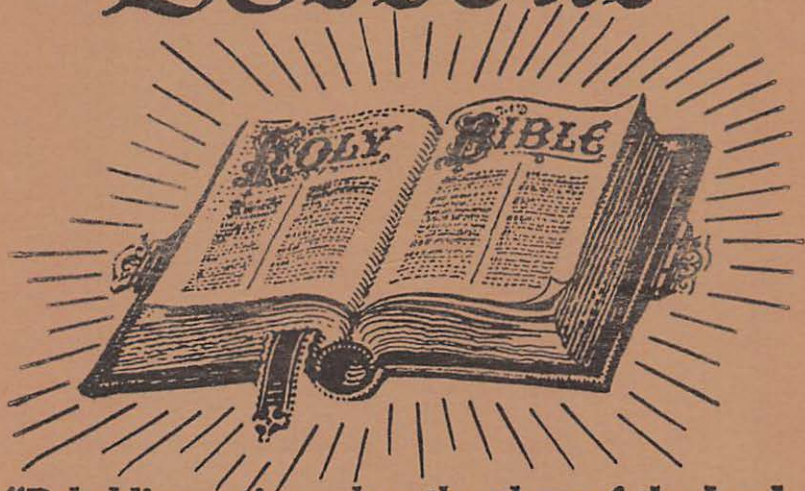


1976

# Bible Lessons



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

**ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Vol. 14, No. 1  
Jan., Feb., Mar.  
1982**

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

# **Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People**

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**Volume 14**

**Jan., Feb., Mar., 1982**

**No. 1**

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## **Table of Contents**

	Page
Jan. 3 Faith the Work of Creation.....	1
Jan. 10 The Fall of Man—A Fall From Faith.....	6
Jan. 17 The Necessity of Faith.....	10
Jan. 24 The Faith of Abraham—Part 1.....	16
Jan. 31 The Faith of Abraham—Part 2.....	20
Feb. 7 Faith Stands Upon the Promises of God ..	27
Feb. 14 The Sin of Unbelief.....	31
Feb. 21 The Rest of Faith the True Christian Sabbath .....	34
Feb. 28 By Faith and Not by Sight .....	41
Mar. 7 The Works of Faith—Faith in Action .....	45
Mar. 14 The Faith.....	48
Mar. 21 Importuning Faith .....	54
Mar. 28 The Trying of Our Faith .....	60

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

**Edited by Leslie C. Busbee, and other co-workers**

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## Theme for First Quarter

We are inspired to set forth a series of Bible studies on a very vital subject for the souls of men. It is the Bible truths that teach the importance, working, and the benefit of having FAITH IN GOD. When we consider how that unbelief was the principal downfall of the nation of Israel, as well as the real cause of the fall of man into sin, it behooves us to be on our guard against unbelief. The best way to safely protect our souls from going down in the spirit of unbelief is to have, hold, and possess an unwavering faith in God. The Bible has many vital and helpful truths for us to know and understand. So with a prayer that the Spirit of the living God will convey to hearts the essence of this vital truth, we present this series of lessons on FAITH. —The Publishers

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January 3, 1982

### FAITH THE WORK OF CREATION

Heb. 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Psa. 33:6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

8 Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

Col. 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist:

Job 26:7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.

Jer. 10:12 He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

13 When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

**Memory Verse:** I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. Isa. 45:12

**Central Thought:** All things in nature have their constitution and existence by the Word of God. This truth of things that are seen having their basis in the Invisible is the essence of faith. Faith is the grasping of the promise of God for the assurance of the things desired. To deny faith is to deny the realities of creation.

**Word Definition:** *Create:* to bring into being; to cause to exist. *Consist:* held together or constituted.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

From the various writers in the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit, we have an agreement concerning the creation of all things and the upholding of all things by the Word of God. From Moses to Paul it has been the firm conviction of the children of God that all things seen were shaped and brought forth by the invisible powers of Almighty God. What we seek to do in this lesson is to establish the truth that faith in our lives today works in this manner. From the invisible to the visible, from the things that are not to those that are. This is the working of our Creator. Not only did He do that in creating the world, but He continues in His role as the faithful Creator for the souls of men. No natural law need hinder God from doing His great work for mankind. Jesus was able to turn water into wine, feed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, cause the coin to be in the mouth of the fish that Peter caught, raise the dead, heal

the sick, and do many other wonderful miraculous things because He was the Creator. He had control of all physical and natural powers because they had their constitution in Him. Job said that He hung the earth on nothing. Jeremiah stated that "when he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens." "He spake and it was done." All things obey and move at the voice of the Almighty. It may not exist before, but after He speaks it will be there. We must have this kind of faith in God. We must learn the great lesson of stepping out on the promises of God with nothing else to stand on. —L. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What are things that are seen created from?
2. What holds the elements together?
3. Why is believing in the creation of God so important for our faith?
4. What does a denial of the creation do to the individual?
5. What danger is there in giving credit to the theory of evolution?

### COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

"And the earth was without form, and void." "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." How Satan has sought to destroy the truth and verity of these words in the hearts of men! It matters not how many seemingly visible answers man comes up with that are contrary to this, it is still true that God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. There have been developments and changes of patterns, but the basic law of life has not changed from creation. Men have sunk into unbelief and abused the wonderful world that God made, but God changeth not. His power is still the same as when He spoke the world into existence. We that cling to this faith will be rewarded with great and blessed things from Him. The theory of evolution fastened upon the hearts of mankind because it afforded an explanation that did away with faith. Man's unbelief made him an open prey to this delusion. Evolution is but a theory. There are many unanswered questions in its text. God has not left Himself without a witness: He

has verified the truth of His powers of creation many times to those who trust in Him. "By Him all consist." By him all things are held together. Scientists have acknowledged that they sense that an unseen and strange power is holding the elements together. If this power were ever to be withdrawn or turned loose, all things would disintegrate. Many atoms are found to be formed with negative and positive charged particles. Positive particles repel each other while positive and negative particles attract each other. What is it that holds a mass of positive particles together? It is the power of God. 2 Peter 3:10-12, states that the elements shall melt and be dissolved. The Greek word for these two terms is "loosen." The elements at Christ's coming will be loosened. All the material universe will pass away. It is now being held together by the Word of God. Let us hold fast the faithful Word, and maintain faith in the Almighty God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Man provides a substitute for nearly everything that pertains to God. If one fails to exercise faith and a belief in God, then the alternative is to place that confidence in man. Those who are unable to accept the simple fact of a world created by God, speedily grasp the theory of evolution. This theory is nothing more than a diabolical trick of Satan to destroy faith in God. If one cannot accept that which God has created and is apparent to the natural eye, such as the creation of the world, will it be any less difficult to comprehend the work of the salvation of a soul?

Let us consider science versus the Bible. Does science completely disagree with the Bible? No! There are many things that science has proved that are stated in the Bible. There does not exist today one unquestioned find of archaeology that proves the Bible to be in error at any point. The collapsed walls of Jericho have been found by Dr. John Garstang, director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. Dr. Garstang found that the walls had fallen outward, even though they were 15 feet high and 10 feet thick—completely substantiating the Biblical account. Furthermore, he found from pottery and

scarab evidence that the city had been destroyed about 1400 B. C., coinciding with Joshua's date.

The Hittites are mentioned 46 times in the Bible. A century ago, critics of the Bible claimed that no such people existed. Since that time, archaeologists have found Hittite inscriptions revealing that they were one of the powerful nations in ancient times.

Science and the Bible do not totally disagree. Why is it then that science is so far astray concerning the creation? It is because one can prove almost anything desired with a few facts. However, one cannot have a proven theory until all of the facts are placed in their proper order without a missing link. Many scientists will inform you that there are a lot of missing links in the theory of evolution. The Christian, believing in the Biblical account of the creation, finds it complete and simple.

—Wayne Murphey

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—L. D. Pruitt, Publisher

January 10, 1982

## THE FALL OF MAN—A FALL FROM FAITH

Gen. 2:15 And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him.

21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

22 And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

3:1 Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?



**Memory Verse:** Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 1:12.

**Central Thought:** Adam and Eve sinned and disobeyed God because they ceased to believe God's Word. Satan so prevailed over their minds that they looked at the things which were seen and not at the spiritual. Satan is still seeking today to draw souls into unbelief and discrediting God.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The account of the creation of man in our lesson and the description of his happy lot make us aware that the chief joy of his heart was that of his fellowship with God. God is a Spirit, and He communicated with man before the fall in a real and wonderful way. This fellowship with God was so pure and holy that sin, guilt, and defilement were not in the picture at all. Man was not conscious of anything evil or degrading about his nakedness because his mind and heart were so innocent and pure. He was enraptured and enveloped in the love and beauty of His wonderful Creator. The warning that was given with the command to abstain from the forbidden tree was accepted, believed, and highly regarded as true. For Satan to prevail against the holy plan of God with regard to His creation, he must approach the woman and decoy her mind and heart away from believing what God had said. He got her to look at the tree. He filled her with adverse thoughts, denying the danger and warning that had been given by God. Thus in a few moments her faith was torn down and she forgot about the consequences that would follow. Bringing her husband into this association of unbelief, Eve forfeited the well-pleasing of the Creator. At once they became aware of the nakedness of their bodies. What caused this? The sense of guilt and their eyes being opened to physical and natural realities brought it about. They had fallen from that realm of the spiritual and unseen realities of God to the plane of things seen. And God made good His warning. The seed of unbelief was planted in their souls. This principal of sin has passed upon all mankind. The absence of God's Spirit to bless

and inspire is replaced by a disposition to go after the flesh and the material things of life. Jesus came to restore man back to that sweet relationship with God, and to do this, Christ became the author and finisher of our faith.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How did God set the pattern of faith for Adam and Eve to follow?
2. What command did God give for them to keep?
3. Was the obedience to this command necessary for their faith?
4. What did their disobedience do to their faith?
5. How did Satan use visible things to attract them to go his way?

### **COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Jesus said that no man has seen God at any time. God is invisible: He cannot be seen by human eyes. Adam and Eve did not see Him with their physical eyes or senses. His presence was to them in the Spirit, so real and keenly discerned by their newly formed and inspired hearts. The natural realm held its true course to them, blessed, overshadowed, and kept by the upholding and preserving power of the Creator. But God willed that Adam and Eve serve and obey Him through choice and not necessity. So, He provided a means of transgression if they so chose, and thus Satan was given opportunity to approach them and affront the precious Word of God to their minds. He openly charged God with intentionally hiding the truth from them. He made God's command seem unjust, cruel, and depriving. The character of God was defamed, and His Word discredited. That is why their faith could fall so easily. As long as they beheld their state as blessed and praiseworthy, the forbidden tree had no allurements. But Satan sowed discontent in their hearts. He got them to look at something that could be touched, tasted, seen, and discerned with the natural senses. It was actually a fall from faith to the base and material things. God had nothing else to do but to sentence it all to the promise of destruction. The beautiful garden of Eden with its eternal tree of life must now be

barred from man's partaking. Man was set adrift on the sea of fleshly and physical endeavor and sight. Hope was given and a promise was made of the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. But the posterity of Adam was subjugated to the material side of life. Sin had done its evil work. Such is still the condition of the majority of people today. Their lives are gauged and directed solely by things of time and sense. Faith is not what you can see. Thus as long as people live to the flesh they cannot have faith in God. It is a challenge to us today who are saved in Christ to live by faith and not by sight.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

By faith God created a perfect earth; He possessed the ability and wisdom to form something out of nothing. It is important to believe that He can do the same thing in our lives.

A vital factor to consider in the creation is that God had pliable material with which to work. The firmament and elements were all subject to His will. For this reason, God was able to look back at His work on the sixth day and know that it was good.

We realize that God created man with a free will. Until Adam's fall, the will of man was subject to his Maker. God walked with Adam and Eve and communed with them, and doubtless gave them instructions as how to live a contented and fruitful life. Since Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and gained a knowledge of good and evil, man has found it difficult to bend his will to God's plan.

Many times worldly knowledge is a detriment to faith. Often, individuals think they know what is best for their own lives, and thwart God's purpose and plan for them.

Jeremiah was instructed to go down to the potter's house. The lesson that he learned there is one that all of us should absorb. If we are pliable in God's hand as the clay is in the hand of the potter, God can mold us and create something useful.

We should strive to be in the condition of Adam and Eve before their fall from faith. If we are totally surren-

dered to God, He can work miracles in our lives. We can review our experiences as God did His creation, and realize that it has all been good and profitable for our learning.  
—Wayne Murphey

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January 17, 1982

### THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 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.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Hab. 2:1 I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

2 And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

3 For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

2 Cor. 4:11 For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

**Memory Verse:** Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Isa. 53:1

**Central Thought:** God is a Spirit, and cannot be seen by the natural man. Through the avenue of His Word, God relates to man. Faith is the persuasion and conviction in the heart of man of God's existence and faithfulness. It is the only way that man can really relate to God. Faith is believing God's Word without any visible support or circumstance.

**Word Definition:** *Faith:* Trust, credence, reliance, believing, persuasion.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

There is no substitute for believing God and taking Him at His word. Our lesson declares that without faith it is impossible to please God. We must believe that He is; we must be persuaded that there is a God. Without this persuasion in our hearts we will have very little incentive or desire toward Him. Although God created all things, and all things bespeak and manifest the glory of God, yet the material side of life must not be the basis for our trust and hope. We must look beyond the things that are seen to the Unseen One who brought all these things forth. As we have already learned, by Him all these things consist. By Him we consist also and in Him we live and move and have our being. It is vital for every person to experience the working of God beyond and in contrast to the normal and natural sequence of things. For this cause we feel led to bring these Scriptures to mind for our lesson today. It is needful to have faith. It is vital, expedient, and indispensable to have faith in God. Abel, Enoch, and Noah were three men who each set an example of faith in his own life. We might say that they were the forerunners of the faith of Abraham, who later was named the Father of the faithful. Each one manifested faith in a different way, but all showed how vital faith was to them in their relationship to God and what a great reward they experienced because of their faith.

Each of them triumphed over death in a different way. Abel was slain, but still lived and spoke in God's sight. This shows how faith will triumph in the resurrection. Enoch exercised so much faith in God and lived so completely in the realm of faith that God rewarded him to avoid death altogether. Then Noah, because of his faith and obedience to God, rode out the flood and saved his life and escaped death. As faith was vital to them, so it is vital and of necessity to us. —Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What was Abel's triumph (reward) for his faith?
2. How was Enoch rewarded for his faith?
3. What did Noah's faith enable him to do?
4. How vital is faith to the soul today?
5. What is the expression of the spirit of faith that we must have?
6. How will we prosper in the Lord if we never come to exercise faith in God beyond that which is seen?

### COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Since it was through not believing in God that man fell from that holy plane of fellowship with God, it is only through believing and trusting that man can ever hope to regain that righteous estate. Adam and Eve were persuaded that God had created them and that God was real. The devil got their eyes off that persuasion long enough to get them to do something that God had commanded them not to do. Therefore, the cord that was their contact with God was severed. Now we see in our lesson that the contact of faith is once more being restored. Although because of sin God was separated from man, faith in the heart of man was sufficient to bring God's blessings down in a wonderful way. Since unbelief was the cause of man's sin, faith began to counteract and retard sin. This is why faith is so vital. It is of great necessity for us to believe in God and the authority of His Word and counsel. As we begin to rise above all the doubts, fears, and unbelief that swirl around us in this world, and to reckon with the verity and faithfulness of God's word and promises, we experience faith working in our souls. We must step forth and put our faith in action.

We must have the spirit of faith which speaks and testifies because of believing in the heart. We believe that God is real, that He sent His Son Jesus who died, rose again, and is sitting at the right hand of God. This persuasion helps and enables us to be victorious over all things—even death. Paul said that he had “the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken.” He was believing that despite the suffering of hardship and death as a Christian, he would be resurrected to eternal life with the saints just as Jesus was resurrected. The prophet Habakkuk set himself to seek God and find what His answer to him would be concerning the many burdens of his time. God’s answer was that “the just shall live by his faith.” We should settle it in our minds once and for all that the only way to find success and victory in our soul’s salvation is to have faith in God and be obedient to His Word.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Scriptures are very plain about the necessity of possessing faith. Faith is a manifold gift consisting of two traits: belief and trust. We must believe, then trust, or we will fail to receive the answer to our petitions.

The Bible is full of Scriptures on believing. Hebrews 10:38, 39, says, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Believing is vital to the salvation of our soul. After we believe, we must trust God for the keeping of our soul. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Jude 24.

Believing and trusting work for the healing of the body as well as for any other problem one may have in life. When two blind men sought healing, Jesus asked the question, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” After their affirmative reply He answered, “According to your faith be it unto you.” So we see that belief is an important part of faith. At a particular time, the apostle Paul faced some trials in his life. All would agree that Paul

possessed great belief in God, but in this particular trial he was called upon to do some trusting. "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." 2 Cor. 1:8-10.

Belief is something in which we come to a certain point in order to obtain. We come to the point of accepting the fact that God is. Trusting, however, spans a length of time while we wait on God to work out His will. We must do both in order to obtain God's blessing on our lives.

—Wayne Murphey

### THE WAYWARD SON

It is now about seven years since the conversion of my friends Mr. and Mrs. Jackson. At that time they had a large family, and being dependent upon his weekly earnings in a printing establishment for their support, the labor necessarily fell upon Mrs. Jackson and was unintermitted and severe. Being of a somewhat delicate makeup, her health gave way. It was the kind sympathy of Christian friends in the time of affliction, when their hearts were tender, which in the providence of God, prepared the way for their instruction, conviction, and conversion.

Who can estimate the sad consequences of having lived so long without an acknowledgment of God in a family, with no family altar from which the incense of devotion ascends morning and evening to heaven? Hitherto my friends had thus lived, and now they were converted. They found an obstacle in their way in their oldest son James. Unrestrained, he had followed the promptings of his unrenewed nature, and now acted in direct opposition to the wishes of his parents. Being just at that point where thoughtless youth is most anxious to be freed even from the semblance of authority, he became the associate of the trifling and giddy, and it was with the utmost difficulty that his father could induce him to attend family worship. Oh, how fervently did these young Christians pray for the conversion of their first-born son! But alas, his feet had begun the descent of the hill of vice, and with rapid strides he hurried on.



One morning he seemed to linger more than usual, as he took his leave to attend his daily vocation. His mother did not particularly remark of it at the time, but when evening came and he returned not, she remembered the evident reluctance with which he had left that morning. The hours of that night passed slowly away, how slowly none but anxious parents in similar circumstances can tell.

The morning came, but James had not returned. Mr. Jackson, greatly distressed and very anxious, visited every place to make inquiries where he thought he could obtain any tidings of his son, but with no result. Days passed, but still they were in suspense, and they "went and told Jesus" their trouble, praying that He would strengthen them to bear their affliction. Today they will tell you that this, the first great sorrow of their Christian life, was sanctified to their good.

In about two weeks from the time of his leaving home, they received a letter from James, informing them that he had enlisted in the United States Army and was now on his way to Texas. He begged them to take no legal measures for his recovery, as he intended to be a soldier, and would enlist again if they obtained his discharge now.

With their hearts filled with distress, they again sought counsel of the Lord, and it was deemed best to permit him to go, in accordance with his avowed purpose. But his case was laid before the people of God, and their prayers requested in his behalf.

James wrote home very seldom during the first year, and when he did write, his letters were very trifling and unsatisfactory. But at length the prodigal had "come to himself" in a far country. Having much leisure, he was looking over the scant library of one of his comrades, when his eye fell upon a tract entitled, "Thou God Seest Me," which was laid between the leaves of a book. This sentence was the first arrow that pierced his soul, which was soon wounded by many others, for he read and reread that tract until his accumulated sins seemed to crush him to the earth. Bitter were the tears he now shed, but he could shed them only in solitude. His comrades rallied, joked, and derided him, but his distress was too great to be dissipated. While in this state of mind he wrote home: "O Mother, I would not listen to you when I might; now I would gladly listen to your counsels, but thousands of miles separate us. I often leave the camp, and behind a bush or tree cry to God to have mercy on me; but I am much in doubt whether He will have mercy on such a wretch as I am."

Many weeks passed ere the light shone upon His soul; but when the day came, it was bright and serene. His soul was filled

with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost through believing. He became humble before God, and Jesus flooded his soul with forgiveness and peace. James is now free, and a comfort to his parents, having enlisted under Christ's banner and become a soldier of the cross.

Thus the clouds which Providence permits sometimes to gather above us, though they darken our skies for a season, frequently give forth refreshing showers to revive our drooping spirits. The cup mingled for us and placed in our hands is never all bitter. Let us as parents first be careful to set before our children a suitable example, and then bear them before the Lord in earnest supplication; for it is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

—From *Sketches from Life*

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January 24, 1982

### THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM — PART 1

Heb. 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Acts 7:2b The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would

give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

Rom. 4:1 What shall we say then that Abraham our faith, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

**Memory Verse:** Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. Gal. Galatians 3:7.

**Central Thought:** Abraham set the pattern for faith and believing in God. He obeyed God's voice regardless of the impossibilities that seemed to rise. And God was faithful to make a way when there seemed to be no way.

**Word Definition:** *Tabernacles:* tents. Abraham had no certain dwelling, but rather lived the life of a nomad, moving about and living in tents which were easily moved.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

It would be well for us to closely examine and widely survey the faith that was found in Abraham. Josephus tells us that Abraham was a person of great sagacity, (reverence) both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions; for which reason he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and he determined to renew and to change the opinion all men happened then to have concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but one God, the Creator of the Universe, and that what happiness men had was from His appointment and not their own power. "To Him alone" he said, "we ought to justly offer our honour and thanksgiving." Because of his teachings, the Chaldeans and other people of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him, thus he at the command of God left that country and came and lived in Canaan. (Josephus, Book 1, chap-

ter 7). This shows the foundation that God found in Abraham to build the experience of faith on. This is a very important thought. A faith experience has to have a solid footing to build upon. All folly, vanity, pride, selfishness, and greed must be swept away. The presence of these things in the heart will render the soul incapable of taking God at His Word. For this is the route of faith. It is to strip the individual of all self-glory and complacency. It is to swing out on the strength of His word alone. Abraham was able to enter the life of faith because of his integrity for what he knew was true and just. Every act of his life in believing God had this underlying principle for its support. —Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What particular need did Abraham have to exercise faith when God called him?
2. Why did he not inherit the land of Canaan visibly?
3. Can you name the three phases of God's promise to Abraham?
4. What was accounted unto Abraham for righteousness?
5. How can we be the children of Abraham today?

### **COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

There were three distinct phases of the faith of Abraham. The first concerned his removal from his land and kindred. It took taking God at His word without any visible evidence or hope for Abraham to leave the land of his nativity. He made this move with no knowledge of just where he was going. This went against his human nature. Who would want to do such a thing? Only through faith in God could this be done. Man is too solicitous of security to do this on his own. He might leave his kindred because of anger or despair, but for religious principles such a move could only be done because of an inward assurance of God's invisible help. The next phase was his dwelling in Canaan. God showed him that he would give him the land for an inheritance, but he could not possess a foot's breadth. He wandered about as a sojourner (a by-dweller) and a stranger. He built no fine habitation, but lived in tents that could be easily dismantled, folded, and transported from place to place. He

lived out the remnant of his days this way. He never saw the promise of Canaan being his own possession fulfilled. The fulfillment was to his seed or descendants. And this brings us to the third phase of his faith. And that had to do with his offspring. He had no son with his wife, Sarah. He had a son with the bondwoman, but this was not the heir that God was singling out. For twenty-five years he waited for the child of promise. In the meantime his body grew old. Sarah passed the time of childbearing. Then in his 100th year when Sarah was almost 90, God open-faced told him that a son would be born within the year. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the thought at first, but they recovered from their momentary unbelief to steadfastly believe that what God had promised, He would perform. Abraham set a pattern for us to follow today in believing and trusting in God. —L. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God has always had a purpose in His dealings with mankind. He did not put Abraham through the ordeal of a long journey needlessly; it was done for the specific plan of giving him an inheritance. If Abraham had failed to exercise faith in God, he would not have received the inheritance.

The Psalmist said, "He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me." Our integrity and faith in God will ultimately bring about victory over all the trials of life.

The third verse of the song "The Bondage of Love" says, "And now I have flung myself recklessly out, like a chip on the stream of the Infinite Will; I pass the rough rocks with a smile and a shout, and I just let my God his dear purpose fulfill." To fling one's self out sounds similar to someone committing suicide. However, the life of a Christian is a life of dying out. In order to allow God's purpose to be fulfilled in our lives, there must be a death of all self and that which is contrary to His will. To fling one's self out is living a life of faith.

Abraham launched out on God's promise, not knowing where he would be led. Perhaps it sounds unreason-

able to do something and have no idea of the outcome of the venture, but with God's guidance and our faith in Him, we rest assured of being "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Col. 1:12

—Wayne Murphey

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January 31, 1982

### THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM — Part 2

Gen. 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest

God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

**Memory Verse:** He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. Romans 4:20.

**Central Thought:** After obtaining the fulfillment of the promise of his son, Isaac, God tested Abraham's faith once more by commanding him to offer his son as a sacrifice. Abraham's obedience to this command perfected and sealed his faith.

**Word Definition:** *Tempt:* test or prove.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

It seems to be the will of God to prove everything that has His name on it. This includes a person's faith. God purposes to put one's faith up against much contrary physical evidence. After Abraham had endured the years of waiting for a son-heir and had been rewarded with Isaac, God saw fit to put his faith to one more crucial test. It was a test that has been repeated in many, many lives of His people since. And Abraham, being the father of the faithful, must needs pass this test and prove his faithfulness. How easily Abraham could have given down at different points along the way. It is for us to observe the faith of Abraham at these points, for he was the father of all who are of faith. He believed God; he rose above every obstacle and discouragement. Hebrews 11:17-19, put it well: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." This explains why Abraham could do such a thing as to take Isaac and offer him up to God. He accounted God able. There was no limit to the credit that he was giving God. If he burned Isaac to ashes, he still believed that God could and would raise him from the dead, because he knew God had said that in Isaac his seed would be called. He had already received Isaac from the dead. He received

Isaac from the deadness of Sarah's womb and the old age of his own body. The surmounting of that previous trial was the strength that he drew from to surmount this final time of trial. We move from faith to faith. Overcome the present encounter and challenge, and it will prepare you for greater ones.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS

1. Name the various difficulties that Abraham's obedience to God in offering Isaac brought to him?
2. What were some of Abraham's actions and words that showed his faith was not faltering?
3. What did Abraham's obedience prove?
4. Of what value is this lesson to us?
5. Is there any relative association between Abraham's sacrifice and Christ?

## COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Abraham knew that God was talking. Having proven God in other fields of life, Abraham prepared for the command that God was now giving him. "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." God knew that Abraham dearly loved his son, and rightly so; however, that was not what He was putting to the test. It was Abraham's love and reverence to God that was at the stake now. Will it endure the flames of adversity and trial? The flames that lick at our faith are the adversities and pressures that the natural realm of life bring against our persuasion in God. Loved ones, earthly associates, circumstances, conditions, natural laws and currents of human tide are the forces that we must surmount. The Genesis account says nothing at this point about Sarah, Abraham's wife. There is a slight indication and chance that she was not present. Abraham was sojourning in the land of the Philistines, and after the sacrifice of Isaac he returned and dwelt at Beersheba. Sarah died a few years later at Hebron. At any rate, Abraham did not let Sarah hinder him from obeying God. He rose up early in the morning: he wasted no time. He tarried not in unbelief. He told the young men that he and Isaac were to go and worship and come again. This was contrary to what it looked like would happen. His faith did not waver. Oh, can we see why God called him the Father of many nations? Abraham never faltered. He went right ahead and took the knife to carry out the command of the Lord. And that is



where God stopped him. "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." His faith was sealed and perfected. God was fully satisfied that Abraham was relying on Him and not on the flesh. This is the proof that we are to furnish God today in our tests and trials of faith. Overcoming all adversities and contrary forces, we are to hold fast and move forward at the command of the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Faith extends far beyond our human reasoning. In our last lesson we studied how that because of Abraham's faithfulness, God promised him an inheritance. It appeared improbable that he would be given a son, but God was faithful to do just that. No doubt Abraham derived great pleasure from the realization that his growing son was a God-given inheritance.

One can imagine the surprise of Abraham when God commanded him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. The thoughts of Abraham at this time are not recorded in the Scriptures, but being human, he may have reasoned thus: "This just doesn't seem right. God gave me this son for an inheritance and now He's trying to deprive me of him. How will I be a father of many nations if I kill my only son?" Whatever his thoughts were, Abraham wasted no time in performing God's bidding.

Occasionally, through the avenue of human reasoning, one may feel that the trials of life are too many and much too difficult. Perhaps we imagine that if something should happen to us, it would be a detriment to the cause of God since we are "such good" workers for Him. Many seemingly justifiable reasons present themselves as to why hard things should not come our direction. By faith we can realize that God's ways and thoughts are above ours, and that whatever His will is for our lives can be submitted to Him. Difficulties in life will not deprive us of our heavenly inheritance, but make it exceedingly more precious.

—Wayne Murphey

### THE GATES OF PEARL

It was during my Indian service—stirring times, too, ripe with mutiny and murder. At that time I had in my regiment a little buglar. I had often noticed him as being too fragile and delicate for the life he had to lead: but he was born in the regiment, and we were bound to make the best of him. His father, as brave a man as ever lived, had been killed in

action; his mother, broken hearted, had dropped, and died six months after.

About two years later, when Willie Holt was fourteen, the regiment was bivouacking some miles from the camp. One morning an act of grave indiscipline was reported to me. On investigation, the rascally act was traced to the men in the very tent where Willie Holt was billeted, two of them being the worst characters in the regiment. The whole lot were instantly put under arrest, and tried by court martial, when enough evidence was produced that one of the prisoners was guilty of the crime. None would own up to being the guilty one; and at last I spoke:

"We have all heard the evidence that proves the perpetrator of last night's dastardly act to be one of the men before us;" then, turning to the prisoners, added, "If any one of you who slept in No. 4 tent last night will come forward and take his punishment like a man, the rest will get off free; but, if not, there remains no other alternative but to punish you all—each, in turn, to receive ten strokes of the cat."

For the space of a couple of minutes, dead silence followed; then, from the midst of the prisoners, where his slight form had been almost hidden, Willie Holt came forward. He advanced to within a couple of yards from where I sat; his face was pale; a fixed intensity of purpose stamped on every line of it, and his steadfast eyes met mine clear and full. "Colonel," said he, "you have passed your word that if any one of those who slept in No. 4 tent last night comes forward to take the punishment, the rest shall get off scot-free. I am ready, sir; and may I take it now?"

For a moment I was speechless, so utterly was I taken by surprise; then, in a fury of anger and disgust, I turned upon the prisoners. "Is there no man among you worthy of the name? Are you all cowards enough to let this lad suffer for your wrong acts? For, that he is guiltless you must know, as well as I." But sullen and silent they stood.

Then I turned to the boy, whose patient, pleading eyes were fixed on my face, and never in all my life have I found myself so painfully situated. I knew my word must stand: and the lad knew it, too, as he repeated once more, "I am ready, sir." Sick at heart, I gave the order, and he was led away for punishment.

Bravely he stood, with back bare, as one—two—three—strokes descended. At the fourth a faint moan escaped from his lips, and ere the fifth fell, a hoarse cry burst from the

group of prisoners who had been forced to witness the scene, and with one bound, Jim Sykes, the black sheep of the regiment, seized the cat, as with choking, gasping utterance he shouted, "Stop it, Colonel, stop it, and tie me up instead. He didn't do it, I did!" and with convulsed and anguished face he swung his arms around the boy.

Fainting and almost speechless, Holt lifted his eyes to the man's face and smiled—yes, a smile. "No, Jim," he whispered, "you are safe now; the Colonel's word will stand." His head fell forward—he had fainted.

The next day, as I was making for the hospital tent where the boy lay, I met the doctor. "How is the lad?" I asked. "Sinking, Colonel," he said quickly. "What!" I ejaculated, horrified beyond words. "Yes, the shock of yesterday has been too much for his strength. I have known for some months it was only a question of time," he added; "and this affair has hastened matters." Then, gruffly, he exclaimed, "He's more fit for Heaven than earth."

A subdued murmur came from the farther corner of the tent, and the sight that met my eyes I shall never forget. The dying lad lay propped up on pillows, and half-kneeling, half-crouching at his side was Jim Sykes. The change in the boy's face startled me; it was deathly white, but his great eyes were shining with a wonderful strange light.

At that moment the kneeling man lifted his head, and I saw drops of sweat standing on his brow as he muttered brokenly, "Why did you do it, lad? Why did you?" "Because I wanted to take it for you, Jim" the weak voice answered. "I thought if I did, it might help you to understand a little bit why Christ died for you." "Why Christ died for me?" "Yes, He died for you because He loved you as I do, Jim; only He loves you more. I only suffered for one sin, but the Lord Jesus Christ took the punishment of all the sins you have ever committed. This punishment of all your sins was death, Jim, and He died for you." "Christ has naught to do with such as me, lad. I'm one of the bad 'uns; you ought to know that." "But He died to save 'bad ones'—just them. He said, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.' Jim," the voice pleaded, "shall He have died in vain? He has poured out His precious life-blood for you. He is knocking; won't you let Him in? Oh! you must—then we shall meet again." The lad's voice failed him, but he laid his hand on the man's bowed head. A choking sob was the only answer, and then for several minutes there was silence.

I felt stirred. I had heard such things once—long ago. Thoughts of the mother I had idolized came floating back out of the dead past, and the words seemed a faint echo of hers. How long I stood there I know not, but I was roused by a hoarse cry from the man, and then I saw that the boy had fallen back on his pillows, faint. A few drops of cordial revived him. He opened his eyes, but they were dim, almost sightless. "Sing to me, Mother," he whispered, " 'The Gates of Pearl.'—I am so tired."

Curious, in a flash, the words came back to me; I had heard them often in that shadowy past, and I found myself repeating them softly to the dying boy:

"Though the path be ever so steep,  
And rough to walk on and hard to keep,  
It will lead, when the weary road is trod,  
To the Gates of Pearl—the City of God."

As the last words fell from my lips, his eyes brightened and met mine gratefully. "Thank you—Colonel," he whispered slowly; "I shall soon be there." His tone of glad confidence seemed so strange, I said involuntarily, "Where?" With a smile he answered, "Why, in Heaven, Colonel! The roll-call has sounded for me, and the gates are open; the price paid." Then softly, dreamily, he repeated:

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come!"

Sykes came, I came; will you come?

—General Hardress



**SPECIAL NOTICE:** If your subscription expired with this issue, please send us your renewal at once. It must be in our office by Feb. 15, 1982.

February 7, 1982

## FAITH STANDS UPON THE PROMISES OF GOD

Heb. 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Rom. 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

2 Pet. 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2 Cor. 1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

1 John 2:25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

2 Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

**Memory Verse:** Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised. Hebrews 10:23.

**Central Thought:** What God reveals to us in His promises we are to claim and accept on the strength of His promises and not faint in our confidence as we wait for God to fulfill what He has promised.

**Word Definitions:** *Promise:* An announcement, com-mital, assertion; an assent or pledge, a divine assurance for good. *Immutability:* Unfailing, unchanging, permanent abiding.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today some key Scriptures that deal with the thought of the promises of God and of what value they are to us. Once again, we are beholding the faith of Abraham, this time with regard to his holding fast to the promises of God. Everything that we get from God comes to us by virtue of His promises. In one sense of the word, the promises of God are the basis of our faith. Without His promises we would have nothing to believe or to stand on. But there is, according to our lesson, an elapse of time between the receiving of the promise and the fulfillment of that promise. We must get our eyes and consideration off the conditions and how things appear. We must grasp in our hearts and minds what God hath promised in His Word. He has promised it, and He is able to fulfill that promise. We grasp the promise before we ever see any indication of fulfillment. This is crediting God as faithful, which He really wills that we do. To credit God with fulfillment before it actually appears is the essence of faith. Such was the faith of Abraham. The whole plan of salvation is a faith work, laying hold of promises that God has given concerning every need that mankind has. The exceeding great and precious promises point us to the divine nature, grace to live and be triumphant in Christ, His glorious coming, and at the last—eternal life. God has promised these things to all who come to Him in faith believing. All things that pertain to life and godliness are provided in Christ. But we must grasp the promise and hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering until we see the fulfillment actually accomplished. —L. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. Does the fulfillment of God's promises come immediately after the promise is given?
2. What do the promises of God contain?
3. Why do some men count God slack concerning His promises, and what is the reason for this seeming slackness?
4. What was the attitude of Abraham concerning God's promise to Him?
5. How can we be sure that God will fulfill His promise?

## COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

God promised to Abraham a posterity through a son who was to be born to him and Sarah. For many years Abraham lived with only a promise. He saw no possible way for its fulfillment. Everything seemed to be hedged up against him. His body grew old as did Sarah's. The time of bearing children was past as far as their natural condition was concerned. But he still had the promise: he clung tenaciously to that promise. Never giving down to unbelief or doubts, he pressed forward, looking for that city whose builder and maker was God. And then the time came when their son Isaac was born. How happy and fulfilled his faith no doubt felt! But God willed to try him once more. He commanded Abraham to go and offer up Isaac as a burnt offering. Oh, what a blow! To think that his son, the fulfillment of the promise, would die and be burned to ashes! But he grasped the promise anew. God had promised that in Isaac his seed would be called. And he accounted that God would raise Isaac from the dead if need be to fulfill that unfailing promise. This kind of faith pleased God greatly, and it was there that the promise took shape in an oath. God swore that He would bless Abraham, because Abraham did not withhold Isaac from Him. Jesus Christ offered Himself without spot to God as an offering. The promises of God to us become an oath through Christ's offering of Himself. God wants our consolation in Him to be strong, and He wants us to flee from the wrath to come and lay hold of that refuge that is set before us. God promises eternal life to all who will go with Him all the way. This is His promise. He has promised to come again; He has promised a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; He has promised all things that pertain unto life and godliness here and in the world to come. Let us cleave to His blessed promises. Let us have a faith that will triumph over all circumstances and conditions that seem to be, and grasp the promise that assures of victory and everlasting hope in Christ. —L. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The promises of God are often a great boost to our faith. They were provided for a purpose, and produce various desirable effects on us.

If I were to promise something to my child, there are several results that it would create. Although I failed to

fulfill the promise speedily, my child would still entertain the belief that it was going to be done. He would know that, because of the promise, the intention would be fulfilled.

It would be cruel indeed, to say to my child, "Well, I guess I could buy you a toy, but I don't believe that I will." A loving father would not intentionally initiate a subject and excite his child's hope, if he had no intention of fulfilling it. A wise father would avoid the very mention of that which would hopelessly ignite his child's desires and destroy the usual contentment of the child's mind.

Our loving father in heaven operates in a similar way. Some people teach that the days of miracles are past and that God heals no more. If that were so, I don't understand why God saw to it that many Scriptures in the Bible pertain to healing. Since we have been given promises in the Bible, the child of God can manifest faith and expect the work to be done.

Another effect that a promise has on a child, is that it creates in him the freedom to inquire of His father when the pledge is to be fulfilled. Provided the child did not demand in an impatient manner, the father would show no offense when reminded of the word which he had spoken. We are exhorted by the apostle Paul to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:16. As long as one approaches God humbly, realizing his insufficiency and need of help, he may confidently and boldly approach the throne with his petition. The child who doubts that his requests will be fulfilled will be hesitant about approaching his father.

Possessing the promises of God should mount our faith and we are better able to pray with the belief that it will be done.

—Wayne Murphey





**February 14, 1982**

## **THE SIN OF UNBELIEF**

Heb. 3:7 Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;

15 While it is said; To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

**Memory Verse:** But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Heb. 10:39.

**Central Thought:** A failure to believe God and His word will bring about spiritual ruin for the soul. Since without faith it is impossible to please God, we should be on our guard against the spirit of unbelief which will cause us to draw back unto perdition.

**Word Definitions:** *Provocation:* irritation and exasperation. This is referring to the drawing back of Israel in the time when God wanted them to go on over into the Canaan

land. *Unbelief*: faithlessness and disobedience; untrustworthiness.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The example that Israel set, when they refused to go forward at God's command to invade Canaan, is a warning against the spirit of unbelief for us today. The writer in the Hebrew epistle is using this example of unbelief to show the danger that we face in the Christian dispensation of failing to enter into the spiritual blessings because of unbelief. To have faith, one must assert himself. He must step forward and move out in the name of the Lord. Israel had braved the wilderness and had seen God's power and majesty in their deliverance from Egypt. They should have been ready to step forward courageously with confidence of God's great unfailing help. But the influence of those who brought up a bad report caused their faith to go down. This provoked and angered God greatly. He had done all that could be done to get this people to move forward. He had laid a groundwork for their faith that should have held up in the conflict and pressures. But it matters not how much encouragement one may have from the Lord, there is always a chance and a fleshly inclination to draw back. And when Israel did provoke God by their refusal to co-operate and go forth at the command of God, He swore to them in His wrath that their chance of inhabiting the land that He had long promised them was gone forever. They were sentenced to wander in the wilderness until their carcasses would fall. Without faith that is all we are—just a carcass. The spirit of unbelief will eat the vitals out of our experience with God and we will have just a shell of a profession. We may go ahead and claim to be children of God and at the same time deny the power thereof.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Why is unbelief so offensive and grievous to God?
2. What causes a person to harden his heart?
3. Is there any danger of our having unbelief today?
4. Of what value is the command to "exhort one another daily"?
5. What will unbelief keep us from today?

### COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

From the 95th Psalm, the writer draws a dramatic appeal to us who hear the gospel of Christ. "Harden not your

heart!" Oh, what a serious message this is to us! Israel had seen God work wonders. They had no reason to draw back from obeying His command. The land of Canaan was their home. God had promised it to them in Abraham hundreds of years before. They had lived in hope and anticipation of returning to their own land. But now the time finally came when at Kadesh-Barnea they were to invade the land and drive out the inhabitants. But they drew back in doubt and fear. Instead of looking at the greatness of the power of God, they looked at the big walled cities, the great tall giants, and at their own meager strength. We today are called upon to enter the Canaan land—but this is a spiritual Canaan land. We will learn more about this later, but this is the land of entire sanctification and soul rest. It takes faith to venture out and consecrate all to God. And the spirit of unbelief is always ready to assert itself. Without decisiveness for God and His perfect will, the souls will fall prey to this evil heart of unbelief. This is the warning of the writer. After delivering the children of Israel from Egypt, God afterward destroyed them that believed not. See Jude 5. Abraham had finished his earthly days and had died in faith that his posterity would return and occupy the land of Canaan. Joseph had closed his life with a charge to the children of Israel to carry his bones with them when they went back to Canaan. But here the children of Israel were drawing back. This meant that they were denying not only the power of God, but they were discrediting the testimony of those who had gone on before. Oh, the spirit of unbelief—how quickly it can catch up with us if we are not on our guard. This is something to which we had best take heed and be on our guard against. We should not excuse or overlook what some call "a lack of faith." "Oh, that is just a lack of faith," one may say. But any lack of faith is a detriment. It should not be counted lightly. It is like leaven: it will increase in volume with time and exercise. May our souls be stirred to defense against this destructive agent of the devil—unbelief. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Let us take heed lest we who claim kinship with Christ fall into unbelief. You may say, "I believe in God and am very religious. I see no chance of unbelief entering my heart." In the 6th chapter of Mark, we read of Jesus as He taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. If anyone believed and accepted the teachings of Christ, it seems it

should have been those who had entered the synagogue to worship.

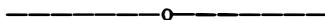
In the 6th verse of the chapter, it states that Jesus marveled at their unbelief. Unless we are obedient to the leadings of God, we also will be guilty of unbelief.

The Israelites, who were the chosen people of God, were charged with this sin. They pursued God to a certain point, but then drew back. Fighting giants was not an every day occurrence for them and they objected to it. We must be willing to go all the way with God to be accounted a believer.

One of the verses in our lesson says, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." It requires faith to be saved. We approach God believing, with our heart open for the blessings and leadings of His Spirit. We must maintain that very same attitude continually throughout our Christian life.

Always bear in mind that it is not only the atheist who will be lost due to unbelief, but many who at one time experienced a closeness with God and professed Christianity.

—Wayne Murphey



**February 21, 1982**

## **THE REST OF FAITH THE TRUE CHRISTIAN SABBATH**

Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.

7 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To—

day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

11 Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Matt. 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labor 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:** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Col. 2:16, 17.

**Central Thought:** From the foundation of the world, God had a rest for men to enter. Neither the literal sabbath rest nor the Canaan land rest afforded what God designed for the soul. The rest of faith that is found in believing and trusting in Jesus Christ satisfies what God intended as a true sabbath rest.

**Word Definitions:** *Sabbath:* to desist from labor or exertion.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Unbelief kept Israel from going forth and entering the land of Canaan. "They shall not enter into my rest." The land of Canaan was a land of rest. God called it His rest, and the entering into Canaan was entering into His rest. The writer in Hebrews links this Canaan rest with the Jewish Sabbath, implying that both rests failed to afford what God really designs for mankind. "Again, he limiteth [marks out, appoints, or decrees] a certain day, saying in David, . . . To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." The kind of rest that God is calling us to now is the rest of faith. The soul finds rest when it believes the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and ceases from the works of the flesh and sin. It is fully enjoyed and experienced in entire sanctification. To lose ourselves

and find it in Christ is soul rest indeed. It is the rest of faith. Believing God and accepting His divine will as the standard for our lives brings us into a sabbath that goes far beyond what the literal Jewish seventh day sabbath afforded. Notice the expression: "We which have believed do enter into rest." Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world God still yearns for men and women to enter into the rest that He instituted. He has marked out the Christian day to afford mankind of this opportunity to enter into His rest. And it all is summed up in believing the gospel and following the example of the meek and lowly Jesus. Jesus said that in coming unto Him and taking His yoke upon us we would find rest to our souls. And this rest is far more serious and carries much more responsibility and challenge than just merely relinquishing the work load one day a week. It is an every day occupation for the soul to enter into the rest of faith that God has brought to us. —Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What two rests in the Old Testament were mentioned in our lesson?
2. Can you see why the Canaan land was called His rest?
3. What is the rest that we are called to enter into today?
4. Why is believing God termed a soul rest?
5. Which is more serious: the Canaan rest or the rest of faith?
6. How do we enter the rest of faith?

### COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

"He that entered into his rest hath ceased from his own works as God did from his." What is this ceasing from our own works? Is God satisfied with a mere work stoppage one day a week? What about the other six days? Common sense could tell us that the nature and disposition of God is not satisfied with the seventh day Saturday ceasing from carnal labor. It may be good for a person to do this, but it does not satisfy the design of God. God is calling us to a far more important and beneficial sabbath keeping. Those in the day when God was calling His people to enter into the Canaan rest drew back in unbelief. They entered not into His rest on account of their unbelief. It is the same with the rest of the soul. Unbelief will keep one from consecrating His life fully to God and receiving the Holy Spirit. It is a parallel condition. Soul rest retires the heart of man from doubt, fear, worry, selfishness, pride, strife, greed, covetousness, jeal-

ousy, hatred, malice, discontent, murmuring, and every other evil that God is displeased with. Trusting fully in God for all things rids the soul of these staining qualities of attitude and character. We relax ourselves in the arms of God and cease from all our struggling. It is no longer I but He. We have lost our own selfish endeavors and interests and have found the real purpose and joy of life in God. It takes effort to enter into this kind of rest. It takes very little effort to just quit working one day a week. But to turn from the selfish and greedy pursuits of the flesh, and to quit doubting and worrying—this takes real soul effort. It takes determination and consistent daily watching to remain in the state of soul rest that Jesus has enjoined upon us. Our fear should be in coming short of this rest. Only those who have entered into this rest will be counted worthy of the eternal inheritance that God has willed to us. It is a serious thing. Let us labor to enter into the rest of faith and not fall after the manner of unbelief that was in those of the past. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Had the children of Israel entered by faith into the rest which the land of Canaan afforded, still there would have been difficulties to surmount. Entering the soul rest which God provides does not alleviate all of our human sufferings, but it supplies peace in the midst of our trials.

One who is physically asleep and resting will be oblivious to the events happening about him. He may have troubles, but when he is sleeping, they are forgotten in the peace which rest affords. Rest renews strength. Should a person never rest, he would soon become worn and weak. The soul rest of God imparts strength and courage to those who live for Him in an acceptable manner.

Perhaps you know of some who, in the midst of tribulation, display a cheerful smile and conduct themselves as though they are free from care. Those individuals know the meaning of soul rest.

The devil is capable of cheating us out of many of God's blessings by vexing our souls and destroying our soul rest. Naaman nearly forfeited the blessing of healing because he became wroth and upset. Had he displayed faith in the God of Elisha, and straightway dipped in the river Jordan, events would have transpired more smoothly for him and those about him.

When we enter into the soul rest that God has designed for us, it will bring a halt to all chaffing, complaining, and

bitter resentment derived from the circumstances which God allows to occur in our lives. Genuine soul rest breeds a trust and strong confidence in God. —Wayne Murphey

### PRAYER BEHIND THE CORN SHOCK

Emily was converted to God shortly after she was engaged to be married. The surrender which she made of herself in the day of her espousals to her heavenly Bridegroom, was that of "body, soul, and spirit, for time and for eternity;" and such was her sense of obligation to Him "who loved her, and gave himself for her," and of the duty of entire consecration to His service, that she doubted the propriety of fulfilling her engagement of marriage with one who did not love the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the self-sacrificing spirit of a true disciple, she offered to release her fiance from his engagement, fearful lest it might be a barrier in her way of self-consecration, or that he might regard it as a yoke of bondage. But her betrothed would not listen to anything of the kind; he loved her fondly, and none the less for her religion; and he pressed an early marriage, solemnly promising that she should have the full and unrestricted enjoyment of her religious privileges, and that it would be his pleasure and duty to provide a way for her convenience in attending the services of the church, that he would himself regularly accompany her to the house of God on Sunday. The path of duty seemed plain to her, and they were married, and settled down on a farm amid the fruitful hills and smiling vales of R——, in Eastern Pennsylvania.

For a time the husband was true to his promises, and regularly went with his devoted wife to the old stone church, where she worshipped the God of her fathers; but after a season he began to grow weary of the church and his wife's Christian friends. Having a large circle of worldly friends, he began gradually to relax his attentions to his praying wife, and occasionally she was left at home alone with her little family, while the husband was away mingling in scenes of dissipation. Soon he excused himself from going to the house of God on Sunday, but proposed to send his wife under the care of one of his men. This arrangement she kindly but firmly declined, on the ground that as the husband had solemnly pledged himself to go with her, if he did not fulfil his promise she would not consent to ride, but would walk the distance—three or four miles—until he was prepared to fulfil his obligation; and this she did for a number of years. In every other respect the husband manifested the most devoted attachment to his wife; but his heart was in love with sin, and he was led on by others in the downward road of sin and folly. Especially was he



fond of parties of pleasure, and scenes of social dissipation amid "the song, the dance, and the wine." Not infrequently whole nights were thus spent, and in the "small hours of the night," or at the dawning of the day, he would return to his home, sometimes bringing with him several of his boon companions, to share in the generous meal his neglected wife would prepare.

In these seasons of absence, the grieved and sorrow-stricken wife uttered no complaint; no words of reproach fell from her lips when the erring husband returned; but in strong faith she committed all to God, believing that in his own good time he would turn the heart of her companion and make him a child of His grace.

It was her practice, on these occasions of absence, to take her little children into the bedroom adjoining the sitting room, and after committing them to God, to spend the whole time in prayer until her husband's return. When with his maudlin companions he did return, and called for food, she met him affectionately, with a pleading eye and tear-bedewed cheeks.

Thus years passed on. A large and interesting family was growing up around them, and to all appearance the husband and father was farther from the kingdom of God than ever, and his case seemed almost hopeless. But the faith of the wife did not fail, nor did her efforts relax. She staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was fully persuaded that God was able to do that which He promised. She expected that God would convert her husband.

At length there was a precious outpouring of the Spirit in the congregation where Emily worshipped; the blessed work was extending for miles around, and "many of the people, hearing, believed, and were baptized." The enemies of truth and godliness were in dismay; they "made a covenant with death, and with hell were at agreement;" and by every means sought to hinder and oppose the work of God. Among these despisers was Emily's husband, who, regardless of the tears and entreaties of his wife, bitterly persecuted the saints.

In the "Valley church," every morning and evening, the children of God came together for prayer and praise. Every morning Emily would invite her husband to accompany her to the meeting, but received a decided negative answer; and as if to try her feelings, and to show his contempt for the meeting and for the people of God, he made it his business to engage in hauling limestone from the quarry to the kiln. As he had to pass by the doors of the sanctuary, he would so arrange it that his wagon should pass at the time the congregation was dispersing. The burden on the heart of his longsuffering, patient wife, became

heavier daily, until it seemed insupportable, and her constant cry was, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me;" and it seemed to her that she could not live, unless she obtained the answer to her prayer.

One morning, as she rose from her bed, her mind was impressed with the feeling that her husband *must that day go with her to the meeting*. The impression was so strong that it became a reality, "the strong conviction of things not seen." At the breakfast table she gave the usual invitation to her husband to go with her to the meeting, but received an immediate and firm denial, with the reason, "I must cart limestone today." This was a trial of her faith, but still she clung to the promise of a covenant of God, "Ask, and ye shall receive," and "All things are possible to him that believeth."

After breakfast, the husband went to the barn to harness his horses, and the wife, like the patriarch Jacob, sought a place of retirement, where she might wrestle with God. She went away from the house into a cornfield, from which the corn had been cut and put up into small shocks; and behind one of these, out of all human observation, she knelt in prayer. From this place of wrestling, the barn door through which the husband must pass with his horses was in full view. There, on that white, frosted ground, did that burdened wife plead with her God on behalf of her companion, and with strong crying and tears, she urged the promises, which are all "yea and amen" in Christ Jesus. Like the prophet Elijah, as she cast herself down upon the earth, she was also impelled to look for the signs of the answer to her prayer, 1 Kings 19:43, 44, and as she cast her eyes towards the barn, she saw her husband leading out one of his horses. She wrestled anew, crying mightily to God to save him, and to turn his feet into the way of truth and peace. Again she opened her eyes, and two horses were attached to the wagon. It was a moment of agony; and she renewed, as for her life, her supplications. When she looked again, she saw that all four of the horses were attached, and the team all ready for the start. Eventful moment! Now "there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand:" her husband had paused in his work; his head was downcast, and he stood as if irresolute what to do. Again she implored God to make bare his arm, to deliver her dear husband from the power of the evil one, from the mouth of the lion and the paw of the bear: and as she looked again, she saw the object of her affections and prayer earnestly unhitching his horses, and their return to the stable. Now she lifts her voice in thanksgiving, with tearful eyes and swelling heart: "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my

supplications; because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live."

Soon after, the husband returned to the house, and the sweet voice of childhood was heard calling loudly for "mother." The wife returned to the house with a heart full of thanksgiving, and the smile of peace resting on her countenance, to meet her husband and hear him say, "Emily, I will go with you to church today;" and her quiet reply, "I am very glad to hear it," had more meaning in it than the mere words convey. They went as in former times to the house of God together, but they went in silence. The preaching of the Word came with power, but it was to revive sin, and the heart of the sinner, instead of being humbled, was filled with indignation and wrath, and he returned home, raging like an untamed beast of the forest. It was, however, the last struggle of the strong man armed, who had so long reigned within and kept his goods in peace, now about to be cast out by one stronger than he, even Jesus, who is mighty to save.

In a few days this man was lying at the feet of Jesus, a true penitent, and was permitted to rejoice with his dear wife in the same blessed hope. His conversion was of the most marked character, and both in his barn and at his lime kiln he had such seasons of delight, that they seemed the dawn of glory. He became an active and devoted Christian, and for many years held the office of a deacon well. His life was consecrated to God, and he was ever ready to tell what great things the Lord had done for him, and had compassion upon him; and his peaceful and happy death, after many months of intense suffering, attested that "he knew in whom he had believed." His body sleeps in the graveyard, his spirit is with Christ, and his memory is blessed. His faithful wife, now a "widow indeed," survives him, still strong in faith and in prayer, delighting to testify of the faithfulness of God. "In due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not." "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." —From *Sketches From Life*

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**February 28, 1982**

### **BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT**

Heb. 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

John 20:27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

1 Pet. 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

2 Cor. 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

5:6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

**Memory Verse:** They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. Jonah 2:8.

**Central Thought:** Faith is living above that which is seen. To go by that which is seen in a temporal way is to observe lying vanities for the true faith is not according to sight.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

One great obstacle and opposition to the workings of faith in our lives is the influence upon our minds of things that are seen. We have already learned that the world and all creation sprang from the unseen. They consist by God's authoritative Word. Eve was led astray by the sight of the tree—something seen. In the workings of faith, one must master the challenge of launching out into the deep of the

invisible. We must go often against what appears. Moses had every visible advantage in being the son of the daughter of Pharaoh. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and deeds (Acts 7:22). It took decisive faith on his part—a definite conviction and persuasion in his heart to take the step that he took in forsaking it all for the sake of that people enslaved whom he recognized as the people of God. Thomas could not believe because he was going by sight. Jesus kindly reproved him for his unbelief, pronouncing a blessing upon those who believed, yet having not seen. This principle of faith can cover every phase of our experience with God. Faith is believing what God has revealed in His promise. This was exemplified in Abraham's faith. By sight there was no way for him. Had he gone by sight, he would never have endured the test. The true Christian life is that of faith, looking beyond the seen. We love Christ even though we have not seen Him. While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. His being unseen makes it necessary for us to walk by faith. —Leslie Busbee

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What were some of the things that were seen in Moses' life that could have hindered him?
2. Why did Thomas doubt?
3. What was Jesus' Word concerning seeing before believing?
4. Why should we not look at things that are seen?
5. Why must we walk by faith and not by sight?
6. Name other Bible characters tested on this line.

#### **COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

I heard a man tell about his first airplane ride. After sitting quietly for some time in his coach seat, he asked the woman sitting next to him, "When are we going to take off?" She answered, "We have been in the air about twenty minutes!" According to his senses, they were still on the ground. I am told that airline pilots fly as much or more by their instruments as they do by their sight. At times they seem to be flying level while their instruments show to the contrary. Have you ever miscalculated direction, that is, been "turned around"? These are but simple illustrations that show how misleading and mistaking sight can be. I have also heard of people trusting God for bodily healing who suffered the worst attack of the affliction after taking a stand for their healing, but the victory was gained by resisting the devil and count-

ing the healing done regardless of the symptoms that appeared. It is a battle and a great one, too. But as our memory verse states, to observe lying vanities is to forsake one's own mercy. This was stated by Jonah in the belly of the whale. We need to remember this, too, when we get into close places. By sight and conditions, Jonah was doomed. The earth and her bars were about him forever. The sign of Jonah was what Jesus promised to give to His generation. Jesus went to Calvary with faith that His Father would resurrect Him to life. Since man was led astray and fell through looking at things that are seen, salvation can be gained by going against sight. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom [things that are seen] knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 1:21. Oh, dear soul, tossed and pressed by things seen, symptoms, conditions, and influences of the flesh that defy what you are believing God for, take courage and stand on the promises, disregarding what you may see. Walk by faith and not by sight. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is Satan's business to magnify the conditions surrounding us. His delight is to constantly press one down in the abyss of despair. He would continually harrass us as to whether we will retain courage and serve God or resign and retreat into the prison house of sin.

Liken this to the court system of today. An event transpires in which someone must take the blame. When the authorities discover one whom they believe responsible, a trial begins for the purpose of inspecting the evidence. A jury is selected to pass judgment, and must draw their conclusion from more than just circumstantial evidence. They must examine evidence which is presented and consider the word of each witness. It is the duty of the prosecuting attorney to make the defendant look as bad as possible. Attorneys sometimes obtain a simple fact which can easily be explained, but will create a big issue out of it in order to place the defendant in the worst possible light.

We all possess a free will which will determine the outcome of our lives. We have the privilege to pass judgment on every circumstance that touches us. In order to make a judgment that is right, we must do more than evaluate things by sight alone. All the circumstances and insinuations that the devil presents, must be considered at more than face

value. Satan would like for us to believe there is no hope for a favorable end to the trials of life when persuing the way of the Lord. Perhaps one's job, reputation, or even life is at stake. In times of decision, consider the promises of God and your faith will mount up. You can come out of the trial free from the condemnation of sin and escape the fetters of a spiritual death.

—Wayne Murphey

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March 7, 1982

## THE WORKS OF FAITH—FAITH IN ACTION

James 2:14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?

17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?

26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

**Memory Verse:** For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Gal. 5:6

**Central Thought:** The love of God in the soul of man will cause one not only to believe in God, but will enable the individual to actually carry out in deeds of action what he believes.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

In his epistle, James had just counselled us to speak and do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. In other words, we should temper judgment with mercy. Mercy rejoiceth against judgment. We are saved by mercy. We are saved by faith. Faith in God for the remission of our sins is indispensable. A merciful attitude in the heart toward your fellow man is a vital ingredient of faith. No one can have true faith in God when he is down on his fellow man. To be down on your fellow man means that you are trusting in your own goodness. Trusting in your own self-goodness is the opposite of trusting in God. Thus, James introduces the thought of faith and how it must be accompanied by works. Mercy, judgment, and faith are the three weightier matters omitted by the self-righteous Jews (Matt. 23:23). They go together; judgment without mercy is judgment without faith. Faith must be accompanied by works. Faith put in action is what avails with God. Faith works from the principle of divine love in the heart. We love God and this causes us to believe in Him and trust in Him. We must do more than just believe that God exists; we must put life in our faith by doing the works that are consistent with our faith. The two illustrations of faith and works given in our lesson of Abraham and Rahab are very good. It was Abraham's obedience to God that perfected his faith. Rahab's faith and persuasion in the God of Israel moved her to do what she did in hiding the two spies from Israel and begging for mercy from God at their hand. Regardless of how much she believed in the God of Israel, she would have perished with Jericho had she not taken action (Joshua 2). We must believe God's Word and promises enough to act upon them. —Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. How is the illustration of giving food to the destitute likened unto faith?
2. Why are works needful to the perfecting of one's faith?



3. What kind of works is he speaking of?
4. Why does the faith of devils not profit them?
5. Why was Abraham's obedience to God's command concerning the offering of Isaac so valuable?
6. What is faith and works compared to?

### COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our lesson for today is proven to be true in many places in the Scriptures. God desires to see our faith in action. When Jesus healed the blind man (John 9:6, 7), He gave this man something to do. In doing it, the blind man proved his faith. "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." The blind man could have hesitated or refused to go, saying, "How do I know this will work?" He could have believed that this was possible but refused through fear of being disappointed. At either conjecture, he would have remained a blind man. But when he stifled all of his doubts by going and doing as Jesus said, his faith was perfected and God rewarded his faith with healing. In Luke 17:11-19, we have the account of the ten lepers being healed. At their cry for mercy and help, Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priest. "As they went, they were cleansed." They could have hesitated, saying, "There's no use doing that." But what misgivings they had were quenched by the action taken. They all knew that it would be the priest's authority that would set them with freedom to go back to their homes and families. When Jesus told them to go show themselves to the priest, they knew that it meant just one thing—Jesus would heal them at their obedience, and the priest would pronounce them clean! As they obeyed and went, they were cleansed. Oh, these are valuable lessons for us today! Let us take courage to step out on the promises of God! Seek to do and act in accordance with our faith. Once a group of people were gathered to pray for rain. One person came on the scene with an umbrella. Someone asked, "What did you bring that for?" The answer was in the affirmative: "I came prepared for the rain!" The secret of faith is taking God at His word and acting upon it. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Portraying the life of Christ in our daily living is a type of faith. Faith can be exercised when God is reigning in the heart. With God's spirit dwelling in us, we not only testify of a belief in Him, but our works manifest mercy and kindness toward others such as God has displayed toward us.

In Matt. 23:23, 24, Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." The scribes and Pharisees firmly believed in God. They were very diligent in their worship, but they neglected the weightier matters which were judgment, mercy, and faith. This was why Jesus declared them hypocrites.

In the nineteenth verse of our lesson we read, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble." A hypocrite and Satan resemble in that each believes in God. The deeds of a hypocrite, like Satan, are self-centered in his daily life. He will not be hesitant to secure the better part of a financial deal though it may be a little shady. He neglects to practice the ten commandments and may recall them only when needing a memory verse. Those possessing a true faith will practice the same mercy and compassion toward others that Christ exhibited to the multitudes in His earthly walk.

—Wayne Murphey

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**March 14, 1982**

## **THE FAITH**

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Gal. 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1 Cor. 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Col. 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

1 Pet. 5:9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

1 Tim. 6:10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Eph. 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Rev. 13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Eph. 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

2 Tim. 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

**Memory Verse:** For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4.

**Central Thought:** We are to contend for the one and only faith given to the saints. It is the persuasion, confidence, convictions, standards, and the doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the overall summarizing title of the disposition of all the born-again, spirit-led souls of men.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

"The faith" is a definite, expressive term. We have quoted in our lesson a number of Scriptures from the New Testament that mention "the faith" and what it means to the child of God. Many more Scriptures could be included. Peter said that we have obtained like precious faith with him. Hebrews 12:2, called Jesus "The author and finisher of our faith." The faith is the treasured possession of all who have been born of the spirit of God. It is the faith of Abraham, the distinct unique way of life that is such a contrast to the carnal ways of men. Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger in this time world. He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. His expectations were all forwardly directed. He saw not the ultimate fulfillment of his desires and persuasions, but his faith steadfastly saw

them coming. This was his heritage to us. All the Scriptures set forth in this lesson concern this faith. It is the life of the Christian. The just shall live by faith. We are to stand fast and be established in it, resisting Satan and making it our shield against his fiery darts. They that take the sword will perish thereby. But he who wields the spiritual weapons of faith, love, hope, and truth will live thereby. —L. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What are we to earnestly contend for?
2. What does it mean to be "men in the faith"?
3. Is it possible for us to come in the unity of the faith to a perfect man?
4. Why does the faith set the saints off from the world?
5. Why is the love of money such a deadly danger to faith?

### COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

It means so much to keep the true faith. Oh, what happiness and soul rest the apostle Paul had at the end of his journey of life to be able to say, "I have kept the faith!" The winds of adversity and trouble had blown hard against Paul. He had met up with many unreasonable and wicked men who did not have faith (see 2 Thess. 3:2). Men and devils fight against the one true faith; they know that it is the victory that overcometh the world. One who will keep the faith of Jesus Christ will conquer and overcome all things and will escape the destruction that will befall all who are of Satan. The systems and agencies of this present world are contrary to faith. Their treasures and commodities are confined to the natural and material realm, but the child of God who possesses the faith of Christ holds the resources in his bosom of realms beyond this fleeting age. The kingdom of God is spiritual, and is not of this world. The King of glory had His life taken from the earth. He was cut off out of the land of the living. But in His triumphant resurrection, He inherited eternal life to share with all who would partake of His faith. Thus the saints who follow Him go through tribulation and even death sustained by the same hope. Their eyes are enlightened to behold the riches of that wonderful world to come. Thus the present earthly phase of their existence is relinquished in view of that which is to come. They bear the reproach of Christ without murmurings or complaint. They have and keep the faith steadfastly. By it they overcome the world!

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Prov. 6:20-23.

The first step toward acquiring faith is that it must be taught to us in some manner. There are those who are blessed to have Christian parents that teach the faith to them. Others may depend upon the Bible and the Holy Spirit to teach them. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" Rom. 10:17. To obtain and build up faith, one must hear the Word or plan of God.

Next, there must be a spiritual digestion of what one hears. To hear alone is not enough. To be raised in the truth does not automatically make one a possessor of the faith. Jesus declared Himself to be the bread of life. Bread is provided for the purpose of nourishing and sustaining life.

In a sense, we all must be reformers. A reformer is one who forms a conviction despite the surrounding environment. One must willingly acquire a conviction to keep the faith in spite of the actions of those about him. Constant attention to spiritual matters and divine guidance will create in us a life of faith.

—Wayne Murphey

## SOUL SUICIDE

I remember reading somewhere of an incident that happened in a gospel mission in Philadelphia. They were having a Patron's Night and some of the rich folk from that town had come to the service. They were standing around talking. The service began. They had a song, and a prayer, and then a testimony meeting. During the course of the testimony meeting a lawyer, well known to all in that town, stood up. He said:

"Brethren and Sisters, I am sixty-two years old. Tonight I want to tell you how I became a Christian." He said, "When I was twenty-four years old, I married a young Christian girl. I was anything but a Christian. I guess I was an athiest. I didn't believe in anything or anybody. Every way I could I tried to break my wife of the habit of going to church, but I couldn't do it. She went anyway. In the course of time, God sent us a beautiful baby daughter. When the little child was

young, her mother took her with her to Sunday school and revivals and prayer meetings and everywhere else like that. But when our child became a young woman— she was so beautiful and so cultured. I was so proud of her—I began taking her with me. I would take her on trips, to parties, night clubs, and dances, and bit by bit I weaned her away from her mother. I would lie in bed on Sunday morning and hug myself like the devil that I was as I would hear my wife knocking on that girl's door and hear her saying, 'Doris, please wake up. Mama is getting ready to go to Sunday school. Will you go with her?' Then I would hear my girl in a sleepy voice say, 'Daddy didn't bring me in until three o'clock. If you will let me off this time, next time I'll go with you.' And the next time it was another excuse. She got to be nineteen and twenty, and she never went to church any more. She became engaged to be married. She set the date for Thanksgiving afternoon. Toward the end of October, when it was getting rather cool in the Pennsylvania mountains, my daughter and her friend, and a bunch of young people took a trip or a picnic. They went out to a mountain lake. They hired a motor boat and got out and had a grand old time. It began to get dark, and they started for shore." He said, "You know in every party there is always a smart alec, and there was in that one. He began to rock the boat and turned it over. They were all in the water. It was only a short distance from shore, about a block or half a block, maybe. They just left the boat—all of them could swim, and it didn't hurt any of them, so they just left the boat alone and went for shore. Instead of drying their clothes, they got into an open automobile and drove for Philadelphia. The first thing you know, the girl went to bed sick, and several of her friends were sick—but my girl seemed to be the worst of them all. The doctors said it was influenza. On the third day he said he was afraid she would get pneumonia. We got a nurse by day and by night. We got an oxygen tent. We tried everything medical science could do, but we couldn't save the girl. On the eleventh day the doctor walked up to me and said, 'Ralph, I am sorry, but Doris is dying. Will you tell her, or shall I?'

" 'I will tell her,' I said.

"I walked in and sat down by the side of our girl's bed. My wife was on the other side, her eyes red-rimmed from lack of sleep. She looked at me; I looked down. I couldn't get up enough courage to tell my daughter that she was dying. I took hold of her hand and said, 'Darling, I am sorry, but the

doctor says you are not going to live.'

"She began to cry and tried to get up and to get out of bed. She began to sob, 'Daddy, I can't die! I mustn't die! Daddy, you have a lot of money, can't you help me? Take me to a hospital. Get another doctor.'

" 'Darling, not only would I spend everything I have, but I would take your place. There is no use darling, you have got to die.'

"After a while she quieted down and turned to her mother and said, 'Mama, do you think it would be bad taste for me to be buried in my wedding gown?'

" 'No, if you want it that way, darling.'

" 'Do you think he would mind if I wore our engagement ring into the grave?'

"The mother bit her lips until the blood flecked her teeth to keep from crying. She said, 'No, darling, I don't believe he would if you wanted it that way.'

"Bit by bit my girl talked her life out. After a while she raised up on her elbow and said, 'Daddy, I am dying, am I not?'

" 'Yes, darling. If I could, I would take your place.'

"Daddy, tell me something. I want you to tell me the truth. Mama says if I want to go to Heaven I must take Christ as my Saviour. You have been saying all I have to do was to be a good girl. I have been a good girl haven't I, Daddy?'

" 'You have been the best daughter any man ever had.'

" 'Daddy, whose way shall I take? Yours or Mama's?'

"I threw my arms around my child and picked her up in my arms and drew her to my heart and kissed her and said, 'Darling, if you have a moment to spare, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for your own soul's sake, for Daddy's sake, take Mama's way!'

The lawyer said by the time he had lowered her into the bed she was dead. He said he threw himself across the body of that child in a storm of passionate remorse and tears and gave his heart to Christ. As he talked he ran his hands through his hair and pulled at it like he was trying to tear it out, and in a voice of memories of indescribable anguish, he said, "Men and brethren, only God in Heaven knows whether my child had time enough to take Mama's way."

But you have. You have time enough now and had better take advantage of it while there is yet opportunity. —Sel.

March 21, 1982

## IMPORTUNING FAITH

Luke 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

11:5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

**Memory Verse:** Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord. Psalms 27:14.

**Central Thought:** We must believe and trust God for all things with a faith that will not be moved or give up under the most trying adverse conditions.

**Word Definition:** *Importunity:* The Greek word means the opposite of bashfulness or shame. Webster defines *importunity* as to annoy, worry, press on, impel, to press with frequent, unreasonable or troublesome persistence.



## LESSON BACKGROUND

The aspect of faith as importunity will probably go against the human side of us as much as any other aspect. And yet, it is really here that the benefit of faith and trusting in God is most wonderfully found and recognized. If we all received what we asked for at our first venture every time, we would miss great values and blessings. His favor and help would not mean nearly so much to us, for the human side of us is too soon spoiled and is so apt to become vain and elevated higher than is meet for our good. Thus, the answers to our prayers are many times withheld for a season. We have in our lesson today two parables set forth by the Saviour to bring out this thought of importuning faith. Jesus realized that man is too prone to relax his hold on God for the ease of the flesh. But he would have us to know that true faith hangs desperately on against all odds and pressures. All discouragements, perplexities, and adverse conditions can be overcome at length through the virtue of faith and importunity. Take a fresh look at the parable of the unjust judge. There were probably judges of this sort living in the time of Jesus. Hard, cruel, and unjust they were—enough to scare the lowly and meek people away even if they were for the right. But here is a widow woman. Bear in mind that a widow woman in that time was not like one of today. This is pretty much a woman's world. But a widow in Bible times was at the mercy of the public. This denotes our true condition before God; we are poor with no means. But this widow broke this wicked judge down through her importunity. Look at the other parable. A man snug in bed is aroused by the call of his neighbor. Because of his neighbor's importunity, he did arise to the neighbor's need. What a lesson for us today in our dealing with God! If these people gained advantage in their need, how much more can we prevail with the kind Father in Heaven!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Does God answer prayer and give us our desires right away every time?
2. Why is the delay so difficult for us?
3. What are some of the reasons for God putting us off?
4. What are some of the reasons why one will importune?
5. What kind of good is wrought through importunity?

## COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The desires and prayers of a child of God are refined and tried through delay and importuning. This is an all-important lesson to learn in the Christian way. Prayers that are born in a night and perish in a night are of very little value. The subject matter does not rest very near the heart if it is not deemed worthy of importunity. We must come again and again. We must not give up! God sees our heart's yearning and takes note of the anguish that we feel as we reach out to Him for the things we desire of Him. We did not have space in our lesson, but I wish to mention the woman of Canaan, told about in Matt. 15:21-28. It is a striking example of importunity. This woman had a need—a desperate need. Her daughter was under the oppression of Satan. Many of our sons and daughters are under the oppression of the devil. We need to importune for them. The welfare of this woman's daughter hinged on her approach to Jesus. If she takes offence to what Jesus says and goes away, her daughter will still be bound. The first trial was in that Jesus ignored her first entreaty. This would turn away many. But this woman had a need. The disciples told the Master to send her away—she was bothering them. This would also offend many. But this woman had a need. Then Jesus said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In other words, "What I have is not for you anyway." Surely she should be ready to leave now after that statement! But no, this woman had a need. She stayed right there. "Lord, help me!" she cried. Then the final blow fell when Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." It is time to leave now. He just literally called her a dog. But no, this woman had a need. "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the masters' table." What was His answer to her who had passed the test with flying colors of humility? "Woman, great is thy faith!" Then let us remember the question Jesus asked: "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" This is a question that only each one individually can answer. This importuning faith, this never-give-up faith, this will-not-be-offended faith is the only faith that will endure the ages of time. It is for us to have it. —Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The life of a Christian is a life of warfare. There are a few important battles in history which were fought and won

in a short span of time. To one in the midst of the battle, time seems to be an eternity. Paul wrote to Timothy and spake thus, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." 1 Tim. 1:18, 19.

Notice Paul's comment that some made shipwreck by putting away their faith. Shipwreck is a tragic occurrence, but many are suffering it with their lives because they are unwilling to wait on the answer from God.

There is nothing of any value unless it has first been tested. If a company creates a product and advertises that it will perform a certain function, they are required by law to prove their claim. No one desires to pay for something that will not work. This is like faith. Faith is not worth anything unless it has been proven to hold up under stress. God is not willing to award heaven to those whose faith will not hold out against the slightest persecution.

Consider the faith of Jesus. Throughout His trial and death He held to his faith and confidence in God. Though at the end when He felt forsaken, He refused to back down and call for heavenly deliverance; His faith passed the final test. No doubt the few hours on the cross seemed lengthy, but God brought about His final deliverance from pain and suffering and placed Him at the right hand of God.

—Wayne Murphey

## THE CHURCH BELL TRAGEDY

For thirty years Fred and Alice Dixon had been doing missionary work among the mountaineers of Tennessee. Without a call or promise of support, they had come as newly-weds to the so-called "Forgotten Valley," drawn by the desperate needs of its inhabitants. Hemmed in on all sides by mountains, the valley was literally shut away from the outside world, its only contact being a rickety stagecoach, which once a week brought mail and supplies for the valley store.

During those 33 years of struggle in the village of Pine-ridge, living in a combination chapel and living quarters, four children blessed the home, but were laid to rest in the little cemetery with four pine trees guarding the graves. Then Fred also succumbed to the lung malady prevalent in the valley.

Mrs. Dixon pondered long about returning to her own people beyond the hills, but finally decided to stay, her life being so wrapped up in the people and her family buried under yonder pines. But what could she do? She had never spoken in public.

"If we only had a church bell," she thought, "I would ring it an half-hour each Sunday morning, reminding the people that it is the Lord's Day, and that they should spend some time reading the Word of God and praying, even though we don't have services." Those thirty years the Dixons had wished for a bell, but lacked money—now there was no money at all; so she must drop the thought altogether.

Two weeks later Mrs. Dixon received a \$200 check, a legacy left to her by her last uncle. She thought of the thirty years of the family living out of the missionary "barrel" which came once a year from the church back home. She had gone back only twice, when money was sent from her family specified for "trip home only." It would be fun to surprise them by coming home in new clothes and paying her own expenses. Suddenly, Mrs. Dixon gave a start—"The bell—the bell Fred and I used to look at in the catalogue—the one we wanted for our Valley—Fred said it would cost \$200 including freight."

Bowing her head in her hands, she sat thus for some moments; then saying with hands raised triumphantly toward heaven, "This shall be my alabaster box of ointment. I'll do it in memory of Fred."

The old stagecoach's most important cargo, ever, soon arrived, and plenty of willing hands elevated and installed this long hoped for bell in the new belfry. The next Sunday Mrs. Dixon was in her self-appointed place of duty. Mr. Benson, the storekeeper, had made her a special chair to ring the bell from. Sweet and clear silvery bell tones pealed out in Forgotten Valley for the first time. As she pulled the rope, she prayed for the flock who had no shepherd, that they would remain true and grow in grace, and that soon they might have another shepherd. She prayed also that the bell might speak to evil-doers. She prayed for so many as the half-hour passed. Then she dropped the rope and prayed more.

Bill Sykes, the moonshiner, heard the bell from his retreat up in smokey mountain. He swore. "Why couldn't a fellow be left alone if he wanted to make moonshine? Why did an old church bell have to clang at him to make him feel he was doing something wrong?" he argued to himself. Mr. Dixon

had often warned him that his sin would "find him out," pleading with him not to sell the "stuff" to the young men of the Valley. Mr. Dixon was dead—but this bell—it was like a voice from Heaven, charging him with the ruin of young men. He must find a way to stop this terrible annoyance.

Late Saturday night, everyone asleep, a slinking form was making his way to the meeting house. With flashlight he climbed up the ladder, catching hold of the bell rope with the free hand, looped it around his arm as he climbed. At the top he firmly tied the loops together with the rope's end, smiling in the dark. Starting to descend the ladder, his 300 pounds caused it to squeak and groan. Finding nothing else to support him, in desperation he grabbed the upper part of the rope while placing his feet in the loops, as he thought. Instead, his feet slipped through the loops, and with a terrific thud, he found himself hanging in mid air, the rope holding firmly under the arms.

The bell clanged in a loud noisy manner, awaking the whole village. "Was Mrs. Dixon sick and needing help?" As one man the village went to see. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dixon hastily dressed and had entered the meeting house with a lamp. There she recognized Bill hanging from the bell rope. At first sight she was scared speechless, but soon comprehended the whole situation, and said: "They say that if you give the devil enough rope, he'll hang himself. I never did suppose, though, that he would use a church bell rope for the purpose."

"Oh, Mrs. Dixon," pleaded Bill in agony, "if you'll please, have mercy on me and get someone to help me down from here. I promise God I'll never make another drop of moonshine. I've been as wicked as the devil himself, and your bell has been preaching to me to repent and change my ways. I couldn't stand to hear it, so I thought I'd just tie it up so you couldn't ring it again, come Sunday; but I guess the Almighty tied me up instead. Oh, please get someone to help me down. The ropes are squeezing the breath out of me."

By this time the meeting house was filled with people speculating how Bill got caught. Some thought he had tried to commit suicide. Others whispered that it was a pity the rope didn't slip up a little higher. Mrs. Dixon told the story briefly. Then a scaffold had to be built under Bill so they could untie the rope. It was a very weak, repentant moonshiner finally standing before them. Some were in favor of arrest, but Mrs. Dixon assured them that since the Lord

had arrested him, He wouldn't leave the job half done. The still in the woods was forever abandoned. Bill gave his heart to God and became one of the church bell's most devoted listeners.

The story of the bell was spread, and a young couple, backed by their home church in Philadelphia, felt called to Forgotten Valley. A new church and parsonage were built. It was Bill Sykes who transferred the bell, and later appointed himself janitor.

The Larkins insisted that Mrs. Dixon make her home with them. She was given the sunniest room in the parsonage. As long as health permitted, she rang the bell. Then Bill took over the sacred duty. "Strange, isn't it," said Bill, "some folks He just draws in gently, with cords of love. With me, now—why the Lord had to hog-tie me to get me in! Well, praise the Lord! He got me in—that's the important thing." A prodigal had returned to Father's house.

One golden October day, Alice Dixon slipped away to join her loved ones, and was laid to rest under the pine trees on the hillside. For half an hour preceding the funeral, Bill Sykes, the redeemed bootlegger, tolled the bell, as mountaineers far and wide gathered for the service. Pastor Larkin announced, "I have chosen for my text for this occasion, St. Matt. 26:7, 'There came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head as he sat at meat.' "

Dear reader, have you repented and believed the glorious gospel that Christ died for our sins and rose again from the dead the third day, as the prophets foretold? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16.

—Sel.

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**March 28, 1982**

## **THE TRYING OF OUR FAITH**

Mark 11:12 And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry:

13 And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.

14 And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

20 And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.

21 And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

1 Peter 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

**Memory Verse:** Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. 1 Peter 4:12.

**Central Thought:** We greatly rejoice in our faith by what is wrought in our lives, but God wills that our faith be tried and put to the test by a prolonged delay of what we are believing Him for.

**Word Definition:** *End of our faith:* the purpose of our faith.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

We have before us an important lesson. This is the final lesson in this series of studies on the subject of faith. We have the account of Jesus cursing the fig tree and what followed. The faith of Jesus killed that tree very quickly. But

we see that it was done primarily to teach the disciples a valuable lesson concerning faith and taking God at His Word. Notice how easily it was done. See how simply Jesus approached the tree, and then finding it bereft of fruit, cursed it to bear fruit no longer. But then from the saying of Peter, we are warned of the trying of our faith. Faith will not always work so easily. There will come a time in every one's spiritual career when his faith will be sorely tried with adversity and delay. We have already mentioned the faith of Abraham and how he was sorely tried by the command of God to offer up his son. We may enjoy faith experiences and answers to prayers, but we have need of seasons of being tried. Our faith will be contested by extra heavy contrary forces. We will have to hope against hope. But remember that the trying of our faith is more precious than gold that perisheth. Though it be tried by fire, it will bring great spiritual riches to the welfare of our souls. This fire is not literal fire, but it is the consuming flame of adversity and tribulation. James said to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, for the trying of our faith works patience. Patience will have a perfect work upon our souls. If we steadfastly endure the trial of our faith and hold fast to our confidence regardless how long our prayers are unanswered, we will attain to the highest pinnacle of spiritual victory, even that of the Lord Jesus Himself. —Leslie C. Busbee

### **Questions:**

1. What was Jesus' real purpose in cursing the fig tree?
2. What did He tell us to have?
3. Why must we be tried in our faith?
4. Of what value is the trial of our faith?
5. What is the end or purpose of our faith?

### **COMMENTS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

We greatly rejoice in the great plan of salvation and all the experiences of faith that we have in the Christian life. It is such a wonderful thing to be transformed to the hope of the gospel and the grace of God. But God sees fit to allow our faith to be tried by adversity and manifold (or various) temptations. The realm of our feelings will begin to assume shapes and proportions that will lead us into doubts and fears. Satan comes in like a flood. Things take place that put our profession of Christ seemingly in great danger. Pressures from the world and sometimes from our own loved ones weigh



down upon us. The furnace seems to be heated high. We find these words in Psalms 66:10-12: "For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Trials of adversity have been the pathway of God's children throughout the ages. God saw fit to take Israel through the great and sore wilderness to try them and to prove them—to see whether they would keep His commandments or not (Deut. 8:2). We who rejoice in the risen life of Christ are not going to be excluded from being tried. It is the process that God chooses to use to prove us as His children. Just as gold and silver are refined through the process of heat and burning, so we as the children of God must pass through the fire also. But in the times of adversity and hardship, we should remember that the trial of our faith is more precious than gold. We should call to remembrance those of old—like Job. He was so sorely tried and put to the test, but he came forth as gold. God does not try us for the sport of it, but He allows us to be sorely tempted and put in the furnace to bring out the gold that is in us. Let us keep the faith regardless of what goes on around us. "Regarding not what I may see, My faith, O Lord, ascends to Thee!"

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God always has a purpose when allowing adversity to come our way. If God were of a sadistic nature and enjoyed seeing His children suffer, we might be justified in entertaining a little self pity. However, by possessing a true understanding of God's nature and why He allows the trying of our faith, we can manifest a proper attitude in the midst of tribulation.

The Psalmist said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." By viewing the trial in an appropriate attitude, he realized some good in it.

Consider Job's trials; there are very few who suffer what he did. All of his children were taken away, he was deprived of all possessions, was grievously afflicted, and to top it all off, was opposed by his wife for his attitude of faith. In the midst of all this Job looked for a source of comfort and could find none. Human reasoning would have said to dispose of the stand he had taken and seek another solution. Listen to

Job's words in this situation. "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." That is a refreshing attitude. His faith enveloped all the benefits of being tried. Let us all strive for a faith that will take in an instant answer, but if God allows us to remain in the trial, let us have a faith that will yet view the end of it with victory.

—Wayne Murphey

