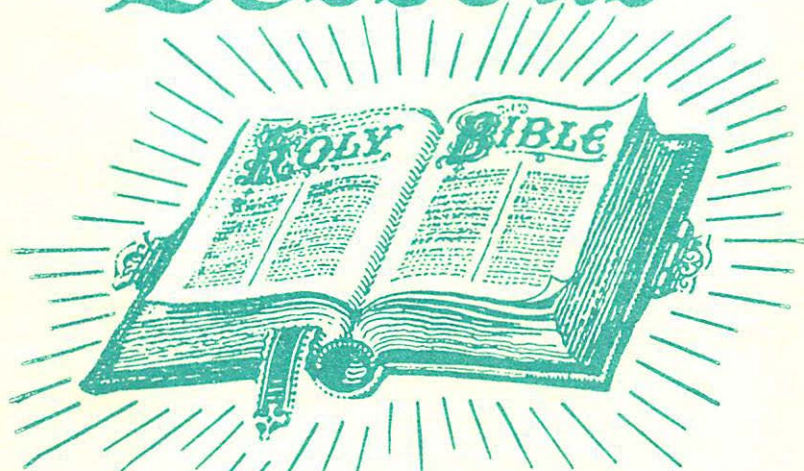


1982

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS — YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 16, No. 1
Jan., Feb., March
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 16

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No. 1

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Jesus Christ and His Church

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Theme for First Quarter, 1984

The Holy Spirit has inspired us with a series of studies from the life of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, as is found in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We will begin with a lesson drawn from the account of Christ's temptation in the wilderness, and progress through the various incidents and examine His methods of ministering to the people, considering also His doctrine and teachings. Of all the spiritual guidance and understanding that the Bible affords, what our Lord and Saviour gives us is most beneficial. He dealt with principles, underlying basic truths that can be applied to every people in every age of time. It is the greatest mistake one can ever make to be in the dark about what Jesus Christ has to say. It is tragic to deliberately ignore His teachings. To obey and conform to Him and His truth is the only means of success and victory in things that pertain to our eternal welfare and relationship with God. So let us all open our hearts to His Word, and study these lessons, praying for Holy Spirit anointing and enlightenment.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

—o—

January 1, 1984

JESUS TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS

Matt. 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Mark 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Matt. 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Memory Verse: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Heb. 4:15.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ overcame the devil in every point of temptation through the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Word Definitions: *Wilderness:* Desert, solitary place away from human concourse. *Pinnacle:* A high point on one of the wings of the temple. "Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God." *Tempt* means to try or put to the proof. We are not to put God to a test. He has already proven His faithfulness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Mark tells us that after Jesus was baptized of John in the river Jordan, "immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness." John had been teaching and baptizing the people in what was termed the wilderness. He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." God saw fit to introduce Jesus in the wilderness and to allow Satan to tempt Him far off from human aid. The Holy Spirit had descended upon Him from heaven like a dove. God had spoken in audible tones: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Luke also gives a similar account of Christ's temptation. But John's Gospel makes no reference to it at all. Right after John baptized Jesus, He departed from the multitudes and transferred Himself into the desert to be alone and to prepare for the great work that was before Him. It is very interesting to notice that the three points in which Satan tempted Christ correspond exactly with the three points in which Adam and Eve were tempted by Satan when they fell from God's blessing. The temptation for food corresponds to that of Eve concerning the fruit, and is classified as the lust of the flesh. The temptation to put God to a test by jumping off the temple is related to the

temptation to be wise which was the main drawing of the devil to Eve. This is termed by John in 1 John 2:16, along with the lust of the flesh, as the pride of life. And the sight of the kingdoms of the world and their glory could be associated with the pleasant sight of the fruit to the eyes of Eve, and can well be classified as the lust of the eyes.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Spirit lead Jesus into the wilderness?
2. Why did Jesus have to be tempted?
3. What wrong could there have been in Jesus turning the stones into bread?
4. How did the Scriptures Jesus quoted give strength and courage in resisting the temptation?
5. How was Satan using the Scriptures wrongfully, and how did Jesus overcome at this point?
6. Why was Jesus not interested in obtaining the kingdoms of the world?
7. Can we use the Word of God to enable us to overcome Satan today?
8. How can we use the Word of God if we are not familiar with what it says?
9. Think of the three Scriptures that Jesus used in our lesson, and how they are related.

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Satan was allowed to tempt Jesus in His weakest points and at the time when the temptation would exert the greatest pressure. After fasting for forty days and nights Jesus was tempted to use the power and authority that He had as the Son of God to command stones to turn into bread. We are very assured that Jesus had this power for we see Him later feeding five thousand people with a small boy's lunch, and having twelve baskets of food left over. Yes, He had the power to turn the stones to bread, but to respond to Satan's suggestion would be a disqualification as the Savior of men. To resist at this point and refuse to seek the gratification of the appetite for food would be bringing the flesh into subjection and overcoming Satan. Satan quoted the Scripture from Psalm 91 correctly, but his application was for a wrong setting. If circumstances brought one into a position of danger of falling, the promise of God would take effect. But to intentionally do something dangerous to prove the Scripture would be tempting God. Paul,

when bitten by the viper, was able to shake the venomous beast off into the fire, but to deliberately take up serpents to show power is error. There is pride involved when people do dangerous things for worldly show. To jump off the temple would doubtless have been done in the eyes of the people. But the deliberate act of hazarding one's safety purposely to prove God's protection turns the whole affair into treachery and pride. We do not know just how these temptations from the temple and the high mountain were executed, but they were done in a way that Christ could have yielded if He had so desired. Luke expressed it that the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Here we have the prince of this world and the Prince of the world to come face to face. Just how much weight this final temptation had on Christ is questionable. Could it have been a great temptation? To the flesh and the human it could very well have had an attraction. But to the Spirit of holiness and eternal life that dwelt in Christ, there was no attraction for the vanities of this world! Thus He was able to repel the devil at all three of these points. And thus He today can enable us to endure temptation and overcome the allurements and attractions of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This lesson on temptation is very important for us to grasp. Much of what the disciples reported of the life of Christ were things that they witnessed and observed. The temptations that Christ endured were of enough significance that He saw that the disciples recorded them.

Paul stated that he was not ignorant concerning the devices of Satan. We can benefit from the experiences of others. By incorporating them into our lives we can maintain an advantage over the enemy of our souls.

Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 10, that he wouldn't have the brethren ignorant concerning the example of the children of Israel. He reminded his readers of Israel's failings in the hope that they would escape lust, idolatry, fornication, and murmuring. You may think, "I wouldn't do as they did. There is no chance that I would be as hard-headed as the children of Israel." Paul went on in the 12th and 13th verses of this chapter to establish his point. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not

suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Every temptation that we overcome will prove to be a blessing to us. Notice that after Jesus triumphed over His temptations, the angels came and ministered unto Him. No doubt when all was said and done, Christ was strengthened and felt the blessings of God upon Him in a greater measure. If God is with us, Satan is not an unconquerable foe. We can be victorious in every aspect of life. If we fail in a particular temptation, undoubtedly that temptation will re-occur, but if we staunchly resist the devil, he will have to flee and the victory is ours.

—Wayne Murphey

—————o—————
January 8, 1984

JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

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

Central Thought: Jesus is only accepted and precious to those who are poor in spirit and have a deep sense of their need of Him.

Word Definitions: *Poor:* To be beggarly; a pauper; strictly denoting absolute dependency. *Brokenhearted:* Crushed, shattered in heart, thoughts, and feelings. *Bruised:* Crushed or wounded. *Minister:* Assistant or attendant. "This was the officer of the synagogue, or his servant, whose business it was to take care of it." (Adam Clarke) *When he had opened the book:* When he had unrolled the roll (Greek). *Esaias:* Greek form for Isaiah. *Elias:* Elijah. *Eliseus:* Elisha. *Gospel:* Good tidings.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus was fresh with His mighty triumph over Satan. The report went out about Him throughout the country. He taught in their synagogues. Clarke comments on this: "We do not find even the persecuting Jews ever hindered Christ from preaching in their synagogues. All felt the power of His preaching, and acknowledged the divinity of His mission. The scandal of the cross had not yet taken place." Christ's custom was to faithfully attend public worship. Woe to the man who pur-

posely or carelessly neglects this! It seems evident that Christ had been one who had before this publicly read the Scriptures. It was the custom for the reader to read while standing and then to sit down while he made the comments. Christ had been brought up in Nazareth. In Mark 6:3, we find another account of his visit to Nazareth with the people being offended at Him: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" And then they recalled the names of His brothers and mentioned His sisters, too. Their familiarity with Christ bred contempt for Him. Their attitude was: "Physician, heal thyself. Do here what we have heard about you doing in other places." This kind of attitude rendered them unqualified for the ministry of Jesus. This put them on the level with Israel in the time of Elijah and in the time of Elisha. Because of the attitude of a person not sensing his or her need and not evaluating God properly, help and mercy are not received. And instead of receiving help, the bitter rejection took place. This is much the same as it is today. It is a warning to us to take heed lest we cast aside the help that God is seeking to send us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What book was delivered unto Christ? Where is this passage found that Christ read?
2. Itemize in your mind who Christ is sent to. Why are these kind of people made the objects of Christ's ministry?
3. What did Christ Jesus say about this Scripture?
4. What was the people's reaction to this message?
5. What made the people of Nazareth like the people in the times of Elijah and Elisha?
6. Can you put in your own words what Christ is saying here?
7. What was there about these words that filled these people with wrath?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus, the Christ (which means "the anointed one"), was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power to preach, to heal, and to set at liberty. He preaches the gospel, or good tidings, to the poor and needy. He heals the brokenhearted soul whose life has been crushed by sorrow and disappointment. He preaches deliverance to the captives in the prison house of sin. No longer do we need to be under the bondage of iniquity and wrong doing. He sets at liberty them that are

bruised. Satan binds souls in ways of life and habits that heap trouble and misery upon them. But it seems that not everyone comes to this realization of their plight. Pride and the vain pursuit of the carnal pleasures of life tend to quench the sense of sin's wretchedness. The people at Nazareth were greatly in need of the gospel and its benefits. But they did not sense it. They derided and belittled the lowly man who spoke these gracious words to them. They did not realize that the acceptable year of the Lord meant their release from the bondage of sin. They had a very poor attitude toward themselves and toward Christ. They could not come to grips with their own personal condition. And because of this they could not reckon with this man of their acquaintance who stood before them. Jesus vividly compared them with Israel in the time of Elijah. There were many widows in that day, He stated, but none of them were in a condition to offer shelter to the man of God. In the time of Elisha, there were many lepers, but only one of them was cleansed. They could have been cleansed had they but had the right attitude and sought for it. We, today, need to beware of this sort of thing taking place in us. It is so easy to be unconscious of our need! This was Christ's greatest problem to deal with, and it remains today as the greatest hindrance to the work of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Those who live for God and stand for truth will at some time suffer human rejection. The fact that Jesus was of their country hindered their belief in Him, but it wasn't until He declared, "I tell you of a truth . . ." that they rejected Him. The reason that Christ spoke thus was because He discerned from the beginning that their attitude was wrong.

This was just the beginning of the rejection of Christ. As we survey His life we find a man of compassion who went about doing good, One whose absolute goal and mission was to help others. It is difficult to understand why such a man would be rejected until we consider the carnality of the hearts of men and how they love darkness rather than light.

Christ was not refusing to work a miracle in Nazareth. Had He been approached by one in need, I am convinced that such would have received help. Christ never did and never will do things just to prove that He is someone. When the scribes and Pharisees demanded a sign, Jesus told them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no

sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." Christ will not work miracles just for one's selfish convenience, but those who honestly seek God will find plenty of manifestations on which to found their faith.

The Jewish nation rejected Christ to the extent that they crucified Him. Christ was not a part of their lives and anything that brought condemnation upon them they wanted destroyed. Jesus is still being rejected by many today. He is crucified afresh in the hearts of men and women. If we are Christians and following in His footsteps, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that there will be times when we also will suffer rejection. The important aspect of this is that we maintain the love of God in our hearts and as Christ practised and taught, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matt. 5:44. —Wayne Murphey

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January 15, 1984

CHRIST'S CALL TO THE LOWLY FISHERMAN

Luke 5:1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Memory Verse: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Eph. 3:20.

Central Thought: Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Sometimes God allows us to exhaust all of our resources to show our helplessness. Then in response to His Word, He wants us to do His will and experience His bountiful blessings.

Word Definitions: *Draught:* A catching or haul of fish. *Gennesaret:* Hebrew name of the Sea of Galilee.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have chosen this account of the call of the fishermen because of its revealing the special incident that took place at that time. The other Gospels do not tell of this particular event as does Luke. Matthew 4:18-22, merely mentions that Jesus walked by the seaside and saw the two sets of brothers. Peter and Andrew were casting a net into the sea, while, farther down the shore, James and John were in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending nets. Mark 1:16-20, tells practically the same thing. Both writers state that, at Jesus' call, the two sets of brothers forsook their nets and followed Jesus. However, Mark states that James and John left their father with the hired servants. John tells nothing of this seaside meeting, but does relate (evidently a former incident) of a meeting that Jesus had with Andrew and his brother, Simon, who, on this particular occasion, was surnamed Cephas, meaning a stone. Mark 3:16, says that Jesus surnamed Simon as Peter. Both Cephas and Peter are words that mean a stone. But "Cephas" is a Chaldee word (similar to the Hebrew), and "Peter" is from the Greek word "Patros." In our lesson we find Peter and Andrew washing their nets, giving it up after a long night of toiling with no catch. They were no doubt tired and frustrated. In accord with what John has told us, it is evident that Peter knew of Christ's power already. He had no doubt heard of the incident at Nazareth, and could very well have been present. At any rate he freely granted Christ's request to push out a little ways from the land, allowing Christ freedom to speak to the crowd of people who had pressed upon him on the shore. Oh, how we need to press upon Christ to hear the Word of God! How we need to obey Him! If there would have been any unbelief in Peter toward Christ, it would have asserted itself at this point. After toiling all night and catching nothing with the nets washed, and doubtless spread out to dry, it took faith and courage to put forth another effort. Think of the description here of the miraculous catch, and also Peter's reaction. The promise of catching men takes hold on these brethren as they forsake all to follow Christ. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the people pressing upon Christ?
2. Why were Simon and Andrew washing their nets?
3. What would Christ's command to "launch out into the deep" mean to your life?
4. Why would Christ's command to Peter be difficult to obey?

5. Why should Peter or anyone have faith in the Word of Christ?
6. Why did Peter react to the miraculous draught of fishes as he did? What made him feel that he was a sinful man?
7. Is there anything about catching fish relative to catching men?
8. Is it possible for us to catch men on our own without Christ?
9. What did these men do after this?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

This account of the miraculous catch of fishes has inspired our hearts. The whole scene and incident abounds with precious lessons. We can visualize this scene vividly in our minds. Jesus' fame had spread throughout the whole country. People pressed on Him from all sides. A great throng now bore upon Him. He was doubtless making His way toward these lowly fishermen to call them to His service. We don't find Christ calling lazy, shiftless idlers to work for him. His work bears responsibility. Jesus wanted to borrow Simon's boat for a special purpose. Simon was glad to oblige the Master. Christ needs our lives for His service, but very few are willing to give themselves to the Master. Fewer still are willing to forsake themselves for the Master. Jesus said in Luke 14:33, that "whosoever . . . forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Think how these disciples forsook all to follow the Lord Jesus! They just walked off and left everything. This is what keeps many people from following the Lord today. We must be willing to forsake all for Him to have His way. We must forsake all if we hope to gain all. Jesus said in John 12:24, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He went ahead to say in verse 25, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." It is a challenge to us today. We must leave our own selfish and sinful ways to be able to walk the path that Jesus trod. We must leave all the world to follow Jesus.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Notice the humility of Simon Peter. After witnessing the power of Christ, he considered himself unworthy to even be in His presence. This is what made him a good fisher of men. There is nothing in way of human effort that will regenerate a

soul. It is only as Christ is lifted up that souls will be drawn to salvation. This is what is wrong with many denominations today. Much human effort is put forth to draw people into the church. Entertainments and programs are offered by talented people. This will not bring spiritual birth to a soul. The servant of God, realizing his unworthiness, must lift up Christ in holy living and then he will be a fisher of men. In speaking to His disciples of their service to God, Christ said, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17:10.

There were many who were talented philosophers and learned men in Christ's time from whom He could have chosen His disciples, but He selected those who would depend upon Him. There were times that the disciples were tempted to become exalted, but Christ knew how to keep them humble.

Our lesson says that James, John, and Simon forsook all and followed Jesus. They cast their lot with Him and consequently had nothing to depend on but Christ and had plenty of time to devote to spreading the gospel. There are things that we must watch in our lives today. We must be careful lest we trust in worldly goods and uncertain riches. There is a tendency to become so involved in the cares of this world that we find no time to answer the call of God. As we remain humble before God and feel our dependency on Him, He can use us as fishers of men.

—Wayne Murphey

January 22, 1984

JESUS TURNS WATER INTO WINE

John 2:1 And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:

2 And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

3 And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.

4 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

5 His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.

6 And there were set there six water pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.

7 Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.

8 And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.

9 When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,

10 And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.

11 This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

Memory Verse: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. 2 Pet. 1:3.

Central Thought: Jesus is the Master of every situation, whether temporal, social, domestic, or spiritual, and we need to be sure that He has a special place in every aspect of our lives.

Word Definitions: *Firkin:* A certain standard of measure equalling about 9 or 10 gallons. *Governor of the feast:* The one who had the oversight or jurisdiction of the tables.

LESSON BACKGROUND

According to the map, Cana was situated a few miles to the north of Nazareth. There is a possibility that the ones involved in the marriage were relatives of Jesus and His mother. At any rate, Jesus and His disciples were given an invitation to attend this wedding. Marriage is an honorable institution of God. It is God's will that men and women marry in His will. It would surely be good if Jesus would be the author of every marriage that takes place today. It is evident that their supply of beverage for the feast ran out. In this case it was wine. It is quite difficult for us to reconcile the Biblical convictions against wine and strong drink with the account of Jesus turning the water into wine. (There are different sentiments and ideas here.) We are positive that Jesus would have no part with an intoxicated situation. However, the general definition for wine is fermented juice. We can close the entire

subject in our minds by assuming that this wine was merely unfermented grape juice. The Bible warns against the excess use of wine. Eph. 5:18, and 1 Pet. 4:3, Prov. 23:29-35, contain a strong warning against the misuse of wine. We cannot take our Saviour's action here as a justification for drinking wine. It would seem that Jesus spoke irrespectfully to His mother. "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" But the Greek text puts it: "Woman, what to thee and to me?" I would say that He is merely expressing His feeling that their shortage of wine is none of their responsibility. But we see Jesus complying with their need. It turns out that the wine miraculously produced from water is the best of all. And surely this is true with everything Christ does. His blessings are the best. It surely pays to give Him first place in our lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the mother of Jesus inform Him that there was no wine?
2. What did Mary tell the servants to do? What does this show that she had in Jesus?
3. What was in the waterpots to start with?
4. What were the two things Jesus told the servants to do? Did they obey? What does this show?
5. Do you consider what Christ provides as the best?
6. What was Jesus doing in accomplishing this miracle?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It was the best thing that this young couple ever did to invite Jesus to their wedding. No doubt Jesus and His disciples would not have attended had there been no invitation given them. It is that way today. Christ comes only when and where He is *invited*. He will not impose Himself on any one, nor will He override the human will. He spoke in Rev. 3:20, and said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Jesus has the very best to give. What He will bless us with and work into our lives far outshines all that we could ever glean out of the beggarly elements of the world. Oh, if souls could only realize this! But it is hard for people to be aware of Christ's superior judgment. Each man thinks his own way is best. Let us incline our ear unto Him. Let us give Him a chance to work in our lives. What Jesus performs (and is still performing) is

better than all that man could ever bring forth. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." Psa. 118:8. Oh, the skill and wisdom of men can do wonderful things, but Jesus outshines them all! Through medicine and physical therapy much good can be done, but by the power of Christ, every sickness can be made completely a thing of the past. God's way is best. Jesus could have drawn back from the cross, and He was tempted to do so, but He knew that the Father's reward for this obedience to the death of the cross would far exceed anything imaginable. The prodigal son found that what was at home at father's house was the best of all. After roaming in the world (that led him to the hogs), he finally came back to his father's house, where he deemed that a servant's life would be better than the ways of sin. And so it is. Let Jesus have His way in your life, and prove that His blessings are the best. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Here we read of the first miracle that Jesus performed in public. Notice the faith that He manifested in doing it. When something is done for the first time, often it is with a little hesitancy, but not so with this miracle that we are considering today.

All through our lesson faith is exhibited. Jesus' mother had perfect faith in her son. Perhaps she had never seen Him work a miracle before, but she was not hesitant to recommend Him to the servants. To manifest faith in our lives we cannot draw back from lifting up God to others. With confidence we can recommend Him to anyone for every need.

The servants exhibited faith. Jesus told them to fill the waterpots and the Scripture says that they filled them to the brim. When Jesus told them to take the wine to the governor of the feast they obediently and confidently carried it to him. The commentator Adam Clarke believes that the water did not turn to wine until it was being drawn from the pots. Perhaps the servants were initially just dipping into water. This would require faith.

At the end of our lesson we read that the disciples believed on Him. To be in such an environment of faith and to witness the results of it, would certainly encourage one's belief. We are serving the same God today. How needful it is that we maintain faith in Him. —Wayne Murphey

HERRINGS FOR NOTHING

The darkness was coming on rapidly, as a man with a basket on his head turned the corner of a street in London. He cried loudly as he went, "Herrings! Three a penny, red herrings, good and cheap, at three a penny!"

Soon he came close to me and commenced conversation.

"Governor, why can't I sell these herrings? I have walked two miles along this dismal place, offering them; and nobody will buy."

"The people have no work at all to do, and they are starving; there are plenty of houses round here that have not had a penny in them for many a day," was my reply.

"Ah! then, governor," he rejoined, "if they haven't the half-pence, they can't spend 'em, sure enough; so there's nothing for me but to carry 'em elsewhere."

"How much will you take for the lot?" I enquired.

"I'll be glad to get four shillin'."

I put my hand in my pocket, produced that amount and transferred it to him.

"Right! Governor, thank'ee! What'll I do with 'em?" he said, as he quickly transferred the coins to his own pocket.

"Go round this corner into the middle of the street, shout with all your might,—

'HERRINGS FOR NOTHING!'

and give three to every man, woman, and child, that comes to you, till the basket is emptied."

So he proceeded into the middle of the street, and went along shouting, "Herrings for nothing! good red herrings for nothing!"

I stood at the corner to watch his progress; and soon he neared the house where a tall woman stood at the first floor window looking out upon him.

"Here you are, missus," he cried. "Herrings for nothing! come an' take 'em."

The woman shook her head unbelievably, and left the window.

"Vot a fool!" said he; "but they won't all be so. Herrings for nothing!" A little child came out to look at him, and he called to her, "Here, my dear, take these in to your mother, and tell her how cheap they are—herrings for nothing." But the child was afraid of him and them, and ran in-doors. So, down the street, in the snow, slush, and mud, went the cheap fish, the vendor crying loudly as he went, "Herrings for

nothing!" and then adding savagely, "Oh, you fools." Thus he reached the end of the street; and then turning to retrace his steps, he continued his double cry as he came.

"Well," I said to him calmly, as he reached me at the corner.

"Well!" he repeated, "if you think so! When you gave me the money for herrings as you didn't want, I thought you were training me for a lunatic 'sylum! Now I thinks all the people round here are fit company for you. But what'll I do with the herrings if you don't want 'em, and they won't have 'em?"

"We'll try again together," I replied; "I will go with you and we'll both shout."

Into the road we both went, and he shouted once more, "Herrings for nothing!"

"Then I called out loudly also, "Will any one have some herrings for tea?"

They heard my voice, and they knew it well; and they came out at once, in twos and threes and sixes, men and women and children, all striving to reach the welcome food. As fast as I could take them from the basket, I handed three to each eager applicant, until all were speedily disposed of. When the basket was empty, the hungry crowd that had none was far greater than that which had been supplied; but they were too late, there were no more "herrings for nothing!"

Foremost among the disappointed was a tall woman of a bitter tongue, who began vehemently, "Why haven't I got any? Ain't I as good as they? Ain't my children as hungry as theirs?"

Before I had time to reply, the vendor stretched out his arm toward her, saying, "Why, governor, that's the very woman as I offered 'em to first, and she turned her nose up at 'em."

"I didn't," she rejoined passionately, "I didn't believe you meant it!"

"You go without for your unbelief!" he replied. "Good night, and thank'ee, governor!"

I told this story upon the sea-beach to a great crowd gathered there on a summer Sabbath day. They looked at each other; first smiled, then laughed outright, and at length shouted with laughter.

It was my time then; and I said, "You cannot help laughing at this quaint story, which is strictly true. But are you sure you would not have done as they did, and been as unbelieving as they? Their unbelief cost them only a hungry stomach a

little longer; but what may your unbelief cost you? God has sent His messengers to you for many years to offer—

PARDON FOR NOTHING!

Peace for nothing! Salvation for nothing! He has sent to you the most loving and tender offers that even an almighty God could frame; and what have you replied? Have you taken the trouble to reply at all? Have you not turned away in utter scornful unbelief like the woman? or ran away in fear, like the child? You are still without a hope on earth, or a hope in heaven, because you will not believe God's messengers when they offer you all that you need for time and eternity—FOR NOTHING.

"Take warning by that disappointed crowd of hungry applicants. When they were convinced that the offer was in good faith, and would gladly have shared with their fellows, they were too late!

"Let it not be so with you! Do not be in that awfully large crowd of disappointed ones, who will be obliged to believe when belief will not help them; whose knowledge, when it comes, will only increase the sorrow that they put off believing until it was *too late!*"

As I looked earnestly upon that vast crowd, the laughter was entirely gone, and an air of uneasy conviction was plainly traceable upon many faces.

"Will you not come to Jesus now?" I entreated.

"He is waiting, pleading with you! Here is salvation, full, free, and eternal; help, guidance, and blessing,—all for nothing! without money and without price." —Selected

January 29, 1983

JESUS HEALS AND FORGIVES

Mark 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Memory Verse: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. *Psa. 103:3, 4.*

Central Thought: Jesus Christ proved that He had power and authority to forgive sins by healing the man with the palsy. He is yet today well able to do both forgiving and healing, but it is evident that forgiveness should come first.

Word Definitions: *Straightway:* Directly, at once, or soon. *Palsy:* Paralyzed or enfeebled.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had just begun His ministry of preaching and healing. In the previous chapter of Mark, we find that His fame had spread abroad throughout all the region of Galilee. At the setting of the sun all the city was gathered together at the door. He left Capernaum and preached in synagogues throughout all Galilee. A leper came to Him for healing, and Jesus healed him with the admonition not to tell anyone. But the leper went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places; and they came to Him from every quarter. The reproach of the cross had not been revealed as of yet, and the multitudes were wild

with joy at this heavenly visitation of power and healing. People were in trouble, helpless, and held under the bondage of Satan's dismal sway. Their faith and hope were inspired. They just knew that if they could get someone to Jesus they would be made whole. Jesus had been run out of Nazareth, and had chosen Capernaum as His dwelling. In our lesson He has just returned to the city, and is once more thronged and pressed by people wanting to see Him and to be healed. Let us consider the faith of those who brought the paralytic to Christ, but let us also note Jesus' first response to their faith. No doubt this poor, sick man felt the condemnation and judgment of God upon his soul. This was his greatest need and Jesus knew it. Somehow the scribes managed to get into this crowded house and to find places to sit. Their opposition rose up at the suggestion of Christ forgiving sins. From them it was one antagonism after another. But the man who could not get in before because of his own feeble condition and the pressing throng found plenty of room to arise, take up his bed, and go forth before them all!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people of Capernaum do when they heard that Jesus was back in town?
2. What did Jesus do to the crowd that was in the house?
3. What did Jesus see in the four men who brought the sick man to Him? Why would this faith move Christ?
4. What did their taking up the roof show?
5. Why did Jesus first tell the man that his sins were forgiven?
6. Why did the scribes object to this?
7. Which was easier for Christ to say: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or, "Take up thy bed and walk"?
8. How was this man able to rise, take up his bed, and go forth, when just minutes previous to this he could not be brought in the door?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Here were four men who had a deep concern for this poor man who was paralyzed and helpless from this terrible condition. We can visualize them bringing him on a cot through the streets, their hearts full of expectancy and hope. But, oh! There was such a crowd around the house; inside and outside the door, pressed and eager concerning what was going on inside! Perhaps for a little while they wondered just how they

were going to get their friend to Jesus. They were not daunted by the seemingly impossible situation. Where there is a will, there is a way. Most people find plenty of time and effort to do what they want to do. If one does not really want to serve God, there are plenty of obstacles to stumble over. There are plenty of hindrances to turn you back. But these men were determined to get their friend to Jesus. No doubt Jesus knew all along just what was taking place, and what was about to happen. Suddenly a sound reaches their ears from the roof above. Boards are being pried upward. Particles of dirt and dust begin to drift to the floor. No doubt the people's attention to Jesus's words are being averted to this new attraction. Pretty soon light begins to shine through a hole in the roof. Hands come into view followed by eager faces from above. The hole gets bigger, and finally a man on a bed is lowered into the room. Jesus knew what he wanted. This man had consented to this ordeal, knowing that any way he could get to Christ he would be rewarded. He could have been embarrassed by such an act, but it is evident that he was not. Oh, let us today not be ashamed to trust in Christ for everything. We have no roofs to tear up today, but there are a lot more obstructions. Let us come to the Lord in prayer and faith. Remove the doubts and hindrances and we can find God's help now just as well as that man did then.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It would be interesting to know more about the man in our lesson. The Bible doesn't reveal his name or record his words, but his actions proved that he was a man of much faith. This man, because of his faith, received a double blessing. The news had spread of the healings that Christ performed, and though this individual probably had little understanding of salvation, he undoubtedly had a great longing to receive help. I believe that when Christ forgave him of his sins it satisfied that longing. The joy of sins forgiven exceeds all other joy. Christ also blessed him with healing and the man's faith took that in also. The experience of sins forgiven was a catalyst that strengthened his faith and it just took in all that Christ had for him.

One person stated that faith is "born in our hearts during birth pains of spiritual life." There must be faith in order to obtain salvation. You must believe that there is a God, that He is able and willing to pardon all sins. After we are saved we

should take this seed of faith and nourish and cultivate it so that it will prosper and grow so as to obtain all that God has available to us.

There is a record of only one person in the whole house who found forgiveness of sin. Undoubtedly there were many there who needed this experience. It would seem that there would have been a real revival take place there that day. They were all amazed at the miracle that had occurred but that awareness did not remove their sins. Such people exist today. Some sit back and criticize. Others are impressed, but few actually put in for the help that they need. The humble individual who makes an earnest endeavor to contact Christ, unmindful of human reproach, will receive the blessing.

—Wayne Murphey

February 5, 1983

THE FAITH OF THE ROMAN CENTURION

Luke 7:1 Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

3 And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

4 And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

5 For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

6 Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:

7 Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.

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

9 When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

Matt. 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

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

Luke 7:10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Memory Verse: Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Heb. 10:35.

Central Thought: God is looking for a people who will not demand or count themselves worthy of His outward show of power and glory, but will rather simply take Him at His Word and not doubt His precious promises.

Word Definitions: *Centurion:* A Roman military officer who had command of 100 men. *Gnashing of teeth:* Grating of the teeth in pain or agony, and chattering of teeth in extreme pain or cold.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Since the Roman Empire dominated a good part of the civilized world at that time, occupational forces were required to be stationed throughout the Empire to help maintain order and diplomacy. Adam Clarke explained that each division, or manipulus, of one hundred men had two centurions. One centurion was over the other. The centurion in our lesson was apparently the subordinate, or lower, centurion. He was "set under authority," that is, he had those who were over him, to whose authority he was subject. But he also had jurisdiction of the one hundred soldiers. He recognized Christ as a Man who had great authority, even over the diseases of the body. With respect to this authority, he put in for help for his beloved servant. It is evident that the authority that he wielded bore much resemblance with Christ's authority; that is, it was in love. A military life has functions that are not conducive to the ways of God. But here is a man, like the centurion (Cornelius) in Acts 10, who was greatly interested in serving God. He had some very important points concerning his attitude and spirit that were greatly in his favor when it came to getting help from Christ. His love for his servant was the first thing. His friendship to the Jewish nation also had a bearing on this case. His deep sense of unworthiness underlaid his appeal for Christ not to actually come. And then His unshaken confidence in Christ's power and the authority of His

word touched the heart of Christ. We drew from Matthew's account (Matt. 8:5-13) what Jesus said concerning people like this centurion. He was not a Jew. He had not the chance that so many Jews had. But he possessed a faith that by far outshone any Jew that Christ had ever met. Let this be a warning and a lesson to us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the centurion concerned about his servant?
2. Why were the elders of the Jews willing to come to Jesus for his need?
3. Why would this centurion feel that he was not worthy for Christ to come under his roof?
4. How could this centurion understand Christ's power and authority?
5. Can you combine all of these factors and conclude the reason for this man's outstanding faith?
6. Can we profit by this example of faith?
7. Is it possible for us today to have the same quality of faith that this centurion had?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

This Roman soldier had a quality of faith concerning the power and love of Christ that was beyond anything that Jesus had found in His own people. "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof, . . . but say in a word ['speak the word only'—Matt. 8:8] and my servant shall be healed." Let us consider this man's expression here. Christ was there in the flesh. He could be at only one place at a time. But His Word could operate anywhere that there was a heart that would believe sincerely. Perhaps because this man (whose name we know not) was a Gentile, he did not feel worthy of intercourse with Jesus in His actual presence. But he had great confidence in the power of that Man's Word. This is a great lesson for us today. There is much in having respect to the Word of God. Take heed, my fellow traveler to the judgment, that you do not despise or count lightly the Word of God. Count His promises true. Judge Him faithful. He will back up His Word as He sees us steadfastly holding to its counsel. Christ is not interested in heading a society that is carried away with His person but has not respect for His Word or teachings. He would much rather deal with people who respect His Word, but ask for no special manifestations. His blessings and reward are going to be great for

those who steadfastly hold to His Word above all else. Those who seek hilarious emotional experiences without the support and stability of the doctrine of Christ are going to be disappointed in the judgment. They will find themselves shut out into outer darkness, while others are ushered into the glorious presence of the Lord. Outer darkness! Think of this woeful plight! No light, no warmth, no illumination—an existence without the barest comfort or solace—all this awaits the neglectful soul who does not respect the Word of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The centurion manifested a steadfast and unwavering faith. He did not express a single doubt about his servant being healed. In order to maintain faith, it is essential that we have a positive attitude. We cannot be depressed and discouraged and still possess the faith that God would have us to.

The last couple of lessons have dealt with faith. Every trial involves its own circumstances and it would be impossible to cover every situation and how to have the victory in each, but suffice it to say that God has the victory for us. The devil will confuse our minds with circumstances and hinder us from receiving the blessing. There is a story about a man driving through the country-side at dusk. Not too far from a farm house, his car had a flat tire. After checking in the trunk and realizing that he did not have a jack with which to change the tire, he set out to walk to the farm house to borrow one. On the way he began thinking, "It is rather late in the evening and the farmer may already be in bed." He walked some more and thought, "It's a little bit chilly and the farmer may not want to get up." He reached the farmhouse and while knocking on the door, thought, "The farmer might be so upset at getting up that he probably won't even loan me a jack." At that moment the farmer opened an upstairs window and asked the man what he needed, whereupon the man hollered back, "Just keep your old jack," and turned and walked away.

There are several things that the centurion could have thought that would have hindered his faith. He could have rationalized that Christ wouldn't grant his request because he was a Roman. Notice that he didn't approach Jesus himself, but sent the elders of the Jews. The Jews were quick to point out that the centurion was a good friend of theirs. Through these seemingly adverse circumstances, he maintained a humble faith in Jesus and that is what brought the answer. —W. Murphey

February 12, 1984

**JESUS DEALS WITH A PHARISEE AND A
SINNER WOMAN**

Luke 7:36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment.

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Memory Verse: He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Prov. 28:13.

Central Thought: The soul that becomes conscious of the depth of his need for Christ will put forth great love and effort to come to Him, while the one who does not sense his true condition will let Him pass by.

Word Definitions: *Alabaster box of ointment:* A box made from alabaster (a precious stone) filled with myrrh (a perfumed oil). *Creditor:* One to whom money is owed. *Debtor:* One who owes the money.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is reported that the manner of taking meals in that time and place was different than what we are used to today. The dining furniture consisted of a couch with a table. The food was placed on the table which was near the head. The person who took food reclined on the couch supported by one arm while with the other he took food. His feet were down at the other end of the couch. Thus one who approached him could be said to come behind. The word "sat" in our lesson is translated from the Greek word which means "to recline." As Jesus was reclining according to the manner of the custom, the woman entered the house and came up to His feet and began her loving act of faith and repentance. Note the four things this weeping woman did. Jesus read in her heart the truth. Just who this woman was we know not. Some think this is the same incident as recorded in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and John 12. To this I cannot agree, but that is really not an important issue. This woman was a sinner and she knew it. She needed mercy and forgiveness. She had faith that Jesus could fill her need. But the other person involved stands need of notice also. Simon was a Pharisee, a member of a religious sect of that day who felt themselves superior to anyone else. This kind of spirit is not dead in the world today. A close study of these two people yields much value. Doubtless before God, Simon needed mercy and forgiveness just as much as this woman. But the problem with Simon was that he did not feel his need. Thus he put forth very little effort, and thus what forgiveness that he might have been given meant very little to him. This same condition prevails in many lives today.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of woman is this in our lesson?
2. What were the four things that she did as she wept before the Lord?
3. What did she say?
4. What was Simon's attitude toward Jesus and this woman?
5. Which one of the debtors was Simon likened unto?
6. What made the difference between Simon and the woman?
7. How can a person avoid being in the condition that Simon was in?
8. Does a person have to go into deep sin before they feel their need of salvation?
9. What made this woman "love much"?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

This is a very touching lesson, full of good and wise teachings. Take a good look at this woman. Her life was marred and stained with sin. That is what sin does. It is deceitful. It seems to promise pleasure and success, but in reality only gives sorrow and failure. Condemnation weighed heavily upon her soul. She felt that God was at a distance. She wanted peace and soul rest. She believed that Jesus was sent from God. She was persuaded that He alone, above all others, could help her in this great need. When she knew that Jesus was in that house, she purchased a costly perfume, and with an aching and breaking heart came earnestly to Him. Perhaps Jesus as a Man might have been tempted to draw back and refuse to allow this woman to deal thus with Him. But He looked beyond it all and read the fervent language of her heart. He knew her earnest and sincere appeal was to Him for help in her soul. Her touch was not that of lust, but of need. Poor Simon! He had no consciousness of this woman's true condition. He thought only of himself and scorned Jesus' acceptance of her. We would hope that Simon learned something that day. We hope that he realized that he, himself, was in just as great a need as this woman. We would hope that, after this woman left the house, Simon would have inquired diligently as to what all this was to mean to him. And it would be good for us today to learn what this all means. One need not go into deep sin to become conscious of his need for God. It is true, that those who do go into the depths of sin are many times more conscious of their need of God than those who do not go deep in sin. But the main ingredient needed is honesty and openness of heart to God's dealings.

God was dealing with this woman's heart. But God could not deal that way with Simon because his own self-righteousness and unreasonable attitude prohibited it. May God help us every one to have the right evaluation of ourselves and God's way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is rather puzzling as to why the Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him. The teachings and practices of Christ were in actuality antagonistic toward the Pharisees. They were a religious sect that claimed to adhere to the law of Moses. However, they upheld not only the written law but an oral law. The oral law was to complete and explain the written law. The expressions of "bondage," of "weak and beggarly elements," and of "burdens too heavy for men to bear," have been used in describing the Pharisees.

Perhaps the Pharisee invited Christ to his house with the idea of showing Jesus how religious he was and how careful he was to keep the ordinances of the law. He probably felt confident that Christ would be unable to lay His finger upon any fault in his life. How wrong he was. Before Christ left his house He showed the Pharisee through a sinner woman that true repentance will bridge the gap to God quicker than anything.

The Pharisee professed a religion all right, but where was his love and humility of heart? He had even failed to do that which was considered etiquette, in washing the feet of Jesus, his guest. Pride and love are enemies. Love will not abide in a heart where pride is. People can fit a religion to their proud and haughty nature, but a true and undefiled love for God brings about a repentance that will result in the salvation of the soul.

Christ proved to the Pharisee that in spite of his religion and profession he needed help. He was a debtor and could not pay the price of salvation for himself. It is not recorded that the Pharisee received the help he needed. It was the woman who laid aside all pride and self sufficiency upon whom the blessings of Christ fell.

—Wayne Murphey

A MOUNTAIN PRAYER MEETING

"Will you go to meeting with me this afternoon, Mabel? Come; this is your last day here; do go once before you leave the White Mountains."

"What do you do in meeting?" asked the gay, beautiful, "High Church" New York belle, with just a shade of contemptuous inflection in her voice.

"There will just be a testimony meeting."

"How very funny! All the old women 'speakin' in meetin', and scaring themselves dreadfully. I'll go. I dare say I shall have a good laugh, if I don't fall asleep."

So we walked through the long, hilly street of Bethelhem, in the pleasant hour before sunset, in the sweet, warm, hazy air of early autumn. The glory of the Lord shone round about us; for all the mountains were burnished, splendid, gorgeous, in purple and crimson and gold. Mabel's deep gray eyes grew large and luminous as her artist-soul drank in the ineffable beauty.

The building was so crowded with villagers and many visitors that it was with difficulty we obtained seats, apart from each other. Mabel found a place next to a young, sweet-faced country woman, and looked, with her flower-like face and French costume, like some rare exotic by the side of a humble mountain daisy.

The minister opened the service with a few fervent, simple words, and then said, "We will now go to prayer."

A plain old country farmer knelt in the aisle before us. His prayer—sincere, and I, doubt not, as acceptable, because sincere, as if it had been offered in polished language—made Mabel shake with laughter.

He rose, and there was utter silence for a moment. Then a high, sweet woman's voice, far in front of us, sang out, clear as a bell,—

"Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne;
Make all my wants and wishes known."

The congregation joined in; only one verse was sung, and again the strange, solemn silence fell upon us.

It was broken by the sudden rising of a lank, awkward boy, who uttered a few words in a frightened nasal whine.

This time Mabel was convulsed with laughter; but the sweet singer, who saw in this utterance only the contrite soul of the speaker, burst forth triumphantly with—

"Oh, gift of gifts! oh, grace of faith!
My God how can it be
That thou, who hast discerning love,
Shouldst give that gift to me?"

Only one verse, as before. Then the pure notes, high above all the other voices died away, and a strange-looking woman arose.

"I haven't any gift of language," said she, "but I want to give in my testimony. I've always been a wicked woman; I've always gone against my conscience. I've made my folks at home miserable for many a long year; and that's the reason God poured trouble after trouble down on me, till I was about to take my own life, when some one—it must have been one of God's angels—went singing through the woods. Shall I ever forget the words?—

"With tearful eyes I look around;
Life seems a dark and stormy sea;—"

She stopped, her voice breaking into a hoarse sob, when the other sweet voice immediately went on—

"Yet amid the gloom, I hear a sound,—
A heavenly whisper,—'Come to me.'"

"Oh, voice of mercy! voice of love!
In conflict, grief, and agony,
Support me, cheer me from above!
And gently whisper—'Come to me.' "

I looked at Mabel. She was not laughing. A strange, awed expression rested upon her features; her head was bowed down as the sweet-faced woman at her side rose, and, turning to the last speaker, said, in a low, gentle voice,—

"My sister, we all thank our heavenly Father that He put His strong arm of protection about you while it was yet time; and since you have joined with us in profession of your faith, there has been no one more earnest in those good works without which faith is nothing."

Then reverently kneeling, she prayed that God would strengthen her dear sister, and give them all love and charity, one for another, and His peace, which passeth all understanding.

Out rang the sweet voice,—

"Haste thee on, from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer!
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there."

Mabel was now silently crying, and big tears were blinding my eyes, when a grand old man rose from his seat. Bent and feeble now, I could see that he had once been tall and stately, looking as the Puritan fathers must have looked when

they first stepped upon "the stern and rock-bound coast" at Plymouth. Fine, clean-cut features, and eyes still blue and piercing remained, but his voice trembled painfully as he said—

"I am ninety-four years old, and most of those I love have gone to the graveyard before me; I have lived all these years in Bethlehem, and, boy and man, have tried to serve the Lord: and I owe my blessed hope in my Saviour to the teaching and example of my good and pious mother." Then, with aged, trembling hands uplifted, he prayed that all the children present might be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Near us was a handsome, well-dressed man, past middle age, who had listened with absorbed attention to all that had been said, and who now seemed strangely agitated. In a moment he arose, and then he spoke.

"I presume that no one here remembers a poor boy who nearly fifty years ago left this place to seek his fortune. Fatherless, motherless, with no claim upon any one here, I wandered away with a heavy heart to earn my bread. Many a time have I been exhausted, discouraged, almost hopeless; but my mother had taught me to pray—her dying gift to me was her own Bible. It has gone round the world with me, and God has never forsaken me. I have long been a rich man, and I have come once more to these grand hills—my childhood's home—to testify my gratitude to my Maker for all His goodness. I never intended to speak as I am now doing; but after what I have heard and witnessed, I should be most ungrateful if I did not give my testimony and belief in the abounding love and mercy of God. O friends! take me back! Let me be one with you in this most sweet and touching service, and when I leave you, pray that I may never be ungrateful for the earthly blessings He has heaped upon me, and for the far more priceless gift of His Son, Jesus Christ."

Every one had listened to the stranger in deep silence. Every heart had thrilled responsively to his words. It seemed as if the very breath of Heaven had entered into the little church, cleansing and purifying each soul present, and filling it with inexpressible devotion, when, like a soft, trembling wave, the pure young voice came floating down the aisles, and we heard the solemn acknowledgment,—

"A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;

A precious, blood-bought soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

She sang alone; a feeling too deep for utterance had prevented the rest from joining in, and many heads were bowed in silent prayer and thanksgiving.

But oh! what did I see? Pale as death, her eyes dilated, her whole frame quivering like an aspen, Mabel arose and essayed to speak. The muscles of her mouth refused to obey her will, but with a painful effort she faltered in low, broken tones, "Pray for me," and sank down upon her knees.

It was the voice of God that spoke in those three little words, "*Pray for me,*" uttered so low, yet distinctly heard in every part of the church. Joyful tears were streaming down many women's faces, as for the first time the singer's voice trembled, broke, and at last sobbed through the humble entreaty,—

"Just as I am—without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

As she finished, a young minister who was living in the same house with us, and whose life had been nearly sacrificed in missionary labors, bowed in prayer. The radiance of Heaven was upon his face, and God spoke through him to the awakened soul of Mabel in a way I had never heard before. The words poured out in an inspired flood, carrying her soul resistless upon its mighty waves to repentance, faith, prayer, praise, love, joy, peace, and at last Heaven!

With a solemn benediction the services were ended; and when we had come out, it seemed as if the very heavens were rejoicing over the tidings which had gone up of the soul that day redeemed. All that was gorgeous and beautiful in color had taken possession of the sky. The clouds, like great gold and crimson banners, were moving high over our heads, furling and unfurling, as if carried by exultant angels, marching and singing their triumphant alleluias.

And Mabel, still white as an Easter lily, but with her deep gray eyes full of a new happiness, a steadfast resolution to live henceforth for Christ, walked by my side, watching the great glory of the heavens, with her arm lovingly entwined in mine. We did not speak; we had no need, for our thoughts were in perfect accord. I had witnessed the wonderful mystery of her instantaneous "change of heart;" I knew it was well with her.

Beautiful, gay, fashionable, the pet of society, I knew her also to be a staunch upholder of all that was noble, good, and pure, and I felt a thorough conviction that she had indeed given herself up body and soul to Him who had chosen to send His Holy Spirit into her heart, as she was going out of the little village which bore the blessed name of *Bethlehem*.

—Selected

February 9, 1984

JESUS CHRIST, THE LORD OF THE SABBATH

Luke 6:1 And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.

Matt. 12:2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was a hungered, and they that were with him;

4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

5 Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

6 But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

Mark 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Luke 6:6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.

7 And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.

8 Be he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.

9 Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?

10 And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

Memory Verse: Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an 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: Jesus brought a richer and fuller meaning to the Sabbath day. As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus changed the day from one of a cessation of physical activity to one of a spiritual rest of the soul.

Word Definition: *Sabbath:* A Hebrew word meaning, "to repose or desist from exertion."

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today the conflict between those who were zealously trying to keep and uphold the law of the Sabbath, and the One who instituted and was Lord of it. Adam Clarke comments very well on this Scripture lesson. He says: "There are four ways in which positive laws may cease to oblige [or be in effect]: 1. By the natural law of necessity. 2. By a particular law which is superior. 3. By the law of charity and mercy, and 4. By the dispensation and authority of the Lawgiver." Clarke also explains Matthew 12:5, thus: "The way the priests profaned the sabbath day in the temple was by offering sacrifices as was done on common days." If we have the letter alone, there will be many conflicts. But if we look to the Lawgiver Himself, He can direct us in the administration of His law to our hearts and lives. The Jews were in error clinging to the letter of the law with no vision of what its real purpose was. It was not lawful for David to enter into the house of God and partake of the shew bread. According to the Sabbath code, it was not lawful for the priests to do the activity of offering sacrifices on the Sabbath. But they were blameless. According to the Sabbath code, it was unlawful to do any kind of work or labor on the Sabbath. One could not even gather sticks. There is One, however, who is higher than the law. There is One who is greater than the temple. It is God Almighty revealed in Christ, the Lawgiver and Builder of His

temple. For the sake of necessity, love and mercy, or for any other reason Christ could put the law aside and move as He wisely deemed best. Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." A wrong application and misuse of the law can lead to great problems and insurmountable obstacles in the path of justice. The attitude and spirit of these people contentious for the law was wrong. Let us get the lesson and be on our guard against a law spirit dominating us rather than the law of Christ. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus not reprove or forbid His disciples from picking grain?
2. Was the Sabbath made for man, or was man made for the Sabbath?
3. Can you think what it would have been if man had been made for the Sabbath?
4. If the Pharisees would have understood what the Scripture meant about mercy and not sacrifice, what would they have done?
5. In what way was Christ the Lord of the Sabbath day?
6. Is it possible for us today to use the law in a wrong way?
7. How was the law used wrongly in our lesson?
8. Try to think of a way that the law of God or the law of man can be misused today, and explain it.
9. Is there any danger of us having a law spirit today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The apostle Paul stated in 1 Timothy 1:5, that the "end [goal, or purpose] of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." In verses 8 and 9, of that same chapter he stated that the "law is good if a man use it lawfully," and that the "law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient." It is possible that we can become so contentious about keeping the law that we pass over and become ignorant of what the purpose of the law really is. The Pharisees were guilty of this. I have grave doubts of them having any comprehension of what the purpose of the Sabbath day really was. Of course, they were entirely and utterly void of any comprehension of who Christ really was. With such scales on their eyes it is no wonder they floundered in such spiritual quicksand and did not know the depth to which they were sinking. Jesus plainly shows

how that some laws can be broken with respect to more important issues. An old story from the early days of the west told about a young boy who became snowbound in a blizzard at home when his parents were gone on a journey. The man had given the boy a list of rules, but had closed with one thought: "Son, no rule fits always, for there are times when you have to forget rules and decide matters as the situation demands." Now this may seem like a treacherous statement, but it is still true. It was true in our lesson. We need something more to go by than just a list of rules. We need the Spirit of God and the love of Christ to overshadow and guide our lives in accord with the essence of His Word. "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." 2 Cor. 3:6. Let us strive to understand and learn what the real import of the Scripture is. Let us be teachable to the Holy Spirit, and He will enlighten our hearts to the perfect will of God. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Observance of the literal Sabbath was a righteousness of the law. The observance of the spiritual Sabbath is a righteousness of faith. To seek righteousness through the law is a vain endeavor. The law is not of faith (Gal 3:12), and to please God a person must have faith (Heb. 11:6). We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). Faith is an inward work and not visible to the physical eye.

We cannot fault the scribes and Pharisees for their zeal of the law. God used the law to make men conscious of their sins. However, after a person is aware of sin, they must humble themselves and ask for mercy. In Romans, the 10th chapter, the Apostle Paul wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Many people today enjoy exhibiting their religion. They relish imposing their religion on others, but when it comes to actually having a desire to help people, they are woefully short. It is important to be doctrinally correct, but the most

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significant thing is to display the right spirit. It was more important to Christ to heal the lame than to argue with the scribes and Pharisees concerning the Sabbath day.

—Wayne Murphey

February 26, 1984

CHRIST REVEALS THE NEW BIRTH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Memory Verse: Of his own will he begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. James 1:18.

Central Thought: Being born from above is the only entrance to the Kingdom of God. We are born once into natural life, and must needs be born the second time into spiritual life. It took God's gift to the world in the life and death of His Son, Jesus Christ, to make this new birth possible.

Word Definitions: *Born again:* Born from above. *The wind bloweth where it listeth:* "The spirit breathes where it wills." (Greek). *Believeth in him [Christ]:* The Greek word here is "eis" which means "to" or "into" (indicating the point reached or entered). Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews. He was a Pharisee. His approach to Jesus by night was to learn more about this great Teacher. He came by night for one of two reasons, and possibly for both. He could have wished to avoid detection, and it could have been that a night visit would have assured him of a personal conference with Jesus, as much of the day was taken up with the people. He was definitely interested, but was wholly unprepared for what Christ gave Him. Note the term "we." He is associating and identifying himself with others—those of his own people and position. Be he made no commitment at this time. That comes later. He was investigating and curious at that time. His assertions were not accurate. He was right about Jesus being a Teacher come from God, but his declaration concerning the miracles as proof of God being with Jesus is very immature. Jesus made no comment about that. What course did Jesus take here? He told this man one of the greatest statements ever spoken by man. No scales of justice or wisdom can fully express its value and importance. The heavenly birth became the theme and topic of the conversation. Forgotten were the miracles. Nicodemus was to grapple with this statement. His reaction to Jesus' words showed the raw, darkened, ignorant, and base individual he was. He had no comprehension whatsoever of spiritual matters. The only kind of birth he knew of was the natural birth. But there is hope for Nicodemus. In John 7:50, he seemed to be considering Christ, and in John 19:39, we find him helping to give Jesus a burial. If Nicodemus appears in glory, it will be because he experienced the new birth, and followed Jesus all the way.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Jesus respond to Nicodemus' statement concerning the miracles?
2. What does the new birth make available for man?
3. What two things or agents produce the new birth?
4. What is the Spirit likened unto in our lesson?
5. What does believing into Jesus Christ have to do with the new birth?
6. Why did God give His only begotten Son? In what way did God give Him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

To be born of the water and of the Spirit is to receive new life in the soul through the means of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. These two agents working together produce a heavenly life for earthly living. It is possible for one's religious experience to be wholly in the realm of natural and earthly things. This was evidently the case of Nicodemus. But Jesus pointed him to higher and vaster issues. He sought to introduce Nicodemus to the wonder and glory of the world of the Spirit, of which the natural things are but types and shadows. The Spirit world is the heavenly realm. It is lifted up above the carnal and material things of life. Man is two-fold: body and spirit. The first birth is of the flesh, but the second birth is from above—the realm of the Spirit. How tragic that one could pass through this life and never experience the wonders of being born from above! Jesus was offered on Calvary's cross to make it possible for men to be born again. Not willing for any to perish, the sacrifice of the precious life of the Son of God was offered. He came into the world to save sinners. And sinners can be saved if they are willing to repent and forsake their sins, and take up their cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." What wonderful words! How precious to know that we need not perish! We do not have to go down to the pit like the beast of the field with no hope of coming up in the resurrection to see good things. We have a hope bright and clear. We need not perish. God has provided a way that we can escape the second death. It is for us to reach out and lay hold of this hope set before us. We should be born from above, and let the Spirit of God have control of our lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christ's answer to Nicodemus is something that we all must base our salvation on. There are many sectarian churches today who have by-passed this vital truth. Today you can join a church by shaking the preacher's hand, signing the church book, or being baptized. These are the churches that cater to the crowds. If you become a part of a church by just sliding into it, then you are in the wrong church. The true Church of God is set on a hill and a person must press his way into it. At a birth there must be some traveling before the child is born. In a spiritual birth the soul must travail and be repentant before God.

Nicodemus was a part of the Sanhedrin, who were responsible for the death of Christ. How different things could have been for Christ if He had only patted Nicodemus on the back, declared him to be a pretty good fellow, and on his way to heaven since he had a form of religion. With this kind of doctrine Christ could have gained quite a crowd of followers and escaped the cross. The only hitch to this is that such a religion would fail to get anyone into heaven. God's purpose in sending His Son into the world was not to destroy religion, but to show the people the way to a more perfect inward work that would result in the salvation of their souls. It is just a fact of reality that in order to have this born-again experience we must lay down all of our self-righteousness, our opinions and ideas, and accept the truth as Christ taught it.

—Wayne Murphey

March 4, 1984

JESUS OPENS UP THE FOUNT OF LIVING WATER

John 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

Memory Verse: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:14.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour has a well of living water to give to every soul who will come to Him. It satisfies the soul, and is an artesian well springing up into everlasting life. No matter how scarred one's heart and life is, to drink of the water that Jesus offers so freely will mean victory and eternal life.

Word Definitions: *Springing up:* Gushing bountifully.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. (John 2:13). He was now returning, and felt the need of taking the route that went through Samaria. The bitter animosity and hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans is well known. The Jews looked down on the people of Samaria. Old-standing feuds that dated back to the days when other nations moved into the area and mixed with the people were sullenly harbored and nourished. But Jesus partook not of this spirit. His heart reached out to all men. He must have known that

there was a soul up there who was needing the touch of His love and the water of life. Jesus had stopped to rest at the well of Sychar. We understand that this is the same Shechem in the Old Testament. Watch how Jesus approached the woman. His request for water had a two-fold purpose. It was to draw out from the woman her sense of the age-old feud in contrast with His human need. It was also to pave the way for His message concerning the real water. Consider the thought of the water. It is a basic human need. It is something we all need no matter who we are or where we are from. It is also a basic spiritual need. Just as we need water for the body, we need water for the soul. This is parallel with the thought in our previous lesson concerning the two births. Just as Nicodemus was blind to the realities of the realm of the Spirit, so also is this woman. Note her expressions that witness to her ignorance. Note Christ's intrusion into her personal life. This is important. Note her reaction. With this adulterous condition made open, her whole life is in view. Also consider how she forgets her water pot. As someone said, "This woman went to the well to get water, and found the well of eternal life."

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus offer the woman at the well?
2. What did He say that this water of life would be in a person?
3. Why was the woman interested in this water?
4. What kind of morals did this woman evidently have?
5. What was the answer to her need? Did Jesus fill it?
6. What was her reaction to all of this?
7. How important is the well of life to us today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The thought of the water of life is so precious and so important. The heart of man is thirsting for something. He tries to quench his thirst in the things of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, but this does not satisfy the longings of his soul. He gets deeper and deeper into the mire of sin and ungodliness. This woman with her five love affairs and marriages had probably had her share of trouble and sorrow. Here she comes, carrying out the menial task of drawing water. Her heart was no doubt heavy with sorrow and remorse. There are many weary and aching hearts today. They need to find the well of eternal life. If only people knew what the gift of God

was! There is a fountain that we can all drink of that will never run dry. Jesus has a satisfying portion for everyone. From His fulness of life and blessings we can have a bountiful supply. He still wants to put this well into the souls of men. Oh, if only people would turn their eyes from the carnal pursuits of life and become awakened to the real joys and blessings of spiritual realities! Anyone who has been with five different companions and has not been able to stay with any one of them has a real problem. This pictures a self-centered and miserable state of frustration. Perhaps she had these things well hidden from public view, but it was not hidden from her, and it was all exposed to the One who was there before her. Through the wisdom of God, Jesus was able to turn her mind from the natural and the sinful. The final wind-up of this story sees not only this woman, but many of her town accepting Christ. Samaria, a place despised by the Jews, was ripe for the harvest of the gospel. Let us lift up Christ today as the Fount of the water of life for thirsty souls.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The woman in our lesson understood only those things relating to the physical. Christ used an intriguing manner to turn her thoughts toward the spiritual realm. There are many people in the world today who have no more understanding than this woman possessed.

Once a native in South Africa purchased a clock. It ran awhile, and then stopped. The hands no longer rotated and the native decided that this was where the problem lay. He removed the hands and carried them to a man who repaired timepieces. The man declared, "There is nothing wrong with the hands of the clock. The trouble is inside the clock. Bring it to me and I will look inside and see what the problem is." The native understood nothing concerning the concept of how a clock works. His only comprehension of the clock was that the hands were supposed to move. There are multitudes of people who understand very little in regard to eternal values. Many are acquainted enough to know religion is supposed to make a person good, but they know very little about what the living waters will actually do for an individual. This is why the invitation is given out: "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

In writing about the Israelites, Paul declared, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual

Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. 10:4. Have you ever performed a hot, hard task and then craved a glass of cold water? Perhaps there were other things available for you to drink, but nothing sounded as good as a glass of cold water. This is the way of the soul—it craves the living water and nothing else will satisfy. We are a privileged people when the spiritual eyes of our understanding are opened concerning the significance of Christ's living waters.

—Wayne Murphey

LYMAN DEAN'S TESTIMONIALS

I do not believe two more worthy, excellent people could be found than Gideon Randal and his wife. To lift the fallen, and minister to the destitute was their constant habit and delight, so that often they shortened their own comforts for the good of others. Mr. Randal's friends urged him to reduce his charities, as such generous giving might mar his fortune and bring him to want; but his unfailing reply was:—

"I think there's enough left to carry Martha and me through life, and some over. What we give to the poor, we lend to the Lord, and if a dark day comes, He will provide."

A dark day did come, but it was not until after he had reached threescore and ten years. As old age advanced, his little farm had become less productive, and debts accumulated. Being forced to raise money, he had borrowed a thousand dollars of Eugene Harrington, giving him a mortgage on his house for security. The interest was regularly paid; but he died suddenly, and his son, a merciless, grasping man, wrote to Mr. Randal, demanding payment of the mortgage. The old man asked for an extension of the time, but he pressed the demand, and threatened if it was not settled within a given time, to deprive him of his home. Mr. Randal was greatly distressed.

"Martha," he said to his wife, "young Harrington is a hard man. He has me in his power now, and I fear he will not scruple to ruin me. I think I had better go and talk with him, and tell him how little I have. It may be he'll pity two old people, and allow us better terms."

"But husband, you are not used to traveling, and Harrowtown is a hundred miles away, and you are old and feeble, too."

"True, wife, but I can say to him a great deal more than I can write, and besides, Luke Conway lives there. I took an interest in him when he was a poor boy. Perhaps he'll advise and help me, now that I'm in trouble."

At last, seeing he felt he must go, Martha reluctantly consented, and fitted him out with wifely care.

The next morning was warm and sunny for November, and Mr. Randal started out for Harrowtown.

"Gideon," called Mrs. Randal, as he walked slowly down the road, "be sure and take tight hold of the railing when you get in and out of the cars."

"I'll be careful. You take good care of yourself, Martha," and, with a parting look, the old man hastened on to take the stage, which was to convey him to the railroad station. But misfortune met him at the very outset of his journey. The stage was heavily loaded, and on the way, one of the wheels broke down, which caused such a detention that Mr. Randal missed the morning train, and the next did not come for several hours.

It was afternoon when he finally started. He was anxious and weary from long waiting; and after three stations were passed, he began to ask questions.

"How long before we get to Harrowtown?" he inquired, stopping the busy conductor.

"We get there at half past eight."

Another question was upon Mr. Randal's lips, but the conductor had hurried on. He looked around as if to appeal to some one else, but turned back, talking to himself. "Not get there till into the evening," he said, "and pitch dark, for there's no moon now. I shan't know where to go." The poor old man was sorely troubled.

Presently the conductor came back, and as he passed his seat, he stopped him again.

"Mr. Conductor, how shall I know when to get out? I've never been to Harrowtown, and I don't want to get out at the wrong place."

"Give yourself no concern," was the polite reply. "I'll tell you when we come to Harrowtown. I won't forget you."

Soothed by this assurance, Mr. Randal's mind grew tranquil, and he finally went to sleep.

In the seat behind him sat a tall, handsome boy. His name was Albert Gregory. He was bright and intelligent, but his well-featured face was spoiled by a wicked-looking eye and a hard, cruel mouth.

He saw the aged passenger fall asleep, and nudged his seat-fellow.

"Look there, John. By and by, I'll play a joke on that old country greeny, and you'll see fun."

On rushed the swift express; mile after mile was passed; daylight faded and the lamps were lit in the cars, and still the aged man slept, watched by his purposed tormenter, and the other boy who waited to "see fun."

At length the speed of the train began to slacken, coming near a stopping-place. Albert sprang up and shook Mr. Randal violently.

"Wake up! Wake up!" he called sharply, putting his mouth close to his ear. "This is Harrowtown. You must get off here."

The old man, thus roughly roused, started from his seat and gazed around him, bewildered. The change from day to night, the unaccustomed waking on a moving train, the glare of the lights added tenfold to his confusion.

"Wh—what did you say, boy?" he asked helplessly.

"This is Harrowtown. The place where you want to stop. You must get off. Be quick or you'll be carried by."

The noise of the brakes, and the distracted attention of the passengers on reaching a new station, possibly ignorance of the real locality on the part of those near enough to have heard him, prevented any correction of the boy's cruel falsehood. Mr. Randal knew it was not the conductor who had aroused him; but, supposing Albert to be some employee of the road, he hurried to the car door with tottering steps. The name of the station was called at the other end, as unlike as possible to the name "Harrowtown," but his dull ears did not notice it. He got off upon the platform, and before he could recover himself or knew his error, the train was in motion again.

Albert was in ecstasies over the success of his "joke," and shook all over with laughter, in which, of course, his companion joined. "Oh, dear! That's too good for anything!" he cried. "Ain't it, John?"

John assented that it was very funny indeed.

Neither of the boys noticed that the seat lately occupied by poor, deceived Mr. Randal had just been taken by a fine-looking, middle-aged man, wrapped in a heavy cloak, who appeared to be absorbed in his own thoughts, but really heard every word they said.

They kept up a brisk conversation, Albert speaking in quite a loud tone, for he was feeling very merry. "Ha, ha, ha!—but I did think the old fool would hear the brakeman call the station, though. I didn't suppose I could get him any farther than the door. To think of his clambering clear out on the platform, and getting left! He believed every word I told him. What a delicious old simpleton!"

And having exhausted that edifying subject for the moment, he presently began to brag of his plans and prospects.

"I don't believe you stand much of a chance there; they say Luke Conway is awful particular," the middle-aged stranger heard John remark.

"Pooh! shut up!" cried Albert. "Particular! That's just it, and makes my chance all the better. I've brought the kind of recommendation that a particular man wants, you see."

"But there'll be lots of other fellows trying for the place."

"Don't care if there's fifty," said Albert. "I'd come in ahead of 'em all. I've got testimonials of character and qualifications from Professor Howe, Rev. Joseph Lee, Dr. Henshaw, and Esquire Jenks, the great railroad contractor. His name alone is enough to secure me the situation."

At this juncture, the strange gentleman turned around and gave Albert a quick, searching glance. But the conceited boy was too much occupied with himself to notice the movement, and kept on talking. Now and then the thought of the victim whom he had fooled seemed to come back and tickle him amazingly. "Wonder where the old man is now. Ha, ha! Do you suppose he has found out where Harrowtown is? Oh, but wasn't it rich to see how scared he was when I woke him up. And how he jumped and scrambled out of the car! 'Pon my word, I never saw anything so comical."

Here the stranger turned again and shot another quick glance, this time from indignant eyes, and his lips parted as if about to utter a stern reproof. But he did not speak. Some hidden motive withheld him.

(to be continued)

March 11, 1984

JESUS CHRIST AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 7:19 And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

22 Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.

23 And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

24 And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went

ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

25 But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts.

26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.

27 This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

31 And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like?

32 They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil.

34 The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

35 But wisdom is justified of all her children.

Memory Verse: He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. John 3:29.

Central Thought: Every man should be content to abide in the calling that God has given. Though some are withdrawn from visible view and others are put forward, none should be discouraged, but see the working of God, and rejoice that souls are being blessed. God works in different ways with different people, but it is all for the one purpose of helping souls.

Word Definitions: *Offended:* The Greek word is "skandalized." It means to take offence or stumble at something. *Gorgeously appparelled, and live delicately:* Showy clothed and living in luxury.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Matthew 11:2, said that John was in prison when he heard of the works of Christ. He had been imprisoned because

of Herod's wife, of whom John had stated that it was not lawful for Herod to have her. One might wonder how John, who had been the forerunner of Christ, and had so wonderfully declared the Word of God to the people, could now entertain doubts about Christ. When you consider, however, the weakness of humanity and how strongly the devil can take advantage of adversities, it is not difficult to understand John's wonderment. Jesus certainly had no unkind word to say to or about him. John was in prison. He was not privileged to see the great work of Christ's ministry. His disciples had told him about it but still he needed some reassurance. Jesus did not chide John. He sent him the message of reassurance. We do not read or find where Jesus went to visit John or to help him be delivered from prison. What do you think was behind the words: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me"? What need would John have for these words? Ponder this. This is an important thought; perhaps the most important point in our lesson today. If we can discover what Christ is meaning here for John, and for us also, it will unlock the door to success with Him. Consider Jesus' discourse in His evaluation of John. What was the people's expectation of John? What was their evaluation? Don't pass over this lightly. This is serious ground we're treading. People are going to be lost today because of their improper evaluation of the methods God chooses. Consider the final verse in our lesson. Can you get the connection between what He said about John and Himself and this last statement? "Wisdom is justified of her children." Think about their reaction to John and their reaction to Jesus. Consider the irresponsible children in the market place. Why did Jesus liken them to the people of His day? Because of their indifference. Indifference is one of the hardest things to deal with. Open defiance and persecution is not as hard to deal with. Scorn and lightly esteeming the vessel God works through renders one unfit for the blessings of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What reassurance did John the Baptist need?
2. What assurance did Jesus send to John?
3. What kind warning did Jesus give, also?
4. What was Jesus' estimation of John?
5. Who did He say was greater than John?
6. What did Jesus liken the men of His generation to?
7. What was the difference in the administration of John from that of Jesus?

8. What did the people's rejection of both prove?
9. How is wisdom justified of her children?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus had to have a forerunner. One had to go before His face and prepare for Him a people. When Jesus finally came on the scene and was introduced and heralded by John as the promised Messiah, John was to fade into the background and out of sight. This was the wisdom of God to have things carried out thus. The humility of John is beyond question. The third chapter of John reveals this, from which we have drawn our memory verse. John was the friend of the Bridegroom. The bride, the Church, was not for him. John, no doubt, had a great following. There were probably several of his disciples who were reluctant to leave John and follow Jesus. We see even in the Acts of the Apostles in chapter 19, verses 1-5, where Paul found some disciples at Ephesus who knew only John's baptism and teachings. In Acts 18:24, 25, we have the account of the saints finding Apollos, who, though he was fervent and mighty in the Scriptures, knew only the baptism of John. So we see the great extent of John's influence—it was far-reaching. But he had to decrease and Jesus had to come to the front. It took a lot of humility for John to accept his lot. And then to be thrown into prison on top of everything else! It began to work on him. Not long after this John was beheaded. John had filled his place; his work was done. It is a great lesson for us today. We must never be offended at the way God works and deals with our lives. We must never be offended at anyone. Bitterness and resentment rises up in many hearts today. The Word warns us about these things. Think less of yourself and consider the work of God in your brother. I believe John accepted the words that his disciples brought to him, and I believe he was reassured. Let us be the children of wisdom. Regardless of how God chooses to work with our lives, let us justify His wisdom and accept His leadings as right beyond all question.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We see wisdom in Christ's message to John the Baptist. Instead of discoursing philosophically about Himself, Jesus simply instructed the two disciples to tell John the Baptist of the miracles that they had witnessed. There is a saying that "the proof is in the pudding." In other words, a person can brag

as much as they please, but the real test is whether or not they have the goods on hand.

There is an instance recorded in the Bible of a time when Peter and John entered into the temple at the hour of prayer. At the gate of the temple sat a lame man begging for alms. Peter, gazing toward the crippled man, said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." Acts 3:6, 7. The disciples had the goods on hand. We notice all through the ministry of Christ and the early morning Church that the apostles possessed compassion and the ability to help the people.

As others look on our lives, what is their evaluation of us? Is it something convincing which would point others to God and be of encouragement to them? It is of the most importance that we manifest the spirit of God in our lives. Gal. 5:22, 23, describes some of the fruits that those with God's spirit will have on hand.

—Wayne Murphey

LYMAN DEAN'S TESTIMONIALS

(continued from last lesson)

We will now leave Albert and his fellow travelers, and follow Gideon Randal.

It was quite dark when he stepped from the cars, and he inquired of a man at the station, "Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Aaron Harrington?"

"There's no such man living here, to my knowledge," was the reply.

"What, isn't this Harrowtown?" asked Mr. Randal in great consternation.

"No, it is Whipple Village."

"Then I got out at the wrong station. What shall I do?" in a voice of deep distress.

"Go right to the hotel and stay until the train goes in the morning," said the man pleasantly.

There was no alternative. Mr. Randal passed a restless night at the hotel, and at an early hour he was again at the station, waiting for the train.

There were other passengers walking to and fro on the platform, waiting for the trains to come.

One was a plain-featured, honest-looking boy, who had been accompanied to the station by his mother. Just before his mother bade him good-bye, she said, "Lyman, look at that

pale, sad, old man. I don't believe he is used to traveling. Perhaps you can help him along."

Soon a loud, prolonged whistle was heard. The cars were coming.

"Allow me to assist you, sir," said Lyman Dean to Mr. Randal, as the train stopped; and he took hold of his arm, and guided him into a car to a seat.

"Thank you, my boy. I'm getting old and clumsy, and a little help from a young hand comes timely. Where are you going, if I may ask?"

"To Harrowtown, sir. I saw an advertisement for a boy in a store, and I'm going to try to get the situation. My name is Lyman Dean."

"Ah? I'm sure I wish you success, Lyman, for I believe you're a good boy. You are going to the same place I am. I want to find Aaron Harrington, but I've had two mishaps. I don't know what's coming next."

"I'll show you right where his office is. I've been in Harrowtown a good many times."

Half an hour later, the brakeman shouted the name of the station where they must stop. Lyman assisted Mr. Randal off the train, and walked with him to the principal street. "Here's Mr. Harrington's office," said he.

"Oh, yes, thank you, kindly. And now could you tell me where Mr. Luke Conway's place of business is?"

"Why, that's the very gentleman I'm going to see," said Lyman. "His place is just round the corner, only two blocks off."

Mr. Randal looked deeply interested. He turned and shook the boy's hand warmly. "Lyman," he said, "Mr. Conway knows me. I am coming to see him by and by. I am really obliged to you for your politeness, and wish I could do something for you. I hope Mr. Conway will give you the situation, for you deserve it. If you apply before I get there, tell him Gideon Randal is your friend. Good-bye."

Fifteen minutes after found Lyman waiting in the counting-room of Luke Conway's store. Albert Gregory had just preceded him. The merchant was writing, and he had requested the boys to be seated a short time, until he was at leisure. Before he finished his work, a slow, feeble step was heard approaching, and an old man stood in the doorway.

"Luke, don't you remember me?" The merchant looked up at the sound of the voice. Then he sprang up from his chair and grasped the old man's hand in both his own.

"Mr. Randal!" Welcome, a thousand times welcome, my benefactor!" he exclaimed. And seating his guest on the office lounge beside him, Mr. Conway inquired after his health and comfort, and talked with him as a loving son.

"Yes, Luke, I am in trouble. Aaron Harrington owns a mortgage on my farm, and I can't pay him, and he threatens to take my home," said Mr. Randal, with a quivering lip. "I went to his office, but didn't find him, and I thought maybe you'd advise me what to do."

"Mr. Randal," answered the merchant, laying his hand on the old man's shoulder, "almost thirty years ago when I was cold, and hungry, and friendless, you took me in and fed me. Your good wife—God bless her!—made me a suit of clothes with her own hands. You found me work, and you gave me money when I began the world alone. Much if not all that I am in life I owe to your sympathy and help, my kind old friend. Now I am rich, and you must let me cancel my debt—I shall pay your mortgage today. You shall have your home free again."

Mr. Randal wiped great hot tears from his cheeks, and said in a husky voice, "It is just as I told Martha. I knew if we lent our money to the Lord, when a dark day came, He would provide."

(to be continued)

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March 18, 1984

JESUS HEALS THE IMPOTENT MAN AT THE POOL

John 5:1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there was at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

7 The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

11 He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

12 Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

13 And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.

14 Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

Memory Verse: Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. Heb. 4:14.

Central Thought: In Jesus Christ we find fulfillment and satisfaction for every need of our lives. With His blessings and help we can make up for everything that has failed us before. In Christ everyone has a perfect chance and opportunity for salvation and deliverance.

Word Definitions: *Impotent:* Without power or strength; sick. *Troubled:* Agitated. *Infirmary:* Feeble health. *Bethesda:* A Hebrew word meaning "House of Mercy."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Before Jesus came on the scene, God manifested His goodness to the pitifully afflicted in faint expressions. Here in Jerusalem by the sheep gate was a pool, or a place where people bathed and swam. There were five porches built to accommodate those who were there to wait for the troubling of the waters. The name of the pool was Bethesda, which means "House of Mercy," no doubt called thus because of the miraculous workings of God in His mercy. The feast of the passover was in progress, and it was doubtless at this season when the angel would make his visit to the pool. Try to picture in your mind this scene. It says that in these porches lay a great multitude of impotent people. They were no doubt attended by

loved ones and those who had compassion for them. All were tense with eyes eagerly on the pool. Just any minute now the waters would begin to stir and dash about. Then, suddenly, the waters began to be troubled. So did the throng of misfortunate people. What a scramble there was! No doubt there were many who fought and strove carnally for that first place. Probably their momentum was so great that instead of just stepping into the pool, they fell into it. Many did not have a chance. Many went away disappointed. Here was one man who had had this infirmity for thirty-eight years. How long he had lain there we do not know, but Jesus knew that he had been a long time like that. People, to get help from the doctor, will go and sit for hours in his office and sit quietly. They have hope of getting some help. But, oh, think what comfort and light is about to shine on this man! One stands before him with power who has no need of the troubling of the waters. His Word is sufficient. The pool is forgotten. It is no longer needed. Jesus has come and put into the background every other system of help for men. He alone can meet our needs.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the pool of Bethesda such an attraction to people?
2. What kind of people were particularly interested in being at this pool?
3. What happened at a certain season at this pool?
4. What would you call the chances of being healed at this pool? Would it be slim or abundant?
5. How long had this man had this infirmity?
6. What was the man's expression of his chance of being healed at the pool?
7. Did Jesus need this pool? Why not?
8. How did the Jews react to see the man carrying his bed?
9. What did Jesus tell the man afterward?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Think of Jesus' question to this man in our lesson. "Wilt thou be made whole?" This man surely had the will, but he was not able to avail himself of that opportunity that the pool afforded. He would have liked to have been in the arms of a big, strong man who willingly would have lifted him and set him over into the pool at the right moment. What joy and rejoicing filled his heart as he felt new strength and energy coursing

through his body in response to the command of Jesus! Instantly he was made whole. As his bed was probably his sole possession, he took it up and carried it off with him. Jesus had conveyed Himself away into the multitude, and the man did not know who He was. Let us notice what Jesus said to him later in the temple: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." Many troubles that people have are the direct result of the kind of life they have been living. We do not know what all this man had done in previous times, but Jesus is giving him a loving warning concerning the future. This is good for us also to take heed to. To yield to sin is to invite trouble into one's life. Oh, why cannot people see this? How degrading the lives of so many are, and it is heaping trouble and misery upon their flesh. He is kept in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on the Lord. If we steer clear of the dangerous pitfalls of the devil, we will avoid the terrible results. Let us be aware of the warning that is given to us today. If we need help from God, seek for it. And when God hears and answers prayer, then let carefulness and the fear of God guide us in the future. Let us learn our lessons well and let the trials and afflictions serve the purpose to draw us closer to God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Notice in our lesson that the people who received help at the pool of Bethesda had to do some waiting. The people were unaware of the exact instant when the pool would be troubled by the angel; consequently, they had to be prepared at any time. Sometimes waiting is the hardest thing to do. If we are to receive help at the hand of God, we must keep in mind that it will come in His time and not ours. This man could easily have become discouraged because others were getting healed and he wasn't. It would have been easy for him to have thrown up his hands in desperation and gone home. Sometimes we have to learn what it means to seek God and wait on Him.

The sick man could also have become discouraged and departed in despair as he noticed how few of the crowd were healed. How many times has the devil brought similar negative thoughts to the saints? "Just look at those whom God doesn't heal. Think of these who have suffered. What is the use of trusting in God?"

The good news in our lesson today is that God sought this man out and gave him the blessing he had been waiting for.

He didn't have to do anything to be worthy of the blessing, except to wait with hope that it would come to pass. What a beautiful thought it is that Jesus singled him out and gave the needed blessing! If you will serve God and wait before Him, there will be times when He will single you out and grant you the desires of your heart.

—Wayne Murphey

LYMAN DEAN'S TESTIMONIALS

(continued from last lesson)

For a minute the two men continued in conversation. Mr. Conway thought a railway ride of a hundred miles must be a hardship for a quiet old man. "It was a long way for you," he said. "Did you have a comfortable journey?"

"Well, I can't quite say that. First, the stage broke down and delayed me. Then I slept in the cars, and a boy played a trick on me, and woke me up, and made me get out at the wrong station, so I had to stay over one night in Whipple Village. To tell the truth I had a good deal of worriment with one thing and another, getting here; but it's all bright now," he added with a radiant face.

"You shall go with me to my house and rest, as soon as I have dismissed these boys," said Mr. Conway, earnestly; and turning to Albert and Lyman, who anxiously waited, he spoke to them about their errand.

"I suppose you came because you saw my advertisement?"

"Yes, sir," replied both, simultaneously.

"Very well. I believe you came in first. What is your name?"

"I am Albert Gregory, sir. I think I can suit you. I've brought testimonials of ability and character from some of the first men—Esquire Jenks, Rev. Joseph Lee, Dr. Henshaw, and others. Here are my letters of recommendation," holding them out for Mr. Conway to take.

"I don't want to see them," returned the merchant, coldly. "I have seen you before; I understand your character well enough for the present."

He then addressed a few words to Lyman Dean.

"I should be very glad of work," said Lyman. "My mother is poor, and I want to work, but I haven't any testimonials."

"Yes, you have," said old Mr. Randal, who was waiting for an opportunity to say that very thing. And then he told the merchant how polite and helpful Lyman had been to him.

"Albert Gregory," said the merchant, "I occupied the seat in the car in front of you last evening. I heard you exulting

and wickedly boasting how you had deceived a distressed old man. Mr. Randal, is this the boy who lied to you, and caused you to get out at the wrong station?"

Mr. Randal looked earnestly at Albert. "I declare! Now I remember him. It is! I'm sure it is."

"Lyman," said Mr. Conway kindly, "I shall be very glad to employ you in my store. You shall have good pay if you do well, and I am sure you will. You may begin work at once."

Lyman's eyes danced with joy as he left the countingroom to receive his instructions from the head clerk. —Selected

March 25, 1984

CHIRST DELIVERS THE MAN WITH THE LEGION OF DEVILS

Luke 8:26 And they arrived at the country of Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee.

27 And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.

28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.

29 (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.)

30 And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils entered into him.

31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.

32 And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

33 Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.

34 When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

35 Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right

mind: and they were afraid.

36 They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed.

37 Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again.

38 Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying,

39 Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

Memory Verse: The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Psalms 126:3.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ has power to deliver a person from the power of Satan regardless of how awful the condition or how long he or she has been in that condition. It is a wonderful thing to be set free from the chains of the devil to walk the way of holiness.

Word Definitions: *Fetters:* Shackles or bonds for the feet. *Legion:* A great number. The Roman legion was a regiment of 3000 to 6000 foot soldiers. *Choked:* Drowned.

LESSON BACKGROUND

“When the world was held in bondage under Satan’s dismal sway, Jesus healed their dread diseases; He is just the same today!” The phrase of this song really describes the condition of things when Jesus came on the scene. Satan had the upper hand of many people’s lives. For some, as is illustrated in our lesson, Satan’s works had prevailed to complete domination and possession. Not just one devil, but legions of devils had taken up their vile abode in this man. His condition was beyond words for description. Mark further describes this man in his account. He said in Mark 5:4, 5: “Neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.” Mark also said that there were about 2000 head of swine that were drowned in the sea. Seeing that swine were unclean animals and forbidden of the Jews by the law to partake of, it may have been that these swine

were being kept illegally. In Matthew's account, he said that there were two men in this case. Probably there were no insane asylums in those days, and deranged people were a public menace to society. Matthew said that the men were exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. For a long time Satan had the upper hand. Now a mightier than Satan has come. When we consider how eager the devils were to leave the man at the command of Jesus, it makes us to know that Christ's power can yet dethrone the devil from the hearts of people. No doubt this man was known about in that area. It was a great testimony to the power of Jesus. According to Mark, Jesus told him: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord had done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." It is truly wonderful what Christ can do for the person enslaved by the devil if they will but yield to Him.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was wrong with this man who dwelt in the tombs?
2. Why was his name "Legion"?
3. Why were the devils afraid of Jesus?
4. How did the man act after Jesus delivered him?
5. What did the man want to do? What did Jesus tell him to do?
6. Is it possible that devil-possessed people can be delivered today?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Try to picture the reality of the condition this man was in. What a wretched state of life—bound by evil and despair! He could not dwell sanely and decently as normal men do. He would wear no clothes. Whoever seeks to undress in public does so at the impulse of Satan. The Spirit of God dictates modesty and sanitation. This man had gone so far in the filth of the devil that godliness was completely foreign to him. Here he was driven by the devil to dwell among the tombs, where perhaps he could catch the horrid scent of dead bodies, which scent is pleasant to an unclean spirit. Crying and moaning night and day, he abused himself and led a wretched and miserable existence. No doubt he longed for deliverance from such a life. The man and devils within him recognized the divine authority and power of Jesus as He approached. Jesus still has power and grace to deliver people from devil possession. Many have testimonies to this effect. People who are ruled by the powers of darkness and evil can find deliver-

ance through Jesus Christ. Through the command of Jesus the devils had to leave that man. They were on forbidden property. Jesus was purchasing that man by His blood. He did not belong to Satan. The devils knew that their hopes of inhabiting that man were gone. They were anxious to leave when confronted by the mighty power of God in Jesus. What a beautiful picture greeted the people who came out to see what had happened to the man! Instead of a wild beast-like creature of terror, there was a man sitting at the feet of Jesus. He was clothed. He was in his right mind. How thankful the man was! How glad he was to be set free at last! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Devil possession is a very real and frightening subject. Yet when God is included in our lives we can have a peace in knowing that we are secure. I am confident that there are many more cases of devil possession than we are aware of. Today those who are violent misfits in society may be confined to a mental institution. If all who are possessed of devils were delivered of them, chances are it would greatly decrease the number of inmates in such places.

Let us notice, according to the Bible, some signs of devil possession. Keep in mind that not everyone who manifests such symptoms is devil possessed, but these are ways that Satan has affected some. In Matt. 9:32, a man possessed with a devil was brought to Jesus. His outstanding symptom was dumbness. When he was delivered, he was able to speak. In the 12th chapter of Matthew, the 22nd verse, we read of a case of both dumbness and blindness. Upon being delivered this individual could see and speak. In Mark, the 9th chapter, one exhibited the symptoms of what today would be termed epilepsy. Jesus called the spirit a dumb and deaf spirit. However, devil possession is much more than just a sickness. There are several places in the Scriptures in which devil possession is distinguished from sickness. (Luke 6:17, 18; Mark 1:32).

As the term implies, devil possession simply means that the devil possesses the individual's reason or power of will; his actions, his words, and many times his thoughts. This is not to be confused with the ordinary power of temptation and sin.

The answer for devil possession is the power of God. Genuine deliverance is not obtained through medical treatment. When a demonic spirit meets up with the Spirit of God, it will reveal itself for what it is and there is deliverance for the person possessed.

—Wayne Murphey

