

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Theme for First Quarter, 1988

As a counterpart and continuation of the lessons in the last quarter on the Church of God and its description in prophecy, we feel inspired to set forth a series of lessons about the visible phase of the Church of God and how God has set it up to shine forth and operate before the world, so that He can be glorified. The organization of the Church, its function before the world as a cooperative organism of men and women filled and directed by the Spirit of God is to be shone forth in contrast to the man-made systems of religion that are operated by men, talent, and money. The high and holy plane of living by the members of Christ's body will stand out against the carnal and materialistic minds of ungodly professors. The peace and harmony of the Church, her beauty of holiness, her unity, her victory, her mission, and her wonderful fruit we desire to look into in this series of lessons, and then we want to preview her glorious and everlasting future. We pray that much spiritual enlightenment and inspiration will be with everyone who studies these lessons! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

January 3, 1988

THE CHURCH OF GOD AS A BODY

Rom. 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;

8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor. 12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and

all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

Memory Verse: For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:13.

Central Thought: The Church of God is organized and set up by God the Father to operate and function just as the physical body of a man with various gifts and organs that promote activity, life, and accomplishment for God's whole purpose.

Word Definitions: *Think soberly:* Be of a sound, balanced, and moderate mind. Think according to what is taught in the Word of God. *Office:* Function or job. *Proportion of faith:* The individual working of God in each member according as he or she is gifted and led of the Spirit. *"Let us wait on our ministering, on exhortation," etc.:* The words, "Let us wait on," are added words, not being in the original Greek text. The Greek interlinear reads: "If service, in the service, if teaching, in the teaching, if the exhortation, in the exhortation." The evident meaning of the apostle is that every function of each individual member should be only as the Holy Spirit leads, inspires, and works to that extent.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our first lesson the subject of the visible Church and its manifestation before men, we take up the study of the Church functioning as a body. For an illustration or type of

this, the writer has used the simple and plain object lesson of the physical body and its various organs and members as they all operate together in the activities and functions of living. Since the human body is such a marvellous miracle, a creation by a personal and living God, it can easily be discerned how that it can be the ideal type of what the writer is speaking of, namely the Church of God as a living and visible organism before men. Psa. 139:14 speaks about us being fearfully and wonderfully made, and the human body is a marvel of design, function, beauty, symmetry, and cooperative activity. So is the Church of God, a people so united by the love and the Spirit of God, operating without man-made machinery or craft.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the Church likened unto in our lesson today?
2. Name some of the members of the human body and compare their functions with each other.
3. How are God's children members one of another?
4. Does any man really stand alone?
5. For the body of Christ to really work, what must be the means for each individual member to operate?
6. Who gives the gifts in the body of Christ?
7. Who sets the members in the body and according to whose pleasure are they placed?
8. Is it possible for a member of the body of Christ to feel inferior to another member?
9. Is there any temptation for one member to feel better than or to lightly esteem his brother?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God's plan is for His saints to live in the world before the sons of men and operate as a unit of responsibility and accomplishment in plain view. Christ is the foundation of the Church and the Head. He directs all the operations of the Church, He being the very life and pre-eminence of His people. He wills that His Church shine forth as an organization of people, directed and inspired and moved by the leadings and promptings of the Holy Spirit that He pours out upon them. The illustration of the body is a very clear expression of what God has in mind. But to get human beings, free-will creatures, to line up to the performance of such an operation is quite an accomplishment. But it can be done, and is being done in every truly born again, Spirit-led member of His body. Paul, in

Eph. 4:15 and 16 speaks about us growing up into Christ, the Head, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted [held together] by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Every redeemed soul has something to supply for the edification and welfare of all the other members of the body of Christ. Some may seem small and unimportant, but they have a function that is vital to the success, convenience, and smoothness of the operation and actions of the body. It is for every child of God to be able to find his place in the body and to faithfully fill that place until God calls him to that world above.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Church of God is a living, dynamic, progressive, divinely unctioned organization. Our lesson does not liken the Church unto an inanimate object, but to a body which has life in it. We realize that there are onslaughts against the Church by the Devil and it would seem at times that there are situations in which a bushel is put over the light of some parts of the Church, but because it is a living institution, it has the ability to overcome attacks, repair itself of damage and continue to shine resplendant. In Ephesians 2:21, the Apostle Paul compares the Church to a building, which would be an inanimate object, but upon closer scrutiny we find that this building is composed of living stones. (1 Peter 2:5).

It means much to be content with the place where God has placed us in the body. We should not desire someone else's position, but we should realize that every office is of great importance. The members do not have time to war amongst themselves, for there is a greater warfare to be waged.

Human organizations have been fighting for that which God instituted in the inception of the Church: the equality of all members. The love that God has put in the hearts of His people transcends all ethnic, social and age barriers.

The greatness of America's beginning is attributed to the fact that it was a melting pot of many nationalities all of which were dedicated to hard work. There were many hardships and problems, but their true grit overcame them and made our nation outstanding. The Church is composed of many backgrounds, all of which have been divinely quickened and brought together in unity to stand against a common foe.

The durability of the Holy Spirit dwelling in each member makes the Church superior to all man-made organizations.
—Wayne Murphey

—o—
January 10, 1988

THE GOVERNMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

Eph. 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

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

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

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

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

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Memory Verse: And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. Col. 1:18.

Central Thought: The Holy Trinity (God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) work together to govern, organize, and direct the functions and operations of the Church of God, working through each member of the body of the saints.

Word Definitions: "*Forbearing one another*": The Greek expression here is "to hold oneself up against, that is, put up with (one another)." *Endeavoring*: Trying, seeking, making a special effort, attempting. "*Measure of the gift of Christ*:" "Measure" here means a limited portion or degree, part of the whole. *Apostle*: One who is sent or commissioned as an ambassador of Christ with the gospel and the power and authority that goes with it, especially to plant truth into new areas. *Prophet*: A foreteller of future events inspired by the Holy Spirit. *Evangelist*: One who heralds or announces the good news of the gospel, a preacher. *Pastor*: The same as the word "shepherd": one who tends, oversees, supervises, and feeds the souls of men. "*Sleight of men*": their deception and trickery. *Preeminence*: The first in rank and influence.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For the first part of the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul dwelt much on what Christ has accomplished in His death, resurrection, and ascension. Here in chapter 4, he entreats us to strive to maintain this unity as a body that we might walk worthy of this vocation. Seeing that there is but one body and one Spirit and one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, how we should seek earnestly for grace and guidance that we will bear the real fruits of the rightful effect of all that the Lord has accomplished. God wants to effect in the earth a body of people who are united in holy love and true faith, who are led and governed by Him alone, working together for the great progress of the gospel. He quotes from Psalm 68:18, applying this to Christ who has ascended up to the right hand of God, freeing souls from the power of sin and also distributing His gifts to His disciples. The unity of the Spirit comes first, but we must have the unity of the faith also. We must agree and see eye to eye; then there is the unity of cooperation. We must work together harmoniously. This is all accomplished as each one is filled and led by the Holy Spirit. It can work thus, for God planned and purposed that it should.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the specific things we are to do in order to walk worthy of this great vocation of being the Church of the living God?
2. How much unity will there be if we do not strive for it and endeavor to keep it?
3. Why is unity so vital and indispensable for the success of the cause of God?
4. Who is the head of the Church?
5. What does being the head of the Church involve?
6. What are the principle gifts that Christ bestows upon men?
7. What is the purpose of Him giving these gifts?
8. What are the dangers that we are to look out for and avoid?
9. From whence is to come our nourishment and strength to function as a body?
10. What has been the downfall of so many religious organizations?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

In Isaiah 9:6, the prophecy declared that the government was to be upon Christ's shoulder. In John 16:13-15, Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit, when He is come, would guide us into all truth. Even things that the disciples were not able to grasp would be revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. He said that the Holy Spirit would not speak of Himself; but would speak whatsoever He shall hear. Jesus said, further, that the Holy Spirit would receive of His, and show it unto us. Then He said that what He has is of the Father. The Holy Spirit would take that and show it unto us. Oh, how wonderful! Christ has been exalted by the power of the Father to His own right hand in the heavenly places. From this glorious position Christ executes the government of the Church by means of the Holy Spirit. He can handle His work and His people very well in this way. He does not need man to assist Him in this operation. He uses meek and lowly vessels of humanity to convey His gospel and gifts of love to precious souls. But He will not use human wisdom and man-made systems to work through. There is human machinery that is being employed in professed Christian organizations today. It is a sly and cunning scheme of the devil to insert into churches and groups of people who take the name of Christ any kind of human organization, man-rule, or carnal devices. This has been the

downfall of so many congregations. It is a wonderful thing to have the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our midst to lead and inspire and direct us in the service of the Lord. We do not need programs, committees, or any other kind of pre-arranged schedules to carry on the work of the Lord. Each individual is responsible before God to be led and inspired by the Holy Spirit for service. The New Testament Church worked this way. The Holy Spirit led them all the way. May God help each one to see these things and have it fulfilled in their lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

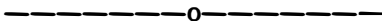
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We should be very glad that the government of the Church is on God's shoulder. We save ourselves much grief in not having the responsibility upon us. Ecclesiastes 8:9 recognizes a principle that has held true through history. "One man ruleth over another to his own hurt." Anytime a person decides to rule over someone else, he is setting himself up for much heartache and disappointment. Only God knows how to prevent these situations for He deals with the heart of man.

One outstanding benefit in following Christ is that He has all power in heaven and in earth. We may follow man who sympathizes and desires to help us, but Christ has the power to both understand and help us. No matter how well-intentioned man is, he cannot foresee enough of the future to keep us out of hard places. Only Christ can lead us beside the still waters. Following Christ assures us of liberty in Him. Man-rule is a cage of deception, but salvation brings about a deliverance of the soul and mind.

We are warned in our lesson about deceiving doctrines and then we are forthwith admonished to speak the truth in love. It is to the saving of our soul that we be able to recognize false doctrine and it is also of great importance how we uphold the truth in the face of it. One individual was among people who spoke a language that he did not understand. He told someone that although he did not understand the language, he could always tell who was in the wrong when the people had an argument because they were always the ones who got mad. If God is on our side, we never need to worry when the truth is put up beside false doctrine.

—Wayne Murphey



January 17, 1988

THE CHURCH SANCTIFIED AND FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

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

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

John 16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

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

John 17:14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Memory Verse: Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.
Heb. 13:12.

Central Thought: God promised it, Jesus shed His blood for it, and the Holy Ghost has been poured out, that every soul who accepts Christ as Saviour and is born again with His resurrection of life may be sanctified wholly and filled with the Holy Spirit in their hearts and lives.

Word Definition: *Sanctify:* To purify, make holy or sacred, to consecrate. It is very interesting to note that the words "holiness" and "sanctification" are translated from the same Greek word "hagiasmos" which means purification or the state of purity.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We want to study in this lesson the wonderful plan of God concerning His Church being a sanctified and Spirit-filled Church. In His final meeting with His disciples in the upper room where He ministered to them the Lord's Supper and washed their feet, Jesus foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit. By His atoning death and subsequent resurrection, Jesus was opening up the way for the Holy Spirit to come. He told them about the coming Comforter and described the work that He would do in their hearts and lives. Then in John 17, we have recorded the prayer that He sent heavenward on that fateful night. In this prayer He prayed that these disciples would be sanctified by God. It is true to reason and fact that this matter of receiving the Holy Spirit and being sanctified were one and the same thing. Despite what people say and dispute about it, sanctification and being filled with Holy Spirit are one and the same. It is the Holy Spirit that does the sanctifying. After Jesus disappeared in the clouds and was gone from their sight, and after beholding the two angels and hearing their glorious message that this same Jesus would come again, the disciples went back into the city of Jerusalem. Their hearts were filled with joy and anticipation of what was coming. Sometimes they were in the temple, and Acts 1 tells us that they went into an upper room. There were about 120 of them gathered there, continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication. Thus they tarried, preparing their hearts for the advent of that blessed Holy Spirit from heaven. They were ready for Him when He came down. That same Holy Spirit still yearns to take up His abode in the hearts of all the saved in Christ today. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who did Jesus say He would send to take His place when He went back to God?
2. What did Jesus say that the Holy Spirit would do?
3. What did Jesus pray for His disciples?
4. Instead of having His disciples taken out of the world, what did Jesus ask His Father to do?
5. What did the expression concerning the Holy Spirit "the promise of the Father" mean?
6. What must we do today in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Is it for us today?
7. Is the Holy Spirit given to the unsaved?
8. For the Church to be sanctified, what must the members be?
9. Can a person be truly successful and victorious in the Christian life without the Holy Spirit?
10. Can one know that he or she has the Holy Spirit?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The crying need in the Church today is for every member to be wholly sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit, and then for everyone who has the Holy Spirit to not quench the Spirit, but to follow and obey His every leading. It is the Holy Spirit that effects real and perfect unity in our midst. Without the Holy Spirit we can never make a success in the Christian way. The sin principle that is lodged in the human heart and nature from the fall of Adam must be eradicated and destroyed. The Holy Spirit is the only power that can effectively purge our hearts from that inward foe. It is God's plan to have a sanctified Church, but the Church cannot be sanctified unless the members in the Church are sanctified. Jesus prayed that we be sanctified. He wants us to be kept from the evils of this old wicked world. With the Holy Spirit abiding and functioning in our hearts supremely, we can be kept from the evils of this world. Every person who is saved by coming to the Lord and calling upon His name and believing in Christ needs to begin right away to make progress to go on unto perfection and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. You need to start preparing your heart by prayer, consecration, and faith to be able to receive the Holy Spirit. Present your body a living sacrifice unto God. Put your whole life, self, and all upon the altar in a consecration of your entire being unto God. "When your soul the perfect price hath paid, God will send the

holy fire!" He wants to be poured out upon you. The greatest blessing you have ever had will be there when you are sanctified. Let us be wise and not neglect this all-important blessing for our souls.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The plan of God was so designed that it would require the Word and the Spirit, both, in order for the plan to be complete. Jesus gave His life; it was not taken from Him against His will. He could have lived on and on, for He did nothing worthy of death. But if He had stayed, He could not possibly have reached every soul upon the earth. By His becoming the Word, it put Him in a form that could reach every man that cometh into the world. When the Word enters a man's heart, and sheds light upon his pathway, that supplies material that the Spirit can use to accomplish His work. When Jesus had finished the work He was sent to do, i. e., planted the living Word in the hearts of men, He was then free to return to His heavenly Father who had sent Him. His return to the Father was the signal to the Holy Spirit that the Word was planted, and now the work of the Spirit must begin. As men embraced the Word and received the presence of the Spirit, they went forth with a zeal and a burden to spread the good news to others. As others heard the Word taught, the truth was planted in their hearts, and that gave them opening for the Holy Spirit to deal with more souls. It is this process that sent the Apostles and early Christians on missionary journeys. Anyone who contacts the truth and embraces its teaching and receives the Holy Spirit is anxious for others to hear and be saved, too. This is what spread the Word throughout the whole earth. The Holy Spirit is a blessing within Himself, so much that the plan of salvation is not complete without Him. Likewise, the plan is incomplete without the Word. God designed that by His Word and by His Spirit men should enter into the fullness of His Grace, and they are essential to each other. The Word without the Spirit is dead. The Spirit without the Word has no direction. Put them together, rightly divided, and you have the plan of salvation, perfect, complete, present, and available to whosoever is willing to open his heart's door and receive it.

—C. W. Wilson
(Written in 1972)

January 24, 1988

THE CHURCH OF GOD AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST

2 Cor. 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Eph. 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

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.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

Rev. 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

Rev. 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

1 Cor. 6:16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

Memory Verse: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Rom. 7:4.

Central Thought: The Church is in relationship to Jesus Christ just as a wife is in relationship to her husband. He is the Lover of our souls, and we are united to Him in one Spirit,

fulfilling His gracious law as the highest fulfillment of our hearts.

Word Definitions: "*Saviour of the body*": Deliverer, healer, preserver, protector, Redeemer. *Wrinkle*: This is referring to the wrinkles on the face which is the consequence of the aging process. The Church of God as a chaste virgin, young forever in spirit, has no wrinkles of age. *Blemish*: A flaw, blot, an imperfection. "*Nourisheth and cherisheth it*": Christ feeds and warms, broods, cares for, and fosters His Church. *Arrayed*: Dressed or clothed.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have already had in a recent lesson from prophecy about the state of the Church with Christ, having her land called Beulah, with her Maker as her husband, and her God rejoicing over her as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. When John the Baptist was questioned by his disciples about Jesus taking over, he replied to them, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." John 3:29. Paul likened those who had turned to Christ as a pure young woman being espoused to one husband. The beautiful descriptive language that he uses in the Ephesian letter falls not short of the reality of the union of Jesus Christ and those who are joined to Him in one Spirit. The closest tie in mortal man is that of husband and wife. A man to his work, to his flock, to his possessions, and even to his life does not come up to the close communion that a true, upright, and godly man shares with a pure and virtuous wife. God chose that relation to be one of the greatest aspects descriptive of that between His Son and the souls of all who unite themselves with Him. There is the meeting, the proposal, the engagement, and finally comes the marriage. What a blessed experience to be a part of the Bride of Jesus Christ! —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are we espoused to Christ as?
2. Is Christ jealous over His bride?
3. What does Christ do as the Saviour of the souls of men?
4. Why is the Church subject unto Christ?
5. How did Christ show His love for the Church?

6. How was the Church to be sanctified and cleansed to be a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or blemish?
7. How close is the Church to Christ?
8. What garments does the Church wear in being presented to Christ?
9. What does the fine linen represent?
10. How are we joined unto Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus Christ came from heaven to procure for Himself a holy bride. He went to the cross of Calvary and died, shedding His blood as an atonement for the sin of the world, so that we might be able to flee the ways of the world and be washed heavenly pure. He sought to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. It means much today to be a part of the spotless bride of Christ. From depths that were sinful Christ sought His bride. But He made a sacrifice of Himself upon the altar of God to purchase and redeem us from the power of sin and Satan, so that we can be sanctified and cleansed from all sin and evil. He paid such a great price for this. Now in order for us to receive His love and grace, we must be willing to give up our ways and thoughts, and return to Him and walk in His way and be taught of Him in His holiness and truth. The Bride of Christ must not be tainted with sin or this wicked world. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1:27. 2 Pet. 3:14 says, Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things [a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness], be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. 2 Tim. 2:19 says, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Christ gave His life to secure for Himself a blameless and holy Church. That is the only Church that He will own and bless. Any church or individual that allows sin to have a place in their life will not stand in the day of judgment. This is not only a joyful and beautiful lesson, but it is a serious one. Let us be faithful to our blessed husband and live that holy life that is well-pleasing in His sight.

—Leslie C. Busbee

1st ed. 1919

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christ is coming back for a bride that is beautiful. The redeeming factor for mankind is that it is not an outward beauty that He is interested in, but an inward beauty. Christ is looking for people who have a kind and benevolent attitude and who are entirely devoted to Him. He wants people who do not grumble and complain and who are not always down on life.

"Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." (Malachi 4:2). Just as the calf which has been well cared for all winter goes out into the spring-clothed fields and kicks up his heels, so the child of God is well-fed on the Word of God and enjoys life. When you gaze upon the countenance of the world, you see faces that reflect a careworn life, but how refreshing it is to see the face of the child of God whose face radiates the joy that comes from a life with God. As the calf of the stall is fed, housed and well-attended, so Christ is looking for a bride that has been well-fed, comfortably housed and properly groomed by His Father.

As the bride of Christ we have a bright future. We have all of eternity to look forward to. Marriage to Christ is an enduring relationship. It is unlike many marriages seen today which last but a short time. There is a quote that says, "Marriage is a romance in which the hero dies in the first chapter." The bride of Christ will never be dissatisfied with Him but shall worship at His feet unendingly.

—Wayne Murphey

THE GATES OF PEARL

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

About two years later, when Willie Holt was fourteen, the regiment was bivouacking some miles from the camp. One morning an act of grave indiscipline was reported to me. On investigation, the rascally act was traced to the men in the very tent where Willie Holt was billeted, two of them being the

worst characters in the regiment. The whole lot were instantly put under arrest, and tried by court martial, when enough evidence was produced that one of the prisoners was guilty of the crime. None would own up to being the guilty one; and at last I spoke.

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

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

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

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

Bravely he stood, with back bare, as one—two—three strokes descended. At the fourth a faint moan escaped from his lips, and ere the fifth fell, a hoarse cry burst from the group of prisoners who had been forced to witness the scene, and with one bound, Jim Sykes, the black sheep of the regiment, seized the cat, as with choking, gasping utterance he shouted, "Stop it, Colonel! Stop it, and tie me up instead. He didn't do it; I did!" and with convulsed and anguished face he swung his arms around the boy.

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

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

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

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

I felt stirred. I had heard such things once—long ago. Thoughts of the mother I had idolized came floating back out of the dead past, and the words seemed a faint echo of hers. How long I stood there I know not, but I was roused by a hoarse cry from the man, and then I saw that the boy had fallen back on his pillows, faint. A few drops of cordial revived

him. He opened his eyes, but they were dim, almost sightless. "Sing to me, Mother," he whispered, "'The Gates of Pearl.'—I am so tired."

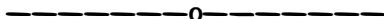
Curious, in a flash, the words came back to me; I had heard them often in that shadowy past, and I found myself repeating them softly to the dying boy:

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

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

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"
Sykes came, I came; will you come?

—General Hardress



January 31, 1988

THE PEACE AND UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Psa. 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

John 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Col. 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if

any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Memory Verse: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal. 3:28.

Central Thought: There is but *one* Church of God, and that Church is *one*. The members are united in heart, soul, and mind by the love of Christ and the one Spirit that dwells in each heart. God is not the author of confusion and is certainly not pleased with the divisions that Satan and men have produced in the church realms.

Word Definitions: "*Dew of Hermon*": Clarke gives a report that this dew on the mountains of Hermon, north of Israel, is very copious. It is reported that "with this dew, even in dry weather, their tents were as wet as if it had rained the whole night." This dew and anointing oil upon Aaron is a type of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church, bringing unity and peace, and the blessing of life for evermore. "*Bowels of mercies*": Deep and tender feelings of love and mercy for one another. *Charity*: Divine love. *Bond of perfectness*: Joint tie or uniting principle of completeness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have unity in prophecy, Christ praying to God for the unity of His Church, unity in reality and action in the New Testament Church, unity commanded and enjoined by the Apostle Paul, and the vital ingredients that are needed to effect a perfect unity among believers. The world has union, but only the true saints of God have unity. Unity comes from above, while discord and strife come from beneath. Means for unity is provided, unity is commanded, unity is held up as wonderful and beneficial, and unity is indispensable and vital. Although Jesus said that He came not to bring peace on earth, but division and a sword, He did not refer to division among the members of His body. He spoke rather of the division between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. Christ died to purchase a united Church. He got what He prayed for. He got what He died for. The New Testament Church under fire for their faith in Jesus lifted up their hearts to God as one man in prayer. The Holy

Spirit fell on them and the place was shaken where they met. They were of one heart and one soul. This is God's plan and purpose for the Church today. It should be the goal of every child of God to promote oneness and harmony in the Body of Christ.
—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is unity likened unto in the Psalm?
2. Where has the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore?
3. What was the main thing that Jesus was praying for in John 17?
4. How much unity did Jesus pray for us to be in?
5. What was the condition of the early morning Church with regard to unity?
6. How much unity did the Apostle Paul command us to be in?
7. What are we to put on as the elect of God in order to have unity in our midst?
8. Will God accept division in His Church?
9. What can I do in order to promote unity in my congregation?
10. Would there be unity in my home or congregation if everyone there were just like me?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Jesus gave His all to purchase for Himself a spotless and holy bride. One of the vital beauties of His bride is the unity of all her members. It is one of the climaxing effects of the New Testament plan of salvation to produce a people who are united in divine love and Holy Spirit anointing, who can live together, get along well together, and love one another. We must admit that nominal Christianity has missed the mark sadly in this respect. The many divisions and sects of the professed Christian world are sanctioned, condoned, and even justified and encouraged in our world today. They sing a song: "You go to your church, and I'll go to mine, but we'll walk along together." Another song I heard says, "You go your way and I'll go mine, but we'll get to heaven at the very same time." We know that according to the Scriptures and the plan of God that this kind of thinking is false and erroneous. Jesus prayed to God that all of His children would be sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. This will make it possible for His

children to really be one. However, it is not altogether an automatic thing to be one. There is a basic factor for unity in every true child of God, and that is the one Spirit that dwells in all. But there are some practical measures to be met in order for unity to prevail with success. We must put on humility, longsuffering, tenderness of heart and mind, patience, and above all, the love of God, which is the bond of perfectness. The love of God hides a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), which means that we will not look at our brother's faults until we can know and understand how to help that one instead of condemning or casting him away. Unity is something that we all have to work at every day, bearing and forbearing, forgiving and giving. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." John 13:35.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Unity is more than an outward affiliation. It is a binding together of hearts. Where there is true unity we can rejoice with them that rejoice and weep with them that weep. (Romans 12:15). When the West was being settled and the pioneers had the elements of nature and undesirable people to contend with the saying was coined, "A sorrow shared is half a sorrow, a joy shared is double joy." You will find that those who have true unity of the Spirit will do all they can to extend a helping hand to others. It may be in small ways, but the spirit of help will be manifested. One tells of a small boy who had to walk home in the dark. All the way home he whistled a tune. When someone inquired about why he was whistling he replied, "I thought if there was any other little boy in the dark he would like to hear me whistling."

The congregation which has unity is not necessarily without trouble. We are all human and come from different backgrounds which in itself can cause disagreement. Unity is brought about by people who are able to admonish one another. It entails more than stating your opinion or telling someone off. A prerequisite to this ability is to be full of goodness and knowledge. (Romans 15:14). Knowledge means more than just having an understanding of how one should dress, talk, act, etc., but it means to be filled with the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:19). To be filled with the fullness of God, we need to find out what God consists of. We are plainly told that God is love. (I John 4:8). When a brother approaches another brother concerning a misunderstanding, and both parties are filled with a

God-given love, there cannot help but be a conversation take place in which unity is spawned. —Wayne Murphey

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February 7, 1988

THE HIGH AND HOLY PLANE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Eph. 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-with he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Col. 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the arth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Rom. 6:21 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.

Memory Verse: The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. Prov. 15:24.

Central Thought: The soul united with Christ in the born-again experience and being sanctified by the Holy Spirit is lifted up by the fulness of His grace to a plane of life and conversation in the heights of holiness, free from the sin and defilement of this world.

Word Definitions: *Quicken:* Revitalize or make alive from the dead. *Heavenly places:* The realm of spiritual life and reality.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul, in this epistle to the Ephesians, spoke in the first chapter concerning his burden for the brethren there that they might be enlightened concerning Christ, His eternal riches, and the hope of His calling. He also wanted them to comprehend the greatness of the power of God which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, putting all things under His feet, and making Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body. It is very important for every soul to have a personal revelation of the Holy Spirit concerning these things. This is important because realizing the high and holy plane of Christ helps to lift our vision to the heavenly places that Christ calls us to. It is not enough to be persuaded of Christ, but we must comprehend His glorious state and the plane of life that He wants to lift us up to. When we were without Christ we were degraded by the devil in a realm of fleshly desires and earthly involvements that separated us from God. It was the great love of God that beheld with pity our dying souls in our lost estate and did something effective about it. He sent Jesus from heaven to come down into this cold, dark world of sin to rescue us from the low plane of degradation we were in. He humbled Himself to the awful death of the cross and arose from the tomb that we might be quickened, and then ascended up on high that we might be lifted up into the heavenly realm with Him. This being raised up to sit with Jesus in the heavenly places is not a future ride to glory after this life. It is NOW! We can NOW be raised up together (with one heart and one soul) into a spiritual realm of worship, love, purity, faithfulness, humility, holiness, and righteousness with Him! And our daily lives can reflect this

holy plane of fellowship with Christ through holy and righteous deeds and conversation.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was our state without Christ?
2. Whose rule did we walk according to?
3. What kind of spirit does the unsaved soul have?
4. Where is the conversation of the unsaved?
5. What did we fulfill before we were regenerated? What kind of nature did we have?
6. What caused God to want to send us life and hope?
7. What happens when a sin-sick soul lays hold on Christ for salvation?
8. Where does He lift us up to?
9. What kind of life will a person live who has been raised up to the heavenly places with Christ?
10. What kind of fruit will he or she bear, and what will be the end?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Salvation is a perfect plan. We are found lost and undone, living in a world of fleshly pleasures and desires under the bondage of the devil. Our life is made up of fleshly thrills and earthly activity. Our end is eternal damnation. We need to be made alive in spiritual things, in heart and soul. Christ achieved this for us when He died on the cross and was resurrected by the Father. Soul-quickening life was made available for us. When we come to Jesus in true repentance and faith, leaving the world and its follies behind, and become willing and determined to follow the Saviour, life from above comes into our soul. Our thoughts and desires become centered on Him. We begin a new life of following Jesus. We are willing to take up our cross and go all the way with Him. Then we begin to consecrate our lives to God and die to all but Him, and seeking earnestly to be sanctified and filled with the Spirit we are rewarded with the precious gift of God, the Holy Spirit. Oh, how our desires and our affections are exalted to a supreme love for God! We are lifted up above the sin and evil, pride and strife of the world around us to a realm of victory and peace. We are given power to overcome temptation and to lead a respectable, honest, upright, holy, and godly life right here in this present world. We are interested in the work of God and the welfare of our soul and the souls of others. We are

in heavenly places with Christ, sitting there with complete rest and trust in Him. We sin no more, for our hearts are purified from every trace of sin. We are able to walk this holy plane with Jesus in His perfect holiness. We can do this right here in this present world before our fellow man. Thus we can be lights for Him, a beacon light shining out from the holy hill of Zion.

—Leslie C. Busbee

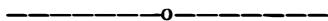
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Romans 6:21, 22.

One minister relates this happening. “Walking in the country I went into a barn where I found a thresher at his work. I addressed him in the words of Solomon: “In all labor there is profit.” Leaning upon his flail, with much energy he answered, “Sir, that is the truth, but there is one exception to it. I labored long in the service of sin, but I have got no profit by my labor.” “Then you know something of the Apostle’s meaning when he asked, ‘What fruit,’ etc.” “Thank God,” said he, “I do; and I also know that even ‘being made free from sin,’ etc.” How valuable this simple faith in the Word of God! And true is the saying of a deceased writer, ‘that piety found in a barn is better than the most splendid pleasures of a palace.’ ”

Anyone who lives a pure and holy life is in God’s Church. Conversely, it is only in God’s Church that you find this spiritual quickening. Many churches fail to provide what man is seeking. I was recently in a bookstore in the religious section. Approximately half of it was designated as “New Age Movement.” There are many people who are turning to the New Age Movement and other Eastern cults because they stress an inner power. Let us live a holy life so that others will be attracted to the gospel.

—Wayne Murphey



February 14, 1988

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

2 Cor. 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Rom. 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

2 Cor. 9:8 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:

S. of Sol. 6:10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

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

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

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

1 Cor. 15:54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse: To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Rev. 3:21.

Central Thought: The grace and power of Jesus Christ enables us to live a victorious, happy, and triumphant life over sin, discouragement, ungodly influences, worldly attractions, Satan's power, and any other element that is contrary to godliness and truth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul was a man who had found victory and triumph in Christ. From a life of frustration under the law and the spirit of unbelief, he had been marshalled with the believers in Christ to fight the great fight of faith in the army of the Lord. And he had experienced the joy that every true child of God can have, and that is victory and success in living for Jesus. All through his writings is found the note of victory. This triumphant experience was not just for Paul. It is for all of us who are believers in Christ and children of God. The Church of God is a triumphant Church. Did not our Lord Himself declare in Matt. 16:18, that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church? Jesus conquered the devil and his powers in His death and resurrection. This victory He shares with us. The Apostle John concurred with Paul in his declarations of victory in Christ. How blessed to have victory over all the powers of the enemy! By trusting and believing and steadfastly following Christ's Word we can have ultimate success and victory in every scene of life. And when this short life is finished and we have faithfully followed Him here, there is a great and final victory that we will share with Him. Yes, the grave will not have the victory to house our body forever. Christ removed the sting of death and robbed the grave of its victory. The victory is given to us as we soar away to meet the Lord in the air on that last great, triumphant day.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Can we triumph in times when people reject us and our message of truth? How?
2. Can you point to one Scripture in our lesson that declares that victory is for us now?
3. Can we really expect tribulation and distress in this life?
4. What does the Scripture say that we are accounted as?

5. What should be our attitude concerning these things?
6. What does the grace of God really do for us?
7. Who is it that is terrible as an army with banners? What does her banner show?
8. How can we quench all the fiery darts of the wicked?
9. What is the victory that overcometh the world?
10. What do we need to overcome in death and the grave?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

“Victory, victory, victory is heard on every hand!” We can have victory in Christ over all sin. Sin shall not have dominion over us as we follow Christ. He has cleansed our hearts not only from the consequence and punishment of committed sins, but from the very principle and root of sin, also. We do not need to be under the domination and rule of Satan anymore. We can rise up in the name of the Lord against Satan and all of his forces. Back in the days of World War II when Hitler and his armies had crushed almost all of the smaller European countries, for a time all resistance and effort to fight back was gone. The Nazi hordes with their lightning warfare had stunned the conquered into fear and suppressed humiliation. But someone got the idea of “V for victory” and began to set it up in various ways before people’s minds. The Germans quickly saw what such would do and they began to set up the letter “V” for something else, but they were too late. It had already taken hold. The crushed people began to rally against the tyranny and ultimately overthrew it. Satan today has persuaded many people that they are defeated, that they cannot live for God, that they cannot live free from sin, and that they cannot live a real, victorious life for Jesus. Such are the lies of Satan, and as long as people believe the lies of the devil they will continue as they are: defeated and slaves of tyranny. The message of the Church of God is a message of victory for those under the tyranny of the devil. You can have the victory if you count it so! Christ’s Church is a triumphant Church. God wants you and me to have the victory. Let us count it so and never draw back. Let us proclaim it in our testimonies, sermons, and most of all, in our lives. Victory and triumph are for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise the Lord!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“O death, where is thy sting?” Charles Spurgeon, a well-known evangelist from the 1800’s, commenting upon this verse

said that when Christ arose from the grave He went to Satan, took his quiver and dumped out all of his darts. He then took the darts and broke them in two, gave Satan back the part that had the feathered end but kept the barbed end. "The sting of death is sin." Christ has made a way that we can live triumphant over sin. We all must still die. Although no one looks forward to passing through this valley, it does not hold a terror for us because on the other side we can stand before God without spot or wrinkle.

When an army goes to war and wins, there is most always a celebration. Heaven will be an eternity of celebration of victories won over Satan. There are some denominations who teach that we cannot live above sin. If ones of this persuasion make it to heaven, I wonder what they will have to celebrate? It would seem that they would have to stand with their hands folded and their heads bowed.

Returning from battle, Henry IV sighted a French nobleman named Crillon standing by the road. "Go hang yourself, Crillon!" the king exclaimed. "We had a great victory at Arques, and you were not there." If we are not a part of the battle and don't have a taste of victory in this life, then heaven would certainly be dimmed for us.

—Wayne Murphey

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JOHN THREE SIXTEEN

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

As he stood there waiting, shivering and cold, a hand was suddenly laid on his shoulder. It was very dark. He could see a tall form standing by him, and he trembled with fear, but a kindly voice said, "Boy, what are you doing here at this time of night? Such as you have no business in the streets at so late an hour. "Go home, go to bed." "I have no home, and no bed to go to." "That's very sad, poor fellow! Would you go to a home and to bed if I provided one?" "I surely would!" replied the boy. "Well, in such a street, and at such a number (indicating a place) you will find a bed." Before he could add more, the lad had started off. "Stop!" said the voice. "How are you going to get in? You need a pass. No one can go in there without a pass. Here is one for you. Can you read?" "No, sir."

"Well, remember that the pass is 'John 3:16.' Don't forget, or they won't let you in. 'John 3:16.' There, my lad, that's something that will help you and do you good."

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

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

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

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

After his injuries had been attended to he was carried into the accident ward. In a short time his sufferings brought on fever and delirium. Then was heard, in ringing tones, and oft repeated, "JOHN THREE SIXTEEN!" It was to do me good, and so it has!

These persistent cries aroused the other patients. Testaments were pulled out to see to what he pointed. What could he mean? and here one and then another read the precious words: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Luther called this verse, "The miniature Bible." When those poor sick folk had read the tender words and heard the injured lad's unconscious comment, "It was to do me good, and so it has!" the spirit stirred

within them, and God used that text then and there to the conversion of souls. The sovereign power of God the Holy Spirit used this one text from the lips of a poor boy in that hospital ward, and souls were saved from sin and death and brought into the light and liberty of the gospel.

After a time of rest and care, consciousness returned, and the poor little fellow gazed around him. How vast it looked, and how quiet it was! Where was he? Presently a voice from the next bed said, "JOHN THREE SIXTEEN and how are you today?" "Why, how do you know my new name?" "Know it! You've never ceased with your JOHN THREE SIXTEEN, and I for one say, 'Blessed John Three Sixteen!' " This sounded strange to the little lad's ears. To be called blessed! He for whom no one cared! "And don't you know where it comes from? It's from the Bible." "The Bible! What's that?" The poor little waif had never heard of a Bible—that blessed Book, God's Word to man. "Read it to me," he said, and as the words fell on his ear he muttered, "That's beautiful. It's all about love, and not a home for a night, but a home for always!" He soon learned the text, saying, "I've not only got a new name, but something to it!" This was indeed a joy.

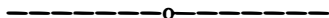
Days passed on, and there were changes in the ward, but our little friend never felt lonely. He fed on his text and its precious words, little thinking how soon he would have use for them. Yet another soul in that ward was to be won by his means, and now in simple conscious faith he was to be the agent of blessing. On a cot near him lay an old man who was very ill. Early one morning a nun came to his bedside and said, "Patrick, how is it with you today?" "Badly, badly," groaned the old man. "Has the priest been to see you?" asked the nun. "Oh, yes, but that makes me worse, for he has anointed me with holy oil, and I am marked for death! I am not fit to die. Oh, what shall I do?" "Patrick, it's very sad to see you so," she gently answered. "Look, here are these beads; they will help you to die happy." She placed them around the man's neck, and then wishing him good-bye, went out. But how could a string of beads ease a dying man facing eternity with his sins unforgiven? Poor Patrick groaned aloud. "God, have mercy," he cried. "I'm such a sinner. I'm not fit to die. Oh, what will become of me?"

Our little fellow heard his miserable words. "Poor old man," thinks he. "He wants a pass!" "Patrick," he called, "I know something that will do you good—quite sure—it has done me." "Tell me! Tell me quickly!" cried Patrick. "If only I

could find something to do me good." "Here it is! Now, listen. John 3:16. Are you listening?" "Yes, yes; go on." "John 3:16—'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' " Through these words Patrick found peace in his dying hour, and entered into everlasting bliss.

Our little friend recovered. For a long time John 3:16 was his one text. God blessed his simple faith. Friends placed him at school and now he is an earnest, hearty worker for the Master.

Will you put your name into "whosoever" of John 3:16 and become the happy possessor of everlasting life now, and endless bliss hereafter? Do it now, and you will praise God for John 3:16. —Selected



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February 21, 1968

THE LIVING FAITH OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Rom. 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Memory Verse: Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Habakkuk 2:4.

Central Thought: There is great danger in us having a head faith with no works to prove it. We are to exercise and

maintain living, active, working faith in God, backing up our profession of faith with a life of obedience to God's Word in every detail.

Word Definitions: *Faith:* The Hebrew word is "aymoon" from which the word "amen" comes. It means firmness, security, fidelity, truth, faithfulness. The Greek word for faith is "pistis" which means persuasion, credence, belief, trust.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We feel greatly inspired to set forth this lesson of living faith. We have made our main text our Memory Verse and we certainly hope that everyone will memorize this Scripture. Habakkuk said in the context of this Scripture that he set himself upon his tower to see what the Lord would say. The Lord answered him to write the vision plainly so that "he may run that readeth it." We are to run the race of faith with patience, looking unto Jesus who is the author and finisher (beginning and end) of our faith. The Lord told Habakkuk to wait for the vision, and then spoke about the just living by his faith. The word "his" here indicates the personal individual faith that each one is responsible to maintain before God. The Apostle Paul quotes this in the Scriptures in Romans and Hebrews. "The just shall live by faith." This is one of the cornerstones of Christianity. The Old Testament saints were saved by faith as our Scripture in James reveals and also clearly expresses in Hebrews 11. Abraham was called of God to be the father of the faithful. The seed of Abraham is Christ and all who walk by the faith that is in Him. The ultimate test and proof of His faith was the offering of his son Isaac upon the altar in obedience to God's command. The account of Rahab's faith was mentioned also and the works that she performed in befriending the two spies from Israel in Jericho. This woman was persuaded of the God of Israel and this is what really moved her to do what she did. But in both of these cases referred to, it was their actions that perfected and proved their faith. For us to really believe in Christ today, we must have faith in action. A dead corpse may have all the form and features of a living man, but there is no life there. A dead faith may have form and features like faith, but it is not alive unless there is action put to it. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Paul say was revealed in the gospel?

2. Can faith be communicated and passed on to others?
3. What is the evidence of living faith?
4. What must we do to have more than just the belief that the devils have?
5. What gave life and perfection to the faith of Abraham?
6. Why was Abraham called the friend of God?
7. What did Rahab do that perfected her faith?
8. Is it possible to profess faith and at the same time deny it with our ways?
9. Will we ever be tempted to cast away our faith?
10. What happens to those who draw back?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

A servant whose master had died was asked by someone if he thought his master went to heaven. The servant replied, "No, he did not go to heaven!" When asked why he thought that, the servant explained, "When my master ever went somewhere or made a trip, he made preparations to go. My master made no preparations to go to heaven." This also reminds us of a person we heard of who was always talking about going to heaven and what a wonderful thing it would be to go there, but when it looked like he might be going, he did everything he could to keep from leaving. This amounts to a denial of the faith that he professed. What does it mean to live by faith today? If we really believe that Jesus is the Son of God and is in heaven pleading for us and is soon to come and take us to glory, we will not have our affections centered down here in this world. We will live carefully and prayerfully. We will seek to be pure and holy as He is. We will crucify the flesh and its inordinate lusts and desires and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. If we really believe that the Bible is true, we will seek to be obedient to its every precept and love its message with all of our heart. Faith works in every aspect of our lives. Faith that works by love is what avails with God. (Gal. 5:6). Oh, let us seek to live by faith, walk by faith, and continue to press forward and believe to the saving of our souls.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The just shall live by faith," is written once in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament. A thought often repeated surely must have some importance and demands our attention. There are many things which people

base their salvation on, but nothing will tide us over the sea of life and land us safely on heaven's shore except faith in Christ. Some people put great stock in their works. Unless their works are based on faith they will profit nothing. As our lesson verifies, faith must have works, but faith must come first. Others put much confidence in their profession of religion or their natural feelings that are sometimes greatly inspired, but there is nothing that can quicken a soul to life except faith.

When we realize our true position in life, it reveals to us why we must live by faith. Jesus likened us unto a child. A child is one who is greatly dependent upon a beneficiary. Children must be cared for. This drives a child of God to his knees to importune his heavenly Father. Like a servant, we need help with the responsibility that has been entrusted to us. We are pilgrims and strangers in this life and need a friend and divine guidance. We are warriors who are contending for a crown in which we need strength to fight the good fight of faith.

We need faith in every phase of life: joy, sorrow, wealth, poverty, strength, weakness and especially death.

—Wayne Murphey

February 28, 1988

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Gen. 49:10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

11 Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

12 His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Isa. 27:2 In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.

3 I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.

6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Memory Verse: For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. 1 Cor. 3:9.

Central Thought: The Church of God is a heavenly vine in Jesus Christ with each member being a branch that bears the fruits of righteousness and holiness before this lost and dying world. The heavenly Father is the keeper and He guards and cares for His vineyard every moment.

Word Definitions: *Shiloh:* Restgiver (Christ). *Gathering of the people:* Obedience of the people. *Red with wine:* Sparkling and brilliant (as stimulated by wine). The wine here is referring to the Holy Spirit that was upon Christ. *Teeth white with milk:* Because of the milk the teeth are healthy and white. This refers to the sincere milk of the Word. *Foal:* Colt, a type of Christ. Christ is bound unto His Church, the choice vine. *Purge:* Prune.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Before Jacob left this world he blessed his twelve sons. The blessing of Judah takes on special meaning and application because it is a clear prophecy of Christ, pointing to Shiloh, the giver of soul rest, unto whom the gathering, or the obedience, of the people would be. He speaks of the colt being bound unto the vine. This is pure spiritual language, pointing forward to Christ and His Church. The wine represents

the Holy Spirit. Having the Church so close to His great, loving heart, and for her eternal welfare's sake, He shed His precious blood through the power of the eternal Spirit of God. He plants the heavenly wine into the souls of men. Our Scripture in Isaiah is clearly pointing to the vine, the Church. It was to spiritual Israel who would take root, blossom, bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. The purpose of the vine is to bring forth fruit. He said further in this 15th chapter of John in verse 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. . . ." Through His wondrous grace and the power of the Holy Spirit we can bring forth fruits of righteousness and of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance will abound in our lives. (Gal. 5:22, 23).

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the purpose and function of a vine?
2. What does fruit supply?
3. What kind of fruit does the Lord want us to bear?
4. What is the only way that we can really bear fruit for God?
5. What happens to a branch that gets severed from the vine?
6. What can we do apart from Christ?
7. What does a branch draw from the vine? What do we receive from Christ in abiding in Him?
8. What is our connection to Christ made up of?
9. Why is pruning beneficial and necessary?
10. Why does God so desire that we bear fruit?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The Church of God is the vine that Christ planted from heaven. Its roots hold fast to the heavenly places and draw strength and nourishment to bring forth fruit before men. Christ has ascended on high, led captivity captive, and has given gifts to men. From His position at the right hand of God He administers His grace and Holy Spirit power. As we abide, or continue, in Him, we receive grace to live and labor for His cause and the souls of men. He gives us increase and souls for our hire. We must abide in Him. Without Him we can do nothing of any spiritual or eternal value. We do not need to fret about whether we will be a blessing to souls. Just abide in

Christ and draw from Him, in devoted worship and prayer, inspiration and holy anointing, and there will be fruit brought forth. From the union of a husband and wife in holy marriage comes fruit and offspring. From the union of Christ being bound in love and faith to His Church comes fruit and increase, too. We are gathered together unto Him. He is the center of our lives. We cling to Him by love and devotion. We follow His leadings wheresoever they may be. The heavenly Father is constantly attending to the care, provision, and success of this great project. He loves the souls of men and stands ready to assist them in the vocation that He has called them to. He is the ever-present and ever-faithful Husbandman. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He keeps a faithful watch on our souls. Only through His grace and being attached with faith and holy love to His Son can we ever hope to be successful and fruitful in the Christian life. —Leslie C. Busbee

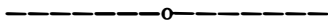
FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” John 15:1. “This is a wonderful vine. It grew up at first like a root out of dry ground, with no form nor comeliness. The soil in which it was planted seemed too poor to produce anything good. But its origin was heavenly, and it grew into luxuriant beauty. By-and-by it seemed that men in their rage had altogether destroyed this Vine which had in it so much blessing for the earth; however, it was not destroyed, but was only lifted away from earth and transplanted to heaven. There in the garden of God its roots were fixed, and the Vine itself dropped down to earth again and began to send out branches in all directions. Every poor, little, human life which attaches itself to this Vine is grafted on it and becomes a branch in it, drawing life from the Vine’s fulness, and sharing its fruitfulness.

“These branches are not left to grow wild and untended, but have wise and skilful care. It ought to be a great comfort to us to know that as branches we are under the culture of a husbandman who is none other than our heavenly Father. We are very sure that His care will be both wise and tender. If an ignorant, inexperienced, unskillful man were to enter a beautiful vineyard and begin cutting away at the vines he would soon destroy them. He does not know what he ought to prune off, or what he ought to leave on the vines. But if the man who comes to tend the vineyard understands vines, and has

had long experience and is skillful, there in no danger that he will do harm in his pruning. By-and-by we shall see increased fruitfulness as the result of his unsparing work."

—Taken from, *Come Ye Apart*.



March 6, 1988

THE BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Eph. 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Rom. 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Eph. 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your

mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

Memory Verse: So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him. Psa. 45:11.

Central Thought: Adorned with the beautiful traits of Jesus lived out in our daily lives in a practical way, we can be beautiful not only to Christ, but people around us will see the beauties of holiness and will confess that God is in us of a truth.

Word Definitions: "*As becometh saints*": Being suitable, proper, fit, or right for the profession of being a saint. *Convenient*: Proper or suitable. *Jesting*: Joking. *Without dissimulation*: Sincere, without pretense or hypocrisy. *Conceits*: Self-esteem.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We draw from Paul's writing to the churches some wise counsels and entreaties aimed at bringing out the real beauty of the Christian life. This beauty is an inward beauty, first pleasurable and desirable to Christ and God. Love, humility, purity, and praise are inward traits of beauty that God desires to see in His creation. Just as Christ lived this beautiful life and loved us, so are we to walk in that same love to one another and to our fellow man. It is not the doctrine of the saints that makes them beautiful. It is the spirit and the attitude of their hearts that is reflected in their everyday lives. Facing up to reality, we must acknowledge that the real beauty of a person is not in their outward shape or features. It is that inward beauty of the soul that shines out even through homely features that makes a person really beautiful. God would have our daily conduct to be consistent with the high profession that we profess as His children. When we live up to our profession it will have its effect on people. A meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. Christ paid the price to have a glorious and beautiful Church. Just as a man who loves the wife of his choice and admires her beauty and charm, even so Christ looks upon the beautiful Church of God in all of her holiness and purity and humility and really admires and loves her. Most of us acquired traits and dispositions in sin that are very unsightly and ugly in God's sight and in our fellow man's also. But, thank the Lord, He will beautify us with His salvation, and we can reflect His beauty to our fellow creatures of earth. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your idea of a "dear" child?
2. How does walking in the same love that Christ had for us affect our relationship with each other?
3. Why is fornication and uncleanness and covetousness unbecoming to the profession of a saint?
4. What is more proper for a saint than jesting and foolish talking?
5. Survey the enjoined fruits listed in Romans 12. Are they not beautiful?
6. Is it possible for us to have these things literally fulfilled in our lives?
7. Are they the fruits of the general run of our society today?
8. What kind of an affect does a changed life for God have upon the beholders?
9. Must these beauties fade with age?
10. Is it wrong to desire to be beautiful in God's sight?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Only the Christian life is truly beautiful. All other beauty is vain. It will fade and change with time. The inward beauty of the Church is everlasting. It remains when natural beauty fades and is gone. It is the desire of a wife who truly loves her husband to be beautiful in His sight. When John saw the Church as the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven in Rev. 21:2, he said that she was prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. This means that she had all the costly jewels of His grace upon her life. This is the desire of all who love and serve the Lord. We want to be beautiful in our gracious Lord's sight. God hates pride, jealousy, selfishness, covetousness, envy, hatred, and all the other things listed in the Word of God that are condemned. He wants these things erased from our lives. He has something so much better to put in their place: traits and characteristics that are truly beautiful. The holy and righteous life of a saint of God is beyond the measure of worth that can be expressed. Man may be able to make things beautiful in a carnal and material sense, but the real values of the soul can only be obtained by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another is surely a beautiful trait to be seen in the lives of God's people. It is so noticeable. This eliminates strife and trying to outdo one another. Let us allow the beauty of the Lord God to be upon us

in our every day conduct. Thus we will be desirable to Him and beautiful to those who are searching for the truth.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As a general rule we see what we want to see. If we look hard enough we will see those who profess and yet do not possess brotherly love, are impatient, are not fervent in spirit, recompense evil for evil or are slothful in business. We should not let this dim our view of the Church as God intends it to be or allow it to be an excuse for us to not let our lights shine in these areas.

Hugh Martin in *The Parables of the Gospel* tells the story of a rather rough, uncultured man who fell in love with a beautiful vase in a shop window. He bought the vase and put it on the mantel-piece in his room. There it became a kind of judgment on its surroundings. He had to clean up the room to make it worthy of the vase. The curtains looked dingy beside it. The old chair with the stuffing coming out of the seat would not do. The wallpaper and the paint needed renewing. Gradually the whole room was transformed. If you are among people whose lives do not portray the beauty of the Church of God, make sure that yours does. You may be gratified at the influence that it has upon others

—Wayne Murphey

THE WAYWARD SON

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

Who can estimate the sad consequences of having lived so long without an acknowledgment of God in a family, with no family altar from which the incense of devotion ascends morning and evening to heaven? Hitherto my friends had thus lived, and now they were converted. They found an obstacle in their way in their oldest son James. Unrestrained, he had

followed the promptings of his unrenewed nature, and now acted in direct opposition to the wishes of his parents. Being just at that point where thoughtless youth is most anxious to be freed even from the semblance of authority, he became the associate of the trifling and giddy, and it was with utmost difficulty that his father could induce him to attend family worship. Oh, how fervently did these young Christians pray for the conversion of their first-born son! But alas, his feet had begun the descent of the hill of vice, and with rapid strides he hurried on.

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

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

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

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

James wrote home very seldom during the first year, and when he did write, his letters were very trifling and unsatisfactory. But at length the prodigal had "come to himself" in a far country. Having much leisure, he was looking over the scant library of one of his comrades, when his eye fell upon a tract entitled, "Thou God Seest Me," which was laid between the leaves of a book. This sentence was the first arrow that pierced his soul, which was soon wounded by many others, for

he read and reread that tract until his accumulated sins seemed to crush him to the earth. Bitter were the tears he now shed, but he could shed them only in solitude. His comrades rallied, joked, and derided him, but his distress was too great to be dissipated. While in this state of mind he wrote home: "Oh, Mother, I would not listen to you when I might; now I would gladly listen to your counsels, but thousands of miles separate us. I often leave the camp, and behind a bush or tree cry to God to have mercy on me; but I am much in doubt whether He will have mercy on such a wretch as I am."

Many weeks passed ere the light shone upon his soul; but when the day came, it was bright and serene. His soul was filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost through believing. He became humble before God, and Jesus flooded his soul with forgiveness and peace. James is now free, and a comfort to his parents, having enlisted under Christ's banner and become a soldier of the cross.

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

—From *Sketches from Life*

March 13, 1988

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD

Matt. 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

2 Cor. 5:14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:

15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Phil. 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

Memory Verse: Let your light so shine before men, that

they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt. 5:16.

Central Thought: The mission of the Church of God is to preach the good tidings of the plan of salvation in Christ to all men everywhere and to let the light of Christ shine out to a lost and dying world.

Word Definitions: *Observe:* To guard, keep, or fulfill. *Constrain:* To compel. *Reconcile, reconciliation:* To be restored or reinstated.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We want to study and consider the mission and work that Christ left with His disciples to do through the unction of the Holy Spirit that was to come. Each one of the gospels tells about Christ's commission to His disciples, which commission is passed on down from one generation to the next. The mission has two parts, we might say. There is the phase of the heralds going forth announcing through the preaching of the gospel the good news of salvation and the grace of God to those who have never heard. Then there is the local Church or group of believers who live in the midst of the worldly society, letting their light shine and ministering to those around them. Both of these phases of the work of the Lord are important. Not everyone is called to go. Some have to stay at home and support those who do go. There are young converts and children to care for and feed. There are homes to be established and maintained. It is a cooperative effort between the two that will effectively accomplish this great mission of the Church. We are the lights in this world and it is our purpose to keep our lights shining out in good order to bear witness of the truth of our risen Saviour. The Church is concerned and burdened for souls. We want to see people find the treasure of salvation. We continue to abide in Christ, looking steadfastly to Him for guidance and grace to live and labor as He would have us to. We are in Christ's stead. We yearn to see people reconciled and brought back to God. We want to keep faithful at our post of duty until the end of the world and the coming of the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. As Christ went back to heaven, what did He commission His disciples to do?

2. What causes men and women to go forth with the gospel message to save the lost?
3. What has Christ committed unto us?
4. What are we to do in the midst of this crooked world?
5. What are we to constantly hold forth?
6. What should be our greatest desire and prayer to God for the people?
7. Is the work of the Lord preaching the gospel only?
8. What other duties and responsibilities does the Church have?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

As we think of our dear Lord meeting with His disciples before He was transported back to the realms of glory, we can feel the great concern and burden on His heart that caused Him to give to them the work and responsibility that He did. He told them to tarry and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would direct all operations. He was, no doubt, thinking of the future generations of people up through the pages of history and the course of time. What a blessed promise He gave when He said he would be with us to the end of the world! He, no doubt, knew that at the end of the world there would be great and sore times of trial and adversity for His Church. Doors and opportunities for the spread of the gospel would be closing as the last days darkened around the saints. He knew that they would be compassed about with forces of evil. But He encourages us to continue to abide in Him, let our light shine out before the world, and be patient for His coming reward. Every Christian should consecrate himself to the service of the Master. "What wilt thou have for me to do?" should be the prayer of everyone. There is a place in earth's harvest fields so wide for every sincere and faithful soul to work in for Jesus the crucified. Many go forth void of the true grace of God bringing error and who themselves are in the night. Much confusion will prevail, but God is overshadowing the work of His true saints and will direct them to the hungry souls who are seeking Him. Let us be steadfast like the Apostle Paul and not let anything move us from the work that Jesus calls us to do. If we will do our part with a sincere heart, our labor is not in vain for the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christ left His home in heaven, came to this wicked world, labored and gave His life that man might be saved from sin. He finished this mission and then appeared to His disciples and told them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." How happy it must have made Him feel to finally be able to absolve mankind of their sins. However, there is a sequel to this. He needs messengers to take the news of the gospel to the lost. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations. . ."

A young man of 18 or 20, a student in a university, took a walk one day with a professor who was commonly called the students' friend, such was his kindness to the young men whom it was his office to instruct.

While they were walking together, the professor was seeking to lead the conversation to grave subjects. They saw a pair of old shoes lying in the path, which they supposed belonged to a poor man who had nearly finished his day's work.

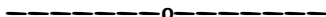
The young student turned to the professor, saying, "Let us play the man a trick. We will hide his shoes, and conceal ourselves behind these bushes, and watch to see his perplexity when he cannot find them." "My dear friend," answered the professor, "We must never amuse ourselves at the expense of the poor. But you are rich, and may give yourself a much greater pleasure by means of this poor man. Put a crown piece, if you have them, in each shoe, and then we will hide ourselves."

The student, having two crown pieces, did so, and then placed himself with the professor, behind some nearby bushes through which they could easily watch the laborer and see whatever wonder or joy he might express.

The poor man soon finished his work, and came across the field to the path where he had left his coat and shoes. While he put on his coat he slipped one foot into one of his shoes. Feeling something hard he stooped down and found the crown. Astonishment and wonder were upon his countenance. He gazed upon the crown, turned it around and looked again and again; then he gazed about in all directions, but could see no one. He put the money in his pocket and proceeded to put on the other shoe; but what was his astonishment when he found the other crown! His feelings overcame him. He fell upon his knees, looked up to heaven, and uttered a loud and fervent thanksgiving.

The young man stood there deeply affected, and with tears in his eyes. "Now," said the professor, "are you not better pleased than if you had played your intended trick?" "Oh, dearest sir," answered the youth, "you have taught me a lesson I shall never forget."

Money had the power to make this man happy. How much more power the gospel has to make man happy. There is also happiness brought to the giver. We cannot all be missionaries, but someone must support those who are. Not everyone is financially able to do that, but there is also a reward in carrying a burden for others. It is enjoined upon all of us to brighten the corner where we are. —Wayne Murphey



March 20, 1988

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

1 Cor. 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up

the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

28 And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Memory Verse: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Tim. 4:8.

Central Thought: The Church of God will have a great and final triumph at the last day when Christ comes to judge the world and punish the wicked and reward the righteous. All who are saved in Christ will rise to meet Him in the air and forevermore be with the Lord.

Word Definitions: *Gog and Magog:* These represent all the forces of evil and error that are arrayed against the truth and the true saints of God. *Camp of the saints:* The battlement or bulwarks, representing the faith and standard that God's people maintain.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the vision of John on the Isle of Patmos and the inspired writings of the Apostle Paul, we have a preview of the final overthrow of the forces of this wicked world and Satan and the ultimate triumph of the Church of God. John had seen the course of the Church unfolded to him on that island where he had been banished because of his testimony for Jesus. That is the main message of the book of Revelation, a history of the Church. He saw thrones of judgment to be filled by Christ and His saints, and he saw the souls of those who had suffered martyrdom for His name's sake. He had seen the triumph of the early morning Church over the powers of paganism and idol worship. This power that Satan had wielded over the world was broken and, in a figurative sense, been imprisoned for a thousand years, or a long period of time. The first resurrection John spoke of is the new birth, the resurrection of

the soul from the dead state of sin. The second death, which is the lake of fire or the final punishment of the wicked, has no power over those who partake of this spiritual resurrection to the holy life of the saints. We are persuaded that we are living in the days when the Gog and Magog powers of error and communism are compassing the faith of the saints about. There is a great war going on in the ecclesiastical heavens. It is the real battle of Armageddon, the final conflict between the forces of Satan and the saints. But the victory will be with the saints of the most high God. Paul brings this out as the putting of all enemies under the feet of Christ, and the last one to go under will be death. Though the Church is hated, persecuted and put down in a popular sense, yet she will triumph at the last, and will be taken to be with her Bridegroom forevermore.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the first resurrection?
2. What will being a partaker of the first resurrection enable one to be safe from?
3. What will Satan seek to do in the last days?
4. Why will the forces of hell not be able to destroy the Church?
5. What will happen at the last?
6. Will this be the end?
7. What will Christ present to the Father?
8. What will happen to all the enemies of Christ?
9. What is the last enemy that shall be destroyed?
10. Who will be all in all in that last day?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

How wonderful it is to be Christ's triumphant Church! When we are washed in the blood of Jesus and born again by the Word of God, we are placed in that triumphant kingdom. By His grace we can overcome the devil on every line. As we go through this world of trials and temptations we can conquer for Jesus every time. We need never be defeated. If we will fight a good fight of faith and be true to Jesus we can share in this final victory of the Church. Our Captain is leading us on to certain victory. We can overcome every foe we face. The forces of Satan and this present, evil world are now compassing the camp of the saints about. We are withstood on doctrinal lines, faith lines, holiness lines, style lines and in

every other aspect where the meek and lowly saints do not conform to the world. The darkened souls of this present world are very indignant against the faith and practice of the saints. Laws are being passed that make it difficult for us to exercise our faith in every way. Satan uses gossip and talk to meet his evil purposes. We are in perilous times. The end is very near. Someday soon, Christ and the Father will conclude that the day of grace for this old world is up. In power and great glory Christ will burst into view with flaming fire. Fire will come down from God out of heaven and consume all the enemies of His truth. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." 1 Thess. 5:3. But the saints of God who have walked before Him in white and have followed Him upon their white horses of perfect holiness will prevail and will be seen with Him in glory. (Col. 3:4). Oh, how it will pay us to keep true to the Lord! Christ has triumphed over Satan, and shortly we shall share in His blessed triumph and trample Satan and the forces of this world beneath our feet. Let us all live close to God and stay in the Church of God so that we can share in His glorious and final triumph.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When Christ died, He wrought the greatest victory of all times. He delivered man's soul from the grip of Satan. However, Christ's work was not completed. He returned to heaven and is guiding the operation of the Church from there. He is directing things towards the end of time. This final conflict will be a time of great victory for the Church. When General Nelson sent his dispatches home to England following the battle of the Nile, he wrote: "Victory is not a name strong enough for such a scene as this." If the conquering of a foe in a limited skirmish here on earth can be so monumental, there is surely nothing that can be compared to the conquering of all evil. No one will be able to stand against Christ on that day, but every knee shall bow.

It is at that time that Christ will present a Church without spot or wrinkle to the Father. It will be the Church that He purchased with His blood and preserved for this special occasion. On this day Christ's work will be completely finished.

This is described in our lesson when it says, "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also

himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." In commenting on this verse, Clarke's Commentary says, "When the administration of the Kingdom of grace is finally closed; when there shall be no longer any state of probation, and consequently no longer need of a distinction between the Kingdom of grace and the Kingdom of glory; then the Son, as being man and Messiah, shall cease to exercise any distinct dominion; and God shall be 'all in all.' "

—Wayne Murphey

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March 27, 1988

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST, OUR SAVIOUR

Mark 15:15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

John 19:16b 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:

Mark 15:21 And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Mark 15:25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

Luke 23:24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

Matt. 27:34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.

42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Memory Verse: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom. 5:8.

Central Thought: Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross of Calvary for the sins of all mankind. He went all the way for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for Him and the brethren.

Word Definitions: *Calvary:* The Latin word corresponding to the Hebrew "Golgotha," which means a skull. The place was no doubt called the place of a skull because it was the general place of execution of criminals. *Malefactor:* Wrongdoer or criminal. "*Gave up the ghost*": The spirit departed from the body, which is death. *Crucify:* To put to death by being hung on a cross.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We will conclude our *Bible Lessons* for this quarter with a lesson concerning the death of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in preparation for next Sunday's Easter lesson on His glorious resurrection. It is a vital thing for the death and suffering of Jesus to be constantly fresh in our minds: therefore, a lesson on this subject is needful often. Most of us are aware that a mock trial had taken place through the wearisome hours of that night, and the morning broke upon the scene of Christ preparing for His journey to Calvary and the crucifixion. In an effort to make a way for Jesus to be set free, Pilate had, according to his custom, offered to free a criminal to the people, hoping that Jesus would be that criminal. But the tide of the people had turned against the man from Galilee, and Pilate had no choice but to yield Him up to their ravening grasp. According to human aspect, this was all a tragedy, but we know now that all this was according to the

plan of God. The people wanted Barabbas released to them, who was a robber and a murderer, and they demanded Jesus to be crucified. It is evident that Jesus began the journey to Calvary's hill bearing his cross, but proved unable to bear it all the way. Thus they employed a passer-by to bear it for Him. Clarke comments on Simon's two sons, Alexander and Rufus. "It appears that these two persons were well known among the first disciples of our Lord. It is not unlikely that this is the same Alexander who is mentioned in Acts 19:33 and that the other is the Rufus spoken of by St. Paul in Romans 16:13." Jesus suffered for six hours on the cross and the clothes that were so shamefully stripped off of his body were parted and gambled for. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Pilate release Barabbas and have Christ crucified?
2. Simon helped Christ to bear His cross, but there was another cross that he could not help Jesus bear. Can you identify that cross?
3. Can we help bear that cross today?
4. What was Christ's attitude toward all of His tormentors?
5. What did Jesus do with the vinegar mingled with gall?
6. What was the attitude of the first malefactor?
7. What was he forgetting?
8. What was the spirit of the other malefactor?
9. What did Jesus say to him?
10. How long did Jesus suffer on the cross?
11. What were the two things that He said as the last words?
12. Did Christ actually feel forsaken of God? Why?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We stand on Calvary's sacred hill,
 beholding One upon the cross.
We hear the mocking of the chill, cold pride
 of hearts all full of dross.
We look and see the nails
 that hold our loving Master to its frame,
and on the superscription there we see
 His wondrous blessed name.
We stand in awe and sorrow sore,
 beholding all this awful scene,
and hear the groans and dying words
 from out His heart so pure, serene:

"Forgive them, Father! for they know not what they do to me this day."

We see them rip His garments up,

His seamless robe is borne away.

Oh, awful scene of darkened shame!

The sun turns dark up in the sky;

we hear Him call on Father's name,

His mortal frame shakes with the cry.

Between two thieves we see him hung,

and one derides him scornfully:

In folly uses thus his tongue,

"If you're the Christ, then set us free!"

But hark, from on the other side

comes words of faith and hope and love:

"Remember me!" and Christ replied:

"Today you'll be with me above!"

Then comes the darkness o'er the earth,

the temple's veil is rent in twain,

while Christ prepares to break the cord

that holds Him to this mortal pain.

There standing by the cross was one

who bore Him as a babe so dear,

with him who leaned upon his breast

and to His spirit was so near.

"Behold thy son!" He loved her so.

To John He trusted her to be;

"Behold Thy mother!"

from that day John cared for her so faithfully.

And now we see the deep'ning pain

and weakness quenching life away,

from loss of blood and death's cold reign

upon His brow began to lay

its awful sad and stinging grasp,

as breath comes shorter, shorter still;

He lifts His mournful eyes above

to God who works His sovereign will.

"Into Thy hands, O Father, now

I do commit my spirit's rest,"

and "It is finished!" see His head

drop down upon His silent breast.

He died for you, He died for me!

Our sins He bore so faithfully,

How can we spurn such dying love

from Him who came from Heaven above?

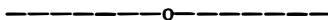
—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"It was a mysterious and supernatural darkness that covered the earth. We may say, and we can say no more, that it was nature sympathizing with the crucifixion of its Lord. How dense it was we cannot tell; but it must have filled the hearts of the multitude about the cross with awe.

"There was also a still deeper darkness around the soul of Him who hung on that central cross. It was so dark that He even seemed forsaken of God. We can never understand it, although we know that it was the sin of the world that made the darkness. Jesus wrapped the glooms of death about himself that we might be clothed in garments of light. He died thus in darkness that we might walk into the valley amid the splendors of heavenly light. He had agony in His last hour that we might have joy. His head wore the matted crown of thorns, and had no place to rest in dying, that under our heads might be the pillow of peace."

—Taken from, *Come Ye Apart*.



OUR GRANDMOTHER'S STORY

When I was a little girl I did not like to attend religious meetings, especially on a week-day. My father was a minister, and I was taught the way of salvation, but I did not like to walk in it. I knew I was a sinful child, but I had no wish to follow Jesus Christ as a loving disciple.

One day my father was requested to assist a neighboring minister in special meetings for nearly a week. I did not like such meetings. It was in winter, when deep snow had covered the fields even to the top of the fences, making one level, dazzling expanse, and I was glad these meetings were fifteen miles away.

Most unexpectedly my father invited me to go with him to spend the week at the minister's house with a child of my own age. I dreaded to go, especially as I had heard my parents talk of "an awakening" in that place; still the novelty of a long sleigh ride, and the prospect of making a new friend, made me anxious to go, and besides I had a new dress, which would add to the pleasure of the journey.

The old fashioned green sleigh was brought to the door, with the clumsy bells on the horse. I was carefully wrapped up, and made quite proud by a huge black muff which my mother allowed me to carry; a foot-stove kept my feet warm.

The old horse jogged along, shaking the bells monotonously, but we found many pretty sights in the clear, frosty ride.

I was beginning to feel rather cold and homesick when we reached the parsonage. A delicate, sweet-looking child was looking from the parlor window. Here I warmed my numb fingers, while little May carried away my cloak and shawls. In the afternoon, May and I talked over our schools and dolls, compared ages, and became warm friends.

As the older people were talking of the meeting appointed for that evening in a school house, it seemed to me that May listened attentively, and looked a little serious; but she always had a gentle, lovely expression. After an early supper, May said, "We will put on our things early, and get really warm before we start." "Why, May," I said, much disturbed, "are you going to the meeting?" "Certainly," my little friend said; "I should be very sorry to stay away; don't you want to go?" "It is so cold," I said, "and I am tired, and I think the meeting is for older people." May looked quite surprised. "We shall ride," she said, "in our covered sleigh." I tried to think of some other excuse, but May's father called to us to hasten, and I saw it was taken for granted that I should go too.

The old red school house was already filled on our arrival. A deep silence pervaded the room, lighted by candles brought in by the neighbors. May and I found seats on a little bench. When the hymn was selected, a man took out his tuning fork to get the pitch. I expected to be amused by the old and cracked voices, but all seemed melted down into a sweet melody. Many sang with tearful eyes. May joined her sweet, childish voice. May's father preached. I looked around, and saw every eye fastened on him. Hard working farmers bent forward and listened eagerly; some faces were bowed on their hands. I tried not to hear much of this sermon, but some sentences would creep through my wandering thoughts. It was the old subject, "Repent, and believe," but handled with so much power and earnestness that a profound stillness filled the room as in the presence of death. After the sermon they sang again that hymn, peculiarly sweet at such times,

*"Awake, my soul, to joyful lays,
And sing the great Redeemer's praise."*

At the close of the service an altar call was given. The minister invited all to come who had a need in their souls. How uneasy I felt. May looked calm and happy.

That night we went to our room in silence. May seemed to have found the Saviour precious to her. I could not sleep.

While May was breathing tranquilly, I was restless and disturbed. My conscience said, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." My wicked heart replied, "I am too young to be a Christian; it will destroy all my pleasure." Then I thought of May, smaller, younger than myself, peaceful and happy; loving her dolls and play, but finding Christ her friend and portion, "the one altogether lovely."

In the morning I was ill-natured and miserable, though I tried to conceal my feelings. We went in the afternoon to the old church, where a great congregation gathered, called from their wood lots and busy kitchens to learn what they must do to be saved. It was a dark afternoon, the church was cold and dreary. A great anguish possessed my soul when my father brought forth the terrors of the law, our hopeless, undone condition, the wrath of God, the entire sinfulness of man, the impossibility of meriting salvation by anything that we can do. I shivered in a corner of a high-backed pew, feeling the truth of all he said, until my own guilty little life appeared in its true light.

In the evening we went again to the same school house. The theme was Christ—His pity, His love, His ability to pardon even the chief of sinners. A great light broke into my soul. I saw that I need not despair; I need not perish. I had nothing to do but to trust in Christ, and take Him at His word.

In the closing hymn, May looked at me in her sweet loving way, for large tears were falling on the yellow pages of the old hymn book. When the altar call was given, I went down the aisle and knelt at the old wooden bench. I repented of my selfish ways and yielded my life to God.

May and I had a new tie of sympathy. I told her how the dreaded meetings had become full of beauty, while she helped me by her rich experience of grace. Through that blessed week we prayed and sang together, until Saturday evening forced us to part, feeling that we had now "one Lord, one faith."

In a few years that gentle, loving May was called into the joy of her Lord, being quickly ready for her heavenly home; while I have spent this long life ever clinging to that Saviour who drew me to Himself when I was a rebellious, sinful child, and who has promised "to love me unto the end."

I was never sorry again to hear the bell ring for meeting; it always reminds me of the time when I sat on a little bench with May, a believing, rejoicing child.

—From *Sketches from Life*

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