if they continued in their defiance of God. They repented not, because they had not believed. Many had been too engrossed in profit and pleasure to hear Jesus' message. Many had come, heard and gone back to their "wallowing in the mire." Some had remained to fight against Him alongside the Pharisees. The faithful disciples were the few seeking to help save the many from rushing down the broad way to destruction.

Chorazin . . . Bethsaida! Two cities just north of Capernaum, and so close at hand as to be almost suburbs of that commercial metropolis. Jesus had done mighty works in those cities. The dead had been raised, (Jarius' daughter, Matt. 9:18-27), the lame made to walk (the paralytic, Matt. 9:2-8), lepers cleansed (Matt. 8:2-4). These and many more miracles had been done in and around Capernaum.

Tyre and Sidon were typical pagan cities filled with heathen ignorance and moral degradation. They were near enough to Palestine for their notorious wickedness to be general knowledge. The opportunities of the people of Tyre and Sidon had been slight, compared to the daily privileges of the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus upbraid the cities where He had been preaching?
2. Jesus referred to Sodom. Had mercy been given to that city before its destruction, and is mercy extended today to all?

3. Discuss Jesus' prayer.
4. Comment on the tender appeal with which Jesus finished his sermon.
5. There are two in a yoke. What happens when one does not do his part? (Compare two in a marriage, two or more working in a congregation, etc.)
6. Just because many do not believe God's Word, does it make it of none effect?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The sermon of our Lord, Master and Saviour, in our lesson, is filled with authority, justice, judgment, and mercy. In His marvelous appeal, He combines mercy and justice. Great is the mercy of God toward us, for if it had been merely justice without mercy, none of us would be saved. We must remember that God is not all mercy with no justice. Verily, the wicked who defy God will be brought to judgment. God will finally prevail. Man has been given freedom of the will, which enables him to reject God. But when he does, he cannot escape the final judgment.

The cities that scorned the teachings and miracles of Jesus and rejected His claims and commands felt serene and secure in their worldly pursuits, but the day is ever short and the night soon comes.

The gracious invitation of Christ to give rest and peace did not exclude these wicked cities. In spite of their persistent unbelief they were also included and urged to come even yet and be saved. God is longsuffering and patient beyond all human understanding.

God has always sent mercy before judgment. In the days of Noah we know that the people were given time to repent. Noah preached to them while he was building the ark, but they did not believe. Their unbelief did not keep the flood from coming.

God sent angels to visit the city of Sodom, and even the pleas of Lot had no effect upon even his children. They scorned the warnings as if they were not true, but their unbelief did not stop the "brimstone and fire" from being sent from the Lord upon that wicked city.

Just so today people are rejecting God's Word and mercy. But their unbelief will not have any effect upon the final judgment of every soul and the complete destruction of this world. It will come. We must accept God's mercy today or we will be lost.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"They repented not." Ponder this. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent; that is, to reform and to adopt the pattern of life with which God is pleased. Godly sorrow works repentance. Feeling the weight and weariness of sin and going against God will cause one to seek a way of escape. Christ offers the only sure way of escape. To repent is to open one's sins beforehand, sending them on before to the judgment. We must reckon with this matter of sin now, or it will reckon with us later. These people had a chance to repent and accept the truth. Through neglect, indifference, and just plain rebellion they failed to know the time of their visitation. These cities had a greater witness than some of the cities of the past. But they will all appear at the judgment. Do you understand what this means? We will all be at the judgment to give an account of ourselves. It is sad to realize that with all of the effort and sacrifice put forth by the Creator of Mankind, He is much despised and carelessly put aside by many. There is a reason for this, and it is a fact of which Jesus was well aware. It is interesting to note that at this point we see Jesus on one of His rare occasions of rejoicing. Despite being rejected and turned aside by many, the few who did accept and appreciate Him meant so much. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent." Think of this. Jesus rejoiced about it. "Thou hast revealed them unto babes." It is too bad for the wise and prudent that the grace of God is hidden from them. But who are these babes? They are the lowly and meek. They are the humble and poor in spirit. They are the simple, and those who take no offence. Retaliation and revenge set up bulwarks in the soul that keep the knowledge of God from entering. Unforgiveness and strife will only serve to bar us out of the kingdom of heaven. There is between the Father and His holy Son a unique fellowship. You cannot get to the Father but through the Son, and you cannot get to the Son except through the Father. You cannot have fellowship with one without the other. But the Son gives an invitation for the weary and heavy laden to come to Him and take His yoke upon them and learn of Him. In this way the Father will be revealed. And yet who can or will come to Jesus who does not fear God and loathe his sin? Thus we come to Jesus through His Father. —Leslie C. Busbee

HOW THE SHEPHERD BROUGHT IN THE LOST SHEEP

One night, or rather one morning (for it was about 3:00 a.m.) I was awakened by someone pounding at my door. There was a man there who was a complete stranger to me. He said, "I have come to ask you to go with me to pray for a dying girl."

When I suggested that I would come as soon as it was daylight, he said he feared it would be too late; so I made ready to go. As I was dressing, he said:

"I want to be fair with you and tell you where you are going. It is no nice place, but a house of shame—but this girl seems to have known you, and asked me to come, as she wants you to pray with her."

I set his mind at rest on that by telling him it did not matter where she was, if she wanted me to pray with her; I would go down with him, as that was my business.

He took me down into the low district and into a house where I found a poor girl in her teens. It was very evident that she was soon to meet her Maker. A little lamp was on a table by her bedside, and I turned the shade so the light fell on her face to see if I could recognize her. She at once sensed what I was doing, and said:

"I don't think you know me, but I know you, and I knew you'd come and pray with me—for I am going to die (think of that kind of a reputation in the underworld). The girls here do not believe I am, but I know that I am going."

While I was wondering just how I could bring that poor soul to a living Saviour, she solved the problem by asking me if there was not a story in the Bible about a sheep that had left the fold, and of the Shepherd who had gone after it and brought it back again? "Oh, yes," I said, "that is the parable of the ninety and nine, and the one that went astray."

"Yes," she answered, as she unconsciously changed the emphasis from the point where the Church has placed it on the ninety and nine, to the place that Christ first gave it. "Yes," she murmured over and over, "the one that went astray." Then she led me on as she asked, "Can you find that in the Bible?"

"Yes," I said. "It is the 15th chapter of Luke," and I turned to it to read. But I never understood it before as I did that night, when her comment on "the one that went astray" gave the real point to the parable.

When I finished the reading in Luke about the Great Shepherd, I turned over to John's narrative about the Good Shepherd who gave eternal life to the sheep. As I knelt to pray by that dying girl, the other girls knelt, too, sobbing by their companion's bed! What an audience was there! I have often preached to vast congregations, but never was a meeting more hallowed by the presence of the Lord Jesus than this! As I prayed there, the conscious feeling that she was being lifted into the very light and love of God gripped me, and right then and there was literally flooding her soul.

I shall never forget the expression on that face when I looked up.

"Oh!" she cried, "Oh! It is wonderful! The Good Shepherd has found me, and He is holding me to His heart!"

I have never heard that expression before, but over and over she kept repeating it. How I thanked God that He had given me a Gospel of Grace, for what message would I have had for a dying sinner like that, if works or merit were demanded?

That poor lost sheep was so happy in her new-found joy that I really wondered if the lifting of that burden of sin from her heart was not giving her physical strength that might bring recovery; and so I ventured to go home—but when I returned later, I knew the end had come, for the undertaker was entering the house as I came up. One of the other girls came out to meet me, and her first words were:

"My! We all wish you had been here when Mary passed away. She was so happy! She kept saying, 'The Shepherd has found me and is holding me to His heart.' You may say it was all fancy, but I believe He did. She actually tried to clasp her arms around the Unseen, and then, with a soft 'Good-bye' to us girls, she was gone."

Did He bring to a rejoicing heaven only that one lost sheep on His shoulder? Well, listen to the sequel:

Some years later, I was preaching the Gospel in a city. A young woman came to me, and smilingly asked, "Don't you recognize me?" When I replied that I could not just say for sure, she said:

"I am the girl that told you of my friend Mary's passing that morning, and how happy she was in her new-found joy, as she died, saying, 'The Shepherd has found me and is holding me to His heart!' But there is something I want to tell you. Once or twice I started to write and tell you the story, but I did not have the courage to finish the letter."

"Well," I said, "what is it that you wanted to tell me?"

She replied, "Just this: that the morning when the Good Shepherd brought Mary in on one shoulder, I came in on the other."

Of course, this brought me great joy, and increased my confidence in the saving power of the Gospel of Christ—the wonderful story of love.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9).

—P. W. Philpot

February 10, 1980

JESUS TEACHES MARTHA AND MARY

Luke 10:38 Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

John 11:20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.

21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.

23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

Memory Verse: She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. John 11:27.

Central Thought: If we take time to sit at the feet of Jesus we will have our faith steady in Him when we are put to the test.

Word Definition: *Cumbered about:* The Greek verb means "was drawn about in different directions; distracted." We say, "Too many irons in the fire." *Thou art careful:* Would be the same as "thou art anxious." *"Believest thou this?"* In other words, the all-important question of life: "Do you believe?"

LESSON BACKGROUND

Luke does not tell the "certain village" in which Mary and Martha lived, but John tells us it was Bethany. Bethany was a village on the eastern slope of the mount of Olives about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus' first visit mentioned in our lesson was during the time that Jesus was carrying on His Judean ministry with the help of the seventy disciples He had sent forth. The resurrection of Lazarus occurred in the last weeks of the ministry of Christ as He came from Perea where He was carrying on a quiet evangelism as He waited for the final Passover.

The home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany was a home which provided shelter, protection, hospitality and a spiritual atmosphere. We do not know many things about this home. Were the two sisters and brother single? Or was Martha married as tradition says? Some feel this was true, basing their conclusion on the fact that she was in charge of the home. This is not a necessary conclusion, since it would be natural for her to take charge of the home if she was the older sister.

The home of the three is most famous because Jesus was there so often. We do not know at what time these sisters and their brother became disciples of Jesus. It would seem that this took place early in His ministry. Jesus spent the nights at Bethany during the final week preceding His death, and it is supposed He was at the home of the three. It also seems highly probable that the women who came in the early dawn to the tomb of Jesus started from this home in Bethany, which must have been a place of gathering for the followers of Jesus.

Notice in the last part of our lesson about Martha's fight with doubts, and the lesson that Jesus teaches her. Notice the grand declaration of faith when she states firmly, "I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world."

—Marie Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Discuss the atmosphere of the home in Bethany that Jesus often visited and the atmosphere of our own homes.
2. How can we sit at Jesus' feet today and hear "His word?"
3. Discuss Martha's busy life and her battle of faith when Lazarus was sick and died.
4. Discuss Mary's choosing the "one thing needful" and her faith when Lazarus died.
5. Discuss the resurrection—when it will come, who gives life after death, and Martha's declaration of Jesus' being the Christ.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Let us think about the three mentioned in our lesson and what is recorded about them. All could not be printed in our lesson, but it's a good study. Let us think of Lazarus. Not one word is recorded from the lips of Lazarus. But one single statement about Lazarus is very illuminating. It's in the message that his sisters sent to Jesus when he was sick. They said, "He whom thou lovest is sick." John 11:3. Could any more illuminating statement be made of anyone? Could any higher tribute to the character of the person be given? Later, when Jesus had come and seen Mary weeping by the roadside and also the Jews, "he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled," and "Jesus wept." "Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!" (John 11:33-36) The family and the Jews knew of Lazarus and Jesus' closeness. What lesson is there in this for us? Do others know of our love and closeness to Jesus?

Martha had her battles. She loved Jesus and did many works, trying to show her love. Works alone would not prove her love for Jesus. It takes faith first and then works will follow. Jesus told Martha that "One thing is needful." Being busy about "many things" will destroy faith. Later, when the trial of faith came, Martha had a battle. She was bold to declare her faith, yet doubts arose and it seemed she did not understand the power of God. It stirs our admiration since she knew the Jews were plotting to kill Him, yet she boldly declared before the Jews that He truly was the Christ that should come into the world. Jesus encouraged Martha's faith and she saw a miracle and the "glory of God" when Lazarus was raised from the dead.

Mary's faith seems to have exceeded that of Martha. Martha needed reassurance, but Mary needed no such help.

Mary didn't express herself to Jesus, as she knew that He understood her heart. Only eleven words are recorded that Mary spoke, yet we know of her love and devotion for Jesus. Perhaps she was somewhat of a silent person. "Still waters run deep." Her faith was great. She had communed with Him and He was her source of comfort and help in the time of need. Let us learn some lessons from the three. —Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And Bethany's palm-trees in beauty still throw
Their shadows at noon on the ruins below;
But where are the sisters who hastened to greet
The lowly Redeemer, and sit at His feet?"

—Whittier

Note the two accounts of Mary. "Mary . . . sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word." "But Mary sat still in the house." she did not move until the Lord sent word. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." In Isaiah 30:7, we find this saying: "Their strength is to sit still." In verse 15 of that same chapter we find another like saying: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." It is a great lesson to learn to be still and wait on God. If we as humans could but comprehend how weak and helpless we are on our own, and how utterly useless are our best endeavors, we would be less apt to forge ahead of the leadings of the Lord. Some are more impulsive and quick to form opinions and take action. "Do something!" is often heard in times of crisis. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." James 1:29, 20. The call of the Holy Spirit in this New Testament dispensation is to cease from our own works and to enter into the rest of the soul. Heb. 4:1. "Be still, and know that I am God." Psalms 46:10. This goes against our way. God's ways are above our ways. The Lord's way of bringing help to Mary and Martha was high above what they had even expected. It is far better to be patient in spirit than to be proud in spirit. Ecclesiastes 7:8. It is to our benefit to wait on God, and not move unless we have His backing. With the restless world churning about us, and untaught minds of well-meaning people putting on pressure for action, it is a very difficult thing to be still and wait on the Lord. How much is lost through impatience and anxiety!

—Leslie C. Busbee

February 17, 1980

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Matt. 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Memory Verse: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. II Cor. 5:10.

Central Thought: God knows His own, even if they are among the tares of this world.

Word Definition: *Tare:* "Bearded darnel. This weed is very hard to distinguish from wheat in the early stages of growth, but shows its vicious character as it develops its seed." "Cheat" is sometimes given to darnel and similar weeds because of its deceptive appearance and worthlessness. *End of the world* brings the end of opportunity, since the world and everything within it is burned up and Christ is no longer our Saviour but our Judge. A *parable* is literally something thrown beside something else; that is basically a comparison, or an earthly story with heavenly meaning.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Jews of Jesus' time were ruled by pagan Romans, whom they bitterly resented. They expected the Messiah to promptly overthrow the wicked and restore Jewish independence. When Jesus made no move in that direction, it was very hard to believe that He was the Messiah. The disciples shared the popular expectation to some extent, and even John the Baptist once began to wonder if Jesus really was the Christ (Matt. 11:2,3). It was very important to teach the people that God would not be thwarted in the end, but His righteousness would prevail. It is needful for men in all ages to understand that there will finally be a harvest, and that the wheat will be separated from the tares, each to its proper destiny.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. What do the good seed and the tares represent?
2. Who sowed the good seed and who sowed the tares?
3. Who are the reapers, and what separation is going on today?
4. Discuss why so many are turning from the truth, and what are they doing to ease their consciences?
5. What is the ultimate end of the tares and the wheat at harvest time?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The disciples asked Jesus to explain the meaning of the parable. Jesus said, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, or the saved people, but the tares are the children of the wicked one." The devil is the one who sows

rebellious thoughts in the minds of unbelievers. He sows seeds of selfishness in the hearts of those who will not believe in God to the saving of their souls. He is the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. At the end of the world the reapers are the angels, or God's ministers who are preaching the unadulterated truths of God's Word. As the "tares are gathered" they will be burned in the end of the world. That will be when the judgment takes place.

Let us note that today God is sending forth His ministers, and they are **gathering out** all things that offend. When the true ministers of God preach the gospel, it separates the good from the bad. The just are separated from the offenders. All those who have backslidden in heart cannot stand under the blazing gospel and the Holy Spirit fire. They will make an excuse for not measuring up and falling away. How sad! The separating, and the gathering to the Church of God is now going on under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is filling sectism and other cut-off groups with converts. Those who do not want all of God's Word go into sectism so they can ease their consciences. Many are not willing to dress modestly or to be just a plain, simple child of God. Some do not serve God fervently. Many hold grudges. But the blazing Gospel is finding them, and they are resisting these truths. Many do not want it to be this way, but that is God's work and not man's. A shaking is going on, and only those who will live according to God's Word will stand. Be sure you are among that number.

How sad it will be in the end when the judgment is set for the wicked! What a terrible torment awaits them! The righteous will be blessed.

—Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Lord Jesus spoke many things to the multitudes in parables. It is an interesting note to see the reason for which He gave the parables. Usually we would think that the reason was to illustrate truths of the kingdom, and in an ultimate sense, this is so. But when we consider that to the multitudes He did not explain the meaning of the parables, we are made to realize that He had other purposes in mind. As I said, He did not explain the meaning of the parables to the general run of the multitude. Instead, He would close the parable with these words: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Let us be aware in the first place that Jesus knew that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. He knew that the

people who came in throngs to hear Him were in no condition to perceive the truths of His kingdom. As He told His disciples when they came asking the reason of His speaking in parables: "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Then He continued with a most profound and important statement: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." He then went on to explain that He was deliberately withholding understanding and the utterance of knowledge from the crowd because their carnal hearts were waxed gross and their eyes (spiritually) were closed. He quoted from Isa. 6:9,10 to verify this. Thus were the parables given, not to reveal, but to conceal, and also to attract the curiosity and desire of those who were present to hear. To those who had no hungering or thirsting for knowledge and understanding, the undisclosed discourse would be passed off as a thing of naught. But to the inquiring and desirous soul there would be no rest until the meaning was searched out. The disciples had proven their qualifications to receive the open truth of the parables by leaving all to follow Christ. It is the same today. To those who have (a willingness and a hungering to follow Him) will be given, but from those who have not will be taken even what they have. This is a challenge to us, and we are made aware that Christ is not promiscuously and carelessly dispensing the knowledge of His kingdom to just anyone.

—Leslie C. Busbee



STRAIGHT TO HEAVEN

"Mother," said a dying girl in Ireland, "It's a dreadful thing to die and be in the fire of purgatory soon!"

"It is that, my darling," the mother said, as she fondly gazed with tearful eye upon the fading cheek of her child, "it is that. O, that I could die instead! But you have confessed, so why are you still afraid?"

"Yes, I have confessed every sin I could remember, and I have absolution, and I shall have the holy oil when I am just at the last, Mother."

"Leave that all to the priest, darling, and say the prayers to the Virgin. That'll bring peace to your heart."

"No, it is all dark. I want to know where I am going, and more, a great deal more than the priest would tell me. Mother"

she added quickly, "I am thinking of the deathbed of cousin Cathleen; she had no absolution, no unction, no masses, but she died happy."

"She was a heretic, Mary, and knew nothing at all, so she died in her sins."

"Some words she said come over me now, Mother: 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' (Psa. 23:4). What did she mean? I have no comfort, no staff. I am trembling in the dark, and see only the great fires beyond, and am full of fear. Cathleen did not believe in purgatory."

"Hush now, Mary dear; go to sleep and forget her and trust in the blessed Virgin."

"Well, Mother, I'll try, but I can't help thinking it must be a happier thing to go straight to heaven at once. I wish I could remember all Cathleen said about it."

"It's not for the likes of us to go straight to heaven at once, Mary. We go the way the church directs."

"But it's a hard way, Mother dear! I often fear that some who get into the fires of purgatory may never get out again."

"Now, don't get distrustful of the masses, darling. Just leave thinking about it all, and here's Pat, he will sit by you for a while, till I run to mother's and back."

Pat had come in and overheard part of the conversation, and now sat down by his sister's side with a heavy heart: for the doctor said she could not recover, and he had traveled from another part of the country to see her before her death.

"Mary," said he, when their mother had left them alone, "what was that about cousin Cathleen?"

"Ah, Pat, I was wishing I could die as happy as she did; and I can't believe her soul is in hell just because—"

"Because she believed in the blood and mercies of the Lord Jesus Christ," exclaimed Pat. "No, Mary, for that's just the reason she had no need to go there at all, and as for the unction, she had that, too. She got it straight from the hands of the Lord Himself. He spoke to her soul, Mary, and comforted her with the assurance of His pardon and love. Do you think she needed anybody else to tell her that?"

Mary stared at her brother, exclaiming: "Sure, brother, you've turned heretic, too!"

"Well, never mind that. I don't care for nicknames at all, but I've been reading the Bible, Mary—God's own blessed

Book—full of such melting words to poor sinners as would melt your heart.”

“But how did you get it? Does the priest know?”

“I didn’t stop to ask him. So, I read and read, and some things were so pretty, and went so quickly to the heart, that I couldn’t stop any more if I’m burned for it.”

“But now, Pat, what is it about purgatory you’ve read in the Bible?”

“Why, just as much as you see in that empty platter, and that’s nothing at all. I’ve searched from one end to the other. So make your heart easy, Mary, for you can’t go to a place that isn’t in God’s creation. You shall go—and I promise you on the faith of the Holy Scriptures—straight to heaven at once, if you do only one thing.”

“What is it, Pat? O, what is there I wouldn’t do if I could? Is it to get a letter from a nearby church?”

“No, no, not such a thing as that. If you’ll listen, I’ll read you the beautiful words that they are,” and drawing from his pocket the precious little volume that had enlightened himself, the young Irishman read:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” (Isa. 53:5)

“Mary, do you think the Lord only suffered by halves? ‘Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thought; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will abundantly pardon.’ (Isa. 55:7) Is it abundantly pardon to go and suffer torments in prison before we get in at all, Mary? ‘For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.’ (Heb. 10:5-7; 10:12-14).”

“Them that are sanctified. Pat, what’s that? Isn’t it to be sanctified that we go to purgatory?”

“No, ‘For where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.’ (Heb. 10:16-18) No offering of your own suffering, my Mary; no masses for our mother to pay. When the blessed Lord was going to be betrayed, before He was taken prisoner, He prayed for all His people in His prayer. He said not a word of going through purgatory. So, Mary, it is Christ’s BLOOD for us, and that’s salvation out and out.”

"But, now, what's the thing I'm to do, Pat? You said if I'd do one thing."

"Why, then it's just this: 'Having a high priest over the house of God,'—that is the Lord Jesus with the one offering of self once offered—'let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.' (Heb. 10:21,22) You must believe these things, and that will make them your own. **'Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved.'** (Acts 16:31) Now at once: 'and being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,' and then you may 'hope of the glory of God,' for 'being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.' (Rom. 5:1-9) O, Mary, It's all of a piece. It's like the Word of God, worth loving and preserving forever. Now can you find it in your heart to trust what God says? It's faith you must get, and not masses, Mary. The offering is made. The BLOOD is shed that must wash away all your sins; so that what you should do is to believe in Christ alone."

"Faith, faith—what is it?"

"It's just believing heartily the Lord, that what He says is true (and will do as He promised), before you get the thing promised, for **'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.'** And then, Mary, if indeed you must leave us—if you must not stay any longer here—you will pass without fear through the shadowy valley, having the staff of truth to lean upon; and your happy spirit, 'Absent from the body,' shall be, for He says it, 'present with the Lord.' " (2 Cor. 5:8)

"O, Pat, it's taking thorns from the dying pillow, one by one; and I do think I'll be able to believe it all. But what will the priest say? Perhaps he will say I am a heretic, Pat." She shuddered at the thought.

"O, it'll do the most harm to himself, never fear. Be true and hold fast to the Lord Jesus and His own words, and you need not fear what men can do."

"It's a blessed religion to comfort us all, whether living or dying, and I only wish the sweet story was told from 'Ballycastle to Cape Clear,' that Jesus died for them, and for His sake God can have mercy on them that believe. It's the Gospel we want, and then it's God's Word, not mine, that says, 'Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.' " (Psa. 164:15)

—Selected

February 24, 1980

TRADITION AND CHRISTIAN DUTY

Matt. 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

12 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

13 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

14 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Memory Verse: The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10.

Central Thought: When the heart is right the outward life will reveal what God has taught us in His Word.

Word Definition: *Tradition:* It comes from the Latin verb *tradere*, which means to hand down. In other words it is what has been handed down to us from the past. In our current lesson it means the human conceptions and conclusions which men have added to the Word of God, and which some men

tend to exalt above the divine revelation. ("No creed but Christ" is a good motto, and "No book but the Bible.") *Elders* were Pharisees. *Scribes* were the scholarly inner circle, usually of the Pharisees, which was a sect in that day. *Hypocrite* is one who feigns to be what he is not, who puts on a false person like the actors in tragedies and comedies. (Having a form of godliness but denying the power of it. Read 2 Tim. 3:5) "*Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man.*" The Old Testament law distinguished carefully between clean and unclean animals. The Jews were permitted to eat only the flesh of animals that had a cloven hoof and that chewed the cud. *Washing the hands*, by the Jews, was a matter of ceremony.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This quarter we are studying the teachings of Jesus. We need to apply them to our lives, as they are guides to us.

All four of the evangelists recorded the thrilling miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus' refusal to be an earthly king at the Zealots' insistence led to the collapse of Jesus' popularity in Galilee. After rejoining His disciples by walking on the water, Jesus gave the Zealots further rebuff with the profound sermon on the bread of life. This was in the synagogue at Capernaum. The Pharisees now return to attack and carry on the controversy with Jesus over the failure of His disciples to keep their traditions. They thought that they must make some decisive moves to block the growing popularity of Jesus.

Great care was given by the Jews to the ceremonial cleansing of the things used in the temple and to the washing of their hands often, even to the touching of an ordinary person. These people felt they were so holy that they must wash and scrub off any such defiling contact. Persons forced to labor from early to late could not possibly keep such traditions, but the people accepted them as binding, even if they were unable to keep them. Jesus showed them that their traditions were purely human inventions and not divine.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. To what two traditions were the Jews adding, which was not according to the law of Moses?
2. Can we have our hearts right before God and neglect caring for our aged parents?

3. Discuss some of the sins that come out of the lives of those whose hearts are not right.
4. How can a person honor God with his lips and not with his heart?
5. Discuss some reasons people give for not obeying God's Word today.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus pointed out that the man-made traditions of the Jews were not according to what God had said in the law. They built up the washing of hands, and giving a "gift" of money to the temple worship instead of caring for their aged parents, thereby making traditions the means of denying, neglecting, and disobeying the Old Testament itself. Jesus showed that their traditions were not divinely authorized. They made them up to suit their hypocritical purpose. Jesus plainly calls them hypocrites. Even their long prayers and commending themselves before others was only honoring God with their lips, when their hearts were far from Him. Jesus hits at the very core of the problem. It's what goes out of the mouth that reveals what is in the heart. The real defilement is spiritual, not ceremonial. If blasphemy and filthy speech come forth from the mouth, the corrupt nature of the heart is laid bare. Not only wicked words, but wicked deeds come from the heart. Mark (7:20-22) adds covetousness, wickedness (maliciousness), deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness to the list that is in Matthew. Sin is a real defilement.

It's sad, but today many are trying to change the meaning of God's Word. They can plainly read it in the Word, but they will say that it doesn't mean that. They try to change it to fit their own interpretations. Many are tricked into this and lose their souls. It's a serious thing to say that "we don't have to live so strictly." God's Word demands a careful life. It's clear on modest dressing, being honest in all of our dealings, speaking the truth in our hearts, and not partaking of the amusements of this world. Some will justify TV by saying that some day the saints might be able to preach the gospel over it. I heard that said about twenty years ago, and it has not come to pass as of yet. Some will say, "I just look at the news," but I am afraid that they look at more than that. Oh, its very presence in the home stands for wickedness because so much of Satan's defilement comes over it. Even the modern songs are slanted to evil suggestions. We are not of the world, even

as Christ was not of the world. He will not take us out of the world, but will give us grace to not have the spirit of the world within us. Let us stand upon God's Word, or we will be like the ones in our lesson whom Jesus plainly called hypocrites. They honored Him with their mouths but their hearts were far from Him.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

To handle the Word of God is a fearful and responsible thing. Paul said in II Cor. 4:2, that he had renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Even to take a Scripture out of its original setting and use it for another purpose is not wise. The Bible is balanced with its counsels and truth so that we need not do that. We will acknowledge that there are those passages in the Word of God that are rather obscure and difficult to understand. But that makes the truth that much more precious. It can be gained only by Holy Spirit guidance and inspiration. To use the Word of God to justify men's traditions is a dangerous practice. There is an old saying, "You can take the Scriptures and prove about anything you want if you twist them just right." We are going to have to give an account of how we have handled the Word of God. Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus, but he misapplied it. Jesus was not to be fooled. He answered with "It is written again." This tells us that we must balance up our assumptions from the Bible with other Scriptures that will harmonize and work together to reveal the truth. There are some Scriptures that seem to teach that women cannot preach. But there are other Scriptures that show that God does use women in this way. Many take Scriptures to justify one marrying again while his first companion is still living. This is dangerous. If we believe not the truth, we are laying a snare for our feet. Strong delusion could fasten upon us, that we believe and accept a lie and be damned. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable . . ." II Tim. 2:15; 3:16. Many twist the Scriptures and wrest them to their own destruction. All of this is needless. The truth is not that hard on us. It is the best way, even though it means self denial and suffering to the flesh. The soul is what needs to be satisfied. Let us take heed how we handle the Word of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

(NOTICE! It is important that we have your order for the next quarter by March 1, 1980. Please order early.)

March 2, 1980

JESUS TEACHES FORGIVENESS

Matt. 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents [\$7,500,000].

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence [\$18]: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Matt. 6:15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Memory Verse: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Eph. 4:32.

Central Thought: Jesus said to forgive "from your hearts." It is more than just mere words or even deeds, but from the unseen depths of the heart in all humility and sincerity we are to forgive. The principle that is taught is that any sum is very small compared with what we owe God.

Word Definition: *Talents*. A talent was a weight used for ordinary produce and precious metals. The value differed in various countries and times. Various estimates of the value of a silver talent ran from a thousand dollars to two thousand. We will use the amount that is in the margin of my Bible which would be even more today. It says, "A talent is 750 ounces of silver, which, after one dollar to the ounce, is 750 dollars." The pence is "a small silver coin equal to about eighteen cents." So the ten thousand talents that the servant owed would be \$7,500,000. The one hundred pence that the servant went out to collect would be \$18. *Seventy times seven*: This would equal 490 times. It means an unlimited number of times. "The Lord commanded him . . . wife, children, and all that he had" to be sold. This was the custom of the times and is background scenery of the parable. It is a mistake to interpret all that is described. We must seek for principles. Dreadful punishment is to be meted out for sin. All that he has is not enough. "*Cast him into prison.*" Imprisonment for debt was a common custom, and remained so until comparatively recent times.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus and the twelve moved south to the Sea of Galilee, and it seems that conflict was developing among the disciples. Repeated predictions of Jesus' death warned them that a crisis was near, but they clung to their belief that He would somehow emerge triumphant and rule a mighty kingdom. Each disciple was concerned about his own position. Finally the disciples asked Jesus who was to be the greatest in His kingdom? In response Jesus set a child in the midst of the group, saying, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:4) He went on to emphasize the responsibility of giving a good example to children and to those young in the faith. This led to the parable of the lost sheep, which precedes today's lesson of Jesus' teaching about a brother

trespassing against another. In verses 15-18 Jesus points out what to do. In verses 19 and 20 He tells of the blessing that will come if two agree, or if two or three are together in the name of the Lord.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS

1. What is the point in Jesus' using the figure of forgiving 490 times in a day?
2. Discuss the great mercy of a king who would forgive a man of a \$7,500,000 debt, and compare it with our debt of sin.
3. Discuss the attitude of the forgiven man and his actions to a man who owed him only \$18, and compare it with our forgiving others.
4. Discuss verse 32 and the king's saying he forgave the servant's debt "because thou desiredst me."
5. Do the trespasses of others demand less from us than we demand from the mercy of God?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a deep lesson we have today! It's a lesson that each needs to help us keep ready to meet our God in peace. When we refuse to forgive our fellowmen we close the gates of heaven against us. Even our daily approach to God in prayer is dependent upon our mercy to those who sin against us. The parable of the unforgiving servant shows that since God has forgiven us, we are obligated to forgive our fellow servants; that the indebtedness of which God forgives us is immeasurably greater than that which our fellowman owes to us; that if we refuse to forgive our fellowman, God will withdraw His mercy from us and bring upon us the terrible punishment that is our due.

The one who holds a grudge and refuses to maintain a forgiving spirit suffers more than his victim. Why? because God offers us forgiveness of a great debt. Unless we accept, we are lost. It hinges on the fact that we must forgive others. It is a serious thing not to forgive. It is usually pride that keeps one from forgiving. Either to seek or to grant forgiveness is a severe blow to selfish pride. When one has wronged another, the worldly way is to deny the guilt, or at least to claim justification for the objectionable conduct. When one has been wronged, the temptation is to seek solace for wounded pride in selfish isolation or to arm for combat. To humble one's self, admit one has done wrong, and ask forgiveness is hard on

pride. To meet an offender in a forgiving spirit is also difficult. Hidden pride is one of the chief sources of man's downfall and alienation from God. But God has deliverance from pride. To find forgiveness from God one must become humble. To keep in touch with God and continue to walk in the paths of righteousness a person must never let pride rise up and rule, as it will be his doom.

One man was urged to forgive and forget an injury done him. He said that his memory was so poor that he was sure he would forget that he had forgiven and forgotten the injury done to him. Too many are like that today. It won't work with God.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus taught that what we allow to go out of our lives will be returned in like measure. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." This is a universal law. What a man sows, that shall he also reap. He that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. He that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly. Gal. 6:7, II Cor. 9:6. This covers every aspect of our lives. He even spoke this in Mark 4:24 concerning our hearing of the Word of God. "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given." How much we get from the word of God, whether it is preached, taught or read, depends upon the measure of attentiveness and desire that we exercise thereto. God wants His blessings and grace to mean much to the soul. How much it will mean is determined by the measure of the extent of the need that is felt. This was made very clear when He said concerning the poor woman who came and wept, bathing His feet with tears and anointing Him with the costly ointment: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke 7:47. This does not mean that a person has to go out and be tainted with the worst sins to have the right appreciation. One sin is enough to separate us from God. The heart should be riven because of one sin as well as many. But just what the forgiveness of the Lord will mean to us depends upon how

deep and earnest is our repentance and loathing of our sins. The greater the effort put forth to come to God, the more it will mean. Thus the gospel is especially an attraction to the poor in spirit, who sense deeply their need and are filled with desire to know Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

March 9, 1980

JESUS HONORS FAITH

Matt. 8:1 When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

2 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

3 And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

5 And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,

6 And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

7 And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

8 The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

9 For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

10 When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

12 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

13 And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Memory Verse: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb. 11:6.

Central Thought: Divine healing is not mind-healing but is a healing wrought by the direct power of God. Healing comes through faith in Jesus' power to heal.

Word Definition: *Mountain*: "Probably nothing more is meant here than a small hill or eminence." *Leprosy*: "An inveterate cutaneous disease, appearing in dry, thin, white, scurfy scales or scabs, either on the whole body or on some part of it, usually attended with violent itching and often with great pain." *Centurion*: A Roman military officer who had the command of one hundred soldiers. "*Sick of the palsy*": A paralytic. "*No, not in Israel*": That is—"I have not found so great an instance of confidence and faith in My power, even among the Jews, as this Roman, a Gentile, possesses." "*Sit down with Abraham . . . Isaac . . . Jacob*": Men of all descriptions and of all countries, and professions will come to meat, or a banquet, with the closest and most eminent followers of God in communion. "Let us therefore imitate Abraham in his faith, Isaac in his obedience unto death, and Jacob in his hope and expectation of good things to come." "*Outer darkness*": As the banquet, or nuptial solemnities, takes place at night those who are excluded are shut out, not only exposed to shame, but also to hunger and cold; therefore, it is added, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had gone up into a mountain or a high hill so it would be easier to talk to the multitude, and there He preached a sermon. This wonderful sermon is recorded in Matthew, starting with chapter five and ends with chapter seven. Often we think of just the Beatitudes as being all that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, but it includes much more. It would be well with us if we would often read that sermon, and of course it is necessary that we put it into practice.

Our lesson begins with Jesus' coming down from the mountain. The multitude still followed Him, having been deeply impressed with the glorious truths which they had just heard. Among those in the multitude were the leper and the Roman centurion, who was a Gentile. They needed help from our blessed Lord and Saviour—our Healer.

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Should we doubt God's will to heal us? Did the leper doubt?

2. Note and discuss the compassion and love that Jesus showed, and does He do the same today?
3. What comparison did the centurion use to help inspire his faith in Jesus' healing his servant?
4. Can we have great faith?
5. The centurion was a Gentile. What did Jesus foretell when He mentioned about many coming from the east and from the west?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, the compassion of Jesus shown to the man who had leprosy! Jesus was "moved with compassion" when He saw the faith, the earnest desire and the pleadings of this dear man. (Mark 1:41) The leper knew that if it was Jesus' will He could heal him. The leper was not in doubt about the ability of Jesus to heal, but was not certain of His will. It is God's will to heal, and Jesus proved it. He reached forth His hand and healed him. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities . . . let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:15,14) We also read about God's willingness to heal when He instructed James to write, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up." (James 5:14,15) It's necessary for the person to have faith to be healed. It's the "prayer of faith" that brings healing. So we say that faith for healing requires an inspiration from the Holy Spirit which brings us that needed faith. Many times we do not always know how "to pray as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. 8:26) We also know that the Bible teaches us that there is an appointed time for us to die. In those times it is not the will of God to heal. But we can know the will of God as we seek His face. If we have not found that it's God's time to take us home, we can know that it is His will to heal, and we need to let our faith take it in.

Jesus commended the centurion for his faith. He said, "I have not found so great faith" in Israel. Can Jesus find that in us? Healing is for us, but we must press for it. The devil fights anything that God does for His children. He will paint dark pictures, bring doubts and fears, point one to men's ways of healing, and try to hinder divine healing. We must close our

minds to these doubts and only let the Word of God dwell in us richly, claim what God has for us and know it is done in Jesus' Name.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God wants people to trust and believe Him. It grieves His Spirit when we doubt and fear concerning those things that He has promised in His Word. An honest and upright man desires that his faithfulness build up confidence in those that he might serve. He likes to be accredited in the minds of his fellowmen. God is like this. Doubt, fear, gloom, melancholy, worry, and drawing back are things that grieve His great loving heart. It was unbelief that caused the woman and Adam to sin in the beginning. They discredited God's Word. They listened to the tempter who boldly asserted that what God said was not true. The children of Israel provoked God's wrath when they refused to go forward into the Canaan land and possess what God had promised them. He swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest. I take the stand to say that it is not tobacco, liquor, and other habits that keep people from serving the Lord. Rather it is something deep in their own hearts: unbelief and a refusal to take God at His word. It matters not what may be the problem, God's Word covers it all and declares the victory that Christ has won for us. There are too many plain declarative statements in the Bible to accept any other resolve. Let us step out on the promise. It is true and will not fail. Too many let their emotions and their feelings dictate to them the course in life to take. This is a fatal mistake. Emotions will rise and fall, and feelings are so changeable and undependable. Let us anchor our souls on the gospel—the everlasting Rock of Ages.

—Leslie C. Busbee

JOHN THREE SIXTEEN

One cold wintry night a poor Irish boy stood in the streets of Dublin—a little city Arab, homeless, houseless, friendless. He had taken to bad courses, and become an associate of thieves, who were early leading him to a wasted life of sin and crime.

As he stood there waiting, shivering and cold, a hand was suddenly laid on his shoulder. It was very dark. He could see a tall form standing by him, and he trembled with fear, but a kindly voice said, "Boy, what are you doing here at this time

of night? Such as you have no business in the streets at so late an hour. Go home, go to bed." "I have no home, and no bed to go to." "That's very sad, poor fellow! Would you go to a home and to bed if I provided one?" "I surely would!" replied the boy. "Well, in such a street, and at such a number (indicating a place) you will find a bed." Before he could add more, the lad had started off. "Stop!" said the voice, "how are you going to get in? You need a pass. No one can go in there without a pass. Here is one for you. Can you read?" "No, sir." "Well, remember that the pass is 'JOHN 3:16,' don't forget, or they won't let you in. 'JOHN 3:16.' There, my lad, that's something that will help you and do you good."

Joyfully the lad rushed off, repeating his lesson, and soon found himself in the street and at the number indicated before a pair of large iron gates. Then his heart failed him, they looked so grand. How could he get in there? Timidly he rang the bell. The night porter opened, and in a gruff voice asked, "Who's there?" "Me, sir; please, sir, I'm JOHN THREE SIXTEEN," in very trembling tones answered the boy. "All right, IN with you, that's the pass." The boy went in, full of astonishment.

He was soon in a nice warm bed, such as he had never seen before, and as he curled himself up to go to sleep, he thought, "This is a lucky name. I'll stick to it!" The next morning he was given a bowl of hot bread and milk before being sent out into the street (for this home was only for a night). He wandered on and on, afraid of meeting his old companions. He was thinking over his new name, when, heedlessly crossing a crowded thoroughfare, he was run over by a passing vehicle and badly injured.

A crowd collected, and with all speed the unconscious boy was taken to the nearest hospital. He was revived as they were carrying him in.

It is usual in Dublin hospitals to put down the religion, as well as the name and address, of those admitted. They asked him whether he was a Catholic or Protestant. He didn't quite know. Yesterday he was a Catholic, but now he was "JOHN THREE SIXTEEN." This reply amused them and elicited a laugh.

After his injuries had been attended to he was carried into the accident ward. In a short time his sufferings brought on fever and delirium. Then was heard, in ringing tones, and oft

repeated, "JOHN THREE SIXTEEN! It was to do me good, and so it has!"

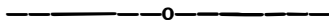
These persistent cries aroused the other patients. Testaments were pulled out to see to what he pointed. What could he mean? and here one and then another read the precious words: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Luther called this verse, "The Miniature Bible." When those poor sick folk had read the tender words and heard the injured lad's unconscious comment, "It was to do me good, and so it has!" the spirit stirred within them, and God used that text then and there to the conversion of souls. The sovereign power of God the Holy Spirit used this one text from the lips of a poor boy in that hospital ward, and souls were saved from sin and death and brought into the light and liberty of the Gospel.

After a time of rest and care, consciousness returned, and the poor little fellow gazed around him. How vast it looked, and how quiet it was! Where was he? Presently a voice from the next bed said: "JOHN THREE SIXTEEN and how are you today?" "Why, how do you know my new name?" "Know it! You've never ceased with your JOHN THREE SIXTEEN, and I for one say, 'Blessed John Three Sixteen!'" This sounded strange to the little lad's ears. To be called blessed! he for whom no one cared. "And don't you know where it come from—it's from the Bible." "The Bible! what's that?" The poor little waif had never heard of a Bible—that blessed Book, God's Word to man. "Read it to me," he said, and as the words fell on his ear he muttered, "That's beautiful. It's all about love, and not a home for a night, but a home for always!" He soon learned the text, saying, "I've not only got a new name, but something to it!" This was indeed a joy. Days passed on, and there were changes in the ward, but our little friend never felt lonely. He fed on his text and its precious words, little thinking how soon he would have use for them. Yet another soul in that ward was to be won by his means, and now in simple conscious faith he was to be the agent of blessing. On a cot near him lay an old man who was very ill. Early one morning a nun came to his bedside, and said, "Patrick, how is it with you today?" "Badly, badly," groaned the old man. "Has the priest been to see you?" asked the nun. "Oh, yes, but that makes me worse, for he has anointed me with holy oil,

and I am marked for death! I am not fit to die. Oh, what shall I do?" "Patrick, it's very sad to see you so," she gently answered. "Look here are these beads, they will help you to die happy." She placed them around the man's neck, and then wishing him good-bye, went out. But how could a string of beads ease a dying man facing eternity with his sins unforgiven? Poor Patrick groaned aloud. "God have mercy," he cried, "I'm such a sinner. I'm not fit to die. Oh, what will become of me?"

Our little fellow heard his miserable words. "Poor old man," thinks he, "he wants a pass!" "Patrick," he called, "I know something that will do you good—quite sure—it has done me." "Tell me, tell me quickly," cried Patrick. "If only I could find something to do me good." "Here it is! Now, listen. John 3:16. Are you listening?" "Yes, yes; go on." "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.' " Through these words Patrick found peace in his dying hour, and entered into everlasting bliss.

Our little friend recovered. For long JOHN 3:16 was his one text. God blessed his simple faith. Friends placed him at school and now he is an earnest, hearty worker for the Master. Will you put your name into "whosoever" of John 3:16 and become the happy possessor of everlasting life now, and endless bliss hereafter? Do it now, and you will praise God for John 3:16.



March 16, 1980

JESUS SAYS, "TAKE HEED."

Matt. 18:1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were

hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

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

8 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.

9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.

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

11 For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost.

12 How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?

13 And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.

Memory Verse: The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. *Psa. 34:7*

Central Thought: The converted person is filled with Godward tendencies that take on practical shapes. He delights in all that God loves.

Word Definition: *"Who is the greatest?"* Jesus was trying to say that true greatness in His kingdom consists in not seeking greatness at all. *Offend:* Or morally ensnare; "bring a stumbling block in others' paths." (One of the most blaring forms of sin is tempting others or persecuting and ridiculing the conscientious.) *Child:* I suppose it would have been a very young child. For such a little child would be humble, free from folly, desire for glory, envy, contentiousness, and all such passions, which Jesus was pointing out. *Millstone* is one of a pair of large, flat, round stones used for grinding grain. *"Drowned in the depth of the sea."* "The manner of death alluded to appears to have been unknown to the Jews. But

Plutarch mentions this punishment as being common to Greece and Rome." *Woe*: The interjection is one of sorrow as well as denunciation, and here the former meaning is predominant, as the latter is in the next clause of the verse.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the last verses of chapter 17 we read about those who received tribute money coming to Peter and asking him if the Master paid tribute. Peter told them that He did. Jesus sent Peter out to catch a fish and there was enough money in the fish's mouth to pay tribute for Himself and Peter. Peter knew that Jesus was the Messiah, and in His own right Jesus did not owe it, but rather than offend them He paid it. Thus Jesus set forth one of the most characteristic features of Christian morality: Go to any length to have peace even if it means losing your rights.

Our lesson begins right after this incident by starting out with the words, "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

—M. Miles

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus use a child to answer the disciples' question?
2. Why did Jesus say first for a person to become "converted" and then become like a little child?
3. Discuss how careful a person must be in not offending another person.
4. Name some things that would be an offence, or a stumbling block, to us that are as valuable as a hand, or eye.
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, "their angels" behold the face of the Father?
6. Why is one that goes astray more important than the ninety-nine?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Every soul in the world is important. No person, regardless of how others look at him, is regarded as an outcast or is unimportant to our Lord and Saviour. In fact, no person should be looked down upon or as unimportant in the eyes of any child of God. Each of us has a duty toward every person. It is better to suffer an injustice in helping someone, than to cause them to be offended. What a terrible thing for a person to have a millstone

hung about his neck and to be cast into the sea! Jesus says this is better than to "offend one of these little ones." How careful we ought to be! That person who causes another to stumble will surely be reckoned with. Some have made fun of others for their mistakes in their religious zeal, or even perhaps when it was not a mistake. This is a terrible sin, and surely the one who does such a thing will be held responsible. Sometimes young people are tempted to laugh at and make fun of older saints who are trying to help them see their need of living a close life. Sometimes in an altar call there will be some who will laugh and make fun. Oh, this is a terrible sin! What if the person standing beside you is really wanting to be saved, but your manner keeps him from yielding? We can't offend others or be a stumbling block without being held responsible.

Jesus brings out the fact that each "little one" has a guardian angel in heaven that keeps an eye upon them. How precious! One person told about an angry man who had been stirred up because of the gospel message. The man raised his hand to strike him, but his hand fell back to his side. He turned and left. The angel of the Lord intervened. How wonderful it is to have the Lord with us at all times! We want to be willing to get rid of anything in our lives that would cut us off from our contact with the Lord. It's not the literal feet or eyes that Jesus is especially talking about, but it's that thing that hinders us from fully surrendering to the Lord. Maybe it's a desire to have honor or to be recognized, or to be the greatest, as some of the disciples desired. But Jesus tells us that the lowliest in the kingdom is the greatest. The apostles got the message, as we find this one thing in their lives after they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to work for God. John wrote a whole book and didn't mention his own name. Matthew wrote only about Jesus, and doesn't say much about his own doings and sayings. Utter unselfishness and humility is taught in our lesson.

—Sis. Marie Miles

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson brings out the regard and tender love that Christ has for those who humble themselves as little children to receive Him. It is a truth so easily overlooked by the proud and scornful. The world praises the strong physical and mental part of men. God does not want us to be weak in these areas, but He would have us to realize the vanity of these strengths without the might of His Spirit in the inner man. Pride so easily prospers in the person who lives with a sense

of his natural strength and ability. Humility is the opposite of pride. The strength of man is but of short duration. But the weakness of men prepares the heart for strength that is everlasting. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth." Jer. 9:23,24. The Apostle Paul had a good many things in which to glory and boast before he met Christ. He was "sitting pretty" and prospering in the Jews' religion above many of his equals. But when he came face to face with Christ, he was made to see that all his accomplishments and his position were of no profit to his soul. He gave them up and became one of the Lord's little ones. But think of what he was able to do then through the strength that Christ gave him! Let us humble ourselves to walk with God. He resisteth the proud, and gives grace to the humble. The high opinion of ourselves and the solicitous attitude that we have toward our own interests and betterment hinders the grace of God from being effectual. It is a lesson we must learn, and a truth that we must realize. What a great privilege it is to be one of the Lord's little ones!

—Leslie C. Busbee



March 23, 1980

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things,

and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Memory Verse: But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me. Acts 1:8a.

Central Thought: Although Jesus Christ could not stay here in bodily form, He gave the promise of the Holy Spirit to come in His stead to execute the work of God through the Church for the good of mankind.

Word Definitions: *Many mansions:* Many dwellings; abodes, rooms. *Comforter:* The Greek word is *parakletos*, which means an intercessor or consoler. It is the same word that is translated "Advocate" in 1 John 2:1. Christ is our Advocate or Comforter, but He said He would give us another Comforter. It also has a root meaning of "to call near, to invite, implore, and console. Is not this a true description of the Holy Spirit? *Holy Ghost:* The word "Ghost" means Spirit. The two words are the same. In our terminology the word "ghost" usually means an apparition or the spirit of one returned from the dead. It does seem a better expression to say "Holy Spirit," although the King James version uses the term "Holy Ghost" a number of times. "*Reprove*" the world of sin: Admonish, convict, convince, rebuke.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The main theme of the Saviour's message before He was crucified was the Holy Spirit. He had (evidently) just given the

ordinance of footwashing and the Lord's supper, and just before they went out into the night He gave this precious farewell message to the disciples, of which only John kept an account. There are so many comforting passages in this sermon, but the mainstream of its discourse was preparing the disciples for the dark days that were to follow and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Judas has exited to fulfill his terrible work of betrayal, and the disciples have questioned among themselves as to who the betrayer would be. The "pot is beginning to boil," and not far away the chief priests and scribes are preparing their case against Him. His time is come, and the hour is crucial. Jesus knows what is waiting for Him. There is no turning back. The work of salvation must be completed. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Christ want them to believe in Him as well as in God?
2. Why did Christ have to go away?
3. Whom was He to send in His place?
4. Why could not the world receive the Holy Spirit?
5. What are some of the things that the Holy Spirit would do?
6. What were the three things that the Holy Spirit was to reprove men of, and why?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Woe to the man (and what a sad state in which to be) void of the Holy Spirit inspiration and guidance! This is our contact with God, and this is what makes us children of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." When we are saved, we are born of the Spirit of God. God's Spirit touches our hearts and draws us to the Saviour. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to be transformed from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God's dearly beloved Son. But in this state He is only WITH us. There is a fuller experience to be received. The Holy Spirit desires to be IN us. Thus we must seek and consecrate our lives to Him. Our faith must not waver. How Satan hates the doctrine of the Holy Spirit coming into the lives of people! He has many doctrines promoted that tend to dull the perception and confuse the mind about this wonderful experience. It is sad that many well-meaning people are caught up in these devices of Satan. The false tongues movement, one-work of grace

theories, and many other elements of confusion infest the religious world. But there is a real truth about the Holy Spirit, thank God. We can rise above all this rubbish, and God can and will reveal the truth about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a Comforter. He fills the soul with solace and strength for the pressures and battles of the Christian warfare. There are many depressing and discouraging elements. The Holy Spirit lifts up a standard against these things. The Holy Spirit is a teacher. As we study the Bible and the sayings of Jesus written therein, the Holy Spirit opens to us the truth and we can be preserved from error. How important it is for us not to form opinions on the Word of God, but wait on the Lord to guide us. The Holy Spirit convicts sinners and draws them to the Lord. He speaks, but many will not listen. This will not excuse them. This is God's way, and if man is stubborn and rebellious enough that he will not listen to the Holy Spirit talking, he will have to suffer the consequences. The greatest need today is men and women who are consecrated, filled, led, and anointed of the Holy Spirit.

—L. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How wonderful is God's plan! It is just right. We think of the revelation of God's plan made to Moses, and marvel at how perfect it was. God told Moses to build the tabernacle after the plan that He had given Him on the mount. The tabernacle was a type of the spiritual work to be done in the soul after Jesus came, ascended, and then sent the Holy Ghost to dwell in the hearts of those who had repented with godly sorrow and turned away from sin. The two rooms in the tabernacle were types of the two works of grace. Outside the first room there was an altar, and the sin offering was offered upon it. The blood was taken from that altar and put on the golden altar that stood before the veil or the door of the second room. So there were two altars and two applications of blood which are types of the cleansing blood of Jesus. Therefore, there are two cleansings in the heart of man. The first cleansing is the work of justification, or being saved from our volitional or committed sins. Now there is a sin for which we cannot ask forgiveness. That is the inherited sin. We read in Rom. 5, "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered in to the world, and death [spiritual] by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This inherited sin, or

that sin that passed on all men, needs to be cleansed. This is the work of the Holy Ghost through the atoning blood of Jesus. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Heb. 13:12.

We thank God for the work that takes place in our hearts and for the power that God gives us to live each day without sin. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Acts 1:8. We have power through the Holy Ghost to live a life pleasing in the sight of God. —Marie Miles

ONLY A ROSE

Some time ago, I preached a sermon in a great penitentiary. I went down there to give the boys a message. The chaplain showed me through that great prison. I shall never forget an incident that took place. I must tell you the story relating to the incident.

Some time before my visit to the prison, a train pulled out of a city station whisking away to prison a great burly fellow—of powerful build, broad of shoulders, and hard-visaged, well past his prime—handcuffed to the sheriff. The lines and SCARS of his iniquities were not only indelibly stamped on his soul — they STOOD OUT on his countenance. As the train came to a division point, the sheriff suggested that they step out on the platform and back and forth they paced. The afternoon was hot and sultry. As they strolled back and forth, the prisoner was manacled to his GUARD. On the other side of the platform, a little girl from one of the finest homes of that community walked with her mother. Just a slip of a girl that might have fitted into the picture of any fairyland — a nine-year-old child with hair of finest-spun gold, blue eyes! A protected and cherished and tenderly reared home-girl of the best type.

As that little girl saw the prisoner pacing up and down the platform chained, it impinged upon the child's consciousness with a twinge of pain, and the force of a blow! Slowly, it was received and accepted into her childish consciousness. "Mama," she said, as she looked up at her, "why have they got that man chained to another man?"

"Hush, child, don't look that way! I don't like you to see things like that. I'm sorry I came down to the train."

"But, Mama," she repeated, "why is one man chained to another man?" —and the mother answered.

"He is chained to another man because HE is a prisoner, and they are taking him to prison."

"What is a prisoner, Mama, and what is a prison?"

"Don't ask so many questions, child."

"But why don't you tell me?"

"Well, he has been a bad man—a wicked man. They brought him before a judge and now he is being taken away to live in a little cell."

"What is a judge, Mama, and what is a cell?"

The mother, as was best fitted to the little girl's ears and mind, explained the punitive system under which government is carried on, and law is enforced and order and property are conserved. The little girl laid it all to her heart, and it beat against her soul, and she reacted to it all in the tenderness of pity and love, and anguish of soul. Her eyes filled with tears!

"And he can't get away if he wants to? Will his mother ever go down there? Will she live down there with him?"

"Why, no child! I don't suppose anybody loves a man like that."

"NOBODY LOVES HIM?"

The thought of a man unloved, of a single soul in the wilderness of a cold, cruel world broke the heart of the child and in the impulse of an urge born of a love as sweet as the rose plucked from the bouquet in the mother's corsage — before a hand could stay her — she had traversed the space between and stood by the man whom nobody loved! She handed the prisoner a red rose, and said, "If you please, Mister, I love you! and God loves you, too," and back she raced to the mother's side.

In the moment of vexation, the mother shook the little girl, but the glory in the soul of the girl flushed the face of the child, and surged through her heart. I don't believe the mother ever heard the climax of the story — which brings us to the "incident" I mentioned before beginning my story.

Well, I delivered my address, had dinner with the chaplain, and after dinner he said, "Would you like to attend the Christian Endeavor meeting?" I assured him it would please me very much, and together we attended the meeting. When the leader came on the platform, he said, "going to tell you that man's story!" I looked away to where the leader stood — he measured every inch of six feet of regenerated manhood!

Somehow he stood out! He came a step forward on the platform; he looked that crowd in the eyes, and "Glory to

God!" were the first words he spoke in tones as clear as bells — and some few voices responded, "Amen."

"Now we will sing for our opening number, '*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*,' " and, responsively, the prison band struck up till you could hear the strains all through the penitentiary, and I heard them singing "*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*" to the tune of "*Silver Threads Among the Gold*." I never heard anything like it before! I have never heard anything quite like it since! The prison band discoursed it — five-hundred throats blended! The jubilant song pealed forth —

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,

More than all in Thee I find:

Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,

Heal the sick, and lead the blind."

The leader bowed his head in prayer, opened his Bible, and brought out a message of SALVATION! After the service was over, the chaplain told me the story:

"I found him in his cell —(they told me he was 'hard-boiled') — he was sitting on the edge of his bunk, an open Book in his hand. He was crying. I looked in, and saw it was the Bible. I motioned. They came, turned the key in the lock, opened the door, and let me in. I went to him, and sat on his bedside, and said, 'Friend, what you reading?' He said, 'Nothin', Chaplin; I ain't readin' nothin'. I was just lookin'.' 'What are you looking at?' And he opened the book, and there were the petals of a RED ROSE crushed between the leaves of the Bible! He said, 'Chaplin, the little kid on the platform — just a little girl! — and she came runnin' over, and she gave me that, and she says, 'I loves yeh; and God loves yeh, too!' — and nobody ever talked to me like that before'."

A RED ROSE — and the chaplain said it was the easiest thing in the world to lead that man to the foot of the cross! Jesus saved him and his body became THE TEMPLE of the Holy Ghost! I heard him leading that Christian Endeavor meeting that afternoon! I heard five hundred prisoners singing, "*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*" to the tune of "*Silver Threads Among the Gold*." The chaplain said, "That man has won more souls to Jesus than any chaplain we ever had. He's a power for God in this place."

Can't you see it now, brother, — the way of the world and the way of Christ? The one and the same man (and yet not the same, because he became a NEW CREATION) — laid on the shelf, while he was leading a criminal life; but now, radiating from that man's life as a center, Christ's glory had come into

that prison, and the man He had spoken peace to was rejoicing in the power of Christ to save! — and not only so, but to save **TO THE UTTERMOST.** —Sel.

March 30, 1980

JESUS TEACHES ABOUT THE JUDGMENT

Matt. 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Memory Verse: Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Matt. 24:44.

Central Thought: It is not enough to be justified, but we also must have a supply of spiritual oil (the Holy Spirit) to keep our lamps burning through all the trials of life until the Lord comes.

Word Definitions: *Likened:* Compared. "*While the bridegroom tarried*": Was delayed.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Saviour's discourse in this chapter is joined with what He said in chapter 24. Notice the closing part of chapter 24. He speaks about being ready for His coming, and the faithful servant who has been given the charge to rule over His household and give them meat in due season. A blessing is pronounced upon the servant who shall be found so doing. Then He mentioned that evil servant's saying, "My lord delayeth his coming." This matter of seeming delay was taken as a cause for careless and wicked behavior. The Lord will come suddenly and reward the evil servant's neglect with banishment into outer darkness. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Note the connection here. He speaks of the wicked servant's observing a delay on the part of his lord. While the bridegroom tarried (delayed), they all slumbered and slept. "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. The just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2:3,4. It is the tarrying that tries our patience and makes the Christian profession seem to the natural man not worthwhile. Patience is a vital ingredient in the Christian life. Run the race with patience. "In your patience possess ye your souls." Get the thought of the tarrying of the bridegroom and this lesson will take on new meaning.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of virgins were in this lesson?
2. What made the difference in the wise and the foolish?
3. What did they all do while the bridegroom tarried?
4. What kind of oil must we have in our lives to be ready to meet the Lord?
5. Does it seem that the Bridegroom is tarrying today? What must we do while He tarries?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." These virgins had all taken their lamps and gone forth to meet the bridegroom. Had there been no delay, they would have all made it. The foolish anticipated no delay. They prepared for no emergency. If it were the Lord's plan to save a soul one night and take him to heaven the next day, it would be easier and more people would be saved. But God is wiser

than that. He wills that we tarry in this world for a season, and wait on Him. The wise anticipated a delay, so they went prepared for it. They took a supply of oil with them in vessels. This assured them of fuel for light should there be a delay. Perhaps they all came to the place where they were to meet the wedding party. But they were not there. There was nothing to do except sit down and wait until they came. As the night came on and the darkness advanced, they all began to nod in sleepiness. Soon they were all asleep. Look at this picture. You are looking at what we are in today. The Bridegroom is tarrying. It looks like the time is right for Him to come. The message of His second coming has thundered through the years. "The fig tree is budding, and the evening is shining. We look for the Saviour, for time is declining; eternity's looming in sight." But still He tarries. Life must go on. Meals have to be prepared, the house must be kept, and the bread-winner must keep providing for His own. Without a supply of the Spirit of God, many will wax cold in these pressing days. Lamps will go out unless we keep filled with the Spirit. The Bridegroom is tarrying. We must work for Him and do His will. The midnight cry will soon be made. No time for preparations then. Now is the time to buy of Christ gold tried in the fire, and white raiment that we might be clothed. Now is the time to buy the truth and also wisdom, instruction and understanding. Prov. 23:23. Do not yield to the temptation to go after the present age and its treasures because the coming of the Lord is delayed. A little carelessness and indifference might take eternity to atone for. Let us keep filled with the Spirit so that we can be ready to meet the Lord when He comes.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The wise and the foolish virgins would seem to be those who were expecting to go to heaven. They were both on their way, but the foolish represented those backslidden in heart. They had lost the (oil) grace of God out of their hearts. Through carelessness they lost the joys of salvation, or possibly some had let false doctrines supplement the truth, thereby imbibing false spirits. But they thought they were right. It's a dangerous thing to trifle with God. If we are not honest with ourselves and willing to measure to God's Word, we will become deceived. We will go right on thinking we are right. This comes from not being honest before God. We know our own hearts and we know if we are measured to God's

Word. His Spirit and Word agree. Read 2 Thess. 2:10-12. Both the wise and foolish were on their way to meet the Bridegroom (Jesus' returning, or facing death), just as we are today. Happy were the wise, but how sad for the foolish! The door was shut. Those deceived foolish ones were still clinging to their dishonesty into which the false spirit they imbibed had brought them. Of course, this is only a parable. When Jesus comes in the clouds of glory, all false spirits will lose their power, and every soul will be stripped of his deception. They will see themselves as God sees them. They will cry for the rocks and mountains to hide them from the blazing truth which will be shown up in their lives. In eternity they will moan, groan, and bewail the fact that they have not been honest before God and to their own souls. They might pound on the doors of Glory, but it will be too late! When Jesus comes He will be their Judge and not their Saviour. The day of grace will be passed. How sad! Surely it behooves us today to be ready and to be honest with our souls before God and His Word. We had better be wise and keep plenty of oil, or grace, in our vessel, or heart. —M. Miles

A BIBLE FOR A SONGBOOK

Some time before Mr. Vaughan, Deputy Purveyor to his Majesty's forces under Lord Wellington, was brought to a knowledge of the truth, he had occasion to go to Birmingham on business. While there, as he was amusing himself with a songbook, he was accosted by a gentleman who begged the favour of knowing what collection of songs it was.

Mr. Vaughan having satisfied the gentleman's curiosity, the latter observed that he also had a book which he carried in his pocket, and which he would with pleasure exchange with him for his songbook; but only on one condition—that he would read it through. Mr. Vaughan consented without hesitation, upon which the gentleman presented him with a small pocket-Bible. This incident seems to have made a deep impression on Mr. Vaughan's emotion. He regarded it as a stretching forth of the Divine hand for his salvation. This Bible he preserved with the utmost care. —Sel.

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