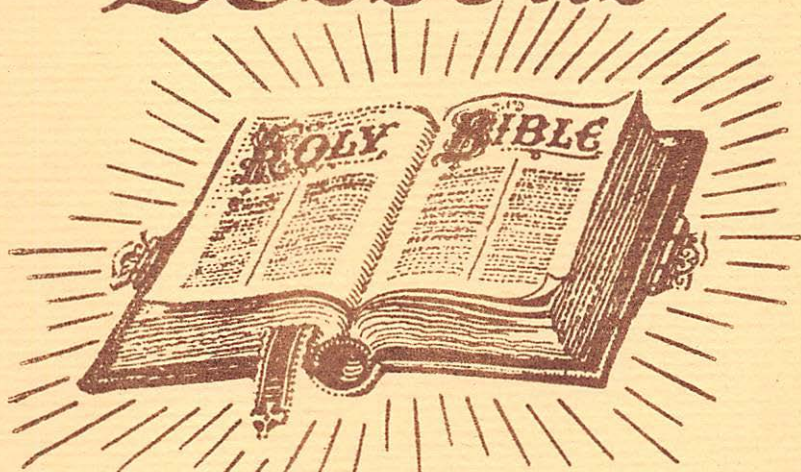


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 19, No. 1
Jan., Feb., Mar.
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 19

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Jesus Christ and His Church
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Theme for First Quarter, 1987

The subjects that we will be considering for our lesson material during this quarter will be varied Biblical topics, vital for Christian growth and success, as well as instructive, profitable, and encouraging. They are all relative to each other as they all have to do with the welfare of the most precious treasure we have, and that is the salvation of our eternity-bound souls. Although in many of the lessons we will not be able to include every scriptural passage that has to do with that particular subject, yet we will endeavor to bring out those Scriptures that we feel will adequately convey the proper channels of truth for that lesson. These are subjects that we as the children of God need to be well acquainted with, although they are so commonly heard and spoken of, we might not realize the extent of their value to us. Let us take a more earnest survey of these subjects, and we do pray that the God of light and knowledge will bless each lesson to the good of all who read and study.

—Leslie C. Busbee

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January 4, 1987

HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

Phil. 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of

things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

II Cor. 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

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

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

I Cor. 2:16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Memory Verse: Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Isa. 26:3.

Central Thought: We can share with Christ His glory and triumph if we will conform our attitudes, thoughts, desires, and purposes to be like-minded with Him according to His humility, obedience to God, holiness, faith, and righteous determination.

Word Definitions: *Mind:* Sentiment, disposition, opinion, attitude. *Bowels:* Pity or sympathy, deep inward feelings or affection. *Vainglory:* Empty glorying or self conceit. *Imaginations:* Reasonings.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Back of everything that is accomplished and carried out is a mind. The mind of a person is the sense and the understanding that gives him guidance and direction. A man does pretty well follow his mind. What he does, where he goes, and all that transpires in his life is according to the kind of mind that he has. There is a Master Mind back of the creation. God had a mind and a will when He created the earth and the heavens. Paul's statement in I Cor. 2:16 of our lesson is a quotation from Isaiah 40:13. From the Hebrew in our King James Standard Version it reads: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" The Septuagint, from which Paul is quoting, reads thus: "Who has known the mind of the Lord? And who has been his counsellor, to instruct Him?" This question Paul poses, challenging the ability of man in his human and natural state (unregenerated and void of Holy Spirit anointing and inspiration) to know the mind of God and spiritual things. And it is true that the

carnal mind of man cannot see the ways of God. "But", said Paul, "we have the mind of Christ." Despite our inability to perceive and know the mind of God, we can have the mind of Christ. This offsets our weaknesses and enables us to overcome our darkness and ignorance. Without the mind of Christ we cannot live as He wants us to. If we can get our desires, our thoughts, our sentiments, and dispositions to be like those of Jesus Christ, we can do as He did. We find in the Greek text that Phil. 2:6 is rendered thus: "Jesus, who being in a form of God, meditated not an usurpation to be like God, but emptied himself." In other words, in light of the great need of lost mankind for a Saviour, Christ did not count equality with God to be held on to, but rather turned it all loose and emptied Himself of all the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. He did this by coming down into human flesh. And not only so, but as a man He humbled Himself and obeyed God, submitting to be crucified like a criminal. The challenge to us is for us to let this same mind be in us in our attitudes and feelings for others. Oh, this goes so deep! It is far deeper than many can comprehend. And, as Paul said, it is a warfare to cast down every contrary attitude and conform our dispositions to the mind of Christ. Oh, how we need the strength of the Lord to successfully carry this challenging responsibility fully out.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the mind of Christ constrain Him to do for lost humanity?
2. What does the mind of Christ cause us to have in our hearts for our brother and our fellow man?
3. Do we as believers automatically have the mind of Christ?
4. What are we to count others to be?
5. What does the mind of Christ prompt us to feel and to do for an erring one?
6. How does a critical, harsh, judging, and law-spirited attitude relate to the mind of Christ?
7. Is there a reward for maintaining the mind of Christ?
8. Why is it a constant warfare to maintain the mind that Christ had?
9. How do we get the mind of Christ?
10. Will it have to be conveyed to us through being His disciples and being taught of Him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

One of the most important attributes of a true Christian is that of being teachable. Through this means, by the inspiration and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, a man can learn what the mind of Christ is, and by allowing its precepts to control his thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and dispositions, he can put the mind of Christ as foremost in his actions and ways. The mind of Christ shows up most vividly in one's relationship with his fellow beings. Striving to understand the other man and to share his need is a vital function of the mind of Christ. Christ cared enough for us to come all the way from heaven down into this cold world of sin and sorrow to minister to us. He came to serve and minister, not to be ministered to. The world was already condemned. He came not to condemn. He came to take our place in the punishment and wrath of God. He took our blame and bore the consequence of our sins and transgressions. This is why He had to die. For that person that is doing wrong and is not treating you right, what would you be willing to do? Would you die for him? Some say that they are willing to go to the stake, but are not willing to bear with another's mistake. To help a person improve their life, they must be won. And this takes love, the kind of love that Jesus manifested. Oh, we do not know and we need not to know the mind of the Lord concerning the creation of the earth and the heavens. Some of those mysteries man will never be able to fathom. But we can have the mind of Christ. We can treat our brother and our fellow man with love, humility, patience, and longsuffering. One young man I heard prayed, "Oh, Lord, give us the power of God!" How much better it would have been for him (seeing how his life went after that) if he would have sought earnestly and prayed, "Lord, help us to have the mind of Christ!" —Leslie C. Busbee

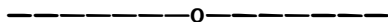
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The mind of Christ is a mind of discernment. Discernment is a valuable trait. When God told Solomon to make a request, he responded, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." Solomon's wisdom was a real blessing and brought glory to his people. Solomon was an exception in his day. Christ brought about a dispensation in which we all may

possess wisdom. Jesus, in speaking of Himself said, "... behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Matthew 12:42. If we can just have the mind of Christ we will have a valuable tool to help us live a successful Christian life. To have the mind of Christ means to live like He did; to follow in His footsteps.

The question arises, "How do we get the mind of Christ?" First we must be in a position to receive it; a worthy vessel. This entails having our sins under the blood and forsaking our own ways and thoughts. Then, through humility we must see our need for the mind of Christ. This will take us to our knees to ask for it. We are told, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." James 1:5. Our search for the mind of Christ will also take us to the Word of God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." II Timothy 3:16. The Psalmist David said, "I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation." Psalm 119:99. Lastly, we would do well to acquaint ourselves with those who have the mind of Christ. The Psalmist David again said to, "Mark the perfect man." Psalm 37:37. It is impossible to sit down and have someone explain to us what the mind of Christ is, but as we associate with and observe the lives of those who have true godly wisdom, we are putting ourselves in a good position to acquire some of it.

—Wayne Murphey



January 11, 1987

THE HEART OF MAN

Jer. 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Jer. 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezek. 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Mark 7:14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

Matt. 15:18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Matt. 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Memory Verse: Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Proverbs 4:23.

Central Thought: The deceitful, defiled condition of the very seat of man's affections is the root of all of his problems, failings, and separation from God. The plan of salvation provides for a cleansing of the heart from sin to holiness and supreme love for God.

Word Definitions: *Heart:* The center of man's being, the seat or basis of all of his affections, emotions, and desires. *Stony:* Hard, cold, inconsiderate, unmerciful, proud, deceitful. *Heart of flesh:* Tender, submissive, impressionable, humble, teachable. *Lasciviousness:* State of being uncontrolled and undisciplined in passions and desires.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The term "heart" is first mentioned in Genesis 6:5, 6, where God looked down and saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, and it grieved God at his heart. Man has a heart and God has a heart. We are persuaded that it was the heart of man that was separated and defiled from God in consequence of Adam and Eve sinning against Him. This evil and deceitful condition of the heart spoken of by Jeremiah manifested itself in Cain, the oldest son of Adam. It has remained the prime source of all man's woes and problems. The hardness of Pharaoh's heart is what gauged the awful plagues that troubled Egypt when God was preparing to bring His people Israel out. It is evident that the heart of man has been the target of God's longing and desire. The law given by the hand of Moses did not reach the heart. Despite all of the wonders and miracles that God wrought in the Old Testament, the heart of man could never be fully cleansed from sin. But Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied of a better day in which the laws of God could be written in a soft and tender heart which would be cleansed from all of its impurity. Through the Word of Christ, His precious blood, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we can have our hearts cleansed from all sin. Our treasures need no longer be in this worldly and material sphere. Our hearts can be fixed on treasures above where Christ presently sits on the right hand of God. How important is the cleansing and keeping of our hearts!

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the true condition of the unregenerated heart of man?
2. What does the Lord say that He does with the heart?
3. What does God promise to do concerning the heart in the new covenant?
4. What kind of heart does God promise to take out?
5. What kind of heart does He put within us in salvation?
6. Where does man's defilement come from?
7. What are the things that come forth from the heart?
8. What do they do to a man?
9. Where will a man's heart be found?
10. And where are our treasures most profitably to be?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Why is a man's heart deceitful and desperately wicked, so hard to discern and know? Because he is going after selfish pleasures and treasures that he is so afraid of losing and actually ashamed of owning. He knows nothing about true riches and the pleasures that are eternal. In his darkness and unrestrained lust and greed he ploughs desperately in quest of that which does not bring satisfaction, and his disappointment spurs him to seek farther and plough deeper. That is why adultery and fornication find room in the heart. All of these things infest and abound in the heart that is unaware of what life's real values are. The heart is man's sense of values. Earthly wealth and pleasure have a hardening effect upon the heart of man. Self takes the priority, being deceived in thinking that happiness lies in gratifying the lower nature. But Jesus came to show us what to really put our hearts upon. The earthly and fleshly things will decay and pass away. That is why they are not worthy of our affections. He presents wonderful blessings of faith, righteousness, holiness, humility (treasures of the inner man) and hope. He shows how that our hearts can be cleansed from the love of vanity and pride and self. He gave His life as a ransom to win back the heart of man from its idols and lusts. God can change the heart if a person will let Him. If a man will give heed to the gospel of Christ, come face to face with his true wretched condition and turn from his evil way, God will change his heart from its warped sense of values and desires to that of peace and love and truth. Upon the tender tables of the born again heart God will inscribe the principles of righteousness and true holiness. It is not hard to live the Christian life when the heart is made right, but it is an utter impossibility to do so with an unregenerated heart. Truly out of the heart and the affections are the issues and deciding factors of a man's destiny.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

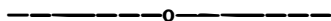
When the heart is evil, it pollutes everything else. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus 1:15. In the Scriptures, a direct analogy is drawn between leprosy and sin. Just as evil proceeds from the heart so leprosy is a rottenness of the bones that works out. Under the law system everything that a leper

touched was considered defiled. A leper was not allowed to sit on a rock by a well-traveled road or drink water from a running stream for fear that others would be contaminated. So it is with a sinner. There are evil connotations on everything they do. They take most everything in God's pure and beautiful creation and use it to satisfy evil desires. What a sad condition to be in.

There was a hope of complete recovery for a leper. If the leprosy had run its course and the leper was free from any active signs of leprosy, the priest made an offering involving two birds, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop. The leper was then allowed back into the camp. After seven days another sacrifice was offered. After this offering the leper was allowed back in his tent and he was considered clean.

This is what God will do for an evil heart. When sin has run its course and the sinner is ready to give it all up, the atonement of Christ's blood is applied to the heart. This atonement, as symbolized by the two birds, was brought about by Christ's death and resurrection. This is justification. Another distinct work is then wrought as symbolized by the second sacrifice. This is sanctification. The person is then a part of God's holy priesthood and ready to serve God with purity of heart.

—Wayne Murphey



January 18, 1987

THE WORTH OF HUMILITY

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

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

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

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

Luke 18:9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I

thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Matt. 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

I Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Memory Verse: He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Mic. 6:8.

Central Thought: It is not becoming or proper for us mortals in this low estate to think highly of ourselves. God takes delight in blessing a lowly and humble person, one who realizes his need and who is willing to take God's prescribed answer for his need.

Word Definitions: *Converted:* To quit, turn around and reverse one's course. *Poor:* Having little or no means, destitute, needy. *"Walk humbly with thy God":* The Hebrew says: "Be humble to walk with thy God". *Humility:* Being depressed in rank or feeling, meekness, modesty, lowliness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There is a marked tendency in man towards pride in thinking, acting, and wanting to be big. Even in people who believe in God there is this problem. The pride of life was one of the effects of the fall of man into sin. One of the attractions of partaking of the forbidden fruit was the promise of being as

gods, knowing good and evil. This tendency to pride can be traced all along the path of history. To effect a plan of redemption that would rescue man from the clutches of Satan, Christ had to go right against this factor in mankind. Humility is very foreign to human nature, and that is why Christ and His ways were so readily rejected. Even those who received Him could not discern the depth of the humility that He was to manifest. The disciples' minds were running pretty high when they asked Him who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. These were pride idealizing patterns and methods that do not agree with God's thoughts. How surprised the disciples were when Jesus presented the example of a little child as the standard of their acceptance into God's kingdom! How prone man is to exalt himself! How prone he is to think big! King Saul's downfall was ceasing to be little in his own sight. (I Samuel 15:17) King Nebuchadnezzar failed to take the warning from Daniel to humble himself, and paid for his pride with seven years out in the brush as a wild beast. (Daniel 4:37) The pride of Edom's heart deceived him (Obadiah 3) just as it is still deceiving people today. There is but one recourse to offset pride, and that is for one to humble himself. God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. This is a quotation from Proverb 3:34: "Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." The Septuagint renders it just like Peter quoted it. It surely pays great dividends for us to humble ourselves before God and man.—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What prompted the disciples' question about the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
2. How can we become as little children?
3. What happens to our attitude toward others when we begin to trust in ourselves that we are righteous?
4. What was the matter with the Pharisee and his prayer?
5. Why was the publican justified rather than the Pharisee?
6. Can you name some of the characteristics of a man who is really poor in spirit?
7. How does humility affect our relationship with others?
8. How does God relate to the proud? How does God relate to the humble?
9. What will God do for the man who humbles down under His mighty hand?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

How often along the Christian way have we been pointed and instructed by the Holy Spirit to meekness, humility, and poverty of spirit! In this proud world around us where the general run of people have such high and haughty thoughts and ways, it is easy for us to be affected therewith. How we are tempted to take stock in our abilities, or the thoughts and feelings of man and his praise, or to look at our accomplishments! But if we walk with Jesus we must seek that lowly plane that He walked in while He was here. To be as a little child! Oh, what a sacred purpose! Religious pride abounds on every side. People think they are so close to God, so special to Him, and this kind of sentiment gets out of hand so easily. We want to be close to God, but we are never to think ourselves as being so close to Him. Humility is a disposition to always be conscious of one's needs. It has been said of humility: "When you think that you have it, you have lost it." There is much truth in that statement. Being poor in spirit is the whole Christian perspective in a nutshell. If we can keep a poor estimation of ourselves all along the way, we can overcome every temptation to pride that comes along. In the midst of trials and afflictions, it is best for us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and patiently wait on His time to come to our rescue, casting our fretting care on Him, knowing that He is truly caring for us. Keeping in mind how much progress we need to make or gain will keep us humble. English poet William Cowper said: "Knowledge is proud that it knows so much, while wisdom is humble that it knows no more." There is always more to learn than what we know, and there is always more ground to cover than what we have covered. Let us seek to be humble, following the splendid example of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, who set a perfect way of humility.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Blessed are the poor in Spirit." This beatitude was not necessarily pronounced on the financially poor, for it is possible to be at the poverty level and be proud. It was not meant to be applied to the poor in mind, for mental poverty does not constitute happiness. Contrary to the familiar saying, ignorance is not bliss. It is the poor in spirit, that is, the lowly in heart, to whom it is addressed.

Some seem to feel that to be humble means to run themselves down. This is not the right perspective for we are under an obligation from God to recognize our talents and put them to their fullest use. We are also to recognize our position as kings and priests in Christ and the privileges it invokes.

Humility is a spirit that bows reverently before God and views itself as not too good to be used in God's work. It is a spirit that does not consider itself too good to help the lowliest of God's creation. Instead of running ourselves down, humility is praising the greatness of God. When we put God in His proper place then we will automatically feel poor in spirit. There is an old adage that says, "A mountain shames a molehill until they are both humbled by the stars."

To be poor in spirit is to be rich towards God. The proud Pharisee compared himself to the publican and went away without a blessing from God. The publican compared himself to God and went away richly blessed. If we would be humble, let us strive to keep our eyes upon God and off of man.

—Wayne Murphey

January 25, 1987

THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST

John 19:16 Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.

17 And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:

18 Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

Luke 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

I Cor. 1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.

Gal. 5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Gal. 6:12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Phil. 3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Heb. 12:1 Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Memory Verse: Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. Matthew 16:24.

Central Thought: Because our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross, the cross has become a symbol and a sign of the suffering, humiliation, reproach, and death that all who follow Him must bear to be counted worthy of Him.

Word Definition: *Crucified:* Put to death by being hung on a cross. *Offense of the cross:* The word offense is translated from the Greek word "skandalon" from which our word "scandal" is derived. Its original meaning is "a trap stick (bent sapling) or a snare, a cause of displeasure or stumbling. This is applied to the cross which indicates that there is in the cross of Christ the cause for taking offence, becoming hurt and displeased.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus went about doing good, healing, working miracles and wonders, and teaching wonderful truths that people so greatly needed. But He knew all along that a cross was His to bear one day and that He was to shed His blood upon the cross. Many of the people who followed Him for the loaves and fishes and for the miracles would be turned away by the offence of that cross. Yes, even His disciples would be offended for a time. The meek and lowly Christ repelled the proud and haughty, the carnal minded, and the worldly. It was the conflict with this foreign spirit to God that was in man that made up the real cross. It was this figure of the cross that caused Him to be put on the literal cross. The literal cross is no more, but this spiritual cross survives. We who follow Christ are crossed up with the world, with the flesh, with self, and with the devil. This is the cross that we are asked to bear for Jesus. This was the heaviest cross that Christ bore. To be rejected and hated, cast aside and despised, especially by those whom He died to save—this was the cross of Christ, a cross that all who follow Him will bear also. Let us study this lesson with this in mind, and call to remembrance those things about the holy way that puts a child of God at variance with the world. It sums up to be the cross, in which Paul purposed alone to glory in. May we allow the cross to be real in our lives, and beware lest the cross should be made of none effect. To glory in the flesh and its abilities, strength, beauty, wealth, and wisdom is to make the cross of none effect. We notice how Luke included the word “daily” in his account. I am glad that this word is there. It holds a great meaning. Circumcision was full of spiritual meaning and had its purpose at one time, but in Paul’s day it became a threat to the cross. Notice the expression: “enemies of the cross of Christ.” Oh, how we should take heed that this be not us! Let us address ourselves to the challenge. Take up the cross and go forth for Him, who endured the cross, counting lightly the shame. If we would wear a crown, we must first bear the cross.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What cross did Jesus bear to Calvary?
2. Considering all the Scriptures in our lesson, what would you sum up the cross of Christ to be?
3. Can you name some ways that the cross of Christ mani-

feels itself in the lives of the saints of God?

4. Why would the wisdom of words make the cross of none effect?
5. Is there any danger of the cross being of no effect unto us?
6. What were the things that Paul discerned as a threat to the effect of the cross?
7. What kind of people did Paul label as enemies of the cross?
8. How did Jesus triumph and overcome the cross?
9. What does the word "daily" imply?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What keeps many souls who have heard the gospel from being really saved? And what has caused many who made a start in the Christian way to be turned aside and fallen by the way? The answer is the same for both: it is the cross. If there were nothing to bear or to give up or to suffer, perhaps everyone would be seeking to follow Christ. But there is a cross that stands at the opening of the narrow way. You must embrace that cross and take it as your guideline through life. The cross stands for self denial, separation from the world, being different, suffering for conscience sake, death to sin and the self life, death to the material things of this fleeting world, death to our own ways and thoughts, death to the styles and fads and fashion of the world, and many other standards of the Holy Bible. Anything that is a precept of Christ that you follow in contradiction of the darkness of this world brings the cross to reality. Then there is a personal, individual cross that must be borne. The Holy Spirit dictates to the soul of man certain convictions and guidelines that are proofs of our love for Him. Paul found glory in the cross. He found that the cross sanctified every thing in life to him. It held him up in persecution and hardship, and it kept him humble in times of prosperity. The cross is a filtering agent to salvation. It filters out all who do not seek God with their whole heart. It turns aside the proud and the scornful. Through its offence those who stumble at the word are taken in a snare. God has planned it like this. The cross is Christ's own personal test to be administered to all who come to follow Him. Let us accept the challenge, take up our cross, and follow Him all the way.

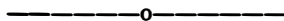
—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The cross of Christ was one of great humility and self denial. If we bear His cross today we will have to be willing to experience the same. Take note of the background of Galatians 6:12-15. The apostle Paul was addressing a problem in which the Jews were trying to hold certain beliefs on the Gentiles. The Jews were receiving persecution because of their stand on circumcision. They felt that if they received persecution, it would only be fair for the Gentiles to suffer the same persecution. The Apostle Paul called this "glorying in the flesh." We can understand more fully what he meant when we find other places in the Bible where the Jews took great pride in their self-denial. This same attitude exists today. The thought that the more persecution I can bring on myself, the more holy I am, is a self-martyr attitude of error. Paul summed up this subject very well in Galatians 5:13. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

What is really meant by "glorying" in the cross? It could not be to glory in the persecution and abuse, for there is a shame and reproach in that. We must gladly "bear" shame and loss, and yet there are many things about the crucifixion that we can glory in. We can glory in that the sky darkened and the earth shook for it revealed a divine manifestation. We can glory in the fact that the cross of death could not hold Him for He resurrected the third day. We can be thankful for the cross because it was the means by which Christ became our Saviour and through it He revealed His love to us.

—Wayne Murphey



February 1, 1987

THE PEACE OF GOD

Isa. 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Isa. 32:17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

Ps. 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

Isa. 57:19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.

20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

Isa. 66:10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:

12 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Phil. 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever

things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Memory Verse: And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Colossians 3:15.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ brings the peace of God to the soul of man through His forgiveness and the faith and love that He implants in the heart and mind, a peace that is unknown to those who live in sin and wickedness.

Word Definitions: *"Nothing shall offend them"*: To them there is no obstacle. Hebrew. No stumbling-block. Greek. *"Be careful for nothing"*: Be not overcareful or anxious. Greek.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the gospel prophet, Isaiah, we find many wonderful prophecies concerning the great peace that we as the children of God can enjoy today. The Prince of Peace is Jesus. He brings peace to the soul. To those afar off, who are steeped in sin and rebellion against God, He offers peace and deliverance. To those near, who are moral and desirous of God's blessings, He bestows abundant peace. Peace is what mortals are searching for, miserably failing to find it anywhere but in Christ and His great salvation. The Jerusalem to which God promises to extend peace like a river is the Church of God, which Jesus purchased with His own blood. The work of righteousness is that of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Oh, how wonderful is that great peace that all those who just love God's law and His dealings feel deep within their innermost being! It keeps their hearts and minds from worry, fret, fear, anxiety, grief, gloom, and strife. God keeps in perfect peace those who keep their minds stayed on Him. Isa. 26:3. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end (or purpose) of that man is peace. Psalm 37:37. Psalm 85:10 rejoices that mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Oh, this wonderful peace that the forgiven and pure in heart enjoy! The last four Scriptures from Philippians seem to be the crown of our lesson. How much Paul rejoiced to have found the peace that is in Christ! He just wanted everyone to

have it. By making our requests known unto God, and trusting fully in Him for everything will bring the peace of God for our hearts and minds.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Where is the kingdom of peace to reign that Christ set up?
2. What is the work of righteousness and what is its effect?
3. What kind of righteousness is he talking about?
4. Which is better: a cottage with peace, or a splendid mansion with strife?
5. Why does sin and earthly pleasures and treasures fail to bring peace?
6. What is there about Christ and His love that brings peace within the soul?
7. How can we live with nothing offending us or causing us to stumble?
8. What are the wicked like? Why is there no peace to them?
9. What does everyone in the New Jerusalem enjoy?
10. How is the peace of Christ different from the peace that the world might offer?
11. What is the recipe for having the peace of God in our lives? What will it do?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

How wonderful to let the peace of God rule in our hearts and lives! How much less trouble would be in the world if mankind could know what real peace is. The carnal mind visualizes peace as everything being ideal and lovely, satisfying to the flesh and to selfish desires, when one is allowed to do their own thing, unhindered and unrestrained. But this is not the peace of God. The peace of God is the tranquil assurance of God's love and care, and the abiding presence of His great Spirit over-brooding all things. Things in a material or earthly way need not be ideal for us to have peace. Peace must abide within the heart. If a person could attain to material wealth and prosperity, they will find that strife, worry, anxiety, grief, gloom, and unhappiness still bring daily disturbances. But people who are saved from their sins and are following after Christ can enjoy peace in the greatest hardship and grating trials. It is because we can have our mind on things above. Jesus can be before us at all times, and we know that all is well with our souls. Upheavals may come, and disappointments we will meet, but we have learned the secret of peace with God. We cast our burdens on the Lord,

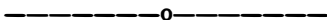
and we do not worry about them. We know that God is still on His throne and that His kingdom rules over everything. We know that all things work for good to them that God has called according to His loving purpose. We are concerned about others and desirous to help them, but we do not let them disturb our peace. What a blessed life of peace and joy we can have right here in this troubled world! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In 1977, Aunt Marie Miles wrote, "I don't believe there is anyone who doesn't love peace. But there are some people who have a contentious spirit. They are motivated by that spirit and it seems they are always stirring up strife. In fact, if they would admit it, they need the Lord to deliver them from that kind of a spirit. They are critical of this and critical of that, and it seems they can find fault with about anything anyone says or does. This causes much heartache and many problems. Peace can't reign in such a person, yet if the one who is being picked on has Jesus in his heart he can rise above it. We can rest safely in the Lord. Surely it is true that, 'Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.' "

This thought on peace is very similar to what Francis Fenlon wrote. "Peace does not dwell in outward things, but within the soul; we may preserve it in the midst of the bitterest pain, if our wills remain firm and submissive. Peace in this life springs from acquiescence, not in an exemption from suffering."

It is not just a coincidence that in the New Testament, whenever peace is mentioned, many times it is in connection with the heart. "And the peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts and minds . . ." In this verse, the first thing mentioned was the heart. This is where it all begins. Then we find that when the heart is at peace with its Maker, the mind will be brought into the same condition. Doubt, trouble and despair will not overwhelm a life so fortified, for they are never allowed past the mind into the heart. —Wayne Murphey



February 8, 1987

THE LIGHT OF GOD

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

I John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

II Cor. 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Matt. 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

John 12:35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.

36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Memory Verse: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Isaiah 9:2.

Central Thought: Without the spiritual light of God shining within the heart of man and upon his way in this world, man gropes in gross darkness, unaware of his dire need and woeful condition. Jesus Christ brought this glorious light to mankind.

Word Definitions: *"The darkness comprehended it not":* Comprehend from the Greek means to take eagerly, seize, or possess. The meaning of the text implies that the light of Christ is not eagerly seized or taken in by the darkness of men. *Single (eye):* Clear, even, straight. *Evil (eye):* Bad, dark, crooked, warped, diseased.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The very first scene revealed in the Bible is that of darkness. The very first of the creation was light. This was not the sun, moon, or stars, which were created on the fourth day. We could think of it as spiritual light, being brought forth, in the rays of which the world and all things were to consist. It was life, the light of men. And we could think of it as the essence of Christ, the true Light, that was to enlighten humanity. It was the Light that would shine long after the sun, moon, and stars had passed away, the same Light that would shine in the New Jerusalem, the Light that would shine into a man's heart and mind. From the writings of John in our lesson come the expressive esteem and value that he, as one of the sons of light, placed upon this great attribute of God Almighty. Light makes manifest things before hidden and obscure. Look at the course of fallen man after his disobedience to God. It is a route downward into darkness, ignorance, error, confusion, and despair. Man lingers in sin because of the darkness of his mind. Christ came to bring light to the heart of man. But the evil of man's warped understanding hinders him from comprehending that light. The god of this world, the devil, the very same devil who deceived Eve, sees to it that the mind is so blinded that the light of Christ is not perceived. But once a man senses his darkness and need, and

opens his heart to the light, and a proper understanding of the gospel enters into that heart, that person will be saved. There is no power can keep a man from loving Christ when he properly understands Christ. It is the mixing up of the mind that causes a soul to turn away from His Saviour. Being ashamed of his ways and doings, a person's vain pride will not allow him to come forth to the light. This begets a love for darkness, but it is only a more vivid proof of the folly of sin. How happy is the soul who has been brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of the gospel of Jesus!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is there in the Lord Jesus that is light for men?
2. Why is it impossible for us to walk with God and be in darkness?
3. What are some of the wonderful results of us walking in the light as God is in the light?
4. What is the chief cause for the unbeliever not being able to turn to the Lord?
5. Where does God want His light to shine?
6. Does light mean anything to a person who does not sense His darkness?
6. What does one ray of light mean to a person who sits in darkness?
7. Is there any danger of one having an evil eye?
8. What happens to a soul who fails to respond to the light and fails to walk therein?
9. In what way is Jesus the light of the world?
10. Why do men love darkness rather than light?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The darkness of the mind and the heart is truly the worse woe that a man can have. We thank the Lord for even natural light. Many of us take it for granted, and do not stop to appreciate it as we should. But we would surely miss it right away if all of a sudden the sun would shine no more. Christ is the Sun of righteousness. The rays of His life and teachings have proven to be a greater source of enlightenment to the world than any other religion, creed, or system of knowledge. He is truly the Light of the world, and His disciples who follow Him are the Light of the world, also. A mirror reflects light and shines it in another direction. So the Church lives in the holy sunlight of Her Lord, and reflects that light to the

world. How sweet is the light of Christ to the soul! How blessed the man who comes to realize that his way of self and sin is but darkness! As he gropes in this darkness, unhappy and full of sorrow and foreboding fears, the gospel of Christ (that he discarded when he was prospering in his own way) shines a ray of hope. In his need and despair he embraces and follows that light. In that light he begins to see his woeful condition of being lost and without hope. In godly sorrow and repentance he begins to call on the Lord. Light from heaven comes into his heart, showing him the love of his Saviour and Friend. It shows him what he should do and how it can be successfully done. It visualizes what the great reward will be for obeying the will of God. It reveals the vanity of his past life and causes him to resolutely vow to never go back there again. How wonderful is the light of God that has come to us through Jesus Christ our Lord! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What, in your estimation, is the outstanding "message of light" that Christ brought to the world? Think this over seriously. What do we normally associate with the gospel of light? Is it the wonderful news that a Saviour has come; that the Son of God is here? Ah, kind friend, think again! The understanding or "light" that is basic and essential and a prerequisite to any work of salvation, and the one that is most often refused and rejected is the one which teaches us that we are all lost in sin and undone before a holy God! No man can ever be saved until he is willing to acknowledge himself as a sinner. Does it offend anyone's pride to recognize Christ as the Son of God? No! Does it require any humility to recognize Him as a Savior? No! Does it cast any reflection or place any responsibility on men to acknowledge Him as holy and just and pure in all His ways? No! All of this can be, and is being done all about us today in nominal Christianity by men who are living in sin. But when the truth begins to sound that men are lost in sin, and unless they humble themselves and plead His mercy and obtain His pardon or they will be banished forever, this they reject. They are too proud to fall down and plead for mercy, too haughty to become humble enough to acknowledge themselves in need, too self-willed to give up their ways in order to live the life He recognizes. Let Christ be whatever He wants to be, that is all right, but don't impose His standard upon me! Is not this the cry of men who refuse

His message? Sad indeed is the condition of men when religious systems all about us advance the idea that Christ need not make any change when He enters the life! Go on sinning, all do more or less anyway, they say. No need to bow and pray through for forgiveness, just come, shake hands with the preacher. No need to be born again, just come and join the church. How sad!

Sinner friend, if you long for peace of mind and relief from a sin-burdened heart, acknowledge yourself a sinner; bring your heavy load to Him and in genuine humility of heart cry out to Him for mercy and pardon from all your sins and promise Him that from henceforth you will serve Him, and Him alone, and you will surely find rest for your soul.

—C. W. Wilson
(Written in 1972)

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February 15, 1987

THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Mark 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope;

21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the

firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

II Cor. 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

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

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

II Cor. 5:1 For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

I Thess. 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Memory Verse: Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

II Thessalonians 2:16.

Central Thought: Through the salvation of Jesus Christ we are born unto an undying hope of ultimate victory over death and the grave to be resurrected unto an eternal and glorious life with Him in that blessed world to come.

Word Definitions: *Earnest expectation:* Intense anticipation. *Adoption:* Sonship. *Redemption of our body:* The salvation or full ransom for the body to be accomplished in the resurrection from the grave. *Groan:* To sigh deeply, inwardly, with longing and yearning.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had just met with the rich young ruler who had come running to Him, asking about what he must do to have

eternal life. Jesus, knowing that this young man's treasure was his material possessions, told him to go and sell all that he had and give to the poor; then he was to come, take up the cross and follow Him, being assured of treasure in heaven. At that saying the young man went away sorrowful. Then Jesus spoke to His disciples about how hard it was for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, modifying His expression "rich" by explaining that He meant "them that trust in riches". Then Peter spoke up, and said, "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." Matthew tells that Peter added to that by asking: "What shall we have therefore?" Matthew 19:27. This was a very important question to Peter and it should be a very important matter to us. Jesus' answer was very plain and explicit. We wanted to bring this into our lesson today on the hope of the righteous, for we believe that Christ is the highest authority on any given subject that we will ever look into. In His saying here and along with these other writings from the apostle Paul we can plainly see that those who really believe in and follow Christ all the way have a wonderful hope of blessedness and life everlasting in the world to come. There are many other Scriptures that will go along with these we have before us. Let us rejoice and lay hold upon this blessed hope. May we be comforted in our faith to know that we will not be like the beast of the field, but have hope of coming up in the resurrection to see good things. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of future did Christ promise the soul who gives up all to follow Him?
2. What do the sufferings and afflictions of this present time work for us?
3. Why are we subjected to vanity? What does this mean?
4. What are we subjected to vanity in?
5. What will take place when this life of vanity is finished?
6. What is the creature groaning and waiting for?
7. How is it that we are saved by hope?
8. What will take place when the Lord descends from heaven?
9. Why is this hope such a value to the child of God?
10. Is there any other means of hope outside of Jesus Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

In Hebrews 6:19 the writer calls this hope an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and he said that it enters into

that within the veil. This means that the hope that we have in Christ goes beyond this time world up into the heavenly element, where Christ is now. In other words, we have it straight from the lips of our beloved Master, that is, if we will love and obey Him now, we will be with Him forever in that home above. Now this hope is truly one of the Christian's dearest treasures. In fact, we might say that it is THE dearest treasure, because all the other spiritual blessings that we have now are because of this blessed hope. When Jesus arose from the grave and showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs to His disciples, their hearts were filled with hope, bright and glorious hope and joy. They went forth conquering, and their message gripped the hearts of men in a world that had lost faith in the gods of the empire. "When the Roman empire grew weaker and its peoples suffered from hunger and poverty and ill treatment, men longed for a religion which would give them comfort and hope. They began to say to themselves that there must be kind, sympathetic gods, who would help people in trouble. Many also began to hope that there was a happy life after death. They had so much trouble that they said there must be a better world to which they would go when they died. They longed for a heaven that would make up for all that they suffered on earth. You can imagine how glad they were when they began to hear about the religion of the Christians. It gave them comfort and seemed to be the true religion. More and more they turned to the faith of the Christians."* And this blessed hope of the righteous is still one of the greatest drawing cards of the gospel today. —Leslie C. Busbee

*Old Europe and Our Nation History, by Barker, Duncalf, and Bacon. Row, Peterson, & Co.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Hope is very important to everyone and a very welcome guest to those laboring in despair. Man can fall into some pretty low pits and yet if he will just look up he will see the light of hope. Every person will at some time pass through sorrow and will need the blessing of hope. If you will look about you, you will probably find someone like that nearby. One minister said, "There's a broken heart in every pew. Preach to the sorrowing and you will never lack for a congregation." Think of the total despair there would be in the world today if the hope of heaven had never been brought to earth.

Once I spent a night on top of a mountain, in the snow,

with very little shelter. It was a night spent there by choice, but it was not very long into the night before I began to wish I was elsewhere. We had a small fire but it seemed like all it did was melt the snow so that the cold water could seep through my clothes and make me more miserable. At best, it just made a small portion of the body hot while the rest of it froze. Sleep was very fitful that night. Do you know what sustained me through that night? It was the thought of the relief which the morning held. More than once that night I thought about the warm dry socks I would have available to put on. The hope of better conditions made that night bearable.

I think of those who have received life sentences to cold Siberian labor camps for their belief in God. What kind of hope do they have? They have little hope of better conditions. I am glad that God has provided for situations even that dire. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." Hebrews 6:19. Sometimes our hopes must go beyond the comfort life affords and rest in the promise of eternal consolation.

—Wayne Murphy

THE DARK NIGHT

(Continued from last quarter)

As you leave the valley in which the chapel stands, travelling due west, at Shepherd Mill you cross a brook, gathered from the mountain rills; and as it meanders down the vale, supplying the woollen bleach-works and cotton-mills, it ultimately joins Bamford Brook, and finally empties itself into the river Roache. Blackpits Mill, where Alice worked, stands on the banks of this stream.

One winter's evening, old Richard, as usual, was preparing the meal for Alice on her returning from work. He had put fresh coals on the fire, and poured the hot water into the teapot. On a small round table, covered with a white cloth, stood the cups and bread and butter; the candle was burning on the mantelpiece. That night the little cottage bore the aspect of peace and cheerfulness. "I like," said the old man, "I like to have everything as comfortable as I can for my Alice when she comes from her work."

The mill had stopped, and the hands were returning home in groups. The night being dark, care was required in passing

between the reservoir and the brook. Alice, hastening to get home, took a wrong step. One wild scream! and the deep, dark waters rolled over the body of poor Alice! Lights, and ropes, and drags, and every available means to save her were instantly brought to bear; and while the flickering torches, borne by many hands, cast their reflecting light on the deep waves, groups of weeping friends stood round the sad scene; and when at last the body was found, and laid on the bank, it was evident to all her soul had fled. **THAT DARK NIGHT ALICE WAS DROWNED!**

Poor Alice!

In thy sad home thy aged father waits,—
Waits for his only child's return; for thee
He waits, to greet thee with a ready smile.
Oft hast thou sweetly joined with him in walks
Of gladness to the house of prayer; and oft
Bent lowly down before the throne of grace,
And sought for daily strength from heaven to meet
All coming ills. But now, alas! thy own
Short day of work is done; angels of light,
From the dark waters of the fatal deep,
Have borne thy spirit home.

Who now shall tell old Richard the dreadful tale? Who of the many scores at the river bank will find nerve to tell the dreadful tale? "Who will tell her father?" was the question put by many of the weeping, sobbing friends. A brother in the church, with trembling heart, undertook the painful task.

On arriving at the cottage door of old Richard, he stood for some time perfectly unmanned. At last he gently lifted the latch. The old man sat in his armchair, with his back to the door. When he heard the door open, without turning his head, he said, "Alice, my child, you have been long in coming tonight." This caused the sorrowful bearer of the melancholy announcement to burst out weeping; he was unable longer to control his pent-up feeling. Richard rose from his chair, looked his friend in the face, and exclaimed, "Oh! tell me what is the matter—whatever is the matter! Has something happened to my child?—do tell me?" With choking voice, the good brother begged the old man to be seated.

"Richard," said he, "pray for strength; my dear brother, pray for strength; the Lord help you, your Alice is drowned."

"Drowned!—Alice drowned!—my child drowned!" Reason reeled, and consciousness mercifully left him; and before the

dead body of his daughter reached her once happy home, kind friends had carried to his bed the unconscious old father.

That night was a night of lamentation and weeping, for as the mournful intelligence spread, a wail of sadness rolled over the valley; for though every one that knew Alice believed she was prepared for the change, still they felt it to be a distressing event. She was loved for her own sake, and additionally loved for her kindness to her aged father.

"Poor old Richard, what will he do now!" was the general exclamation. But nowhere was the sorrow so deep as at the church meeting, from which Alice was seldom absent, and, had all been well, she would that very night have made one of the happy company. That was, indeed, the house of mourning; the usual singing was dispensed with—the minister read out old Richard's favorite hymn:—

God moves in a mysterious way.

Then all knelt down in solemn prayer, and as they prayed they wept; a beloved one had fallen from their midst, but if the militant church counted one less, the church triumphant numbered one more. How suitable to this event are the words of the following hymn:—

When blooming youth is snatched away,
By death's relentless hand,
Our hearts the mournful tribute pay,
Which pity must demand.

While pity prompts the rising sigh,
Oh! may this truth (imprest
With awful power), "I too must die!"
Sink deep in every breast.

Let this vain world engage no more;
Behold the gaping tomb!
It bids us seize the present hour,
Tomorrow death may come.

The voice of this alarming scene
May every heart obey;
Nor be the heavenly warning vain
Which calls to watch and pray.

During that dismal night several neighbors kindly attended to the decent requirements of the dead child, and the few wants of the feeble, afflicted father. For many hours he

lay with closed eyes; few words escaped his lips. He moaned in his sleep, and once or twice repeated the words, "Alice, you have been long in coming home tonight."

When old Richard recovered his reason, he wept aloud for some time. When able to converse, he said—"Now I understand my child's last prayer; she always read the evening chapter, and if I was not well, she sometimes engaged in devotion. 'Lord,' she said, 'Thou hast taken my dear mother, and all my sisters and brothers to dwell with Thyself in mansions above; if it please Thee, preserve me for my aged father's sake, that I may be a comfort and support to him in his declining days; but if otherwise be Thy will, then he will see us all safely folded in the realms of bliss, and he will soon follow, and then we shall be a whole family in heaven. Oh! help us both to say, Thy will be done.' But never did I feel it so hard to be resigned; my cup is bitter indeed. It seemed this stroke might have been spared me. It is strange, very strange. I would not judge the Lord by feeble sense; but now this world is a wilderness, a waste, howling wilderness. She prayed—yes, my child prayed—that we might be able to say, Thy will be done. Lord help me to say it; for no doubt Thy will is the best, though at present I cannot see it. Job lost more in one day than I have lost in a whole lifetime, yet he could say, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' O my God! help me to be resigned."

The day of Alice's funeral was a memorable one. Many of the hands in the mill where she had worked, together with the teachers and elder scholars belonging to the Sunday school, besides many friends and neighbors, followed her to the tomb. The old man, leaning on his staff, and the arm of a brother Christian, headed the melancholy procession. Amidst tears and sobs, the body was lowered into the *devouring grave*, but with a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection.

(To be continued on page 59)

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February 22, 1987

THE GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

I Cor. 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

II Cor. 6:1 We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

Memory Verse: For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Psalm 84:11.

Central Thought: God has freely offered and provided in His plan of salvation an abundant supply of help and strength to enable every soul to be saved from the power and consequence of sin and to live a righteous and holy life with victory over all the power of the devil.

Word Definitions: *Grace:* Both the Hebrew and Greek language define the word translated "grace" to be graciousness, favor, and is summed up to mean the divine influence of God upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; the unmerited favor of God. *Grace for grace:* Favor upon favor, blessing after blessing, an unending, inexhaustible supply. *Peculiar people:* Special and separate.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From those who were earnest partakers of the grace of God in Christ we draw a beautiful and beneficial truth of the wonderful extent of the blessing that the grace of God has brought in Christ to the world. John rejoiced that he had been granted the privilege of beholding the glory of the only begotten of the Father, and had been made a partaker of the fulness that was in Him. He made a clear distinction between that wonderful grace and truth that He found so abundant in His Master, and the law that was given by Moses. How much farther it goes and how much more it accomplishes in the soul! Being an eyewitness of Christ and His grace and glory, John and his testimony is foremost in our study. But the apostle Paul became a partaker of this wonderful grace of Jesus, too. Oh, the wonderful things he brought out about the amazing grace of God! Looking back at what he came from, he knew that it was only the mercy and goodness of God that he ever got his eyes opened. He exhorts us to be gentle and shew all meekness unto all men. And cannot we all say that we were sometimes foolish, disobedient, and all these other sad conditions of heart and life? But the grace of God made the difference. We end our lesson with a serious note on not receiving the grace of God in vain. We are made responsible when we become recipients of the grace of God. God is expecting something good in the way of fruit and service from an individual upon whom He invests His wonderful grace. Although the grace of God is free as far as our own ability and

power to purchase or earn it is concerned, yet the grace of God has far reaching and very serious responsibilities attached to it. He wants His grace to have the right and proper effect in our lives. So we should rejoice and at the same time tremble with carefulness and conscientious endeavor.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did John see Jesus Christ full of?
2. What does the word "fulness" imply?
3. What did grace and truth in Christ have that the law of Moses did not have?
4. What does the grace of God teach us to deny?
5. How does the grace of God teach us to live?
6. What does the grace of God teach us to look for?
7. Why does the songwriter call the grace of Christ "amazing grace"?
8. Were you ever any of these things Paul spoke of in Titus 3:3?
9. Have you been changed from that? What changed you?
10. What does God expect out of a life that has been changed by His grace?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, the wonderful grace of the transforming and conquering love of Jesus Christ! How many lives have been affected by what He did on Calvary! How many hearts have been healed! How many broken homes have been mended! How many ignorant hearts and minds have received true knowledge and understanding! Think of a world steeped in darkness and blindness, stained with wrong and violence, warped by prejudice and fear, dominated by Satan and all of his works, captivated by evil desires and passions, crushed by despair and oppression, clouded by doubts and fears of all kind, afflicted by sickness and disease! Think of the woeful condition that mankind was in when Jesus came on the scene. Now look at the lives who have been blessed, healed, delivered, enlightened, saved, and made righteous! Think of the apostle Paul who was exceedingly fierce and bloodthirsty for the saints of the Lord Jesus! Look how the grace of God turned him around! Instead of the destroyer Saul, he became the planter Paul! Oh, how everyone can rejoice to know that we live now in the time of abounding grace. As by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in

life by one, Jesus Christ. As sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:17, 21. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." II Cor. 9:8. Oh, so many more wonderful things have been declared concerning the grace of God. Let us humble ourselves before Him, and receive grace that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"A British Tommy [soldier] gave me a synopsis of the sermon," recalls Joseph Fort Newton, "and I can still see his big blue eyes and hear his soft voice as he told me point by point, what the preacher had said. The subject was 'The Grace of God,' and the Tommy closed his account with exquisite courtesy in these words: 'The minister told us that the grace of God is plentiful, sufficient for all need, and near at hand, but he did not tell us what the grace of God is; perhaps you, sir, will be good enough to do that.' "

Sometimes we take simple things for granted and yet other times we make simple things complicated. It seems like this is generally the situation concerning the Grace of God. The definition of grace is often given as the unmerited favor of God. That is a good definition and yet we need to bring this thought a little closer to our experience. How do we know that the grace of God is upon our lives? Let us analyze the first outpouring of God's grace upon the life of a Christian. "That being justified by grace, we should be made heirs." When a person is forgiven of their sins, grace is a vital ingredient of the experience and the penitent heart feels it, but many times does not know what to term it. Perhaps you remember the happiness, relief and thankfulness that flooded your soul when you repented of your sins. This good feeling is the Grace of God. As you rose from the altar and went out into the world, you had no intention of committing sin. You protected that good feeling and did everything you could to preserve it. This is what is meant when grace is referred to as a saving and keeping power; a strength in time of need.

This initial outpouring of grace will help for a length of time, but after awhile, the new wears off and the keeping power of it fades. This is why it is so important to go on to

sanctification. Grace plays a part in sanctification also. The apostle Paul speaks of the heart being established with grace. (Heb. 13:9). In sanctification the Spirit of God takes up its abode in the heart. This is a direct line to God. In this relationship we can continually feel God's approval and unmerited favor upon us. We can continually have a new song in our hearts.

—Wayne Murphey

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March 1, 1987

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Rom. 2:28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

II Cor. 3:3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

I Cor. 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Heb. 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

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

Memory Verse: For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Romans 8:6.

Central Thought: The real essence of Christ's life, kingdom, and all that pertains to the work of God has to do with the spirit part of man, thus it is called spiritual, being in the realm of faith and things that are to the mortal eye invisible.

Word Definitions: *Fleshly tables of the heart:* Fleshly denotes tenderness, teachable, receptive to instruction, open-mindedness. *Discerned:* Judged or understood. *Spiritual wickedness in high places:* The Greek Diaglot reads: "spiritual things of the evil one in the heavenlies." This word heavenlies is the same word translated as heavenly places in Eph. 1:3 and 2:6. It is the realm of the spirit: the Spirit of God, spirit of man, and spirit of the devil. *Comparing spiritual things with spiritual:* The Greek diaglot renders this in the word-for-word translation: "Explaining spiritual things to spiritual ones (people)."

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today the counsel and testimony of a man who prospered and gloried in the flesh and the literal Israel at one time. He had everything to his credit to make him a Hebrew of the Hebrews. But after he had come face to face with Jesus Christ on the Damascus road, Paul was made to see plainly the earthly, literal, fleshly phase of things was no more the realm of God's working. He was made fully and keenly aware of the realities of the spiritual side of life. It is a vision that every workman in the kingdom of God must gain.

Carnal application and interpretation of the teachings of the Bible is the greatest abuse that is heaped upon the work of the Lord today. Without spiritual understanding there is no way that one can know the real truth of the Scriptures. To have even a small carnal slant on divine things is hurtful. By being enlightened by the revelation of Jesus Christ, Paul saw clearly the spiritual side of everything that had been carnal before. He saw that to be a real Jew, one had to be one inwardly, in the heart and in the spirit, and that the real circumcision was that of the heart. He saw the difference in the letter of the law and the real spirit that gives the truth life and inspiration. He saw that the real law of God must needs be written in a spiritual manner upon a tender heart and open mind. Spiritual things can only be discerned by people who are made spiritual by a born again experience, and by being sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. No small wonder why the Lord of glory had been crucified by a carnal minded priesthood and nation! Although God dealt with man at one time in a loud spectacular manner with fire and darkness and tempestuous clouds, it is now made plain that God administers in a way far different. It is a spiritual experience that He is calling men and women to. We must let God elevate our minds up above things that are seen and felt. The most important things of the Bible to us are spiritual, and unless we get a hold of this we will never gain access to the real knowledge of God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of blessings has God given us in Christ?
2. What kind of Jew avails with God today?
3. Is it possible for a German to be a real Israelite? How?
4. What circumcision is to the praise of God?
5. Where does God want His laws written today?
6. In what way does the letter of the law without the Spirit's inspiration kill?
7. What was the basic reason for Christ being rejected by the Jews and crucified?
8. How does the natural man and the carnal mind relate to the things of the Spirit?
9. Will a soul prosper who is looking for God to work spectacularly in an outward display?
10. What kind of warfare is the child of God to engage in?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The holiness of the Lord and His way of working with man has always been of a spiritual nature. When God told Adam that he would die the day that he ate of the forbidden fruit, He was speaking of spiritual death. Adam did not die naturally for a long time, but he died spiritually when he sinned against God. Noah entered a spiritual realm when he obeyed God and prepared an ark for saving his family and himself. The spiritual plane upon which he walked was too high for the lustful world around him. Abraham lived a life of faith, entering a spiritual experience filled with spiritual favors and values. All of the Old Testament saints prevailed with God because of their triumph in spiritual things. But so many lost sight of the spiritual side of life. The general run of people were so carnal minded that Christ came on the scene without their realizing it. The conflict of the spiritual and the carnal is of old standing. Paul saw a type of it in the conflict between Sarah and her maid Hagar. Sarah's child was of faith (spiritual), and Hagar's child was of a fleshly conception. (Galatians 4:29). Oh, how sad today that so many are motivated and dominated by the fleshly and earthly side of life. How small and confining is their world! How dark is their realm of life; just natural, temporal, earthly, material, and humanly possible things is the sole framework of their heart and mind. When God has provided something so much richer, sweeter, lovelier, and lasting, what a pity that mankind is content to delve in the sticks, straw, and mud of this fleeting life! How tragic that man wars in a carnal way when the real enemy in his life is unconquered, unsubdued; how foolish that he speculates about the literal nation of Israel and is unmindful of the true Israel of God! Let us seek to see and dwell in that spiritual reality with God that satisfies the soul.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The greatest gift or blessing that God has given to mankind is eternal life. (Rom. 6:23). This is a wonderful gift that no one else can give. It is given to us by the Holy Spirit. "For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." Rom. 1:11. Through sanctification we can begin enjoying these blessings right now. Since these blessings are spiritual, and cannot be seen with the physical eyes, Paul, in our lesson, spoke of them as being a mystery.

If the blessings of God are spiritual and cannot be seen or perceived with the natural eye or carnal mind, how is it that Christ instructed us to be a light to the world? We can easily understand how a gas fire works. Invisible gas is piped into an appliance where invisible air is mixed with it and it is ignited by a fire which produces a visible flame. As God pours His invisible spiritual blessings upon us, they become a part of our thoughts and feelings. God's Holy Spirit ignites this invisible mixture and His flame can be seen and felt by the world in the form of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. (Gal. 5:22).

Let us be careful not to take the blessings of God for granted. Sometimes we need to stir up our pure minds and remember all that God has done for us. If all of God's blessings were removed from us we would surely recognize their worth then.

—Wayne Murphey

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March 8, 1987

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

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

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

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

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

Eph. 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

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

II Cor. 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

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

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

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

I Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Memory Verse: Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14.

Central Thought: It is the will of God for every one who believes in His Son, Jesus Christ, to consecrate their hearts and lives to God, receive the Holy Spirit and be sanctified, and then follow the precepts of holiness and purity before God every day of their life in this world.

Word Definitions: *Holiness:* Synonymous with the word "sanctification", which means sacred, purified, consecrated.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the earliest association of God with man, God has sought to convey the image of His holiness and uprightness to the heart of man. Man was created by God in a holy state. But in his disobedience man lost that holiness of heart. But all the way through in God's dealings with men, there was a holy and sacred bearing in it all. Peter quotes from Leviticus 11:44, which reads: "For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy." Everything about God calls for holiness and sacredness and

purity in man. Since God is holy, man must be holy if he is to be on good terms with God. The apostle Paul seems to be quoting from Old Testament Scripture in the text from II Cor. 6:16-18. Isaiah 52:11 seems to be one of the places he is referring to: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." He surely is quoting from the real essence of the holy Scriptures, pointing us to our responsibility of cleansing our selves from all impurities, and following after holiness to perfection. He bears it down more and more, and such a touching truth is borne out concerning Christ giving His life for us that we might be a holy and blameless Bride for Himself. Peter joins in the witness that soberness and holiness are to be the law of our life in this world. Our first Scripture from Romans is really the first direct and indispensable command to us in that epistle. For all the first 11 chapters Paul declares emphatic and unchangeable truths of faith and righteousness, making it plain how simple and within our reach is the grace of God. Because of this he entreats us to consecrate our life for holiness unto God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. For what reason should man be holy?
2. What force or influence would cause man not to seek holiness?
3. What will happen if a sincere soul fully obeys Rom. 12:1, 2?
4. What are we to yield as servants to righteousness unto holiness?
5. What kind of fruit does God look for in our lives?
6. What kind of Church did Jesus give Himself for?
7. What steps are we to be sure to take in perfecting holiness in the fear of God?
8. Name some solid truths from the Scripture that causes one to want to be holy.
9. Our former lusts were done in what kind of condition of our hearts?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

To be holy, man has to be delivered from the power of pride and sin. Pitiful and foolish pride keeps man from seeking after holiness. Man should not be dear unto himself, but he needs to seek to be dear to God. Oh, the blessing of holiness! We accept Christ as our personal Saviour, and then

we consecrate our lives and all to Him on the altar of sacrifice. God accepts our sacrifice by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us. Here the blessed Spirit becomes a faithful Monitor of holiness, righteousness, and truth. As we continue to yield to His gentle voice, our lives sink deeper and deeper into the holiness of God. God is holy, Christ is holy, and we are holy. This brings us into a blessed fellowship with God and one another. Isaiah 62:12 prophesied that we would be called, The holy people. Many other statements are made in the Scriptures that directly apply holiness to those who have fellowship with God. The Heavenly Father chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Heb. 12:10. Jesus gave His life on the cross so that we could be made holy. We can be cleansed from all sin. He wants us to be a part of His holy Bride. Jesus abides at the right hand of God in perfect holiness and righteousness, right there in the very presence of the Almighty God. He wants us to sit with Him in those heavenly places, and be right at His side. But there are many unholy elements and influences around about us in this world that we must overcome. We must not allow ourselves to be defiled with the creeping and sly influences of the devil. It is a constant warfare to keep ourselves in perfect holiness. We must be on our guard all the time. But God will help us as we submit to Him and keep low at His feet. Holiness and humility go hand in hand. May holiness unto the Lord be written on everything in our life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

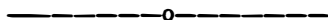
“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.” Isaiah 35:8.

Can we enter into the vision of the prophet as he, by the Spirit, looked into the future and wrote about that great highway of holiness? Not only did he see that great highway of holiness far above the world of sin and corruption, but he also saw the way to get up on that highway. Many people want to live right and desire to quit their sins, but they do not know how. But Jesus speaks to us and tells us the way to be holy. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” Jesus is the way to get up on the highway of holiness. By His dying on the cross and shedding His blood, He paved the way for us to have our volitional sins forgiven and also by His blood, we are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The Lord never intended for anyone to

stay in a justified state. He shed His blood that we might be cleansed of the sin principle that passed upon all men because of the fall of Adam and Eve. The Apostle Paul plainly tells us, "By the which we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Hebrews 10:20. To be sanctified means to be made holy. To be made holy, we must consecrate and place our body, soul, mind, and will into God's hands without one reserve and leave them there. We then move at the will of God, and not our will. We are made holy through this giving of ourselves to God and the infilling of, and cleansing by, the Holy Spirit. We are then upon the highway of holiness. We can serve the Lord without fear, "in holiness and righteousness . . . all the days of our life." Without holiness no man shall see God, our lesson makes us know. The whole New Testament teachings are for those who are living a sanctified life. Without the power of the Holy Spirit within us, we could not live according to the standard of holiness.

Are you on the highway of holiness? Are you living up to your privileges on this highway? When we are holy we are walking with Jesus. We have Him for our constant companion. When problems arise that touch you deeply, and, if you would allow it, would plunge you into the deepest despair, are you turning to your Friend that is walking with you on this highway? Or are you ignoring Him, and falling under the influence of the spirit of the enemy that tries to get to you from the earth below? Oh, dear one, use your privileges and resist those influences and sing the song about your Friend who hears your faintest whisper. Praise God for this highway which is leading us to our eternal home with victory!

—M. Miles
(Written in 1974)



March 15, 1987

JOY IN THE LORD

Nehemiah 8:10c . . . the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Psalms 149:1 Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

4 For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand,

Isa. 29:18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

19 The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

21 That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

John 16:20 Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

I Peter 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom,

though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Memory Verse: Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11.

Central Thought: There is such a joy in being in true fellowship with God and His Son that makes up far beyond comparison for what we might suffer as a Christian.

Word Definition: The Webster definition for *joy* is: the emotion excited by the receiving or expectation of good; pleasurable feelings or emotions caused by well being, success, good fortune, or the like; or the prospect of possessing what we love or desire; gladness; delight. The Hebrew word for *joy* is: blithesome and gleeful. Webster defines *blithe* as: kind, gentle, friendly; of a well pleased character or disposition; cheerful.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Nehemiah and the people of Israel had, despite much opposition and difficulty, succeeded in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. They gathered together to worship God and to hear the law read. There was much rejoicing in their hearts and Nehemiah encouraged them in their rejoicing, forbidding weeping and mourning, "for the joy of the Lord", he said, "is your strength." How blessed are the people down through the ages who have found the joy of God! People take delight in worldly pleasures and things that gratify the lower nature, but nothing compares to the deep inner happiness that comes from knowing God. God wants people to be happy in Him. He is not satisfied with a service of fear and dread. He wants people to be happy and joyful in their souls by serving and obeying Him. God knows that a man who joys in Him will be faithful to Him. Now the path to joy seems to be paved with tears and sorrow. Joy becomes more joyful because of what one suffers to obtain the fulfillment of his joy. The smiling countenance, the singing heart, the joyful sound, the happy disposition, the cheerful attitude—all these beautiful manifestations of one's satisfaction with the Lord bring great pleasure to Him. God wants our happiness to be in Him, and not just His blessings. In the face of Christ's death and the sorrow it was to bring, He pointed His disciples to the joy. There is a joy and a peculiar delight in comprehending the truth of Christ's triumph, having the assurance deep within

that it is true beyond all question. Both Paul and Peter join with all the rest in their joy. Note Paul's statement concerning joy in the Holy Spirit along with righteousness and peace, bring, in effect, the kingdom of God. The unspeakable joy that is in the heart of a soul who is so persuaded about Christ that he believes in Him, sight unseen, surely is one of the greatest testimonies of the grace of God. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How is the joy of the Lord our strength?
2. What is the behavior of a true child of God like?
3. What kind of two edged sword goes along with the high praises of God?
4. What does hearing by the deaf and seeing to the blind bring to the soul?
5. Who will increase their joy in the Lord?
6. Does the scorner or the fault finder have joy?
7. How does watching for iniquity interfere with one's joy?
8. What kind of joy does Christ want us to have?
9. How does the road to joy lead through sorrow?
10. What did Jesus compare our joy in Him to?
11. How is righteousness, peace, and joy approved of men?
12. How can we live and have joy unspeakable?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There is a difference between real joy in Christ and mere fleshly pleasure and fun. True joy is deep settled in one's heart and is unchanged and unaffected by outside influences and conditions. Worldly pleasure can be spoiled, interrupted, disappointed, and disturbed. How sad the person who seeks in the earthly, fleshly, and temporal realm for that which his soul is craving! He is desiring the joy and pleasure that comes from knowing God and pleasing Him. But, being ignorant of this, he or she flings their hearts out toward the world and what it offers. And, being not satisfied, they thrust their desires deeper, swallowing the devil's lies that the gratifying of their hearts will be soon to come. And all the time they are missing the very best. To one who finds the joy of living for Christ, the things of the old world are dark, shallow, and vain indeed. In response to the call of the gospel and the strivings of the Spirit of God to the soul, we can experience a peace and happiness unknown any where else. One of the mysteries of a true Christian is the source of his joy and happiness. He does not reach out for the exciting and pleas-

urable things around him that so many are seeking after. He is not straining to get ahead financially for the wealth of the world. He seeks not for dress and worldly fashion. He lives simply, humbly, and honestly. And yet he is happy. How is this? It is because he has found Christ Jesus as His blessed Lord and Shepherd. He experiences the Lord revealing Himself to his heart, anointing Him with the oil of the Holy Spirit, causing his cup to run over. Psalm 23:5. Words fail to describe the joy of the Lord. One just has to experience it for himself to really understand how sweet it is. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Salvation is not a dreamy aspiration of the nature of trying to be just, pure, and good, then if we fail and become selfish, sensual, devilish, forgetting the failure and trying again, always trying, always hoping, with a vague belief that although sin always gets the best of us, there are some good things in us which, after all, can't be lost. It is not a vague reliance on God's goodness and mercy, a feeling that He is a Father, and cannot, therefore, doom His children to despair and death. These dreams and hopes are the salvations which men provide for themselves. These ideas and aspirations are not, nor are they like God's salvation.

God's salvation is a definite work in the heart by the cleansing blood of Jesus. The penitent soul looks at Jesus dying on the cross, dying in his stead. The penitent soul knows that he is the one who has sinned and he deserves to be on that cross, for Jesus was innocent of any sin, yet, the great love of Jesus Christ for the soul of the penitent one, caused him to take his punishment because God can only acknowledge the sacrifice or the offering of an innocent One for the guilty. As that soul acknowledges that Jesus took his confessed sins, then he can have Salvation. The joys of Salvation are given to him and what a joy! Surely, he sowed in tears and reaped in joy.

The converted soul goes forth helping others to know about Jesus and His saving grace and comes bringing sheaves with him to the Lord. His rejoicing is great. He doesn't get discouraged because not many will come, but continues to tell the gospel story.

His greatest desire is to dwell in the presence of the Lord and "behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire into His Word to know how to help others. He knows that in trouble, he is

hid in Christ and is upon the rock, which cannot be moved.
His soul is full of praises because of the goodness of God unto
Him and to others.

—M. Miles
(Written in 1977)

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March 22, 1987

KEEPING OUR EYES ON JESUS

Isaiah 17:7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.

Psalm 34:5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

Isa. 8:13 Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

Isa. 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Micah 7:5 Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.

6 For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

7 Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Memory Verse: My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. Psalm 5:3.

Word Definitions: *"every tongue shall swear"*: this word "swear" means to confess solemnly. *"despising the shame"*: This word "despise" means to count lightly, esteem it of little value, or worth considering.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For this precious and most vital thought in our lesson today we have gathered several Old Testament Scriptures along with what Paul, or the writer, wrote in Hebrews. Some of these are quoted in the New Testament, however. Peter was probably referring to Isa. 8:13 when he exhorted in I Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Peter also refers to Isa. 8:14 while speaking of Christ as the corner stone of the Church, saying in I Peter 2:8, that Christ was "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence", because of how people would stumble in disobedience at the Word. Paul also referred to this Scripture and the one in Isa. 28:16, when he put the two together in Romans 9:33, thus: "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Paul quotes Isa. 45:23 in two places. In Romans 14:11, in speaking of us all going to stand at the judgment seat of Christ, said, "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." In Philipians 2:10, 11, speaking of Christ being highly exalted and given a name which is above every name, declared: "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Jesus Christ Himself quoted from Micah 7:6 in Matthew 10:35, speaking how that He came not to send peace on earth: but rather a sword: "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her

mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Seeing that these Scriptures are quoted so importantly by the New Testament writers, we ought to take them very seriously. For they all have the command and the counsel for us to look to God alone in every scene of life and above everything and everyone else. We get in spiritual difficulty quick when we get our eyes on anything else other than Jesus Christ. As long as we keep Him and His Word in view and count it as our guide and stay, we will not be moved from the hope of the gospel. Because there are so many contrary forces and influences that are not sanctioned by the Lord (these having a great pull and influence) it is vital that we steadfastly look heavenward to Jesus all the time, even as Stephen did when he was being condemned by the council.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is there about looking at things around us that is so perilous?
2. In what way can a person look to the altars and to the work of his hands?
3. Do we experience any difficulty in keeping our eyes on Jesus?
4. What eyes are we to employ in our looking to Jesus?
5. What happens to us when we steadfastly look to Jesus?
6. Is there any other fear that we can be affected by today?
7. How can Christ, who is meant for a foundation, become a stumbling and a rock of offence?
8. Why would God want to hide His face from anyone?
9. Where do we have to turn our gaze to find Christ?
10. Are you acquainted with the division that exists between the saved and the unsaved?
11. In looking to Jesus what do we gain? Of what value is it to look to Him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

In bringing to mind this important matter of our looking steadfastly to Christ, we are reminded of Peter in Matthew 14:28-30, when he was bidden to come to Jesus who was walking on the Sea of Galilee. He actually walked on the water for a ways, but when he saw the wind and, no doubt, the swelling of the waves, he became fearful and began to sink. He got his eyes off of Jesus. Now this is what will happen to everyone of us if we get to looking at the waves of

trial and danger around us. If we get to looking at other people's failings we will get in trouble. If we get to looking on the dark side of life we will become gloomy and distressed. We are to run this race patiently, looking to Jesus who ran it successfully once Himself. Do not think about your influence and how much good you might be doing, for the measure of your success in the Christian way is mostly unseen. Do not measure a revival meeting by the throng at the altar. It does not always pan out the real results. Keep your eyes on Jesus. We will be ashamed if we get to looking at the things in a worldly sense that we forfeit for the way of the cross. Let us live on the victory side of the cross, concentrating on the gain that Jesus has. Others will stumble at the truth because they do not see Jesus and His triumph. We must bear the scorn and shame of the cross even if it bears upon us because of those in our own families. People, whoever they are, who do not visualize Christ and have no revelation of His reality in their souls will oppose those who do. It has always been that way. The testimony of the Lord and His law is bound up and sealed from the eyes of the proud. It is hidden in the hearts of those who love Him. Let us keep our eyes on Him always, disregarding everything else.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Peter walking on the Sea of Galilee is a classic example of keeping our eyes on Jesus. Fear, in this case, is what caused Peter to take his eyes off of Christ. Fear can be a dreadful thing. There are cases where individuals have become physically ill because of fear. We must keep our eyes on Christ and continually commit our lives unto Him lest we also fall prey to this torment.

We read of another instance when Peter turned away from Christ because of fear. This was at the trial of Jesus. Because of fear of man, he denied Christ. Later, on the day of Pentecost, he received such a spiritual vision that he spoke boldly. This was a result of replacing fear with faith.

When Stephen was facing death, he exhibited no fear. This was because of his great faith and he was privileged to see Jesus standing at the right hand of God. How prone man is to lose sight of God and what He can do.

There is a natural fear that brings about caution. This is an instinct that God equipped us with in order to protect us from harm. Whenever this God-given fear gets out of control

and erodes our faith and confidence, we need a renewed vision of Him.

In the following poem, note the places where we should not look.

—Wayne Murphey

LOOK TO JESUS

I look not back; God knows the fruitless efforts,
The wasted hours, the sinning, the regrets,
I leave them all with Him who blots the record
And graciously forgives and then forgets.

I look not round me; then would fears assail me
So wild the tumult of earth's restless seas,
So dark the world, so filled with woe and evil,
So vain the hope of comfort and of ease.

I look not forward; God sees all the future,
The road that short or long will lead me home
And He will face with me its every trial
And bear for me the burden that may come.

I look not inward; that would make me wretched.
For I have naught on which to stay my trust.
Nothing I see save failures and shortcomings
And weak endeavors crumbling into dust.

—Selected

March 29, 1987

LOOKING FOR AND HASTING CHRIST'S COMING

Matthew 24:45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?

46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.

48 But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;

49 And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;

50 The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

II Thess. 1:7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

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

Memory Verse: He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Revelation 22:20.

Central Thought: The coming of the Lord is the sweetest and most looked for event to the child of God who is living in this present world for Christ and His glory.

Word Definition: *Dissolved:* The Greek word "luo" means loosened. This indicates that at Christ's coming the elements will be loosened. The power of God that holds the parts of the atoms together will be restrained and all creation will fall apart. This takes tremendous power, similar to atomic energy released when the atoms are split or loosened. Think what a terrible scene it will be when all the elements in the universe, even the heavens, will be loosened. *Hasting:* Anticipating and awaiting with eagerness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In Acts 1:9-11 we have the scene portrayed of Christ's ascension back to the Father. He had conquered death by His own death and resurrection, and had been with His disciples for a number of days. After giving them final instructions and the charge to go to Jerusalem and await the advent of the Holy Spirit, He began to rise from the earth, and soon disappeared in the clouds. The disciples' eager eyes followed His upward movement, and they stood with their eyes transfixed on the heavens. Suddenly, while they were standing there gazing up into the skies, their attention was drawn to two angels in white and the words they were speaking. The angels told them that the same Jesus that they saw going up into heaven would so come in like manner. The disciples' hearts were warmed and comforted with the thought that their Master would be coming back, and they went forth to meet the challenge and work the work that He had left them to do. They looked forward to the return of their Master, and lived to that end. But years passed, and finally, as one by one the Church fathers passed away, Paul got the revelation from the Lord that His coming was not to be as near as they had supposed, but that a falling away was to come first. II Thess. 2:3. And now the years, ages, and centuries have come and gone. Jesus has not returned yet. But He wants us to still yearn and eagerly await His coming. Satan has succeeded in cooling many off in this respect. But we should discipline our hearts to constantly keep His coming before our hearts and be watching and doing His will faithfully. We cannot afford to let this day come upon us unawares. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What should a faithful servant of the Lord be doing when He comes?
2. How does an eagerness for His coming help keep one faithful and busy?
3. What does a thought of his lord's delaying his coming cause the servant to do?
4. Why should we not entertain the thought that the Lord's coming is not near?
5. How does a careless attitude show itself in relation to others?
6. What will the true saints have in their hearts when they see the Lord coming?

7. What will happen to our homes when the Lord comes?
8. What will happen to the earth and everything in it when the Lord comes?
9. In what condition must we seek to be in when the Lord comes?
10. What are we looking for?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Why should we be eagerly anticipating and wishing that the Lord hasten His coming? The first reason is that He is our Beloved, and we are yearning to see Him and to be with Him forever. He is our Lord, our Saviour, the Bridegroom and Lover of our souls. We have our hearts fixed on Him, and are doing our best to please and to glorify Him in our lives. We hate to think of our loved ones and the peoples of the world not being ready to meet Him to their everlasting doom, and we are willing to wait until it is the Lord's time; but we are still filled with anticipation for His coming and are willing to do everything possible to help hasten that wonderful hour. We are keeping our hearts right before Him, watching and praying for His help. We will not smite our fellow servants or grudge one against another. We want to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless. We are groaning under the blight of the travail of the decay of nature, the weakness and infirmities of the flesh, and we are vexed sore with the wickedness and the sin of the world around us. We are yearning for the Lord to come and bring an end to all of this evil, lust, murder, strife, and immorality that seems to be getting worse and worse all the time. We are yearning to be re-united with all the saved and those who have been true to the Lord, who have gone on before us to the paradise of God. We want to meet with those whom we have not seen, the redeemed of all ages who had the spirit of Christ in their lives. We are reaching forth and eagerly anticipating the coming of the Lord Jesus. Oh, may this spirit of patiently waiting for Him to come prevail in each one of our hearts always. The Lord is coming soon, and He will come quickly. Amen! Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The most important thing in the Christian life is to be in a continual state of readiness. This means being ready for anything. God is preparing to bring this world into judgment

when the time is right and it is vital that we be ready for service so that we can help prepare the world for this great occasion. We must not just sit back and let the world go by while we look for the second coming. As we faithfully labor for God we will naturally be looking for the eternal home of rest that His coming will bring.

There are literally hundreds of opinions in the religious world as to what will take place when Christ returns. If we allow ourselves, we can become bogged down in discussions and disputes and forget to be ready for what does occur. The Bible is plain about what will happen at Christ's coming, and it is important for us to understand it, for then we will not be deceived about His return. However, some people get so caught up in opinions that they forsake that really weighty matter of being ready. One story tells about a young man who was drafted into World War II. When he filled out his draft paper he became so confused with the questions that he finally just turned the sheet over, wrote, "I'm ready when you are" and mailed it in. Let us just accept the plain simple truth of Christ's second return and be ready for it.

—Wayne Murphey

THE DARK NIGHT

(Continued from page 33)

The good brother before mentioned, took old Richard to reside at his own house. His remaining furniture was sold to pay a few small debts. On the following Sunday morning, the old pilgrim, now alone, was again wending his way to the house of God. Kind, but mistaken friends, tried to dissuade him from going, thinking it would increase his distress of mind. "No, no," said the old man, "I have often had, like the Psalmist, hard things made plain in the sanctuary of my God. Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. God will guide me with His counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.' No, let me go to the chapel, for 'one thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.' "

Richard's appearance in the chapel that morning drew silent tears from most in the congregation; and when the minister offered up a prayer that the aged brother might be

sustained under his heavy bereavement, his voice trembled with emotion, and the sobs of the audience became general, and every heart in that assembly said "Amen," to the prayer for their afflicted friend.

But another trial yet remained; the owner of Blackpits Mill died, and in consequence, the works were stopped, and all the hands had to seek employment elsewhere.

The good folks in whose house Richard for several months had found a shelter were amongst the number. He had the option of going to the parish Workhouse, or receive two-and-sixpence per week if he did not go into the house. He chose the two-and-sixpence; "for," said he, "if I go to the Workhouse, I shall not be able to attend the chapel and other means of grace;—for that comfort is still left me, and an unspeakable comfort it is. And besides, if I go to the Workhouse, when my short pilgrimage is ended, I shall be buried in a stranger's grave; and I should like—oh! yes, I should like to be buried with my dear wife and children."

Another brother in the church, feeling commiseration for the now houseless old man, offered him a home. This poor man had nothing to spare, for he was a weaver, with a family of small children. Here Richard soon found he was a burden, and he would not consent to eat the children's bread, and now there seemed no place left but the Workhouse. For a whole week he was in much trouble. To leave the chapel, to be buried in a stranger's grave, to remove from amongst those who had, according to their ability, shared with, and lightened his sorrows, was a sore and painful trial.

Late one Saturday evening he remained long in prayer, beseeching the Almighty to open out some way of deliverance. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord! for I am in trouble. Hear, O Lord! and have mercy upon me. Lord, be Thou my helper." His struggle that night was severe and bitter; but at last, from the depths of his afflicted soul, he was able to say, "Lord, not my will, but Thine be done. I leave my body, soul, and spirit entirely in Thy hands."

On the Sunday following, the day after Richard's prayer of resignation, I was unaccountably impressed with a desire to attend Bagslate Chapel (Richard's place of worship). I knew it was the school anniversary that day, but that was not in itself to me any attraction. The place was two miles from my house, and on that day—what was very unusual—I had no special engagement. I felt I must go, and after dinner I set out in good time, wishing to distribute a few tracts on the way. On

arriving at the chapel, and on shaking hands with many well-known friends, I found several of them in great trouble. On inquiring the reason, one of them informed me that old Richard was going to the Workhouse, and was come to bid them farewell.

"Where is old Richard?" I asked.

"In the school-room, taking leave of the children," was the answer.

On entering the school-room, I found Richard alone, walking up and down; the scholars and teachers were all gone into the chapel. The old man seemed to be laboring under great mental anxiety. On seeing me approach, he held out his hand, saying, "This is my last day amongst you; I feel it hard work to part with my old friends, the means of grace, and the house of my God. Oh! how precious to me has been this Sunday school and this blessed sanctuary; but the bitterness is past. Yes, yes, the bitterness is past; I now feel much more resigned to my lot;" and taking hold of my hand, he prayed that the Lord might bless me, and make me a blessing.

"Well, Richard, but supposing you had three shillings per week, added to the two-and-sixpence allowed by the township—how would that do?"

"Do! do! why I should be a king; yes, and far happier than any king. Do! I should think it would do, indeed."

"Well, then, you shall have it," I replied, "weekly, and every week as long as you live. And now you can remain with your friends and the school, and still attend the house of your God; and when your days are ended, you can be laid down in the grave with your wife and children, as you have always wished."

Richard looked at me with tears streaming down his face, and with the most childish simplicity, said, "Mr. Ashworth, are you really in earnest, or are you trifling with an old man's sorrows?"

"In earnest, Richard, and never more in earnest; you surely do not think I should sport with your troubles."

For a moment the old man seemed unable to speak; then, clasping his hands, exclaimed, "Now I see! now I see! If I had sooner left myself entirely in the hands of God—sooner from my heart said, 'Not my will, but Thine be done'—deliverance would have come sooner. Not till last night could I say it; and my God sends deliverance the very day after. 'Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust.' 'Oh! magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.' "

"Well, Richard, but I think you had better not tell about this providential help; there may be prudence in not making it known."

"Tell, tell, but I must tell, I cannot help it. Was there ever anything like it? Just in time; a day or so later, and I should have gone!"

And tell he did; for after the service was over, Richard was again shaking hands with his friends, exclaiming, "Bless the Lord, I am not going; no, no, the Lord hath sent me help; I can come to His house still, and meet with you as long as I live, and then be buried with my own family. Praise God, for He has done it all."

The following week was to Richard a week of great joy. He spent much of it in going amongst his Christian friends, talking with them about his deliverance, as he called it. To one brother in the church, he said, "I wonder I was so unwilling to leave myself in the hands of God. I have long believed that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, but somehow I did not like the Workhouse, and I was very wishful to keep near the school and chapel. Oh! this 'Thy will be done' there is nothing beats it. My dear Saviour first spoke these words when sweating drops of blood, and it seems that we must be made to sweat too, before we will say it. Prayers in sorrow are prayers in earnest. I have had a wonderful deliverance. I have now ninepence halfpenny a day of an income, and I can make that do famously, and I will try never to doubt God's care for me again."

Richard's re-appearance in the school the following Sunday morning astonished some of the younger scholars; they could not understand how it was that he had bid them farewell, and come back again. Richard knew their thoughts, and from the desk told them all about his deliverance.

For two years the old man regularly received his promised pension, several friends willingly contributing the amount required. This, in addition to many gifts, prevented him being a burden to the poor hard-working man with whom he resided. As long as he could walk, either alone or with help, he attended the house of prayer. But the weary wheels of life were now on the eve of standing still. On my visit to him a few days previous to his death, I found him, like a shock of corn, ready to be gathered in, and, as he said, "his sun was setting in a clear sky."

"Well, well," said he, "you are come to see me once more; I think it will be the last time. I do not know the persons that

have so kindly sent me the money, but the Lord knows, and He will bless them. I have been trying to think of the way God has brought me, and now I believe He has brought me the right way. Many dark clouds have cast their shadows across my path. Dark, indeed, have been some of the nights of my pilgrimage, but faith in the promises enabled me to see my way; but the night my dear Alice was drowned was the darkest of all; that was A DARK NIGHT. I have had many sorrows, but I have had millions of joys. Yes, Mr. Ashworth, taking all together, I have been a happy man. A few more hours, and we shall be *fourteen in heaven*. What a mercy, fourteen in heaven! From my heart, I do *now* believe that 'all things work together for good to them that love God.' One day with my Saviour in heaven will compensate for all my sufferings on earth."

It was, as Richard expected, our final interview. In his last moments he enjoyed unbounded peace, and his triumphant death was another evidence of the power of saving and sustaining grace.

He died at a place called Springs, and, at the request of his friends, the writer preached his funeral sermon, from the words, "BLESSED ARE THE DEAD THAT DIE IN THE LORD."

Richard had prayed that not one of them might miss the way to heaven;—that through all the temptations which they might have to pass—through all the dangers and troubles of the wilderness, not one of them should be found straying in forbidden paths; that after the storms of life were o'er, they might all be gathered into the fold of the Good Shepherd, never to part again.

Richard, thy prayer is heard!

—Taken from *Ashworth's Strange Tales*.

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