

# Bible Lessons



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

**ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE**

Vol. 20, No. 2  
Apr., May, June  
1988

Faith Pub. House  
Guthrie, OK  
73044

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

(USPS054-680)

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Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of  
Jesus Christ and His Church  
Edited by Leslie C. Busbee and Wayne Murphey

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Subscription Price-50¢ a copy for quarter of year, or  
\$2.00 per year, issued quarterly.

Second class postage paid at Guthrie, Oklahoma

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Published Quarterly By

FAITH PUBLISHING HOUSE  
920 W. Mansur Ave.  
Guthrie, Oklahoma 73044

## Theme for Second Quarter, 1988

We will take for our subject of study this quarter the acts, or doings and labors, of the apostles of Jesus Christ and the progress of the early morning Church of God. Since our first Sunday is Easter Sunday, and the appropriate subject for study would be the resurrection of Christ, we will begin with Paul's sermon preached at Antioch in Pisidia, recorded in Acts 13, in which the resurrection of Jesus Christ was clearly set forth from the Scriptures. In the following lessons, beginning with the days just previous to Pentecost, we will trace the activities and functions of the early morning Church as it goes forth with the gospel of the Saviour to the world. It is very important for us to know about this phase of the history of the Church. May we, as we study these lessons, grasp a greater vision of the work of the Lord and find out how we can all have a more worthy part in the Church and its progress today.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

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April 3, 1988

### CHRIST TRIUMPHANT OVER DEATH AND THE GRAVE

Acts 13:26 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

**Memory Verse:** Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. Rom. 6:9.

**Central Thought:** By the power of the almighty Father, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, arose triumphant from the grave with an incorruptible body to live forever, giving for all who love and obey Him hope of eternal life.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul and Barnabas had been chosen by the direction of the Holy Spirit to go forth on a missionary journey from Antioch. This Antioch in the northern part of Israel near the Mediterranean Sea was a gathering place of certain prophets and teachers. Their journey took them southward to the coastal city of Seleucia where they boarded a ship that took them to the Isle of Cyprus. After their encounter with the false prophet Bar-jesus, and the conversion of the deputy Sergius Paulus, they sailed for the mainland of Asia Minor. After passing through Perga in Pamphylia (one of the several Asian provinces) they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue there on the Sabbath Day, and sat down. After the reading of the law a door of utterance was opened for them to speak. We have in our lesson today the latter part of the sermon Paul preached that day. After rehearsing a brief history of Israel up to the days of John's introduction of Jesus

to the people. Paul proclaimed the blessing that Jesus brought to the world through His death, burial, and glorious resurrection. It is very striking and inspiring to me to note the earnest and clear simplicity of this sermon and the Scriptures that he quoted from the Old Testament, and how he applied them. The first one from the second Psalm, "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee," he quotes relative to God's fulfillment of His promise to the fathers in raising up Christ from the dead. The second one is from Isaiah 55:3, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." No more would Christ return to corruption. This was the sure mercies of David, which were promised unto us. The third quotation from Psalm 16:10, refers to the same thing. As a warning, he quotes from Habakkuk 1:5 for a guard against the unbelief that would ensnare many when the gospel would come to them.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What were the people doing concerning the prophecies when they had the Lord Jesus crucified?
2. Who saw Christ many days after His resurrection?
3. Why is it important that we believe and heed these witnesses?
4. Can you identify Paul's expression: "the promise which was made unto the fathers"?
5. How does the resurrection of Christ fulfill the Old Testament promises?
6. How does the declaration in the second Psalm relate to Christ's resurrection?
7. To what did Paul apply the sure mercies of David?
8. In what way did Christ see no corruption?
9. What is preached unto us through Christ, and what do we receive through Him?
10. What warning did Paul give to the people at the close of his message? Is that warning still true today?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

God had promised many blessings to Israel that were to come to pass in Christ. Many of these blessings were interpreted in a carnal and material way by so many. But Paul declares that all of these promises were fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. What profit would a bunch of material blessings mean to us from God if death continued to rob us of life and fellowship with Him? What

would a material inheritance of land and wealth mean to a person if he or she knew that it was theirs no farther than the short span of their earthly years? What does it mean and how can earthly things mean so much to people when they realize that there is but a step between them and death? Without Christ, earthly wealth and inheritance becomes vanity. How glorious is the truth of our lesson today! Christ is risen from the grave, and His resurrection is offered to us today as a promise of us sharing in that same resurrection in the last day. This resurrection that God wrought through Christ gives us hope and a newness of life and faith that works a real resurrection to the soul, raising us up from the cold grave of sin and worldliness to a life of purity and righteousness with Jesus. When Christ arose from the tomb and broke asunder the bars of death for you and me, He accomplished the greatest blessing that we could have. Because He lives, we shall live also. His triumphant ascent from the grave and death has given Him a name that is above every name. No other monarch accomplished what Jesus accomplished. Life and eternal salvation is ours through believing, obeying, and truly following Him all the way.

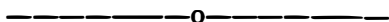
—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is nothing known to the human understanding that conveys the idea of complete finality as does that of death. It is a condition in which all voluntary vital functions cease and from which there is normally no reprieve. Christ came proclaiming Himself to be the resurrection and the life, and even raised some from the dead before their very eyes, and then declared that all those who would believe in Him would never die. How disappointed His followers must have been when they saw this One who had led them to believe that through Him they could inherit eternal life—Himself expiring on the tree! How could He give life to someone else if He could not retain His own? So real was it all, undeniable evidence that they had seen with their own eyes, and could not deny, until they completely forgot that He had also taught them that though He would indeed give His life a sacrifice for many, yet on the third day He would rise again to life forevermore. Without this event of resurrection, His life and sacrifice were meaningless. This was the crowning feature of the entire affair, for if no life were available to Him, then He had none to offer anyone else. But with life restored to Him, thus proving that He came from the Father of life who was able to

break the power of death, He could then proclaim to those at hand, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and unto my God, and your God." He knew His Father would not have glorified Him with life if His sacrifice had not been satisfactory and accepted. Since life was restored to Him, He knew His efforts were acceptable with His Father and consequently the plan of salvation for all mankind was effected. It is through this plan that we are born again and become the offspring of His and our heavenly Father. Praise His name!

—C. W. Wilson (written in 1972)



April 10, 1988

## **AFTER CHRIST'S ASCENSION BEFORE PENTECOST**

Acts 1:12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty.)

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Acedama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.



21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

**Memory Verse:** 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. Luke 24:49.

**Central Thought:** The disciples of Jesus tarried together in prayer and preparation for the coming of the promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Not only was there continued prayer, but there were also decisions and steps taken in preparation to receive the Spirit.

**Word Definitions:** *Bishoprick:* Office. "*Gave forth their lots*": Clarke says that the most simple form of casting lots was to put two stones, wood, metal, or slips of parchment, with the names of the persons inscribed on them, into an urn (or jar); and after prayer, put in the hand and draw out the stone which the hand picked up. Whose name was on the stone thus picked out was the decided party. *Sabbath day's journey:* A distance of about one mile.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

While the disciples were listening to Jesus give His last few instructions, He began to take His departure from their midst. "While they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." We can imagine the wonderment and joy that filled their hearts as they beheld Him going up and being lost from their view. Two angels stood by them as they kept looking upward, hoping to get another glimpse of their beloved Lord and Saviour. The angels assured them that the same Jesus that they saw going up to heaven would return



in like manner. Remembering His charge to return to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, they began to leave the Mount of Olives and make their way the short distance of about seven and one-half furlongs, approximately one mile, back to the city. There they met together in an upper room to pray together and prepare their hearts for the advent of the precious promise Christ had given to them. It is not known for certain just where this upper room was. Some believe it was in the temple, while others believe it was in a private residence. I am of the opinion that it could very well have been the same "large upper room" (Luke 22:12) that Christ delegated to be prepared for the Passover and the Lord's Supper. It could have been rented by the brethren for a place of gathering and refuge, and where Jesus often appeared to them in the days previous to His ascension.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did the disciples meet to pray together?
2. Who else, besides the eleven apostles, were present?
3. About how many were there?
4. Why was Judas Iscariot not there?
5. What was Peter's concern about the absence of Judas?
6. What Scripture did Peter use to decide on choosing a replacement for Judas?
7. What were the requirements for being a replacement for the office of one of the twelve apostles?
8. How did Judas fall from this office?
9. How did they decide who the successor would be?
10. Who was chosen for this position?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

It is very wonderful to note that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brethren were present in the upper room with the one hundred and twenty disciples who were continuing with one accord in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. They were uniting their hearts together in preparation for the blessed outpouring of the precious Comforter Jesus had promised to send to them. Although there may be certain cases to tarry for the reception of the Holy Spirit, it may not be as necessary as it was in the apostles' time. Yet it often is the experience of the seeker to tarry in prayer and heart preparation and consecration before one can come to the proper place of receiving the Holy Spirit.

The heart must be prepared; and tarrying, seeking, humbling, dying out, and consecration is a safe and a sure way to a real experience of sanctification, or receiving the Holy Spirit. Matthew 27:3-5, says that Judas repented himself and tried to give back the thirty pieces of silver for which he had sold his Lord. The leaders would not accept the money, so Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and went and hanged himself. The chief priests took up the money, but would not put it in the treasury. Instead, they used it to purchase a tract of land to bury strangers in. According to what Peter said, Judas was probably the first to be buried there. Just think: the money that Judas hoped to gain in selling his Lord ended up to be the price of the field in which he, the traitor, was buried in! Thank God, when a vacancy is made in the Church of God, the Lord has someone to step in and fill up the ranks. Very little is heard of Matthias after this, if any at all, but we are sure that he made a faithful minister for the Lord. Jesus has a place for every one of His faithful believers. I am sure that Justus did not allow any wrong feelings in his heart, but went forth and was true to the Master, also.—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

One of the greatest virtues that a person can acquire is patience. It seems inbred in man to be impatient. Peter, James, John, and several other disciples became somewhat disillusioned concerning the gospel after Christ's death, and they went fishing. Later, at the ascension, Christ gave them specific instructions to tarry at Jerusalem. The disciples seemed to take a renewed interest in the kingdom of God and our lesson finds them tarrying with one accord in prayer. The blessing of God in our souls is always worth waiting for. Prayer is an ingredient that is of great help in bringing about the will of God in our lives. Being of a nature that we can have harmony with our brother is also well pleasing in the eyes of God and helps to bring God's Spirit, accompanied by its attending blessings, into our soul. There is much to be learned from the example of the disciples in the upper room.

One of the qualifications in choosing a disciple to fill Judas' place was that he had to have known Christ from the time of His baptism to His ascension. In order to be a disciple of Christ today, we must be intimately acquainted with Him. We must have a personal experience with Him. There are many who claim to be followers of Christ and yet by what

they teach, it is obvious that they know little of His nature. There have been large organizations established by people who claim to have a special message and insight into the kingdom of God. Crowds of people will blindly follow these individuals into deception. There are going to be a lot of surprised people when Christ is revealed at His second coming. 1 John 3:2, says that at His appearing we shall see Him as He is. At that time, all of man's opinions and ideas, no matter how intricately fabricated, will disintegrate. It is important to acquaint ourselves with Him in this life and seek to be a true disciple.

—Wayne Murphey

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**April 17, 1988**

## **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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.

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

**Memory Verse:** But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts 1:8.

**Central Thought:** In fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy God sent the precious Holy Spirit to dwell within the hearts of those who had given themselves to His Son and were prepared to receive Him.

**Word Definition:** *Cloven tongues:* "Cloven," from the Greek, means divided or distributed. This was a good outward evidence of the gift of tongues that was distributed to each of those present. *Holy Ghost:* More properly expressed as the Holy Spirit.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

For about ten days the prayerful group of believers in Christ had been tarrying and preparing for the coming of the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. The prophecies had foretold this grand and glorious event. Peter's quotation from Joel had promised this wonderful outpouring of the Spirit of God. There were two evidences of a natural manner that heralded and made everyone aware that the blessed moment had come. First was the sound from heaven. At this first advent God knew that a dramatic manifestation of His presence was needed. This sound from heaven was like rushing mighty wind, filling all the house where they were sitting. They may have just arisen from a glorious season of prayer, just sitting quietly in holy awe and reverence. The wind is a typical likeness to the Spirit. The word "spirit" in the Greek means a wind or breath. The Holy Spirit is the breath of God. Jesus, in speaking of the Spirit, said in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth. . . ." John 20:22 says that Jesus breathed on His disciples, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In the beginning God breathed into man's nostrils the "breath of life" and man became a living soul. The second

manifestation was the tongues of fire. Fire is also a typical likeness of the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist prophesied that Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Luke 3:16). Hebrews 12:29 tells us that our God is a consuming fire. The brethren were given their first spiritual gift, the gift of speaking in other languages. It was so needed because of the many different nations present at Jerusalem. These people were there to attend the Jewish feast of Pentecost. "Pentecost" means fifty days after the Passover. The Church began to function as a body to manifest the work of Christ for the salvation of the souls of men. —Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What was the condition of the believers when the day of Pentecost was fully come?
2. What were the two visible things that announced the presence of the Spirit?
3. What did the infilling of the Holy Spirit enable them to do?
4. What kind of tongues did they speak with and how?
5. Why was this gift of speaking in other tongues so needed at this time?
6. What was the reaction of the multitude when they heard these Galileans speaking in their languages the wonderful works of God?
7. What did the mockers say about it?
8. Why did Peter mention it being but the third hour of the day?
9. What did he say this was?
10. What Scripture did Peter quote in reference to this?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

It was mentioned in prophecy that God willed to "declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem; when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord." Psa. 102:21, 22. This prophecy was fulfilled at Pentecost. The nations were gathered together. They had come there to worship and serve the Lord. They were devout men, which means they were careful, circumspect, and pious. It was at this great gathering that God worked in His plan to pour out His Spirit upon the Church and use the members of the body of Christ to show forth the wonderful works of Himself. All fear and timidity were gone from the band of believers

who had followed Christ. The word spread fast that something unusual was happening and the people began to gather. Just how it was all arranged and organized we know not, but we do know that every one of these people heard their language being spoken by someone in that body of people who had just been filled with the Holy Spirit. They were all with one accord and in one place. This means that they were not only together in a group, but that they were united in heart, soul, and mind. No one was remembering Peter's denial of the Lord or Thomas and his doubting. All of this was in the past under the blood. God has particular delight and pleasure in hearts thus united in His love and purpose. These were humble, meek, quiet, loving, and reverent men and women. Think about Mary, the mother of Jesus. She received the Holy Spirit. And there were the brothers of Jesus. Some of their names are given in Matthew 13:55, which were: James, Joses, Simon, and Judas. How wonderful that they were able to overcome the belief that they once held on to, and to recognize in their brother the Saviour!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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Everyone with a desire toward God would like an experience similar to the one on the day of Pentecost. Sometimes it is hard to reconcile our repetitious, daily life to one of mighty, rushing winds, cloven tongues of fire, and speaking in different languages. Yet our life can be just as Spirit-led as the apostles'. Leslie Weatherhead in *The Transforming Friendship* quotes the following passage from *My Lady of the Chimney Corner*. "God takes a hand wherever He can find it and just does what He likes with it. Sometimes He takes a preacher's and lays it on a child's head in benediction, then He takes the hand of a mother to guide her child, and sometimes He takes the hand of an old critter like me to give a bit of comfort to a neighbor. But they are all kinds of hands touched by His Spirit, and His Spirit is everywhere looking for hands to use."

These small acts seem very simple. But to be effective we must have the Spirit. Our own works will not bring about the desired effect. The story is told of a young artist who, being dissatisfied with his work, borrowed the brush of a great painter. But the brush didn't help the young man paint any better. "It is not the master's brush you need," a friend said, "but the master's spirit." Likewise, it is God's Spirit that we need in every act of our daily lives. It is then that people will

take note of us just as they were amazed, and marvelled at the disciples in the upper room.

—Wayne Murphey

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## **DISCOVERED! NOAH'S 6,000-YEAR-OLD FLOOD**

Scientists had uncovered the fantastic city of Ur, but a few feet deeper lay one of the most incredible archaeological finds of all time.

"And the Lord said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the Ark. . . . And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days." Genesis 7.

The graves of the Kings of Ur stood out like barren, flat-topped hills in the burning desert sand. Like ants, the diggers delved with shovels and picks into the heart of one special hill, sweltering as wicker baskets filled with history moved slowly, hand by hand from the deep shafts in the earth.

Sir Charles Leonard Woolley, the wiry little archaeologist in charge of this joint British-American expedition into the past, had no thoughts of the Flood as the baskets came to the surface, each bearing evidence of life and death in the vast Mesopotamian desert when the Kings of Ur ruled their fabulous city.

Mysterious—For six years the scientists had sweated in the desert, close to the spot where the Euphrates joins the Persian Gulf. And they had achieved the discovery of all time—they had unearthed the Biblical city of Ur of the Chaldees. The city from which, said the Bible, Abraham had "gone forth."

They had proved that a place as mysterious and legendary as any of the kings and conquerors, powerful empires, temples and golden palaces with which the Bible regales us, had really existed. The Bible was right.

Woolley and his colleagues had found this place beneath the sands—temples, fountains still standing. Even the ovens for baking bread were still there.

"After 3,800 years," Woolley reported, "we were able to light the fire again and put into commission once more the oldest kitchen in the world."

For three years the excited archaeologists dug until, under the slopes of this great hill of Tell al Maqyyar, a whole city lay before them, bathed in bright sunshine, awakened from



its sleep after thousands of years. Such was the incredible discovery of Woolley.

He had not the slightest inkling of the even bigger sensation which, three years later, he was to reveal to an astonished world.

Woolley had found the graves of the Kings of Ur beneath a 50 ft. mound south of the Temple of Ur.

The stone vaults were filled with costly treasures.

Golden drinking cups and goblets, shapely jugs and vases, bronze tableware, mother-of-pearl mosaics, lapis lazuli and silver surrounded the bodies which had mouldered into dust.

But the graves of the kings contained more grisly and depressing sights.

In the vaults were found teams of oxen, the skeletons still in harness, and great wagons laden with artistic household furniture.

In solemn procession, it would seem, attendants with the ox-drawn treasure wagons accompanied a body to the tomb. And while the grave was being sealed outside, the attendants composed their dead master for his last rest . . . then took some drug, gathered 'round him for the last time and died of their own free will, to serve him in his future existence.

By now Woolley was working in the world of 2,800 B. C. As the summer of A. D. 1929 approached, the sixth season of digging was drawing to a close.

Woolley put his diggers once more on the hill of the graves of the kings.

He had to know whether the ground under the royal graves had fresh discoveries in stone.

Woolley reported: "Almost at once discoveries were made which confirmed our suspicions.

"Directly under the floor of one of the tombs of the kings we found a layer of charred wood and numerous clay tablets, covered with writing of a much older type than the inscriptions on the tombs. Judging by the nature of the writing, the tablets were about 3,000 years B. C."

Now the shafts went deeper and deeper . . . and one day the diggers called: "We are on ground level."

Woolley let himself down to the foot of the shaft, carefully prodded the floor and stopped short. It was pure clay—a kind that could have been deposited only by water.

At first he thought it must be silt left over by the old Euphrates river. But the layer of clay was too high above the river.

Abruptly—he decided to dig into the clay. At six feet

it was still pure clay. Then suddenly, at 10 feet, the layer stopped as abruptly as it had started.

The next baskets that came to the surface contained stubble, ancient rubbish and countless pieces of pottery. They had struck, under this clay, fresh evidence of human habitation.

The pots had been hand made. But the pots above the clay level had been turned on ancient potters' wheels. There were no metal remains below the clay—only flint implements. It was the Stone Age.

That day a telegram from Mesopotamia flashed the extraordinary message: "We have found the Flood!"

That was the only possible explanation of this great clay deposit beneath the hill at Ur. The sea had left its unmistakable traces—remains of little marine organisms embedded in the clay.

Woolley feared for a moment that a chance coincidence might be making fools of them. So he sank another shaft, 300 yards away. The result was the same.

Then he dug another, on a nearby hill. They came to a brick pavement. Sixteen feet below this pavement, which Woolley was sure dated about 2700 B. C., he said: "We were among the ruins of a city of Ur which had existed before the Flood."

For miles around scientists began sinking shafts to check the extent of the Flood. And Woolley estimated the disaster engulfed an area north-west of the Persian Gulf 400 miles long and 100 miles wide—part of modern Iraq and Kuwait.

A vast, catastrophic inundation, resembling the Biblical Flood which the skeptics had described as either a fairy story or a legend, had not only taken place, but was an event within the compass of history.

Reckoning by the ages of the earth layers containing traces of human habitation, which were as reliable as a calendar, Woolley proved when the Great Flood took place.

It happened about 4,000 years before the birth of Christ.

So, the Bible was right.

Adapted from *The Bible as History*, by Wener Keller (Hodder and Stoughton.)

April 24, 1988

## PETER'S SERMON ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

**Memory Verse:** For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. 1 Pet. 3:18.

**Central Thought:** It was the predetermined plan of almighty God for Christ to be slain that He might break the bands of sin and the grave and be raised up to the throne of David in the heavens as Lord and Saviour of all mankind.

**Word Definitions:** *Hell:* The Greek word is "Hades" which means "unseen," referring to the place of disembodied or

separated spirits; the realm of the dead. *Corruption*: the decomposition or decay of the physical body. Although Christ was dead, His body did not decay in the tomb. *Christ*: The Greek words means "the Anointed One." The Hebrew word for Christ is "Messiah" which means the same.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In last week's lesson we had the beginning of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, where he quoted from Joel concerning the promised pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh. We pick up his discourse at the close of his quotation from Joel. Concerning Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, Peter quotes from three Old Testament sources, all of which are from the Psalms. The first one is from Psalm 16. The Greek from which he quotes is nearly word for word with the Hebrew except for the last verse in that Psalm. We will insert here the Hebrew rendition as it really more clearly represents the position of Christ relative to His ascension to the right hand of God. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." *Psa. 16:11*. Peter clearly attributes this to David. He quotes again from David and *Psalm 132:11*: "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." Christ is of the seed of David according to the flesh and it is clearly defined that in His resurrection and ascension that Christ did fulfill this prophecy and was at that moment seated upon David's throne. Peter carried it farther when, in stating that David was not ascended into the heavens (his sepulchre being with them in that day), he quoted another of David's inspired writings from *Psalm 110:1*. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." All of these Scriptures together presented the glorious truth to those people that the crucifying of Jesus only served the eternal purpose of God, giving Him the opportunity of raising up Christ from the dead and making Him the means for everlasting hope and salvation. —Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. What did Peter say that the Jews had done to Christ?
2. What did God have to do with what they did to Jesus?
3. What did David prophesy concerning the resurrection of Christ?
4. What did David know that God had sworn unto him?

5. What did Peter say about the present state of David at that time?
6. Where did Peter say that Jesus was exalted to?
7. What did Jesus shed forth from the right hand of God?
8. What did David say concerning Christ sitting on the right hand of God?
9. What three phases of Christ's redemptive work did the three quotations from the Psalms cover?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

This Simon Peter, who had denied the Lord and cursed and swore less than two months ago, is filled with power and boldness by the Holy Spirit to declare the truth of Christ to the gathered people on Pentecost. The Scriptures in their true light have been opened up to him. He sees Christ as their grand fulfillment. The death, burial, ascension, heavenly administration, and ultimate triumph of the Son of God was clearly portrayed in the three quotations that he made from the Psalms. Christ had the Father's will and pleasure always before His face, and was not troubled nor moved from the purpose of His life. His heart rejoiced, His tongue was glad, and His flesh did rest in hope. He was not afraid to go to the cross and die for the sins of mankind. He despised the shame for He knew that God would resurrect Him back to life again, and He knew that this resurrected life would be the means of giving life to fallen creatures dead in trespasses and sins. He knew that His body would not see corruption. Christ also knew, as David knew, that in His resurrection and ascension He would be placed upon the throne of David. This was to be His position as High Priest for the souls of men, an intercessory role as a Mediator between God and man. He was to hold this position in the heavens until the end of time. All of this was brought out in this glorious message that Peter declared through the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. That same Jesus that the Jews had hoped to eliminate through crucifixion was Lord and Christ now. The message was given. What would the people do with it? What are we doing with this message? This very message preached by Peter is vital for us today. Do we believe what this message tells us? Are we acting upon it and gauging our lives according to what it means?

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

"Thou hast made known to me the ways of life." David already knew what it meant to have his heart quickened. As

much as the law allowed, he had experienced forgiveness from a dead state of sin to a life of righteousness. The only way to get true enjoyment out of life is to experience life from above. A small boy, just learning to write, ended a letter to his uncle in this way: "I send you my love. I hope you live all your life." Although the child may not have fully realized what he was saying, there is much truth to the thought that there are many people who have life but are not living. One person prayed, "Oh, God, help me to live while I am alive."

"... Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance." God had already revealed to David a spiritual resurrection and that inspired his confidence in a literal resurrection. Because God had made known to him the ways of life, his flesh would rest in hope that one day God's countenance would bring life back into his body and fill him with joy.

"I'm going to live till I die," said one gentleman of 82 years, "and then I'm going to live forever." There will be a short space of time between the literal death and resurrection of our bodies, but we can have confidence that it will happen. We base our faith on the fact that Christ was the firstfruits of the resurrection and has proven the will and power of it to take place within us.

—Wayne Murphey

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**May 1, 1988**

## **THE RESULT OF THE GOSPEL PREACHED AT PENTECOST**

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Isa. 66:7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

**Memory Verse:** . . . How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Rom. 10:15b.

**Central Thought:** Beholding the miraculous gift of speaking in other tongues by the Holy Spirit, and the impact of the truth concerning Christ in Peter's message brought repentance and a change of heart in the people who heard the gospel on the day of Pentecost.

**Word Definitions:** *Pricked in heart:* Thoroughly pierced, agitated violently, "stung to the quick." *Untoward generation:* Warped, crooked, perverse. *Singleness of heart:* Without stumbling or offence; smoothness and simplicity. "*Such as should be saved*": Only those who truly repented and were born again were added to the Church.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

With our Scripture text from our study in Acts we have added the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Zion (the Church) bringing forth her children and a nation being born at once. Surely this was a prophecy of the Church at Pentecost. A nation was born at once. Three thousand souls were saved. The Church brought forth her children. Our lesson closed last week with Peter's declaration that God had made that same Jesus whom they crucified both Lord and Christ. This mes-



sage that Peter had preached was not formulated by the emotions and ideas of a scared bunch of people humiliated by Christ's death and seeming defeat. They were eye witnesses to His resurrection, having eaten and drank with Him after He was risen. They had seen Him go up and disappear into the skies. The power of the Holy Spirit put great force and weight to Peter's words. The people were persuaded of the truth. Even those who had doubted and disbelieved were pricked in their hearts. There were, no doubt, many other things that Peter brought out in his appeal to the hearts of men that day. Repentance, baptism, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit were the answering entreaties to the people's great need. The effect of the gospel was a body of people united in fervent love and care for one another and love for the Lord Jesus. The New Testament Church began her onward move to declare to the world that Jesus was Lord of all. —Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What did Peter tell the people to do?
2. What gift would their turning to the Lord qualify them for?
3. Who was the promise of the Holy Spirit given to?
4. What did Peter tell them to do concerning "this untoward generation"?
5. Who were baptized that day?
6. How many were added to the Church?
7. What kind of activities did these converts follow?
8. What was their relationship one to another?
9. Could we say that these believers were truly happy?
10. Who did the Lord add daily to His Church?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

The first effect of the administration of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believers was that those who heard it were pricked in their hearts. They were made conscious of the truth that was declared unto them. This was conviction in their souls and it made them begin to seek for guidance and help. There are many people today who hear the gospel and it does not affect them. Satan blinds the mind and hardens the heart. But these people were pricked in their hearts and they began to ask what they were to do. And when they were told by Peter to repent and be baptized, they gladly received his word and obeyed. What a high day in Zion that was! Think what a great baptizing service was held! They gladly took their stand for

the Lord. They were persuaded that this was the truth. Oh, how we love to see that today! It was not just an emotional experience that would fade in a few hours. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. . . ." They met together, ate together, prayed together, and rejoiced together in the new-found joy of life in Christ. They shared together of their earthly substance and no one lacked. Their love was pure and rich and true. They continued daily with one accord in the temple. It was surely a rejoicing time, and it had its effect upon society. Fear came upon everyone. They knew that these people had something wonderful. It still works the same today. When we make contact with the Lord Jesus in salvation and His kingdom of love, it works wonderful blessings in our hearts, homes, and communities. Those who are really saved from sin and changed to new creatures in Christ are still added to His Church. With His high praises in our lips and His two-edged sword (the gospel) in our hands, we can go forth conquering and to conquer.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson today illustrates the power of the Holy Spirit when it moves. The first indication that we have of this power is recorded in Gen. 1:2. "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." We understand by this that the Holy Spirit had an integral part in ordering and establishing the world and the universe. There are other recorded instances where the Holy Spirit moved upon people and they prophesied under its power. On the day of Pentecost, Peter was moved by the Holy Spirit to bring forth God's message to the multitude. When we read that those who heard were pricked in their hearts at his message, we understand that the convicting power of the Holy Spirit had begun to move upon the people in general. This was the creation and establishment of order in the Church of God. What great power was manifested to bring about the salvation of 3,000 souls! The Holy Spirit then led, taught, and inspired those who beheld. No wonder Isaiah prophesied, "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?" The Holy Spirit had never worked like it did on that day of Pentecost. I am glad that it can still move in the lives of those who are given to God.

—Wayne Murphey

May 8, 1988

**THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN**  
**Part I: The Miracle**

Acts 3:1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

**Memory Verse:** And the prayer of faith shall save the sick. and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. James 5:15.

**Central Thought:** Through the power of Jesus Christ and the authority of His name a grown man who had never walked was instantly healed and made to walk and leap.

**Word Definition:** *The ninth hour:* 3:00 p.m.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Just as Jesus wrought wonderful healings for souls as part of His ministry of life and salvation to them, so God began to work His heavenly gift of healing in the ministry of Christ's disciples. And we know that today He yet works in the healing of the sick as a means of encouraging and promoting the work of salvation in the earth. The condition of this lame man was of long standing (from birth, and in the next chapter we learn that he was over forty years of age) and was probably a well known, frequent occupant of this position at the Beautiful gate. Of this Beautiful gate Josephus observes (as he relates Adam Clarke) that it was the most beautiful and so called because it had richer and much thicker plates of gold and silver than the other gates of the temple. This door gave easy access to the interior of the temple, and for that reason the lame man was laid at that point. It was probably a custom for people entering the temple to always have money to give to the beggars. The apostles were, no doubt, very poor in this world but they were very rich in faith and the presence of the Lord Jesus. Peter and John, still united by the holy love of their Saviour were going into the temple for the prayer hour. It is a good and wholesome and beneficial practice for people to pray together. Private and secret prayer is strongly advised by the Lord, but it is an established fact that praying together brings great blessings on the Church. After Peter had given the commandment to the lame man to rise up and walk, he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. It was then that the healing took effect. Peter's taking the man by the right hand was an expression of faith. God honors every move that we make in our profession of faith in His promises today.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What were Peter and John going into the temple for?
2. How long had this lame man been crippled?
3. Why was he brought daily to the temple gate?
4. What did the lame man expect to receive from Peter and John?
5. Why did Peter not say, "Look on me?"
6. What did Peter have to give to this crippled man?
7. What did Peter show when he took the lame man by the right hand and lifted him up?
8. What did the lame man do more than just walking?

9. What kind of effect did this have upon the people?  
10. What did the lame man do to Peter and John?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

Healing is the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is concerned with both the spiritual healing that people need for the inner man, and He is concerned with the physical needs as well. He has healed the outer man very often to open the door for the healing of the inner man. And He has healed the inner man so sweetly as to inspire faith for the healing of the body. Isaiah declares that with his stripes we are healed. Isa. 53:5. Matthew quoted Isaiah thus: "... Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Matt. 8:17. The man in our lesson had never walked in his life. To support himself he had to beg for the mercy of others to give to his needs. There were no welfare checks or social security in those days. The extreme state of poverty upon mankind gave God an opportunity to show His love and helping favor. Try to imagine what it meant to this man who had never walked in his life to suddenly be able to leap up and walk like other men. No doubt his heart was filled with indescribable joy! It was a wonderful testimony of the power of God working in the believers of Jesus. How grateful this man healed by the Lord was as he held on to Peter and John! How wonderful that God would visit the sore need of the human race with healing for their sicknesses, afflictions, and woes! Of course, they associated Peter and John with this healing, looking on them with wonder and amazement. But Peter was careful not to receive any praise or honor for what was done, and in our next lesson we will hear another of the first gospel messages preached after Pentecost, exalting and making manifest the power and grace of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Eph. 3:20. I believe this is a perfect description of how the lame man must have felt after being healed. He asked Peter and John for alms to tide him over for a few hours and he received the blessing of a lifetime.

This was not a blessing indiscriminately given. The lame man was seeking help. The apostle James declared, "... ye

have not because ye ask not." James 4:2. Some of the outstanding healings recorded were of those who were seeking. Some had to press their way to gain an audience with Christ. "They besought him for" Simon's mother-in-law. The man with the palsy was helped by his friends. "They sought to bring him in, and to lay him before him. They went upon the house top, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus." "And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all." The centurion came to Christ, beseeching Him for help for his servant. Not feeling worthy of Christ's coming to his house, he besought Him just to speak the word. His desire was granted. This ought to encourage us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:16. —Wayne Murphey

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**May 15, 1988**

**THE HEALING OF THE LAME MAN**  
**Part II: Peter's Message**

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of res-

titution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

**Memory Verse:** For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.  
1 Peter 2:25.

**Central Thought:** Jesus Christ has passed into the heavens to intercede for us at the right hand of God in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures, and will remain there until the end of time. He comes to us in times of refreshing through the Holy Spirit.

**Word Definitions:** *I wot:* I know. *Times of restitution:* Times of restoration or reconstitution. This is referring to the end of this present age and the ushering in of the new heavens and the new earth. *Refreshing:* Blessings of peace, love, joy, and communion with Himself.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Our last Sunday's lesson took us up to the first statement of Peter's message to the people after the lame man had been healed. The people were filled with wonder and amazement and looked with marvel upon Peter and John. Peter wanted the people to know that it was not by their power or holiness that the man was healed. He glorified God and again reminded them about the recent death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, of whom he and the other disciples were witnesses. His message was one of great truth. Verses 19-21



have a very important content that we do not want to overlook. What is he trying to say? Let us read from the Emphatic Diaglott interlinear: "Reform you therefore and turn you in order that your sins may be wiped out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send Him who has been before destined for you, Jesus Christ, whom heaven must indeed receive [contain or hold] till the times of restoration of all things." Peter declared that Moses and Samuel and all the prophets had foretold these things that had come to pass. From His throne in the heavens, Christ is caring for and administering the matters concerning His kingdom of grace in the souls of men. He is the Head, the Leader, the Sovereign King, and the great Protector of His flock. The blessing that He promised Abraham has proven to be fulfilled in the blessing of salvation for the souls of men.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. How did Peter declare that the lame man was made whole?
2. Peter knew that the Jews had killed Jesus because of their \_\_\_\_\_ ?
3. What did he say that God had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets concerning Christ?
4. What did he tell the people that they should do?
5. What would repentance and conversion and being clean from sin enable them to receive from the presence of the Lord?
6. What prophecy from Moses did he quote?
7. What did Moses say would happen to everyone who refuses to hear Christ?
8. Of what covenant did Peter say that we are the children of?
9. What did God's covenant with Abraham say?
10. How did God send Jesus to bless us?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, that we might open our hearts wide to the truth that is contained in our lesson today! One great testimony of its truth was the miracle that stood looking at the people in the lame man healed and made whole. That was a marvelous thing to behold, but Peter wanted the people to be aware of a much greater miracle, and that was the risen Christ and what

He was and what He was doing at that hour. Christ had fulfilled the prophecy of the prophets who had spoken down through the years. Jesus had come down from heaven to take upon Him human form. He lived on the same level as the mortals that He came to save. He lived without sin, but He suffered and experienced all the hardships, trials, and temptations that humanity was subject to. He fought all the battles that men and women fight and He overcame them all. He visited mankind in their desperate needs. He healed, He comforted, and He taught the truth of God and the way of life. And, on top of all that, He took the blame and punishment for their sins by dying on the cross of Calvary. But the glorious outcome of it all was that He, the Saviour of men, did not stay in the tomb where they buried Him. He came back to life and showed Himself openly to His disciples. They were eye witnesses of His risen majesty. And then, some time later, He visibly went up and disappeared into the clouds. He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God as the prophets had foretold. He ministers from His throne of glory the blessings and help that will sustain His beloved in this world. He will remain in this intercessory position until the Father declares that, "It is enough." Then will come the end of this earth and its fleeting age. We must turn from our sins and take up our cross and follow Him if we want to share in His eternal glory. Praise the Lord for the message of Christ to us!

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Peter's message was plain and to the point, yet we find mercy in it. He exposed their gross error in crucifying Christ and yet he tempered it by allowing that it was done through ignorance. This is the same spirit of mercy and forgiveness that Christ had when He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. Peter proceeded to preach repentance to the people. Although something is done in ignorance, when God's light reveals it for what it is, He expects repentance.

The route of obtaining salvation is often shunned. A humbling of self and admission of wrong is hard for many people to do, but this is the only thing that God will accept. Pardon is conditional. Sin must be given up. Compromise or striking a deal is out of the question. How can a perfect and holy God accept one who holds tenaciously to his transgres-

sions? A French officer, whose ship had been captured by the English, advanced towards Admiral Nelson and offered his hand. "First give me your sword," said the admiral. There can be no true reconciliation with God while we retain the weapons of our rebellion, which includes our own opinions and ways. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. 55:7. Conscious and deliberate sin must be forsaken and conscious and deliberate righteousness must be lived. Then will come the times of refreshing through the Holy Spirit.

—Wayne Murphey

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## SHARING THE BURDEN



There was a warm-hearted Christian merchant who closed his shop on Sunday. In the morning he attended church to worship God, but in the afternoon he went on the street and distributed tracts. Feeling very tired one Sunday afternoon, he was resting quietly in his library. On the writing desk was a bundle of tracts. Outside it was pouring with rain. He heard a stealthy step, then the library door was pushed open and his eleven-year-old boy ran in. Seeing his father there the lad asked in surprise, "Why Father, aren't you going out to distribute tracts today?"

"It's raining too hard," he lightly replied to satisfy the child.

"Papa, doesn't God save people when it's raining?"

The merchant was startled at such an awesome question. So he explained, "When it is raining hard there are few people on the street. Moreover, I am very tired, so I am not going out."

"Papa, shall I go out for you?"

"Son, may God bless you in your good purposes. When you are grown you may continue your father's work." As he rumbled the child's hair, the latter coaxed, "Let me go now!" His heart had been touched and he was keen to act.

"It is not convenient in the rain."

"What does it matter if I wear my rubbers and carry an umbrella?" The child begged, then taking silence for consent he ran out and was back in a moment clad in his rain clothes. Skipping excitedly he called, "Father, I'm ready. Please give me some tracts."

Seeing the lad's eagerness the father handed him a few sheets, warning him to be careful and return when he was through. In high spirits the boy started out to distribute the tracts. In the downpour the streets were slippery and with scarcely a sign of a person. He waited a long time before he disposed of a single tract. Darkness was coming on; the rain continued relentlessly and there was not a solitary person on the whole street.

"Return when you are through," had been his father's command. If he were taking his father's place, he felt he must finish giving out the tracts before going home. Finally only the last sheet remained in his hand, but there wasn't a person in sight to whom he might give. He walked another block, but still he was the only one on the lonely street. What was he to do with this last tract? "There's a way. People don't come to me. Why don't I go to them?" With long strides he approached the nearest dwelling and knocked.

"Who's there?" came a voice from within. His heart was thumping, half with fright, half with joy. He waited a moment, but as no one opened the door, he gathered up his courage, raised his small fist and knocked again. Timidly he put his ear to the crack to hear if there were any movements inside.

"Who is it?"

"That's good. They'll surely come now," he thought. But he waited and still the door was fast closed. He was growing impatient and his small hand beat a rapid tattoo on the door.

"Who's knocking again?" He kept it up until the door opened and there stood an old woman whose distressed face was a sharp contrast to the eager one on the doorstep. With face wreathed in smiles he said respectfully; "Lady, pardon me, but I've come specially to bring you the Gospel." Raising his chubby fist he placed the last tract in her hand.

"Thank you."

The child darted off. His "Goodby" was blown back by the wind.

The next Sunday evening a small street chapel was crowded with listeners. The warm-hearted merchant was acting as usher. His young son had come along, hoping to learn how to do his father's work. After songs and prayer, the chairman asked if anyone wanted to testify to the Lord's grace. An old woman with the light of Heaven on her face rose and voiced her praise:

"Thank God, He sent a little angel to save me. Other-

wise last Sunday night in my loneliness, poverty, and utter despair I would have ended it all. It was pouring with rain. I had reached the dregs of human suffering, having lost both husband and son. After a long struggle I gave way to despondency and started to hang myself. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. I responded but made no move, thinking to wait until the person had gone before taking my life. But the knocking continued until I had to open the door. There stood a little angel with the face of spring who gave me a gospel tract. As I looked at it I knew that God had not forsaken me. I could not keep back the tears, but confessed my sin and asked for pardon. Praise the Lord! He saved me!"

The lad softly whispered in his father's ear, "She's the one!" Only then did the father know that God had sent his child to find a lost sheep by means of a tract!

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:14-17.)

—Andrew Gib

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**May 22, 1988**

## **THE CHURCH THREATENED**

Acts 4:1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.

4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

**Memory Verse:** Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Romans 8:34.

**Central Thought:** The same spirit of jealousy that moved the Jewish leaders to have Jesus put to death worked against the followers of Jesus as they began to influence the people to believe in Christ.

**Word Definition:** *Sadducees:* A Jewish sect, the followers of one Sadok, who flourished about three centuries before Christ. These Sadducees did not believe in angels, spirits, or resurrection.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The materialistic-minded Sadducees were very displeased that the Christians were making headway in influencing their society to believe in Jesus, whom they affirmed was risen from the dead. The Sadducees denied the supernatural power of God, and were in many ways similar to many in the religious world today. It is easy to be a Sadducee in heart. Just discredit the supernatural power of God and the reality of future life and resurrection, and you are such. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was a threat to the quiet hold that these carnal, near-sighted people had on the mass of humanity. Satan is the prince of darkness, and his work is to keep people in the dark about the real truth of Christ. Through oppressive ignorance and false teachings the devil succeeds in keeping society unaware of the real truth. The lack of the true knowledge of God paves the way for corruption to abound. Here is the reason for the persecution and sufferings of the Church when she shines as a light in the darkness. "... Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:19. To have their sinful ways uncovered and exposed causes them great alarm, for it attacks their social standing and favor with people. The Church was being a shining light as the power of God was manifested and the Word of the everlasting gospel was being preached so clearly. John and Alexander, mentioned in our lesson, were two of the wealthy and famous Jews who were in Jerusalem at that time. They sided with Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests, in their abuse against the saints. Finding nothing to punish them for, they threatened them to cease teaching in the name of Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the leaders grieved with the apostles?
2. What was the number of the men who believed?
3. Referring to Jesus as the stone, what did Peter say that the Jews had done to Him?
4. What did he say that this stone had become?
5. What did Peter make clear concerning salvation in anyone else but Christ?
6. What kind of men did the persecutors perceive that Peter and John were?
7. Who had the apostles been with?
8. What was Peter and John's answer when they were commanded not to speak at all in the name of Jesus?
9. What did the leaders do after that?
10. Why were they afraid to punish the apostles?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God was surely glorified by healing the lame man at the gate Beautiful of the temple. Souls are now being saved because of this miracle and the numbers of the disciples of Jesus are increasing more and more. There is a great stir in Jerusalem. But very soon Satan massed his contrary forces. The principalities of this present world withstood the work of the Lord. But Peter and the others, being filled with the power and courage of the Holy Spirit, were not daunted at the threats that were given. Referring to Isa. 28:16 and Psalm 118:22, Peter calls the Jewish leaders builders who set at nought the stone which had become the head of the corner, which was Jesus. In his first epistle, written years later, Peter uses this same scripture, stating that the disobedient to the Word were the ones who stumbled at the workings of God and set at nought, or disallowed, the very rock that was meant to be precious to them and to be their foundation stone. 1 Pet. 2:6-8. He went ahead to declare that there is no salvation in any other name under heaven. The leaders marvelled at the boldness and courage of Peter and John, but they remembered that they had seen these men before. **They had been with Jesus.** Because they had been with Jesus and because the Spirit of Jesus was working strongly in their hearts, they were able to give a straight and true answer to their opposers. They were able to steadfastly withstand the threats of punishment and the pressure that was being put upon them. Let us be alone with Jesus in prayer. Let us tarry and open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. Success and victory will come to us in our times of hardship and trial if we will.

—Leslie C. Bushee



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Church has always received persecution in one form or another. People, in general, are still grieved today because Christ is taught. It was recently on the news that a man paid the government of Britain the equivalent of \$180,000.00 to have their postal system cancel the postage on all letters with the words, "Jesus is alive." This caused a great uproar in that country and there was opposition to the idea of allowing this Christian message to be imprinted on the mail.

Although people can persecute and threaten, nothing can effectively diminish the blessing that salvation affords. When the Roman empire threatened to banish Chrysostom, the early Christian preacher, he aswered," Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's house. Thou canst not banish me." When the emperor threatened to kill him, he said, "Thou canst not, for my life is hid with Christ in God." When he threatened to take away his treasure, Chrysostom said, "My treausure is in heaven, and my heart is there." Finally the emperor said that he would take away his friends. To this the Christian said, "Thou canst not, for I have a Friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee; there is nothing thou canst do to hurt me."

—Wayne Murphey

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May 29, 1988

### THE CHURCH STRENGTHENED AND FRESHLY ANOINTED

Acts 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant

unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

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.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

**Memory Verse:** But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. Psalm 92:10.

**Central Thought:** The Holy Spirit abides continually in the saved and sanctified soul, but in special times of need and pressure, He pours out a fresh anointing and a new touch of fire upon the saints, to enable them to triumph over all the power of the enemy.

**Word Definitions:** *Unicorn:* Usually refers to the rhinoceros, but here the Hebrew word "reeym" could refer to the ox or the buffalo, meaning conspicuous or uplifted. "*Holy child Jesus*": The Greek word here means "holy servant Jesus."

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we saw where the Church met its first real opposition since the Saviour was crucified. Jesus had foretold the persecution that was now beginning. At first it was threats, but later there was to be real action taken against the saints of the Lord. The leaders were the ones who were

threatened at this point. This was not taken lightly by the Church. They realized that the threats were real and could be carried out. "They went to their own company." How wonderful it is to have a company of brethren and saints to resort to in this life! The weight of the cross weighs down upon the people of God. In one another is found comfort and consolation and an agreement of prayer to God for help. These people's hearts were knit together in the holy bonds of love and pure affection. What affected one affected all. United in their simple faith in Christ and the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they fell on their knees before God. They lifted up their voices to Go with one accord. They were agreed. They knew what they were facing, and they knew what they needed from God. This matter of praying together in agreement and heart to heart has never lost its value to the Church. God responded to that prayer that day and sent a new touch of holy fire and fresh anointing upon their hearts. It bound them up in such unity that all the cords of self and worldly love of earth was melted away. It will still do the same today. When the love of God holds full sway in our hearts, we are willing to share what little we have with the precious saints, for we know it all belongs to God. —Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Where did the apostles go after being let go from their persecutors?
2. What did the assembly of saints do when they heard what had happened?
3. Who did they quote from in their prayer?
4. How did they say that David's prophecy had been fulfilled?
5. What did they ask the Lord for?
6. What happened when they had prayed?
7. What were they filled with?
8. How did they speak the word of God?
9. What was the relationship they had to each other?
10. What did they do with the money from the houses and lands?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

How dear and precious the children of God are to each other! When burdens come and needs arise, it is a wonderful blessing to have someone you can go to and pray with about it. God seems to take special note and particular delight

in saints praying together and being in one heart and one soul. We have seen along the journey of life so much good and wonderful effects of united prayer and agreement. In camp meetings, assembly meetings, and revival meetings, united and earnest prayer is indispensable for the success and progress of the meeting. Private prayer is important, also. But praying together as a band of saints for the blessings of God brings great response from our Father in heaven. The story we have heard of W. W. Walford, the author of the words to the song, "Sweet Hour of Prayer," says that he was a shoemaker. Sometimes in the course of the day's work, problems and difficulties would arise. When this would come, he would close the shutters of his shop, hang a "Closed" sign out front, and retire to the back room for prayer to God. From this practice of faithful prayer were inspired the words to this wonderful song. God answers prayer sometimes by removing the obstacle, but more often, we might say, His will is to refresh and strengthen the soul that one might be able to surmount life's problems and overcome them. Oh, the strength that comes to the soul when the Holy Spirit comes upon us afresh! Oh, what a privilege we have to receive of the fulness of Christ, and grace for grace! When we make a real contact with the divine power of Christ through the Holy Spirit, our ways and attitudes will be just such as it was in the early Church. We will truly have all things common.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"And being let go, they went to their own company." The type of people we associate with in life is a good indication of where we will spend eternity. It is related of one well known preacher that he had seasons of deep despondency, when he was confident that he was going to hell. His brethren often labored with him in vain. One day, after all the reasoning had failed, one of the ministers said, "Well, brother, you know more about yourself than we do. To us you appear very well; but after all, you may be a whited sepulchre—beautiful on the outside, but inwardly full of corruption. If so, you will go to hell. I should like, however, to know what you will do when you get there?" "Do?" cried the preacher with great animation and emphasis. "What will I do? I will vindicate the law of God, and set up prayer meetings." "All right," replied his brother, "but in that case the devil will not keep you there; he will soon turn you out as unfitted for his place and company." The preacher came out of his gloom and was happy.

In *Winning a Crown*, C. W. Naylor writes, "When Christians are associated in a church, they have two kinds of fellowship. There is, first, associational fellowship, or the fellowship that comes from being associated in the same organization. This tie of association that binds them together is often mistaken for the fellowship of the Spirit. It is not, however, this fellowship, but something quite distinct from it. Spiritual fellowship is the blending of kindred spirits, whether these be good or bad. Christian fellowship is the blending of the Spirit of God in the hearts of God's people. It is the heart-tie that unites them one to another. It has its origin in God. It cannot be made; it cannot be forced. It is spontaneous. It is the affinity of like elements. We cannot make ourselves have fellowship with someone. If it exists at all, it exists naturally, simply because both parties are possessed of the same spirit." It was this true fellowship of being in one accord that brought the anointing and refreshing on Peter, John, and the Church.

—Wayne Murphey

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June 5, 1988

## THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA, HIS WIFE

Acts 5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira, his wife, sold a possession.

2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is that ye have agreed

together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

12b (And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

**Memory Verse:** . . . Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth. Luke 12:15b.

**Central Thought:** Greed and dishonesty in a person's life will bring them under the condemnation and wrath of God and will doom their souls to a devil's hell.

**Word Definitions:** *Privy:* To understand, or be fully aware of. *Durst:* Dared.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. 17:9. In the midst of the greatest workings of God with souls can corruption break forth because of this sad condition of the heart of man. Things were going great in the work of the Lord. Hearts were being melted by the gospel. Love was flowing from one to another. The icebergs of self and earthly love were melting and the warmth of brotherly love and affection were ruling. Those who had worldly possessions that they had accumulated trusted no more in these temporal things. Seeing their poorer brethren who had not enough, they gladly disposed of their properties and brought the proceeds to the apostles for distribution to the needy. No one told them that they had to do this. This was purely on a free-will offering basis from the heart moved with compassion and the love of God. The couple pictured in our lesson incurred the wrath of God because of their deceit and covetousness of heart. They had talked this over privately. They had come to this decision together. It was not weakness or ignorance on their part or else they would have been shown mercy. Peter made it clear to Ananias that the money was his

own responsibility and he did not really have to give it all in the first place. But because he professed to give it all and secretly held back part of the price under hypocrisy, the wrath of God fell upon him and his wife. The cost of this dishonesty included his poor eternity-bound soul and everything in this life as well. How strangely things were carried out in those days! Think of a woman's husband being dead and buried for three hours without her knowledge! No doubt, it was just some more of the judgment of God upon her when she proved to be deceitful also. Surely it pays to keep the fear of God upon our hearts!

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why did Ananias and Sapphira want to keep back part of the price of the land instead of giving it all?
2. Why did they give under pretence of giving the entire piece of the land?
3. Did they have to give all of the price of the land?
4. What should they have done if they felt that they needed the money for something else and could only give a part of the price?
5. What was their grave error and mistake?
6. What did this error cost them?
7. What is the danger in covetousness?
8. Does happiness consist of having great possessions of earthly goods?
9. Why does God not want us to love wealth?
10. What effect did the judgment of God in our lesson have upon the society of people?

### **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

Sin and transgression is not only wrong and offensive to God, but it is also needless, harmful, and not beneficial to the soul. There was no need for Ananias and his wife to lie to the Holy Spirit. If they could have safely and conveniently given the full price of the land, moved and inspired to do so by the love of God and the example of others doing the same, all would have been well. And if they had done it at a great sacrifice, their blessing would have been doubtless much more. They did not have to do it at all. They could have sold the land and used the money for another need, and all would have been well. But when they sold the land and then came to the apostles saying, "This is the price that we got for our land," and at the same time lying about it and keeping back a

portion secretly, God was greatly grieved and saw that open punishment would help others to fear more as they should before Him. No doubt Ananias and Sapphira did not dream that the wrath of God would be poured out so quickly. And no doubt there were very few who had any idea like that, either. We need to keep the fear of God upon our hearts today. Just because the wrath of God is not poured out upon people in every case as it was upon Ananias and Sapphira, does not mean that men are not incurring the wrath and displeasure of God. Sometimes God pours out His wrath to show forth to mankind more of the fear of the Lord. The destruction of the world by the flood in Noah's time; the fiery overthrow of Sodom and the cities of the plain in the time of Lot; and other instances in God's Word of the fierceness of God's wrath should be a warning and a lesson to all of us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Christ said a great deal about the danger of riches; but not many persons are afraid of riches. Covetousness is not practically considered a sin in these times. If a man breaks the sixth or eighth commandment, he is branded as a criminal and covered with shame; but he may break the tenth, and he is only enterprising.

"To look about one, one would think a man's life *did* consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. Men think they become great just in proportion as they gather wealth. So it seems, too; for the world measures men by their bank account. Yet there never was a more fatal error. A man is really measured by what he is, and not by what he has. You may find a shrivelled soul in the midst of a great fortune, and a grand, noble soul in the barest poverty.

"The first thing is to gather into our life all the truly great and noble things of character. Here are two texts to ponder, because they settle this question: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report . . . think on these things.' 'Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.' "

—Taken from *Come Ye Apart*



**June 12, 1988**

## **THE GOSPEL GOES FORTH, DESPITE OPPOSITION**

Acts 5:12a And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people;

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18 And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straightly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled

Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

**Memory Verse:** No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. Isa. 54:17.

**Central Thought:** No human opposition can keep God from fulfilling His holy purpose when His saints obey Him and go forth with the gospel of salvation for the souls of men.

**Word Definitions:** *Indignation:* Jealousy. *Common prison:* Public prison.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The terrible fate of Ananias and his wife Sapphira had produced a tremendous effect upon the Church and all the society about them. It caused people to recognize that surely God was with that little band of believers in Christ. The believers congregated in Solomon's porch. Clarke observes that, according to Josephus, this was a porch on the east side of the outer court of the temple. It was left standing from the original temple of Solomon, and was about 600 feet long. When the leaders saw that the religion of Jesus was gaining to such proportions, they carried their anger against the apostles farther than threats by having them put into the public jail. Not believing in the power of the almighty God to be with them, the leaders felt that this would put a stop to their work. But the angel of the Lord came by night and, releasing them, gave them this commission: "Speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Think of the expression: "all the words of this life." The life that is in Christ still needs to be preached today. There is a resurrection in Christ for the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins. There is life forevermore. This life begins now when we are saved. See how quick the apostles were to obey the angel? They entered into the temple early in the morning and began teaching the gospel. How surprised were the officials when they came to get the apostles to take them before the council! They were gone! No doubt the leaders were getting fearful, wondering just how far this would all go. The high priest accused them of intending to bring the blood of Christ upon them. but we know that this was not the purpose of the brethren. They were only witnessing what they were deeply

persuaded of, and if the blood was brought upon the Jewish leaders, it was because of their own error.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people do when they saw that God was doing healings and miracles?
2. Why were the Jewish leaders jealous of the apostles?
3. What did they do with them?
4. What happened during the night?
5. Where did the apostles go and what did they do early the next morning?
6. How did the apostles get by the guards when they escaped the prison?
7. How did the captain with the officers bring the apostles from the temple to the council?
8. What did the high priest accuse the apostles of doing?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a blessing the Church was proving to be to the world of people around about! The world was held in bondage under Satan's dismal sway. People were sick and tormented of unclean spirits. Although Jesus had healed many, there were many more who needed to be healed. Think of the streets lined with sick people on couches and beds, just waiting for at least the shadow of Peter to pass over them! Then they came from the cities, too. They were every one healed. Is that not wonderful and blessed? How good the Lord is to people even today. He still heals and blesses humanity. We may not see it as much as it seems to have been accomplished back then, but we know that the Lord is still working to help people in their troubles. We can rejoice in what God did back there, just as well as we can rejoice about what He is doing today. Oh, the message the apostles were giving to the people! It was the message of the life in Christ. Not long ago, I was visiting in a home, and we had a long discussion about various controversial points which the ones I was visiting with were bothered about. I counselled them the best I knew how. But in the night the Lord visited my heart with thoughts about the life that is given to a child of God which enables him to understand the things of God. I thought of the many Scriptures that speak about the life that is in Christ. Oh, it was so comforting, reassuring, and enlightening! It is the life that Christ has to give that will prevail with God and will help us to see the true

light. This life, this risen life in the soul, was what the apostles were trying to hold before the people. If only those brazen and cold leaders could have seen the life that Christ wanted to give them! They would not have crucified the saints, had they known it. But, like many today, they were dead and did not realize it. They had no perception of the life of Christ and thus were blinded in their way. —Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“O, there have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen church of Christ! The martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree; the pastor was cut off, and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture—awful suffering was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried, and said, ‘O Lord, how long? let it repent thee concerning thy servants.’ The enemy laughed and said, ‘Ah, ah! so would we have it.’ Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter, and her princes were trodden down like mire in the streets. O, my soul! how was it in that sad day, when the enemy came in upon her like a flood, and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when thou wouldst not hear the cry of thine elect! It seemed as if thine ear was deaf; the plaint of the widow was unheeded; the groans, the agonies, and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed; and thou didst still allow the enemy to vex thy children. Persecution shook the land, and sent forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy his church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the church had a wave pass over she rose out of it, and lifted her fair countenance, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. She was all the more glorious for it all. Every time her blood was shed each drop became a man, and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause. Ah! those were times when, instead of the church being diminished and brought low, God did multiply her, and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil.”

—C. H. Spurgeon

## PROTECTED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS

*A True Story by Joseph Payne, A Missionary to Mongolia*

Throughout the long winter months Gashatay, it seemed, had led a charmed life. For many miles around, villages had been sacked, looted, and refugees had been continually pouring into the mission station. Spring came and with it, the news that a fresh and much larger band of brigands than had hitherto been seen had entered the district. They were the "Heh Ma Tui" (Black Horse Brigade), exceptionally well equipped and numbering over 2,000 strong.

One night, while everyone slept and silence reigned, I was suddenly awakened out of my sleep by a blood-curdling yell. It came from my wife who was fast asleep. After the scream, still fast asleep, and in a perfectly steady voice, she cried out triumphantly, "Protected by the Blood of Jesus, protected by the Blood of Jesus!" She kept crying this until I awakened her. She was in a state of great excitement and fear. She had been dreaming, and this is what she had dreamed:

Stretched before her vision lay the vast open plain of Mongolia. Nestling in its little hollow, lay the village of Gashatay, and the mission buildings. Presently, gathering from the four parts of the earth, multitudes of shadowy figures appeared. They were unclean spirits being spewed from the pit of hell. There were legions of them and they overpowered everything in their pathway as they swept over the countryside. No one and nothing was spared.

Finally they reached Gashatay, and then came pouring over the hill and through the mission gates. The dreamer then saw two of the figures break away from the rest of the company and enter our little two-roomed, brick house. They entered the first room and were about to enter the second when my wife and I with all the strength of our lungs cried out, "Protected by the Blood of Jesus, protected by the Blood of Jesus!" (It was this cry which had awakened me out of my sleep.) Slowly, and sneering horribly as they realized they were being cheated of their prey, the two evil spirits in her dream slunk backwards. The power of the precious Name was compelling them to yield ground, until finally, after one last supreme but fruitless effort to advance, they disappeared. We were safe. What could the dream mean?

About nine o'clock that same morning, just after prayers, one of the brethren came running over to me crying excitedly, "Mu'shih, come quickly, bandits are coming!" Following after Brother Pai, I raced up the little hill, at the top of which is the small mission cemetery, and looked in the direction

indicated. Far over in the west I saw great rolling clouds of dust which told us that a veritable army was on its way. Intermittently groups of horsemen broke through the dust clouds and we saw them galloping madly in the direction of Gashatay. In between the horsemen and Gashatay, the whole countryside was seething with the fleeing peasants. Even as we watched, the villages immediately below us were being whipped into a state of great excitement as they realized that within an hour the plundering horde would be upon them. Already they had reached and were sacking "Red Slipper Valley."

Returning to my wife as composedly as possible, I explained to her what was happening. We were expecting our first baby any day, and our nearest medical help was nearly four day's journey away, so anxiety was tearing at our hearts. By now the refugees were streaming past us in an ever growing number. Sweating and cursing men, their faces set with determination and drawn in anxiety, were furiously lashing their beasts into greater effort. Springless carts drawn by oxen, bearing terror-stricken women with their screaming children, rumbled clumsily by on their wooden wheels. Small boys did their part and struggled gamely along with their belongings tied up in a dirty blue cloth and slung over their shoulders. Lastly, bringing up a pathetic rear, came poor women, too poor to own carts or animals, shouting at their screaming children to hurry faster, hobbling painfully by on their crippled bound feet. Some would stumble and fall, while scores of them too discouraged and weary to go farther, turned into our mission gates and implored us to help them.

Our own friends pleaded with us to join the stream of runaways and try to make a get-a-way while there was still opportunity, for they knew that we would be considered a rare prize should we fall into the hands of the bandits. We declined, however, as we felt in this matter we must trust the Lord. The last refugee had passed, and momentarily we were expecting the blow to fall, but for some reason it failed to come. Except for some sporadic shooting in the distance, all was quiet.

We were at a loss to understand it, when suddenly, from out of the earth it seemed, away on the ridge of the distant foothills by which Gashatay is surrounded, a column of horsemen appeared. Silhouetted against the skyline, they were an inspiring sight as they galloped along the crest of the hills. Others appeared and soon the air was again filled with the sound of barking rifles and the rat-a-tat of machine guns. Presently some of the refugees came straggling back, bearing

with them one or two wounded. Even before we were told we knew what had happened; we were surrounded! A nauseating feeling of utter helplessness came over me—and not over me only, but over all, as we realized that it was only a matter of an hour or two before our fate was sealed. There was not a vestige of hope left that we would be delivered because there was no company of soldiers within eighty miles large enough to rescue us.

My wife and I solemnly turned back into our little home. Conflicting thoughts filled our minds and anxiety clutched at our hearts for the little one that was to be born to us in the near future. Tales of bandit cruelty were carried to us, increasing our alarm and anxiety. The suffering of those who had been fastened to rafters and branded with hot shovels, of those who had fingers crushed under stones, lips and noses slit with knives, of others who had been thrown alive down wells, came very near to us, and caused distress and terror.

Gunfire was coming perilously near now. I looked out of the window and there on the southern foothills I saw a company of bandits taking up formation. Even as I watched them they came charging down the side of the hill, riding like demons. Bullets were whistling in all directions as my wife and I again sought the Lord in prayer. We asked for grace to die—if that were to be our lot—to die as Christians. Then we asked for a word of comfort, and to our hearts the Lord spoke and gave us these words: To my wife the promise given was, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil." And to me, "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper." In a wonderful way we felt strengthened and a sweet assurance filled our hearts. God was with us, and something of that calmness and peace which the martyrs must have experienced flooded our souls. "Oh, the peace that Jesus gives!"

Rising from our knees, we got a glimpse through the window of bandits galloping round and round the compound firing on us as they passed. Finally, when they realized that their shooting was not returned, they came charging into the compound. The hour had come. Deliverance or martyrdom? What was it to be? "Be brave, dear, it will not be long now." What followed in the next few moments is a hazy jumble in my mind, but I remember my wife and I together going out into the compound to meet the bandits; then a rifle being pushed towards us, a curse and a command to get back into the house under threat of death, and my wife scolding our would-be murderer for walking on the garden! Strange what things we do in a crisis! We returned to the sanctuary of our rooms as ordered and waited.

We had not long to wait, for soon the door was rudely kicked open and in strode two bandits. They had been detailed off from the main group to loot and bring us forth, probably for execution. Here was an outstanding thing: it was exactly as my wife had seen in her dream. For the second time within a few hours she was looking upon the same picture. Up til now it seemed as if the devil had had everything his own way, but now we began to see the hand of the Lord. Approximately ninety-five per cent of the population of Mongolia is unable to read or write, but God in His goodness saw to it that one of these men who came to us was one of the five per cent who could read. Furthermore, somewhere he had heard the glad message of God's love, for he appeared to be acquainted with the Gospel. On our walls he had seen Scripture portions printed in Chinese.

What happened next was overpowering. Striding across the room, this bandit, clothed still in his heavy winter furs (though it was May 4), perspiration coursing down his face in tiny rivulet, with his rifle held ready, confronted me and stared into my eyes with a peculiar expression. I wonder what thoughts passed through that man's mind? What past experiences had he had? Who knows but that some isolated, lonely missionary's labor was now bearing fruit!

"Is this a Jesus house?"

"It is."

"Are you a Jesus man?"

"I am."

His hand was placed on my shoulder and in tenderness he said, "Do not be afraid, I will see that you are not molested. I will protect you, for you are good people. You preach the way of righteousness." Then as suddenly as he had come, he was away. He had come to loot, to rob, to plunder and to kill. He became our comfort and consolation instead. Oh, wonderful, wonderful are the ways of our God! Who can fathom His love? Of all that murderous horde there probably was only one who could help us and God sent that one!

All that morning, throughout the afternoon, and well into early evening, the terrible work went on. Young men were murdered in cold blood; women were ravished; old people were thrown alive down the wells. Homesteads and farms were looted and put to the torch. Backwards and forwards raged that horde. What some had missed, others found, so that none escaped. In the midst of all this sorrow, destruction and carnage the "Jesus House" stood unscathed. It was a "city of refuge," for all that sought its shelter that bloody day. "Pro-



ted by the Blood of Jesus, protected by the Blood of Jesus!"  
"When I see the blood I will pass over you."

—Taken from, *Bible Lessons* 1977

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June 19, 1988

## REJOICING TO SUFFER SHAME FOR CHRIST

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

**Memory Verse:** For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Heb. 12:3.

**Central Thought:** We must not be discouraged and fearful at the threats and pressures of the powers against the truth, but rather rejoice to know that God is with us and will lead us on to certain victory.

**Word Definitions:** *"Cut to the heart"*: Exasperated, furious. *Dispersed*: Scattered.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

In our last lesson the apostles had been brought again before the high priest and other leaders of the Jews. The high priest had accused them of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine and with intentions of bringing the blood of Christ upon them. Our lesson begins today with Peter's answer to the charges brought against them. Their answer infuriated the Jews. Just the mere thought or suggestion that Jesus Christ, whom they had slain, was still alive and reckoned by these men to be exalted to the right hand of God filled their hearts with wicked indignation. They took counsel to slay the apostles, but they were restrained by the wise counsel of one called Gamaliel. This was the same Gamaliel that Paul mentioned in his defence to the Jews in Acts 22:3, in which he stated: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel." Although Gamaliel was not in favoritism with the religion of Jesus Christ, yet he was sane, balanced, wise, and unbiased enough to see that the Jewish leaders were not handling the matter very well. He had enough of the balanced fear of God to beware of fighting against God. He mentioned two different instances of men who rose up in their horn in defiance against society and government. His reasoning was very sound. "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." History has proven this to be so. Nevertheless the apostles were beaten and commanded not to teach their doctrines. Undaunted by these persecutions and rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for their Master, they continued daily and in every house and in the temple to proclaim the wonderful works of Jesus Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. What did Peter tell the leaders that he and the other apostles ought to do?
2. What did he say that Christ was exalted to be?
3. To whom did he say that God had given the Holy Spirit?
4. Why did Gamaliel counsel the Jews to be careful what they did to these men?
5. Why did he counsel them to leave the apostles alone?
6. What did the Jews do to the apostles?
7. How did the apostles take what was done to them?
8. Did they cease their labors and ministering?
9. Why did the apostles rejoice?
10. What did the name of Jesus Christ mean to these people?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The followers of Jesus were so positive in their assurance of who Christ was and where He was that they were willing to endure the persecution raised against them by those who were not thus persuaded. They knew that Jesus had died and risen again from the grave. They had beheld Him ascending up into the heavens. They knew that, according to the Scriptures, Jesus was at the right hand of God in intercession for them. Why should they be fearful or dismayed at whatever came against them? God was on their side, and Jesus was with them. They knew that their work and their cause was of God. Oh, we today who are living for God and following Jesus can have that same persuasion and boldness! Christ is still the Prince and Saviour for the souls of men! He is still at the right hand of God in power and dominion over all. He is interceding for us in the midst of our battles. As Paul said in Rom. 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect when God justifies us? Who is he that condemns and tries to stop the truth? And who is able to separate us from Christ? Even if we suffer bodily pain and sorrow, if it be for His sake and because of our stand for Him, we know that He is being glorified. This has been the consolation and confidence of Christ's Church down through the ages. The fifty million or so martyrs through the dark ages were able to endure the terrible pains of death because of their persuasion in Him. And down here in these latter days of time we find Christ still all-sufficient and faithful to lean upon and trust in. Let us hold fast our rejoicing and full assurance of hope firm unto the end.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Each of us have different trials, temptations, and persecutions or problems to face. Some might have severe trials from their children, some from their parents, some from those at work, some from relatives, some from their wives, some from their husbands, some from bodily afflictions, some from their neighbors, etc. On and on grows the list through whom we might be touched. Each of us is going to be tempted and tried in this life. We might as well expect that. The one thing we must do, through all of these things, is to guard our faith and confidence in God.

Oh, I know that the troubles will come thick and fast at times. It will bring us to tears, and we may become weary and faint with it all. We look at the person through whom it comes. We are tempted to blame them, and then the devil is there to work in some ill feeling toward that person. But we must not fight the person through whom the trial is coming, but we must resist the devil. He is the bottom of it all. We are to pray for those who spitefully use us. When we place the proper cause for the trouble, then we know what weapons to use. We are told in the Word to "put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." So we need to have plenty of peace, faith, righteousness, truth, the Word of God, and prayer to fight the devil with. Remember we are not fighting against "flesh and blood" so we "do not war after the flesh." "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" the devil has tried to build up around us. Thank God, we can be "more than conquerors through Christ" who gives us the victory.

—M. Miles (Written in 1974)

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**June 26, 1988**

## **A GREAT NEED IN THE CHURCH IS FILLED**

Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6 Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council.

13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

**Memory Verse:** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2 Cor. 4:7.

**Central Thought:** *Proselyte:* Convert to Christ. *Suborned men:* To secretly arrange and delegate for the purpose of fraud or deceit.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ was prospering and growing daily. Many people were being added to the ranks of the faithful. And it is certain that when the numbers of members are multiplied, the problems and responsibilities are also multiplied. In a crowd of people such as was being added to the Church we might be sure to find the various kinds of people that make up the human race at large. Not only will there be grown and dependable men who are capable of standing on their own two feet and being used as leaders. There will be children, sick people, poor people, aged people, and widows and orphans. In our lesson today we see where the Church arose to meet some of these needs. The widows were being neglected. This was before the time of social security, old age pensions, and welfare. God had so designed His Church to take care of these needs. The care for one another and the love that flowed from heart to heart was not only on things above and the hope of future life with Jesus. There were hungry mouths to feed and aged minds and hearts to comfort and care for. Although the apostles could not see how that they could leave off their duties in preaching the gospel, they did recognize that this need must be filled. Of the seven men chosen to fill this need, we are most acquainted with Stephen and Philip. We shall hear of Philip later on. Note the qualifications: of honest report and full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. As so often is the case, God chose to use these brethren who were so dedicated to the work in other areas as well as attending to the widows. Stephen began to function as another leader in the work of the Lord. And, because of his success and blessing to the multitudes, he began to draw the anger and displeasure of the ones in authority. We find him brought up to the council, his face shining as an angel, prepared to give an answer for his faith.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. What problem arose in those days when the number of the disciples increased?
2. Why did the twelve not feel it good to take care of this need themselves?
3. What kind of people did they call for to fill this need?
4. What particular kind of people were obedient to the faith along with all the others?
5. How was Stephen's ministry blessed?
6. How did those who opposed Stephen get along in resisting him?
7. What did they accuse Stephen of doing?
8. What did Stephen's face appear like?

## **ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS**

The greatest service that one can enter and be a part of is the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many opportunities in this great field of labor, and the great blessing and reward of faithful service to the Master ought to be a great attraction to the soul of man. The Lord needs faithful and qualified workers. It will not all be on the front line in the pulpit and out where one can be seen. There are the workers who will be behind the scenes, faithfully filling there the service of the Lord in caring for the poor and aged, and serving others in menial chores and responsibilities. Who does God call and from whence come His faithful servants? It is from the people who are saved and who are really seeking to know and do His will. The desire to serve in the work of the Lord is not a personal desire to be seen or heard, but it springs from a loving heart to the Master and a willingness to spend and be spent for His dear name. Cooperation and unity and a fervent heart of love will make each man's calling a joy and a delight. Even though the task be lowly and seemingly unimportant, yet God has so tempered the body to give great comfort and consolation in whatever the place that one might fill in answer to the Spirit's call. There is a place for everyone to fill. If each one will earnestly seek God every day and apply his or her heart to the school of wisdom that He calls us all to, God will be faithful to open up a place where we can labor through life's short day for Jesus the Crucified. What a blessing it is to be in the cause of the gospel, regardless of the suffering and persecution that comes therein! Let us devote

ourselves to the fear of the Lord and be ready to answer the call to divine service when it comes to us.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

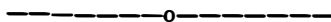
Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the early Church is recorded in our lesson today. The Church arrived at such a perfect state and its light beamed so brightly that a great company of priests were won to the gospel. These men were of a group which had been adamantly and diametrically opposed to Christ. It was a great miracle.

What brought about this miracle? Our lesson indicates that the business matters of the Church were being cared for by men filled with the Holy Ghost. They had more than a high profession. They were displaying the fruit of the Spirit. The disciples' soul-stirring sermons would have been ineffective if matters of business were neglected. It would have been a blight on the cause of Christ.

There is a lesson to be derived from this. The world will respect our Christian profession only if they can respect our business dealings. This includes our private lives. Tertullian, one of the great Church fathers, said that he and most of the converts who came out of paganism in his day were won to Christ, not by books or sermons, but by observing how Christians lived and died.

While a missionary was giving an address to some Hindu ladies, one of them arose and walked out. After a short absence, she returned and listened more intently than before. At the close, the missionary asked her if she had left because she was not interested. The Hindu replied, "Oh, yes! I was so interested in the wonderful things you were saying that I went out to ask your carriage driver whether you lived it at home. He said you did so I came back to listen again." The Church needs more people who live the Word to fill its positions. The example of a godly life will help add souls to the Church.

—Wayne Murphey





## PART OF DERO BROWN'S TESTIMONY



On arriving in Los Angeles and settling here in the Valley, my wife found a job almost immediately and so did I. I joined the painter's union and it looked like we were going to make it for awhile. I stayed off of drugs for a year and worked. Of course, I was stopping at too many of the bars and booze will get you in trouble almost as fast as drugs. Of course it is not a violation of the law to drink, but it will get you into a lot of trouble. I am sure that there are more men in all of the prisons that I have been in who are there indirectly because of alcohol than there are for any other one thing in the world. It will break up your home and will destroy your life and will certainly send you to prison.

Any number of men I have talked to seemed like nice fellows when I met them in prison and after talking to them they would say, "Brownie, you wouldn't believe this I am sure, no one else does, but I was so drunk when I committed this crime I don't even remember committing it. Here I am in prison doing twenty years for this terrible crime committed against society while I was so drunk I don't remember it." So you see alcoholism is just as destructive and will cause you just as much trouble and send you to a devil's hell just as quickly as any of the rest of the vices that I know anything about.

So here I was in California, painting, making a hundred and forty or fifty dollars a week, but drinking too much, and for the first time in all these years I was having some serious domestic difficulties. My wife resented very much my use of drugs, but at least while I was using drugs I wasn't violent and didn't abuse her or do some of the things that I did when I started using alcohol. It looked like this thing was going to break up our home. I began associating with some of my old friends doing many things for which we could be sent to prison (if we got caught) and one day found myself facing an assault and battery with-intent-to-kill charge. I had a lot of hatred in me built up during my years in McAlester, Oklahoma when I was locked up in solitary. I was on bond doing everything in my power to get it fixed, and really the police, knowing the circumstances, were not too anxious to send me to the penitentiary for this because of the way it came up—it didn't look too bad on my part. Even though I was still out of prison I was not doing too well. It looked like that I would get back in there because the

boys were coming around frequently and we were playing some of the old con games trying to make some easy money.

It wasn't long until I was back on drugs again and this, of course, almost crushed the heart of my dear little wife because she had seen this pattern over a period of years and she knew just what it would do. I would begin as though I had a little sense and then I would wind up like I didn't have any because this thing grows on you as time goes by. I started out by using a small amount of drugs and then I kept on until I was again using a large quantity. Of course, this requires more and more money. Now you can't make this kind of money painting, or any other kind of legitimate work, so I had to start back in the rackets again to support this vicious dope habit.

Heroin in California was about twenty-five dollars per paper and before it was over I could shoot one of these papers every two hours and I had to have it. If I didn't have it, I was out there trying to get it and this meant I had to commit an awful lot of felonies. I would imagine that in the year and a half or two years this dope habit ran, I must have committed not less than five thousand felonies. So you see when I was caught, I was way overdue. I was arrested and as always I made bond and then set about to try my best to get the lesser sentences on the charges against me. Some of these charges called for more time than the others, but usually I put it off as long as I could. By spending money with attorneys to have my case postponed in court, and then getting my business all straightened out, when it came to a show down, I would plead guilty just to save the State some money and the prosecutor some trouble. He usually agreed to give me the lightest sentence that he possibly could. And that is what happened in my case in California.

I took the least that I could possibly get, which was fourteen years. Now I had never been in an institution like the one in California where they have an indefinite sentence, where after the sentence is given, the pardon and parole board, (or adult authority as it is called) determined how much time one is to serve. Of course when they classified me they saw immediately that I would be placed in the incurable class along with the habituals that could not be cured and there was little hope or help for me from any of these people. They would no doubt be surprised today if they know that I am out, going on my second year, doing the work that I am doing right now and writing this testimony. But nevertheless, I am out, and this is the important thing in my life and I

believe with all of my heart that I am out now to stay since God so marvelously saved me.

—By Dero "Jack" Brown, 30 years a drug addict, 17 years in prison, 3½ years in solitary confinement.

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