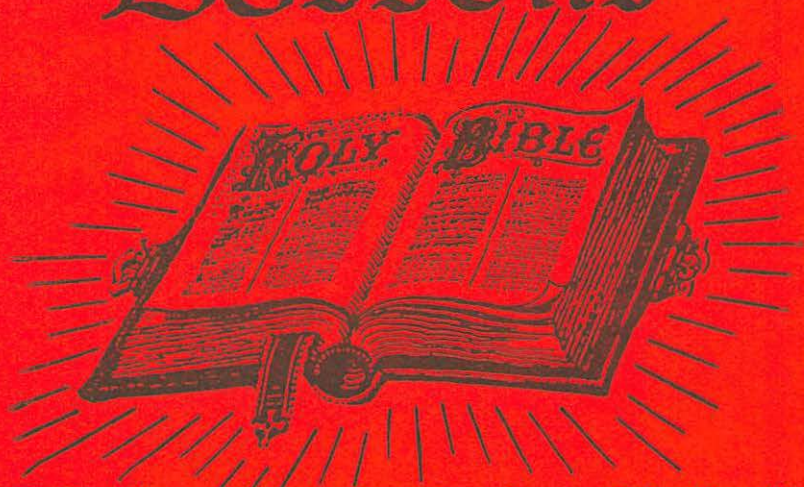


# Bible Lessons



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

**ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE**

Volume 21, No. 4  
Oct., Nov., Dec.  
1989

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# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 21

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## Theme for Fourth Quarter, 1989

Our Bible lesson studies for this quarter will be the second epistle of Paul the apostle to the Corinthians. In the 14 lessons in this series of studies we will be able to cover a number of precious subjects. This was Paul's second letter to these brethren, a sequence to the first letter and the effect for good that it had upon them. The comfort and mercy of God, the true ministry of the New Testament and Christ's ministers, the hope we have in Him, the purity and standard of holiness that is ours to follow, the blessing of giving and being poor for Christ, the spiritual warfare that we are in, warnings against false preachers, being strong in our weakness, and examining ourselves in the true faith are all wonderfully expounded by the anointed heart and pen of the beloved Apostle Paul. We sincerely trust that this series of lessons will prove to be a wonderful blessing to everyone as much as we have enjoyed preparing them.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

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October 1, 1989

### CONSOLATION IN SUFFERING AND TRIBULATION

II Corinthians 1:3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

7 And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we

should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

12 For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

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

21 Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God;

22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

24 Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

**Memory Verse:** Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. II Corinthians 1:3.

**Central Thought:** The sufferings that we bear as followers of Christ are balanced by the comfort and consolation that Christ abundantly fills the heart with.

**Word Definitions:** *Tribulation:* Any trouble or distress that we meet in the Christian life. *Comfort and consolation:* Both of these words are generally from the same Greek word which means solace or encouragement. *Simplicity:* Singleness (as Jesus said, "If therefore thine eye be single," Matthew 6:22), sincerity without pretence or self-seeking; also generous and giving abundantly. *Godly sincerity:* Clearness and purity of God. *Yea:* Yes, positive. Yea means faith and believing, counting God faithful and true. *Nay:* No, negative. This is unbelief, doubts, darkness and despair. *"Dominion over your faith":* No man can rule or dominate another man's faith. Every man must stand on his own personal faith and trust in God.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

"It is a general opinion among learned men that this second epistle to the Corinthians was written about a year after the first epistle. That the first epistle has produced powerful effects among the Corinthians is evident from what the apostle mentions in this. Titus had met him in Macedonia, and told him of the reformation produced by the epistle; that the Church had put out from among them the evil, and that the epistle had overwhelmed them with great distress; had led them to a close examination of their conduct and state; and had filled them with respect and affection for the Apostle Paul. Hearing this, Paul wrote this second epistle to comfort and to commend them." —Adam Clarke. Paul is rejoicing in the comfort and consolation that he was finding in Christ in view of all of the tribulations that he and the saints were going through. He was finding that the sentence of death that he constantly lived under only helped to prove the power of God in his life. The true faith of these Corinthian brethren and their love for Christ and for Paul was the greatest joy to his heart and the richest fruit that he had hoped to see fulfilled in their lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What was the gracious title that Paul attributed to God in our lesson?
2. What is God's purpose in comforting us?
3. By what means are we going to be able to comfort others?
4. As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, what also abounds?
5. How does the consolation of the Lord help to offset the tribulations?
6. Why did God allow Paul to have the sentence of death in himself?
7. In the sentence of death, what did Paul learn to trust in?
8. In what way did the Corinthian brethren help Paul in the things that he suffered?
9. What was Paul's rejoicing in all of his tribulations?
10. What would be the result of a mixture of positive and negative preaching?
11. What effect does a totally positive gospel have upon a soul?
12. Instead of having dominion over their faith, what did Paul seek to be to them?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Today we need a positive gospel. A gospel that does not bring a clear and definite experience of faith and victory in the heart and life is a detriment and a hindrance. Raising questions with no answers is an uncertain sound that will cause no one to prepare for the battle of a Christian. One who seeks the Lord with all of his heart and who takes up his cross to follow the Lord must be backed and supported by strong consolation and assurance from the Lord and His Word. Viewing God as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort helps to give positive and definite assurance in our hearts to hold fast to our faith in him. What we suffer as a Christian will be made up for by what we enjoy in Him. This consolation that Christ bestows upon the suffering heart is the sweetest reward for the tribulations that we suffer for His sake. Great sufferings and loss for the Lord will be counter-balanced by great joys and victory in the presence of the Lord in our hearts. Many times the children of the Lord literally carry upon them the threat and sentence of death. In another place Paul said that we are killed all the day long and are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. (Romans 8:36). The child of God (in one way or another) finds himself constantly in danger of his life. This is also true for all human beings, but more so for those who are followers of Christ. But this sentence of death only magnifies the miracle of the life of God that is manifested in us. Our trust is in God who raiseth the dead. This gives a decisiveness to our faith, and we are able to go forth each day for the Master with hope and trust for ultimate victory.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is a hard concept to understand, especially when in the midst of sorrow, but good things can come by passing through trials. It is only natural that trials cause us to seek more fervently a close relationship with God, and this is the right approach to take.

It is foolish to look for ways to suffer in an attempt to get blessings, but neither should we always try to protect ourselves from having to endure those things that may be brought against us.

A story is told of a missionary in Africa on furlough who bought a sundial that it might help African village people to tell the time of day. He set it up in the midst of the village, but his people were so filled with admiration and wonder that

straightway they built a roof over it to protect it from sun and rain.

These villagers inadvertantly and unwisely ruined the purpose of what the sundial was for since they did not understand its workings. Likewise, it is possible to distance ourselves from trouble and completely annul the purpose God had in letting it take place. Rather than seeking direction from God in their lives, some people let problems come between them and Him. We will not be so prone to do this if we realize the consolation God has for His people in the midst of trials.

A relationship with God brings comfort, for God is a merciful God. Abraham Lincoln once told a friend, "I have not suffered by the South, but I have suffered with the South." This is how God views our trials. He suffers with us. When God is viewed in this manner it brings great consolation to a troubled heart.

—Wayne Murphey

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October 8, 1989

## COMFORT AND MERCY TO ALL

II Corinthians 2:1 But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

2 For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

3 And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I



forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

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

15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

17 For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

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

II Corinthians 2:14.

**Central Thought:** There is forgiveness for the sinner, and more graces for the faithful in the great provision of grace and blessing that is found in the fulness of Christ.

**Word Definitions:** *Heaviness:* Sorrow. *Sorry:* Sad. *"Savour of his knowledge":* The odor or fragrance of Christ. *"The savour of death unto death, or of life unto life":* The gospel is preached to all in its purity and assurance. To those who hear, believe, and obey it brings life to the soul, but to those who refuse and turn away it becomes the means of death, spiritual and eventually eternal if they do not turn from their evil ways. *"Corrupt the word of God":* To adulterate, add to or take from the sacred meaning of the Scriptures.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul had laid the truth down to them. He had spoken plainly and pointedly to them concerning various issues and problems that existed among them. His tender heart was rent with sorrow to have to say some of the things that he said in his first letter. No real loving parent enjoys having to scold or censure his child. He will do it when he sees it is vital for the welfare of the child, but he does not enjoy it. Many times it hurts the parent as much as the child to have to chastise and discipline. But great



joy comes when the fruits of the discipline come forth. Paul saw the fruits of his ministry coming forth. He seeks now to commend the dear ones there in Corinth, and to encourage them. He seeks to bring assurance of God's forgiveness to that erring one who had repented of his wrong and was seeking mercy and comfort. He did not want that one driven to despair and swallowed up with sorrow. That is why he urges them to confirm their love to him. He forgave him and he wants them to forgive, also. He knew that Satan would get an advantage over that soul if forgiveness, comfort, and assurance was not heaped at the door of his heart. The triumph in Christ really meant much to Paul in seeing what the Lord had accomplished with the brethren at Corinth.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What was the only reason why Paul had made the brethren at Corinth sorry?
2. What was he wanting to come from this sorrow?
3. What was to be Paul's greatest joy concerning the brethren?
4. What did he want them to know in regard to how he felt about them?
5. Why did Paul allow himself to be grieved only in part?
6. How should we treat one who has sinned and has repented of their sin?
7. What can be the effect on someone who has sinned and is seeking pardon when he finds no mercy, love, or forgiveness at the hands of the Church?
8. What are some of the things that Satan can suggest to a discouraged soul at this point?
9. What are we unto God as we proclaim the truth of the gospel to souls?
10. How are we a savour of life unto life to the saved?
11. How are we a savour of death unto death to those who refuse to heed the gospel?
12. What are the serious consequences of corrupting the Word of God?

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

In all of the work of preaching, reproving, disciplining, and proclaiming the truth of the eternal Word of God that comes to us in the gospel, there is a vital ingredient without which the whole business will be an utter failure. This in-

redient is very easy to be short of, and that is love—warm, fervent, and affectionate love to one and all. This is the number one ingredient. In all of Paul's dealings with these brethren, the fervent love and affection he had for them was manifested clearly. They had no doubt of his love and godly sincerity toward them. To the erring soul was given reproof and warning mixed with love and sympathy. When such a one repented, comfort and faith was promoted to be instilled in his heart and mind. He must be aware, not only of the magnitude of his sin, but also of the magnitude of Christ's forgiveness and good will. And, he must not only know that Christ forgives him, but he must also be assured of the mercy, forgiveness, and good will of the Church from which he had been excommunicated. This expression of love and mercy must be clear and confirmed to him, otherwise the Devil is ever present to put thoughts of discouragement and despair into the mind. This is Satan's greatest tool. This is his prime device. He can implant seeds of doubt, fear and despair into the heart so easily, and too many times he has succeeded in turning those away that could have been won if the love of God would have been gotten across to them. Let us diligently seek to manifest the Word of Christ as it really is so that hearts can be drawn and won to come to the Lord for mercy, pardon and salvation.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In Adam Clarke's commentary it brings out the thought that the "triumph in Christ" Paul speaks of is a comparison to the triumphal parades given Roman conquerors when they returned from a great victory. Adam Clarke relates that the parade, among other things, consisted of victims of the enemy who were to be sacrificed. During this time, all the temples were opened and every altar smoked with offerings and incense. To some this celebration meant great rejoicing. The smell, or savour, of the incense was very exciting and invoked a thrill in the hearts of the victorious people. But it also meant death to those who were conquered.

The Apostle Paul was used by God in proclaiming God's counsel and he felt as the Roman conqueror. A great victory had been won and he was enjoying the triumph of it. However, Paul stressed in the first of our lesson the tenderness of his heart in God using him. His approach toward the people was one of mercy and comfort. How prone man is to conquer

through fear and judgment. God knows that comfort will be needed when the Word is used. Great havoc can be wrought when it is not handled that way.

It is important to notice that his triumphing was in Christ. It was not something that Paul had attempted on his own, but he was motivated by Christ, he preached Christ only, and then he could depend on Christ to give the grace that was needed to make everyone victorious. —Wayne Murphey

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October 15, 1989

## MINISTRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE SPIRIT

II Corinthians 3:2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

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

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

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

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

7 But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished:

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart.

16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

**Memory Verse:** . . . Our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. II Corinthians 3:5, 6.

**Central Thought:** In the New Testament of Jesus Christ, the laws of God are ministered by the anointing and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, written upon the tender hearts of humble and submissive souls who are able to look steadfastly upon the glory of the Lord, and are changed from the glory of the flesh to the image of Christ.

**Word Definitions:** *"Our epistle written in our hearts":* The Greek text says "written in **your** hearts." The epistle Paul wrote to them was not only read and heard, but it was received and inscribed upon the tablet of their warmest inmost affections. *"Fleshy tables of the heart":* The word "fleshy" or, fleshly, refers to tenderness and pliability, an attitude of submissiveness and willingness to lovingly obey. *Sufficiency:* Ability: *"Ministration of death":* The handing down from God of His laws to Moses on Mt. Sinai, engraved upon tables of stone. It is labeled the ministration of death because the effect that it had upon hearts was to magnify and increase the sin and, in consequence, to bring condemnation and spiritual death. *"Ministration of the spirit":* This is the law of Christ administered to the heart by the Holy Spirit, enabling man to fulfill it with joy and victory. *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty":* Liberty here is defined as access and freedom to partake of. Through the Holy Spirit we have an entrance into the realities of the Almighty God. *"With open face beholding as in a glass":* Unveiled by pride and the flesh we can behold as in a mirror the reflected glory and beauty of Christ. *"Changed from glory to glory":* Changed from the glory of the law system to the spiritual glory of the Spirit of God.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In chapter 2 Paul had expressed his joy and rejoicing for the good effect that his epistle had produced in the lives of the

saints at Corinth. They had openheartedly received his counsel and admonitions and were greatly benefited therefrom. In our lesson today Paul views his epistle being written in their hearts by the Spirit of God, making them living epistles of Christ known and read of all men. He calls this operation of the Word of God from his ministry to them as the ministration of the Spirit, and compares it to the giving of the law of God to Moses on Sinai. He is specifically speaking of when Moses was come down from the mountain on that second occasion and brought with him the tables of stone which God had given to him to replace the ones that he had broken to pieces after coming down from the mountain the first time upon seeing the idolatry of Israel around the golden calf which they had made. He called this the ministration of death, speaking of its glory in that Moses shone in his countenance the glory of the Lord so brightly that the people could not look steadfastly upon him. This was the ministration of death, and it was glorious. He points us now to the glory of the ministration of the Spirit in Christ, which ministration, he says, would exceed in glory the other. The veil that Moses put on to cover the brilliant glow of his countenance was for the sake of the people. Therefore, Paul rightly concluded that the real veil was upon their hearts, a blindness to spiritual things that yet hung over their hearts unto that day. Exodus 34:33-35 tells us that while Moses was speaking to the people he put on a veil, but when he went in before the Lord, he took the veil off. Paul drew a parallel to this by saying that when people turn to the Lord, the veil will be taken away from their hearts. The Lord here he refers to, is the Spirit of the Lord which opens up and gives us access to the great riches of the knowledge of Christ. In the New Testament we can, with open face and without a veil on our hearts, behold the beauty and glory of Christ and, by beholding, we can be transformed to the same likeness of holiness, faith, love and righteousness.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. Where did Paul joyfully find his epistle to be written?
2. Where does God want His laws written?
3. What kind of heart can the Spirit of God write upon?
4. How does the letter without the Spirit kill?
5. What is the difference in the law of God written on tables of stone and the law written upon the tender heart of a child of God?

6. How was the giving of the law of Moses a glorious thing?
7. What was done so that the children of Israel could look upon Moses?
8. Where did Paul say that the veil really was?
9. What are some of the elements and influences that constitute a veil upon the heart?
10. How can this veil upon the heart be taken away?
11. What kind of liberty does the Spirit of God give to us?
12. What happens to the heart that with open face beholds the glory of the beauty of Christ Jesus?

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

It was a glorious sight to see Moses coming down from the mountain after being in communion with God for forty days and nights. His skin shone with a glorious light so brightly that the children of Israel and the elders could not look steadily upon him. In order for Moses to converse with the people he had to cover his face with a veil. This was a glory that accompanied the giving of the first covenant, the law on Mt. Sinai. This glory was done away with. It soon faded from view. After a lapse of time the glory faded from Moses and his countenance became so that people could commune with him. The giving of the law upon tables of stone did not accomplish the real purpose of God, because there was a veil upon the heart of man. To have the law written on a tablet of stone did not quicken the soul to enable it to perform the holy standard of God's law. Man was unable to perform the will of God, thus the glory of that law was for condemnation and death. Some people today are still trying to live up to written laws and creeds. As the poet Whittier said, "But yet my human hands are weak to hold your iron creeds, Against the words ye bid me speak my heart within me pleads." Many preachers today preach with a law spirit. Their attitude is: "You do this, and God will bless you." But oh, there is a better way. The letter kills because it affords of itself no strength or inspiration to perform. The current of the rebellious heart is too strong to be withstood by a mere doctrine or creed. There must be the work of the Holy Spirit written upon the very tables of the heart. We are saved without the law, but as we behold the glory of the risen Christ, we are inspired and strengthened to live, to perform, to do, and to be all that His precious will is calling us to.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is so important to have the indwelling Spirit of God if we are to receive the blessings outlined in the New Testament. It is the law spirit of the Old Testament that has blinded the eyes of many people.

The following parable was addressed to an assembly of Jews by a Mr. Moritz. "A poor Jew wanted very much to be rich; he therefore put a bandage on his eyes, that he might pray to Mazal (or Fortune), and went everywhere through the streets, looking up to heaven, and crying, 'O Mazel, Mazel, make me rich!' At length Mazal threw down a great bag full of precious treasure, which fell right before him. The poor man did not take off the bandage, but ran on, and stumbled over the treasure. Neither did he turn back to see what it was, but went on still crying, 'O Mazal, Mazal, make me rich!' Mazal seeing her gift neglected, took it up again into heaven, and the Jew remained a beggar as before." The Jews who were present requested an explanation of the parable, which he gave them by referring to Isaiah 9:6 and the 2nd Psalm. A deep silence followed. At last, some young men asked, "And will the bandage always be on our eyes?" He told them to pray that the Spirit of God might take it away. Five of these young men received salvation that evening.

If we want to be able to live acceptably before God, understand His deep mysteries, enjoy the liberty of spirit that is in Christ, and enjoy the full benefit of the riches God has willed to all men through Christ, we must forsake a legalistic approach to God as a means of salvation and drink deeply of His Spirit.

—Wayne Murphey

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October 22, 1989

### THE MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH

II Corinthians 4:1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

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

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



5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

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

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

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

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

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

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

15 For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

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

**Central Thought:** The truth is manifested to men by Christ being seen in and through the lives of holy men and women by their meekness and bearing the sufferings of Christ with courage and steadfast faith.

**Word Definitions:** *"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost":* The word "hid" in this sentence means in the Greek text, "having been veiled." Paul had just spoken in the previous chapter about the veil being on the heart. *"The god of this world":* Satan, the Devil. *"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus":* Living constantly under the threat and possibility of death.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Having emphasized in the previous chapter of the blessed ministry of the Spirit that he had seen working in his life, and recognizing it as the New Testament ministry of Christ, Paul speaks of its manifestation in the true saints. Knowing that many promote their cause, and merchandise by trickery, flattery and fraud, he senses that this holy and sacred office of preaching and promoting the gospel must never be done in that way. Those who preach the gospel must blend with their preaching a life of righteousness and holiness, which will convince hearts and persuade those who have an open mind for the truth. He also recognized the fact that not everyone would give heed to the gospel. Only those who open their hearts to the light of Christ will be affected by it. The gospel is not to be projected in an undermining manner. It is straight out and open, plain and simple. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30. The fruit that is seen in such times as Paul mentions in our lesson is the advertisement of the gospel. In trouble, in perplexity, while being persecuted, and in times of being cast down—in all of these times—the child of God remains undistressed, nor in despair, not forsaken nor destroyed. The death that is working in their lives is producing spiritual life in others. The spirit of faith and trust in God prevails over all the opposing powers of Satan and men. Their confidence foresees the great day of reward in the resurrection, and the fleeting things of this present world have no bearing on their purpose and decision for Christ. —Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Where is seen the most convincing proof of the truth of the gospel?
2. Why cannot a person be tricked into believing the gospel of Christ?
3. What is the usual cause for a person to reject the Lord Jesus?
4. What does a blinded mind do to the light of God?
5. Is it possible for a person to preach himself and not the Lord Jesus?
6. How does a true minister feel about himself in his ministry?
7. Who is it that really commands the light to shine out of darkness?

8. Is it possible for a soul to see and appreciate the light if he or she does not sense their state of darkness?
9. In what way can we let the excellency of the power be attributed to God and not to us?
10. What part does tribulation and suffering play in manifesting the truth to others?
11. How can the life of Jesus be truly manifested in our mortal flesh?
12. With what strength can a person let death work in them?
13. What is the assurance that we have as we endure the cross for Christ?

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

The ministry of the gospel of Christ is void of human promotion or self-glorification. One does not need to stoop to carnal ways of high pressure, trickery and dishonest means in order to advance the knowledge of Christ. These kinds of activities are clear indications of the desire for fleshly gain and prominence. Many so-called Christian churches of today are filled with programs and drives and activities bent on adding new members to their number. At the bottom of this active and energetic system is the desire for more financial and social prestige. This is not so with the true ministers of the holy gospel of God. To glorify God and to be a blessing to needy lost and dying souls is the desire of the anointed minister of God. His soul is full of rest as he labors in the ministry, for he knows that it is not his efforts that will avail, but it is the working of the Spirit of God in him. If we are to be the true ministers of God, we must keep this kind of attitude. We are but earthen vessels. Any good done or accomplished is not our doing, but the working of the Spirit of God. God allows us to suffer many things in our mortal bodies to help keep us weak and inferior in ourselves so that it can be plainly known that it is not in our strength that the labor is being done. It is a constant fight of faith to keep one moving on for God. The way gets hard and narrow, but we faint not, knowing that there is a great reward coming for the faithful. Let death and sufferings be our lot, for we know that in the resurrection there will be a full reward. All things work together for our good and we press on to the goal, praising God for the blessings that witness His divine presence in our lives.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." II Cor. 4:2.

"How is it that a certain member of your church who is an ignorant man, is so successful in the villages as a preacher, when I cannot command a congregation?" This is the question one clergyman, well versed in the Bible, asked a certain pastor. "Well," came the answer, "the reason is this: the member of my congregation that you refer to is touched with the power of the gospel, and speaks from heart to heart; that is the secret of his success." By having the gospel within our hearts is the only way that the Gospel will be effectively manifested to the world.

The first part of the verse above speaks of things that will hinder the manifestation of the truth. No matter how bright our profession, if we are dishonest in our dealings our lives will not carry much weight on others' estimation, and how often it has been proven that if we use the Word of God deceitfully with a crafty motive for personal gain, our influence is greatly hampered.

When it speaks of "commending ourselves to every man's conscience" it does not infer that we should conduct ourselves according to how every man thinks we should. We would be mixed up individuals indeed if we endeavored to do that. It does mean that we should so live that all people can recognize the truth being in us.

—Wayne Murphey

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October 29, 1989

### ASPECTS OF THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

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

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

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

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

2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

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

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

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

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

II Corinthians 5:1.

**Central Thought:** We are willing to suffer all the adversities that attend the ministry of the gospel because our hope is bright of a rich and a full reward in glory when this mortal life is swallowed up in immortality.

**Word Definitions:** *"Outward man perish"*: Our mortal part utterly rots, decays, is ruined or wasted. *"Far more exceeding weight of glory"*: The Greek text renders this phrase thus, "an exceeding on an exceeding heaviness of glory." *Tabernacle*: Tent. *Groan*: To sigh, or grieve, being in difficulty and straits. *Naked*: Without the garments of immortality. *"Earnest of the Spirit"*: The Holy Spirit working in our lives is likened unto the part of the purchase money or property given in advance as security for the rest of the payment. By us allowing the Holy Spirit to lead, inspire, and rule our lives it becomes the pledge for the eternal fulfillment of our inheritance in Christ.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson Paul spoke about facing death constantly in the Christian life and the service of the Lord. He stated that the reason this could be endured was for the hope

of being resurrected by the Lord Jesus with those who had received His ministry. Our lesson today contains his expressions of what this hope meant to him. He counted the things that he suffered as a Christian as light affliction, and that it was working something far better for him in glory. The perishing of his outward man did not affect the constant renewing of his inner man. He was not looking at the material realm of life, but rather was fixing his spirit's adoring gaze to the treasures in heaven that would never pass away. His earthly house he likened unto a tabernacle, or tent. A tent is not a permanent dwelling. It is but a temporary thing soon to be folded up and discarded when the real dwelling is ready to be moved into. There are many inconveniences in living in a tent, especially if it is in a climate where rain and snow and wind are prevalent. There are many things to be suffered and endured while living in this mortal shell, hence the groaning and the yearning for that better house.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What are the things that cause the outward man to perish?
2. What are the things that help keep the inward man renewed?
3. What helps to make our affliction "light?"
4. What happens when we begin to look at the things that are seen and consider their worth and value more than the eternal, unseen things?
5. How can we keep from looking too much at the things that are seen?
6. What kind of structure is our physical body likened unto?
7. What are some of the things that cause us to groan while in this tabernacle?
8. Where did this hope come from and with what assurance is it certain to us?
9. What will be the state of the person who will have to move out of this tent and have no house waiting for him to move into for eternity?
10. While we are at home in the body, where are we with the Lord?
11. What do we strive to be, whether present or absent?

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

Jesus taught His disciples in Luke 16:9 to "make to yourselves friends of (or with) the mammon of unrighteousness

(material riches); that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." This expression is parallel with the teachings of Paul in our lesson today. We are going to be put out of this earthly house we are in right now. We need to make provision for ourselves of another dwelling to move into when we have to leave our present dwelling. We want to be sure of this, so sure and steadfast that our future home will swallow up in glory all of the sorrows and sufferings that we have had here. Only by receiving the salvation of Christ and being led by His Spirit can we have this kind of hope. By bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus and bearing the cross for Him this house eternal is made more sure and precious. We do not want to be found naked. There are many people who think that they have hope in Christ who are not preparing for this house from heaven. When death comes they will be ushered by its cold hand out into the outer darkness of eternity where it is desolate and homeless. There will be no shelter or a place of habitation for them. They have lived only for this present life, having their good times while the faithful have suffered. There will be no friends in eternity to welcome them into eternal habitations. They will be found naked, oh, terrible thought! This is the serious cast to our lesson today! We need to have a dwelling for us over there. We need another body to inhabit after this body is gone. Let us prepare for the house of our eternity.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What a glorious revelation will come to us, as we sweep through the portals of glory! There are not words in the English language to describe the beauties awaiting those who belong to the Lord. As the outward man perishes day by day and the strength grows weaker, the hope grows brighter for a life that is beyond this veil of tears. This old house of clay, the earthly tabernacle, will go back to dust and the soul, or the inward man, will be taken to be with the Lord. Over there, "we have a building, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." What a glorious hope we have within us! The Apostle Paul tells us, "absent from the body, and . . . present with the Lord." Oh, what could be greater than to see the Lover of our soul face to face. We will be safe and secure from all the power of the enemy. What more could we desire? Heaven is beyond our comprehension, yet it is real, very real and it will be all that the soul longs for or ever could desire. Nothing there will be imperfect, but will be peace, peace, and



more peace. Oh, my soul magnifies the Lord when I think about these glorious things. No wonder the Apostle Paul looked back over the persecutions, imprisonments, tumults in this life and said, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." "It will matter but little at last, what we have passed through, when the shades of the evening as sunset we view." When we get a glimpse of heaven's glory, then the burdens and trials of this life will fade away and all the beauties and grandeur of heaven will envelop us.

When we die, we await the judgment in the presence of the Lord, in paradise or in Abraham's bosom. Luke 16:25; 23:42, 43. The unjust or wicked are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." (Jude 6). Knowing what awaits the wicked and the "terror of the Lord, we persuade men" to turn unto the Lord while they have time and the right use of their minds. Surely, one needs to know that "today is the day of salvation." It is time to seek the Lord and be ready to meet Him in peace.

—Marie Miles  
(Written in 1975.)

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November 5, 1989

## THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

II Corinthians 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

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

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

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

17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:

old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

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

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

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

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

**Memory Verse:** . . . God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

II Corinthians 5:19.

**Central Thought:** God sent His Son, Jesus, and was in Him, to atone for man's sins and bring about a reconciliation between God and man, and the ministry which Christ imparts to us is one of bringing the lost back to the fellowship of God.

**Word Definitions:** *"Beside ourselves"*: To be astounded or astonished beyond measure. The Greek expression is "to be put out of wits, to be amazed." This can be for joy or because of sorrow. *Sober*: To be of a sound mind in full control of thought and feeling. *"The love of Christ constraineth us"*: We are moved, compelled, controlled and motivated by knowing and understanding the love that Christ manifested for us in giving Himself for all. *"Know we no man after the flesh"*: We look upon every man as a precious soul Christ died to save. We will have no relationship with any one that is fleshly or sinful in God's sight. Only in the Spirit and according to purity and holiness will we relate to anyone. *Reconcile and reconciliation*: Bringing God and man back into fellowship and harmony again. On God's part there is mercy, atonement and forgiveness; on man's part there is godly sorrow, repentance, faith and obedience. *Ambassador*: A representative, one who goes in the place of another.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Our previous lesson ended with Paul's statement that all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of ourselves to God. Because of this there is a sincere

burden in the heart of the saint to help people to prepare for that great day. While Paul seeks to persuade men, he realizes that he is before God all of the time. Also, he is being made manifest before men, even to the ones to whom he is addressing this epistle. His life was before God and to God, and it was before men and for the cause of men. The love of Christ caused him to seek to live in this manner, not to the flesh or to men, but unto Him who gave His life on Calvary. He knew Christ no more as a man, but as the eternal Son of God in the heavens. He knew that if any man could get in Christ, he would be changed from his old habits of lust, greed, pride and sin unto the new life of faith, love, hope and patience. Here was reconciliation between God and man, a perfect cure and solution from the problem of sin that had defiled the human race.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. What does knowing the terror of the Lord cause us to want to do?
2. Who did Paul desire to be made manifest to?
3. Why did Paul not commend himself to them?
4. What are some of the things in the Christian life that might make a man be beside himself?
5. Because Christ died for all, who should we that are alive in Him live to?
6. How will we treat people if we know them only in a fleshly sense?
7. How did men treat Christ who knew Him only in a fleshly sense and never perceived His spiritual values?
8. Because of this, is there any way that a man can be truly in Christ, and not be born again?
9. What was God's attitude toward a lost world when He came down to this world in Christ?
10. What is the plea of the gospel toward the wandering, lost souls of men?

### ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

"Be ye reconciled to God"! This is the earnest plea of the Holy Spirit working in and through His ministry and Church to the fallen race of men. God has sent His Son, and accompanied His Son to come down to this cold, dark world to bear man's sin and transgressions. He does not impute their sins against them any more. He has a new life to give to one and all. There is power in the blood of Christ and the Spirit of

our God to make a new creature out of everyone. Man must sense and recognize his lost and undone condition, and be sorry deep within his heart that he has strayed from the fold of God. He must turn his heart towards the Lord in genuine repentance and humility, and be willing to submit to God and obediently follow Him all the way. God and man can meet once more on these terms. Here is where they can be reconciled. Man who has wandered in his own ways far from the loving heavenly Father's embrace returns unto Jesus, the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. Oh, what a wonderful blessing this is! What a great message we have to share with the souls of men! A new creature in Christ! All things are made new and all things are of God. Old things of the flesh, the world, and selfish gratification pass out of our lives. We do not seek for their treasures any more. We have found a richer treasure, one that fadeth not away. No more are we in despair and sorrow of heart. Comfort and hope spring up in our hearts. We are no more a barren desert void of life and beauty and rest. The Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley now grows abundantly within us. We are reconciled to God, one with Him and His people in love and faithfulness forevermore.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are some who feel that since man has been given the ministry of reconciliation, it gives men the power to absolve other men's sins. When we consider closely the meaning Paul had we understand that the ministry of reconciliation is the message of the Gospel. II Corinthians 5:19 tells us what the message is. God was in Christ while He was on this earth and He forgave men of their sins, which means all was clear between God and repentant man. Since Christ is now at the Father's right hand it is up to us to tell others what He can do. We are ambassadors for Christ. We do not fill His role but we are spokesmen for God, beseeching people to find His forgiveness.

There is no greater One that we can bring people to than God. He can do far more for a person than anyone else. After Mark Twain had made a triumphant tour through Europe, where he was honored by great universities and kings, his daughter said: "Daddy, I guess pretty soon you will know everybody except God." If we should be acquainted with all the important people of our time and yet fail to seek God and His forgiveness, we will be in great distress on the day of judgment. No one will be able to stand to aid us then.

An account recorded in the Scriptures tells of an infirm man who laid a long time at the pool of Bethesda. He was unable to get into the water when it was troubled to receive his healing. When Jesus asked the man about this, the reply was. "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled to put me into the pool." John 5:7. Likewise there are many in the world today who have no one to help them into the forgiving fountain of Christ's blood. We have quite a ministry of reconciliation to fulfill.

—Wayne Murphey

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**November 12, 1989**

### **APPROVING OURSELVES AS THE MINISTERS OF GOD**

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

**2** (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

**3** Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

**4** But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

**5** In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

**6** By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

**7** By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

**8** By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

**9** As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

**10** As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

**11** O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

**12** Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

**13** Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

**Memory Verse:** (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) II Corinthians 6:2.

**Central Thought:** In every situation of life, by every holy means that God has supplied in Christ, we must seek to approve ourselves as the ministers of God, being defamed and rejected by men, and yet blessed and enriched by the Lord Jesus.

**Word Definitions:** *"Receive not the grace of God in vain":* Do not fail to make the proper use of the grace given to us, not giving any cause for the work of God to suffer reproach. *Succour:* Help. *Necessities:* Needs, close places. *"In tumults":* In the midst of confusion and disorder. *"Love unfeigned":* Sincere love without pretence or hypocrisy. *"Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.":* We are not cramping you or pressing you. You are cramped and pressured in your own mind and feelings. Do not fear or doubt the love we have for you.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

After Paul's most sublime and eloquent appraisal of the reconciliation of God and man to one another and the ministry of that reconciliation that he most joyfully bore within his heart, he now urges that diligence be exerted on the part of everyone to approve themselves as the ministers of such a vocation. He quotes from Isaiah 49:8 rejoicing that the accepted time of God's reconciliation with man is **now**, and that **today** is the day of salvation. No offence must be given but the offence of the cross. We are to prove our divine calling as the ministers of God in things and by things. In the various close and difficult places of life we are to employ all the graces and blessings that God has supplied in Christ to show forth the preciousness of Christ. There will be honor and dishonor, good report and evil report to surmount. We will be called deceivers, so let us be sure that we are true. We will be small and unknown by the praise of the world, but let us remember that we in Christ are well-known to God. Dying, chastened, sorrowful, poor and having nothing, yet will we live, rejoice, make many rich (in faith) and we will possess all things (in Christ).

—Leslie C. Busbee

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. Is it possible to receive the grace of God and fail to use it properly?
2. What effect does an unfaithful minister have upon souls?
3. In what special conditions of life does the faithfulness of a minister really shine?
4. What are the things that must be seen when a servant of God is faced with these difficult times?
5. Where will the honor bestowed come from?
6. Where will the dishonor come from?
7. How can we be unknown, and yet well-known?
8. How can we be sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing?
9. How can we be poor, and yet make many rich?
10. How can we have nothing, and yet possess all things?
11. Is it possible for us to be straitened and cramped in our own minds when in God and Christ we could be free and happy as a bird?

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

It behooves every child of God to take heed to his conduct and manner of life. Many, many souls have been driven away and discouraged from finding the real life of Christ because of a misrepresentation of the truth by some careless person who professed to be a follower of the Lord. People are watching us, weighing our actions as well as our words. In times of adversity and stress the sweet Spirit of Christ shows up very plainly. If we murmur and complain in our times of adversity, people will take note of that. If we will be honest in the face of loss to ourselves, people will mark that. We preach more loudly by what we do than by what we say. When we can be joyful in provoking times of stress and disappointment, it will be a great witness for the Lord. It is a careful walk that we make before men. At the best we can do, there will still be those who will condemn and criticize us. We must take those things quietly and meekly, too. We will not be popular in a worldly sense according to the praise of men. We will rather be scorned and looked down upon. One lowly saint was reproached by a proud relative at a funeral for riding in their car. It was very evident, and the action of this proud relative was terrible. The saint took it meekly, and later the Lord allowed this proud relative's car to crash in a most unusual way. God will fight for us, and we will not need to lift a hand or voice in our defense. It is most certain that we will not be rich in material things, although God will be faithful to supply



our needs. The Lord said to one of His ministers who was praying to have more money to give, "I have better things for you to give than money!" Let us set our goals heavenward and prove to the Lord and others that we are genuine children of the most High God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

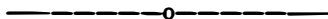
## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

One minister used to give his final charge to candidates before their ordination in these impressive words, "Tomorrow I shall say to you, wilt thou, wilt thou, wilt thou? But there will come a day to you when Another will say to you, 'hast thou, hast thou, hast thou?' "

It is a sobering thought to think that someday we will give an account of our ministry. Therefore it is well to constantly take account of our works and to see if they are being profitable and edifying. We should make sure that we are a credit to our calling when it comes to patience, pureness, kindness and love. Our attitude must be a proper one in times of affliction, distress and labor.

In many ways the success of a minister's labours can be measured according to how big his heart is. First our heart must be big enough to take in God. He is the very foundation and inspiration for all of our works. Next our hearts must be big enough to take in other people. If the Apostle Paul's heart had not been enlarged enough to take in all the saints at Corinth he would have had a limited effect upon them.

In our lesson the Apostle Paul charges the people that their hearts also should be enlarged. So this matter extends to everyone, not just preachers. To enlarge means to make larger than normal. People in their natural state, only have a heart big enough for themselves and maybe a few close friends and relatives. But let God in your heart and as He begins working, you will find ample room for others. —Wayne Murphey



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## **The Story of the Spring by the Side of the Road**

A stranger made his way down a road leading into a wide, expansive, fertile valley. It was late in August, hot, sultry and dusty. The stranger was worn with the journey and was hungry and thirsty. He wondered where he might find a well or spring; a place to rest and be refreshed.

As he made his way down the road he saw a sign nailed to a tree. On this sign was an arrow, pointing to a path that led back from the road. Beneath the arrow were the words, "To the spring," evidently written by some trembling hand.

These were very welcome words; "To the spring." So the stranger wended his way down the path to where he found a great gushing spring pouring forth from beneath huge jagged rocks. All around about this wonderful spring were mammoth oak trees growing in their luxuriance. Beneath the spring was a pool of water made by the falling of the stream. There were cups by the side of the spring. The underbrush had all been cleared away. Near the spring a rustic seat had been built.

The stranger drank freely from the spring and was refreshed. He took off his coat and his linen and bathed his face, hands and arms in the pool below the spring and was refreshed again. This done he sat down on the rustic seat to rest. From there he beheld what at first he had not seen, a basket of ripe, beautiful apples, hanging to a limb of a tree just over the spring.

On the basket was a sign, evidently written by the same trembling hand that had made the one by the side of the road. The sign read, "Stranger, these apples are yours. Help yourself." He took a couple of fine juicy ones and ate them. O, they were so good. Glancing up he read the sign again, "Stranger, these apples are yours. Help yourself," so he filled his pockets and took a couple more to eat.

As the stranger sat there rested and refreshed he found himself wondering what in the world this could mean. All this comfort and no one there to collect any money. What could it mean!

The birds were singing their evening songs. All the air held a solemn stillness. The golden threads of sunlight poured down through the leaves of the trees. What could it all mean?

It finally dawned on him that there must be someone nearby whose love for humanity and whose unselfish devotion had led them to arrange the wonderful setting of the spring and asked no returns except the sweet satisfaction of having

arranged a place where weary travelers might be directed so they could lay down their burdens and be refreshed.

His curiosity was deeply aroused. He wanted to meet persons with such a vision and with such a passion for service and to inquire why all this comfort. He looked for some path which might lead to the explanation. He discovered the path, leading out of the forest trees, and followed it up thru the farm-yard gate, thru the garden gate, up the garden path past the old-fashioned flowers, pinks and holyhocks, to a little old house on the edge of the orchard. After knocking, an old man with a benign face came to the door. "Good evening, stranger, good evening. Come in. Come right in."

"Neighbor, I have called to ask about the story of the spring. Can you tell me the story of the spring down by the side of the road?"

"Oh, it's the story of the spring you are after, is it?" The old man said as he laughed the deep laugh that came from the depths of his great generous soul. "The story of the spring. Excuse me please, stranger, and I will call Mother. She loves to tell the story of the spring."

Having called the old mother, she came in, sat down, and folded over her gingham apron to cover up the spots. "The story of the spring is it, stranger, you are asking for the story of the spring?"

Brushing away a tear and swallowing a lump that came in her throat, for it was a tender story she was to tell, she proceeded.

"It was this way, stranger, Fifty years ago Father and I were sweethearts together. Frequently we would take long walks in the moonlight after the day's work was done. On these walks we would dream of how we would invest our lives for others. Sometimes we would think how interesting it would be to give the world a song it might go singing down life's weary way. Sometimes we would wonder if the time would ever come when we could give the world a book that might cheer, instruct, encourage and gladden humanity with all its burdens, heartaches and struggles. And sometimes we would dream of a possible time when we might have piles of gold with which we might help the ambitious, relieve the distressed and render such blessed service as we observed humanity so much needed.

"All these thoughts seemed but vain dreams for we were poor young people, shut away from educational advantages, necessary to so ambitious a dream, so we decided that if we were never to be permitted to give the world a song, or a book or never to have the piles of gold, we would do the next greatest thing, make a home that might be a help and an

inspiration in making other homes great and worthwhile. After all, great homes count as the nation's greatest asset.

"The years were repining and so we were married.

"The immediate question was, 'Where was the home to be located?' Father at once began to look about for a strategic location for such a home. He found this wide, expansive, fertile valley. Here we knew that we would be finally surrounded with many homes, the setting of our dream.

"So Father filed on this claim as a homestead. The evening he came home with the papers we came to this spot and kneeled down upon the sod and dedicated this quarter to be God's acre for service. We soon cut away the timber with which to build our house. We added an extra room as our guest chamber. Father proceeded to clear the farm and put out the orchard.

"We would listen for the settlers driving in with their ox wagons. At the sound of the rumbling of these wagons Father or I would go down to the valley road and ask the settlers to come in for the night. Father helped them locate their homesteads, then rally the neighbors to help roll up their log cabins. Loving service was the word, the passion of our hearts. Many a young family found the Saviour about our family altar.

"So, stranger, for fifty years now, Father and I have lived for the people of the valley. We have shared with them all our joys. We have been by their sides as they have needed our help. We have loved their children and sought to inspire them to become useful and great for their country. Our little brood has come up and mingles with the children of the valley. We have seen swarms of these blessed young lives come up thru these beautiful years.

"So for fifty years now, stranger, Father and I have lived for the people of the valley and have beautifully realized our dream. But one day I was coming in from the garden and found Father sitting by the fireplace crying. I said, 'What in the world are you crying for, Dad?'

" 'When I saw you down in the garden this morning, Mother, with your face so pale, your hair so white, your shoulders so rounded by the burdens you have borne by my side these fifty years and when I saw you come up the garden path so trembly and faltering like, I could not keep the tears back and found myself saying, 'Never again, never again, never again will Mother and I have the strength to go out and steady the aged down thru the valley of the shadow. Never again will Mother and I have the strength to smooth the pillows of the dying thru the long, weary nights. Never again will we be able to load the flour, hams and potatoes into the wagon or sleigh and take relief to the poor and the suffering.'

I am not crying, Mother, because we are getting old. Heaven never beckoned with a sweeter call than now, but it was such a joy to go out by your side, Mother, and minister to the people of the valley that my heart is hungry to go right on and on with this blessed work. So when I saw you this morning, Mother, looking so frail I realized how nearly our race was run. It is from heart hunger that I am crying, Mother.' "

"So," she said, "I sat down and cried by his side and we talked it all over. Finally I said, 'Father, let's do one more fine service for humanity before the touch of time shall palsy our hands utterly. Let's do what we have been thinking of doing so many years. Rest good Father, and sharpen your ax and take plenty of time and cut away the underbrush from about the spring. Build a rustic seat. Cut a path thru to the road. God will hand the boughs of our apple trees full of apples every year. I'll take my old trembly hands and, as best I can, fix up the signs and then we will render this last expression of our love to God and our fellow travelers down life's rugged way.'

"The old man arose and began to pull on his boots. 'Capital, Mother, capital,' he said. He immediately went out to sharpen his ax. He came in and said, 'Have dinner early today, Mother.' After dinner he swung his ax over his shoulder and I used to see him in his palmy days and start off down to the spring with the zest of a war horse, having sniffed the smoke of the battle. With many times his usual strength he swung into cutting away the underbrush. The path to the road was soon completed. The rustic seat was soon built. I did my best with the signs.

"When all was done, while the caroling birds accompanied us with their evening symphony, we dedicated the spring to God and humanity, asking no return except the sweet satisfaction that we had rendered one more service to our fellow man and made it possible for him to turn aside from this dusty weary way, find a place of quiet, find refreshment and rest and a place to lay down his burden and in sweet meditations catch the spirit of the valley."

Little did those old people realize that this stranger was none less than the great American poet, Sam Foss. When he heard this story he went out and wrote that poem that you love and I love and that has gone around the world, entitled, "The House by the Side of the Road and Being a Friend of Man."

## **"THE HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD"**

There are hermits souls that live withdrawn,  
In the peace of their self-content:  
There are souls like stars, that dwell apart,  
In a fellowless firmament;  
There are pioneer souls that blaze their paths,  
Where highways never ran—  
But let me live by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road  
Where the race of men go by—  
The men who are good and the men who are bad.  
As good and as bad as I.  
I would not sit in the scorner's seat,  
Or hurl the cynic's ban—  
Let me live in the house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

I see from the house by the side of the road,  
By the side of the highway of life,  
The men who press with ardor of hope,  
The men who are faint with the strife.  
But I turn not away from their smiles nor their tears,  
Both parts of an infinite plan—  
Let me live in the house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man.

I know there are brook-gladdened meadows ahead,  
And mountains of wearisome height;  
That the road passes on through the long afternoon.  
And stretches away to the night.  
And still I rejoice when the travelers rejoice  
And weep with the strangers that moan,  
As I live in my house by the side of the road  
And be a friend to man. —Sam Walter Foss

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**November 19, 1989**

**PERFECTING HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF GOD**

**II Corinthians 6:14** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

**15** And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

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

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

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

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

**4** Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

**5** For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

**6** Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

**7** And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

**8** For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

**9** Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

**10** For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

**11** For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear,

yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

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

II Corinthians 7:1.

**Central Thought:** God commands us to separate ourselves from being in agreement with the sin and error of this present evil world, and be holy and pure as His sons and daughters.

**Word Definitions:** *Concord:* To be in accordance or harmony. *Filthiness:* Soil, stain, defilement, immorality. *"Fervent mind":* Zeal and warm affection. *"Godly sorrow":* Sorrow according to God, regret and grief for grieving God. *Indignation:* Sore grief and displeasure against sin and wrong. *Revenge:* Holy retribution and punishment, judgment.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul, in our previous lesson had dwelt on the thought of approving ourselves as the ministers of God. He had expressed his sincere love for them, having an enlarged heart to bear them in his thoughts and concern. In our lesson today he enters into another very important topic of instruction, and that is of us being separate from the evil influences in the world around us. We are in the world, but not of the world. We can live among people, eat and drink with them, work side-by-side with them in the temporal affairs, share the common blessings of life, and do many things that they do as human beings, but when it comes to what we fellowship, condone and agree with, there is a strict and clear cut line that has to be drawn. Paul expressed it in another place like this, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (Ephesians 5:11). We do not know what all that the brethren in the Church at Corinth were being involved with, but it is possible that they were mixed up with things that were not edifying to their souls. There are many influences in the world today that we as Christians cannot partake of, that we must in honor of Christ stay away from. The apostle is not wanting to put the brethren in a strait jacket, but he knew that these influences can stain the soul and involve the person in a way that is not good. In his first epistle to them he had made them sorry, but rejoiced that their sorrow was a godly sorrow and that it worked repentance to



salvation and victory. In their repentance they had fully approved themselves to be clear in those things wherein Paul had instructed them.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is there danger and spiritual detriment in the fellowship of evil?
2. Can we be friendly, kind, cordial and gracious to people without fellowshipping their evil?
3. What is the real temple of God?
4. What does God want us to do about the sinful influences in the world?
5. What has God promised to do if we will come clean for the truth?
6. We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Is there a cleansing that we must carry out in separating ourselves from the evils of the world?
7. Why was Paul so full of comfort concerning the brethren at Corinth?
8. What effect did his letter have on them?
9. What had Titus told Paul that had brought him so much comfort?
10. What effect did their godly sorrow have upon their lives?

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

Being the children of God and the objects of His great love and affection, we owe to Him everything, and He is justly worthy of all of our love, devotion, trust, allegiance and service. We join ourselves to Him, and He is all we need. But, there are always other influences in the world that are constantly reaching out their hand to us for sympathy, support and fellowship. We must be careful of what we get ourselves involved with. Now and then we get a telephone call soliciting the purchase of a worldly concert ticket to help promote some community function to solve some problem or need. We answer that we are willing to do what we can to help in solving our community's problems, but that we are not interested in attending the concert or buying tickets for it. There is a line to be drawn. God can help us know where it is to be drawn. The Spirit of the Lord can help us to know of these things. He is faithful to reprove us if we get into something that He is not pleased with. One brother told about how that after he was saved, he was invited to go with a party to a ball game. He consented to go, but while in the midst of

the game he became very sensitive to the evil around him. One man near him was cursing, another was waving a beer bottle. He felt the Lord reprove him for being there. Another young man went to a gathering of young people at a home. He was told that it was to be an effort to better their study of foreign language. As the evening progressed he saw that it was not a good place for a Christian to be. He became so troubled that it began to even affect the activities and those in attendance. Finally he requested that he be allowed to leave. He said that he believed they all were glad to see him go. A true child of God just cannot be in harmony with the spirit of the world. Christ shed His blood and sent His Holy Spirit to cleanse us, but unless we separate ourselves from the evils of the world, we will not be fully clean. —Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Holiness is a wonderful virtue of the saint of God. Think of the fame of Christ that spread throughout Israel. He was a man different from any other. The only one who had even approached this popularity had been John the Baptist. Christ, through His holiness made an impact upon the world that time has been unable to erase.

In following Christ, we also may create an impact upon those around us. Through our holiness, individuals will be able to mark our lives as something above the ordinary. This is that city set on a hill that cannot be hid—the New Jerusalem of which Christ is the head.

Not only will holiness claim the attention of strangers, but our lives will be equipped to stand the scrutiny of our family and close acquaintances. It has been said that if you want to know what kind of Christian you are, go ask your family. The holiness of God as set forth by Christ should so infiltrate our lives that the closest friend or companion can have perfect confidence in us.

I recall the story of a preacher who discovered some young boys skipping school. Upon inquiry the boys informed the preacher that they were "lying for a dog." The one who told the biggest lie would receive a little puppy. After the preacher admonished the boys for telling lies, one of the children inquired of the preacher if he had ever lied. With sanctimonious air, the preacher replied with a "No-o." One of the little boys scoffed and said, "What a whopper—give the preacher the pup."

We should live such an example in holiness, modesty, truthfulness and integrity that those whom we are unaware

are observing us, will have a good report of our general conduct.

—Wayne Murphey

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November 26, 1989

## BEING POOR IN THIS WORLD, BUT RICH IN CHRIST

II Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance also may be a supply for their want: that there may be equality:

15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

**Memory Verse:** For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

II Corinthians 8:9.

**Central Thought:** Spiritual life thrives in the generosity and sacrifices of those who are poor and needy, who rather than choose riches give of themselves to the Lord and to ministering for the welfare of others.

**Word Definitions:** *"To their power . . . and beyond their power they were willing of themselves":* As they were able and beyond their ability (depriving themselves of the necessities of life) they gave of their own accord.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul, in our lesson today, is pointing the brethren at Corinth to two examples of spiritual riches in the midst of earthly poverty. He mentioned the Macedonian brethren, and how that the grace of God was so great on them in their giving. They had great trials of affliction, and very deep poverty, but it all abounded to their joy and the riches of their generosity. They wanted Paul to have the gift that they had so sacrificially provided for him. An offering from the poor given from a heart of love is one of the most precious gifts ever given to a minister. It touches their heart so deeply. It warms them with a love that transcends all else. Paul knew that these people were poor, very poor. And yet they gave and gave some more. Oh, what a bond this brings between the servant of God and those to whom he ministers the gospel! He wanted these Corinthian brethren to be blessed in this way, also. Not that he was desiring their means, but he wanted them to know the joy and blessing of giving. He referred them also to the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what a splendid example our dear Saviour is of this! Though He was rich and powerful as the Son of God, yet He humbled Himself to become the poorest of the poor. He willingly offered Himself to die in our stead. He was homeless, penniless, and destitute of every human necessity. He did this for our sakes, so that we could be made rich in salvation and the fulness of grace.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### QUESTIONS:

1. Under what circumstances had the Macedonian brethren given to help Paul?

2. What had their great joy and deep poverty abounded unto?
3. To what extent had they been willing to give?
4. Who did they give themselves to first?
5. In what way was Jesus rich?
6. In what way did He become poor?
7. How can we be made rich?
8. What kind of riches is Paul speaking of here?
9. How can we all help one another to make things come out equal?
10. Would there be enough provision in the world for everyone if there was equality?
11. Why is there not equality in this world?
12. Is there equality in the Church of God?

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

One of the greatest temptations to humankind is to be rich. To the carnal mind, riches mean money, wealth, earthly possessions and security. But these are not the true riches that we should seek after. Earthly riches have a way of dominating the mind and soul to where one becomes insensitive to God and the true riches. Jesus Himself declared that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The true riches of faith, love, patience, meekness, wisdom, kindness and peace are the most worthy objects of our desires. There is great joy in being poor in this world and knowing the realities of being rich in the favor and fellowship of God. Many people work hard to be rich. They make it the goal of their lives to be wealthy. It fills their waking hours and many times their sleeping hours. The thirst for earthly wealth is an all-consuming thirst. It makes a person cold and selfish. Very few people can survive prosperity in material things. There is something about material wealth that causes one to put their trust in it. It is a deceitful thing that preys on the heart of man. Oh, how we need to heed the truth that only Christ has the true riches! He gave up everything to come down to the cold, dark world to become the poorest of the poor. The wealth of the world had no attraction for Him. He had a better home to look forward to. He was not impressed by the things Satan sought to entice Him with. He had a joy set before Him that helped Him to overcome all of the sufferings of the cross. Oh, if more people could but see the blessing of giving and self-denial! What a change would be in our society! Only Christ can make us truly rich.

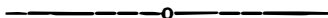
—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul said "to live is Christ." Christ was the center of his life. Just so, He should be the center of our lives. Every plan and purpose should be derived from Christ. Jesus stood before the Father with the attitude of, "Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Psa. 40:7, 8. "I delight to do Thy will." Jesus did the will of the Father here on earth until He said on the cross, "It is finished." First, Jesus gave Himself to do the will of the Father and then He gave Himself to ministering to those about Him, and finally gave His life. First, we must give ourselves to Jesus and then He prompts our giving and ministering to the saints. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Matt. 25:40. Christ is the one who prompts our giving, therefore we have a real fellowship with Christ. We abound in the grace of giving as well as in the other graces. Giving is good for saints, as it checks any tendency to selfishness and it keeps the heart tender. Blessings come from giving, therefore we fellowship Christ, who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we might have everlasting life. This brought joy to our Saviour, "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross . . . and is set down at the right hand of God." Heb. 12:2. He had joy in seeing us saved from sin and therefore was willing to endure the cross. We fellowship our Lord in giving because we love to see the joy in those that are given to.

—Marie Miles

(Written in 1975.)



**December 3, 1989**

## **THE BLESSING OF GIVING**

**II Corinthians 9:1** For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

**2** For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

**3** Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

**4** Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

**5** Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

**6** But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

**7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

**8** And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

**9** (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

**10** Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

**11** Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

**12** For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

**13** Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

**14** And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

**15** Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

**Memory Verse:** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. II Corinthians 9:7.

**Central Thought:** God wants us to give of ourselves and our means freely, sacrificially, and cheerfully to help support the work of the Lord and to help those who are in need.

**Word Definitions:** *Superfluous:* Not needful.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have some very good pointed truths concerning the blessing of giving to the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has always accomplished His designs for man, making use of the freewill offerings that come from what man has been blessed to have. When God began to unveil to Moses His plans for the tabernacle, He instructed him to take offerings of every man that giveth willingly with his heart, of the gold, silver, brass, and all of the other things that would be necessary for the building of the tabernacle. When David made public his plans to have the great temple built, the people offered and gave willingly the things that were needed for the service of the house of the Lord. In the New Testament Church we still have this principle. God surely sees that it is good for us to give. When we offer of ourselves and what we have to the Lord with a cheerful and yielded heart to the Lord, the sacrifice thereof is a sweet smelling savour to Him. No one prospers by holding back on God. No one gets ahead by closing their fists on their money. "Give, and it shall be given unto you," said Jesus in Luke 6:38. As our lesson plainly states, we are not to give because we have to, or just because it is a necessity, but we should give because we want to give, and be cheerful while we are doing it from the heart. God loves a cheerful giver. There is a rich reward for the faithful and cheerful giver. The attitude of the giver who gives in the spirit that God is pleased with, will help him to be in a condition where God can and will pour out the fulness of His grace upon him. Giving is the basic principle of life and success. No one gets very far in the Christian race who does not learn and know the joy of giving. God's unspeakable gift, the gift of His Son is the greatest gift of all, and the giving of ourselves and of our substance is the just and proper thing for us to do.

—Leslie C. Busbee



## **QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is giving such an important phase of the Christian life?
2. What will one's blessings be if they give sparingly?
3. What is the attitude in giving that God loves?
4. What is the great reward of giving?
5. What will God's abundant grace enable us to do?
6. What kind of righteousness will be to the man who disperses abroad and gives to the poor?
7. Will a person who gives consistently and sacrificially ever really miss the things that he gives for the Lord?
8. What will the bountifulness that God bestows cause to spring up in the heart?
9. Will this thanksgiving be in the giver's heart alone?
10. What are the good and perfect gifts and the one unspeakable gift of God?

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

One of the most important functions of the Christian life is that of giving. We must give of ourselves, of our time, of our means, of our strength, and every other phase of our lives. One who does not give does not prosper in the Lord. Selfishness and greed are foreign to the Spirit of God. No man can have these dispositions in the heart and have fellowship with God. The Christian life is to give, give, give, and give some more. God's nature is to give. Think of the blessings that He bestows daily upon humanity. The sunlight from the sky, the rain from heaven, the air we breathe, the beauties of nature, food, and many more things are the tokens of the love of our beneficent heavenly Father. He gives because He loves to give. He gives bountifully and richly all things for us to enjoy. If we are His sons and daughters, we will have the same kind of desire and pleasure to give. We must first give ourselves to the Lord, then everything we have is His. It really belongs to Him anyway, but He wants to receive it from our hand of faith and love. It is more than just merely giving a tithe. There are times when a tenth will not satisfy the craving of love and desire to give that He puts in our hearts. Oh, the spiritual poverty that there is in the world on account of people not knowing the blessing of giving to the Lord and others. As we give freely and cheerfully, God sees to it that our needs are supplied and that His abundant grace will be constantly in our hearts. Let us be diligent to give freely and sacrificially as never before. Learn the great joy of giving and

your Christian experience will grow and prosper by leaps and bounds.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A beggar at the end of the day heard the cry, "The king comes!" Expecting a princely gift from the king, the beggar was astounded when he extended his cup only to have the king stop his great white charger and ask, "What gift have you for the king?" Is this our perspective of giving; that God is the giver and we are always on the receiving end?

"The Golden Ladder of Giving" by Maimonides, a Jewish scholar of the twelfth century, included the following steps which lead from the lowest rung of giving to the most perfect. (1) To give reluctantly, the give of the hand, but not of the heart. (2) To give cheerfully, but not in proportion to the need. (3) To give cheerfully, and proportionately, but not until solicited. (4) To give cheerfully, proportionately and unsolicited, but to put the gift into the poor man's hand. (5) To give in such a way that the distressed may know their benefactor, without being known to him. (6) To know the objects of our bounty, but remain unknown to them. (7) To give so that the benefactor may not know those whom he has relieved, and they shall not know him.

—Wayne Murphey

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December 10, 1989

## THE RIGHT KIND OF WARFARE AND STRIFE

II Corinthians 10:1 Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

2 But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

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

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

6 And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

7 Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

14 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ:

15 Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly,

16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.

17 But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

**Memory Verse:** (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) II Corinthians 10:4.

**Central Thought:** We are not in a literal combat with carnal men using carnal weapons, but we are in a spiritual conflict, daily bringing into captivity every part of our being to the will of God, and we are striving to fulfill all that God is calling us to, that He might be glorified.

**Word Definitions:** *Imaginations:* Reasonings, opinions, ideas, beliefs, things that the carnal mind has proposed to be truth. The gospel attacked all superstitions, myths and theories that men in darkness had devised in their idolatrous worship.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul was meek and gentle when he was among the brethren, but in his letters he exercised more boldness. He did it this way because he did not want to have some thinking

that he was walking after the flesh. This is a very important thought. Real Christian warfare is accomplished by the workings of the Spirit of God through meek and lowly saints of God. Our weapons are faith, love, righteousness, hope and the gospel of Christ. Only by these weapons can we pull down strongholds and bring every heart and mind into the captivity of the grace of God. It seemed that some tried to take an advantage of Paul because he was so meek and gentle, but he assured them that he could be bold in Christ, also. He states in our lesson that he disapproved of those who measured themselves by themselves, that is, looking on one another for the evaluation of their own spiritual life. There is a tendency for us to do this. We hear someone testify and expound what God has done for them, and the enemy tries to make us feel inferior or dissatisfied with our own spiritual accomplishments. He would even get souls who are unaware to try to imitate and be like someone else, but we must all remember that God deals with us as individuals, and we are to walk according to the rule of faith that He has personally joined unto us. If we will keep our individual places in Christ and commit our brother or sister to Him, we will find that God will be near us to make our experience and labors prosperous and successful.

—Leslie C. Busbee

#### **QUESTIONS:**

1. How did Paul treat the brethren when he was in their midst?
2. Why was he bolder in his letters than he was in their presence?
3. What kind of warfare did Paul fight in?
4. What kind of imaginations does the gospel tear down?
5. What high thing exalts itself against the knowledge of God?
6. What does bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ involve?
7. When can we be ready to deal with sin and disobedience?
8. Why is it unwise to compare ourselves with others and measure ourselves by ourselves?
9. What happens if we overstretch ourselves and go beyond what the Spirit of God is working in us?
10. If self motivates and approves our labors, who is glorified?

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

The service of the gospel and Christian warfare are two very important things to the child of God. Knowing how to

deal with others and how to present the gospel message is very, very important. When we are dealing with souls and in the presence of the unsaved we need to be very loving, gentle, and meek. Some in their zeal think that they need to pressure and talk people into getting saved and lining up with the truth, but there is something here that we had better be careful about. If we pressure people and get them to heed our efforts, the Spirit of God may not have as much to do with that as we might think. The people could be responding to us instead of the Lord. And when that is true the results will not be what they should be. Our labors and our warfare in the Christian life must be kept strictly under Holy Spirit rule and inspiration. It is possible that we might be fighting a carnal fight even if we do not have a gun or a sword in hand. We might be fighting a carnal fight with our words. We may be able to persuade and pressure people, but if the Sword of the Spirit is not in the fray, the strongholds and imaginations will not come down. We want people won to the Lord and not to us. When they are won to us, there will be a tendency to measure and compare with one another. This goes on in many religious circles today. Many preachers literally rule their "offspring," domineering them into things that they have devised. Not all religious activity is of God. Show me a man who is not meek and gentle in his ministry and I will show you a man who is ruling over people in an unjust, unauthorized manner. Faith, love, kindness, patience, peace, purity and divine wisdom are the weapons and tools that really get the work done for the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Sometimes young converts are troubled about not being able to testify like some older saint. But as the lesson tells us, we are not to measure ourselves by ourselves nor compare ourselves with others. We are to testify like the Lord shows us, and just be ourself. The older saint has gone through many trials and has had a lot of schooling in the things of the Lord. They have a deeper depth than the young convert. So don't try to be like them. The young convert will be able to testify to more grace in his life as he continues to live for God. As the young convert continues to exercise himself, the Lord will add to his service for Him. We should desire to labor for the Lord, yet we must not go beyond our ability that the Lord gives us. We are not to "stretch beyond our measure." One elder minister said that every young minister should teach a class of little children and learn how to teach before trying to teach adults.

I don't know if that rule would hold always, but there is something in it. If you can't feel an anointing, or get over a truth in teaching children, how can you teach adults? Teaching is one of the qualifications of a minister, "apt to teach." I Tim. 3:2. I don't believe that the Lord calls a person to take the pulpit to teach others just as soon as they are saved. The qualifications of a minister are that they are "not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into condemnation of the devil" I Tim. 3:6. A novice is one, "newly come to the faith." What a young convert has to say can be said while he is standing at his seat. We then will not be going "beyond our measure."

Zeal without knowledge will get us into trouble, yet we must be busy for the Lord and move as the Lord leads.

—Marie Miles  
(Written in 1975.)

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December 17, 1989

## WARNINGS AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

II Corinthians 11:1 Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me.

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

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

12 But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am

more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

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

**Central Thought:** Satan has many agents and workers who pose as the ministers of Christ, ever seeking to win people to them, preaching false doctrine, and making it treacherous and difficult for the faithful servants of God to labor for souls.

**Word Definitions:** *"Bear with me a little in my folly"*: Paul thought it needful to defend his ministry, speaking much of himself, his sufferings, his revelations and his success. He knew that some would think it unwise and vain. *"Ye might well bear with him"*: The word "him" here is an added word by the translators. Some have felt that the word "me" would have been more appropriate here, as he had already in verse 1 asked them to bear with him.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

There seems very surely to have been a false teacher trying to influence the brethren at Corinth, working against Paul. Paul had preached Christ to them, and they had believed. He had counseled them by letter and they had received that. Someone was now coming among them preaching another Jesus, presenting Christ in another spirit, and holding forth another gospel, all which was foreign and different. In Paul's

preaching he had espoused them to Christ, and had held a standard of holiness that pleased the Saviour. Paul did not seek to draw people to himself. But the false teacher, as it is with every false prophet, had sought to draw people away from the teachings of Paul unto himself, using the name of Jesus as a ruse or bait to attract them. Perhaps he was more eloquent than Paul, or a little more persuasive with his words. Paul was seeking to defend his ministry, reminding them of the things that God had worked in His life. This is why he made the list of the things that he had suffered and gone through with. It has happened more times than one that a minister has labored to win souls and build up a work for God, and then another spirit comes in and steals the hearts of the people. Now we know that there is but one real Jesus, and only one true Spirit of the Lord, and only one pure and true gospel. But when two different men preach from the same Bible two different gospels, then we know something is wrong. God help us today and safeguard us from false teachers and their destructive work.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. Is there a jealousy that is justified and right?
2. In the preaching of the gospel, who are we to seek to draw people to?
3. What was Paul afraid of concerning the Church at Corinth?
4. Is it possible for a man to preach the wrong Jesus?
5. Just where is this "other Jesus" formed?
6. What do false apostles transform themselves into?
7. How does Satan make himself appear?
8. What to you is the worst peril that Paul had to meet along life's journey?
9. What weighed down on Paul on top of all the other things from without?
10. What did Paul glory in?

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

"A chaste virgin to Christ." Oh, what weighty words are these! The Holy Spirit of God accompanies the gospel to woo and win our hearts from the ways of sin and the world, to find a new life in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master. We hear how He so loved us when we were all so undone. It comes to us personally and individually. It charms us so to realize how much He cared for our souls to take our place and die for us on Calvary. The love of Christ bears down upon us, and we finally fall at His feet and repent of our sins. As our faith



takes hold of His precious promises, the peace of God's forgiving love floods our hearts with the greatest joy that we have ever known. We know that He has delivered us from sin. Our hearts are changed from the old to the new. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Oh, how our hearts are filled with love and worship to Him! We are lost in the love of Jesus, just carried away by the grace and power that we feel in our hearts from day to day. We love everybody. Oh, what a wonderful experience to have in this life! How sweet is our walk with Jesus! We see the wonderful hope that He is giving us, and we want to see His sweet face some blessed day. We seek to please Him. We want to be pure as He is pure. We are a chaste, pure virgin to Christ. We are united to Him in one sweet holy Spirit of love, holiness and power. This world and all of its folly attracts us no more. We have found the pearl of great price! This is an experience that is so precious in the sight of God, but we must be on our guard. Jesus warned us about false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Their effect will be to corrupt us from the chaste singleness of heart that we have to the Lord, to them and their ideas. Oh, it has happened many times to many people. Let us be on our guard, and seek to maintain a constant life for Jesus above all things.—Leslie C. Busbee

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

*2nd Phil. 98*  
Christ can be presented in many different ways. It is amazing how that sometimes He can be presented in such a way that His character is hardly recognizable. It is of utmost importance that we have an ongoing, personal relationship with Him so that if we have occasion to come into the influence of a false prophet, we can recognize it.

Paul insinuated, by comparison, that this false prophet at Corinth was very subtle. He was adding to what Paul had told them about Christ, and making the way of holiness more complicated. Judas, who was the brother of Jesus, exhorted in his epistle, "that ye should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 3. This is a good admonition. We need to go all the way back to the fountain-head. Jude was written in approximately A.D. 75, and already there had been many things to complicate and draw away from the simple salvation Christ taught. How much more it has been done in nearly 2,000 years! Man's concoctions have thrown many impurities into this gospel stream. When a false doctrine or theory is a trouble to you, there is more surety and comfort for your soul, if rather than approaching the theory

and trying to sort out the impurities, you simply turn your attention to the simplicity of Christ. There are times that false spirits are hard to put your finger on, for Paul said that Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, but the plan of salvation is easily understood by even the simple.

—Wayne Murphey

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**December 24, 1989**

**“WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG”**

**II Corinthians 12:1** It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

**2** I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

**3** And I knew such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

**4** How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

**5** Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

**6** For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

**7** And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

**8** For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

**9** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

**10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

**11** I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

**12** Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds

15 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

**Memory Verse:** And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. II Corinthians 12:9.

**Central Thought:** There are things that God will allow to come upon us in life that He will not take away in answer to our prayers, but will rather use those things to try and to keep us humble, and give us His all-sufficient grace to make us strong and triumphant in our weakness.

**Word Definitions:** *Infirmities:* Weaknesses, inability, limitations, difficulties. *Reproaches:* Insults or injuries. *Necessities:* Times of constraint and being forced into unpleasant situations. *Distresses:* Close and difficult situations, calamities.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we saw where Paul was defending his ministry in the face of false teachers who were seeking to prey on those to whom he had preached. He continues his defense now by telling how that the Lord Jesus dealt with him in outstanding visions and revelations, balancing them out with special and unusual trials and heavy infirmities. The one he is speaking of as being caught up to the third heaven and into paradise was himself. Just when he was caught up to these heights of glory we cannot accurately tell. Some have thought it might have been when he was taken up for dead after being stoned as related in Acts 14:9. Whenever it was, Paul was granted the special privilege of being taken up into the presence of the Lord where things were spoken that are not permitted to be uttered here on earth. It seemed that God saw fit to bless Paul in a very outstanding way with visions and revelations of His glory. But, to counter-balance these wonderful blessings in order to help keep him humble, God saw fit to allow Paul to suffer unusual difficulties which are listed in our lesson. Paul called it all a thorn in the flesh. There has been a lot of speculation as to what this thorn in the flesh was. Some think it might have been his poor vision. I am more inclined to count it as the things mentioned here all together, making up a great heavy load of physical difficulties that plagued him wherever he went. It is not strange nor out of reason that Paul sought God's mercy to escape these things. However, the answer of Christ to him is our main lesson today.

He got an answer, but it was different from what he had hoped. That same grace will be ours today as we face the thorns that we find in our flesh, for we are in the same fight that he was in. God still works to counter-balance our lives. As Frances Ridley Havergal said in her poem of the compensating springs and the balance wheels of life, "The hand that takes the crown must ache with many a cross." This is true in our day. May the Lord help us to see the depths of the meaning of the expression, "When I am weak, then am I strong."

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul not want to glory in the fact that he had been caught up to heaven?
2. Is there any danger of us speaking too much about the revelations and special blessings of the Lord?
3. Why did the Lord give Paul a thorn in the flesh?
4. What was his first reaction to this thorn in the flesh?
5. What did the Lord say to him?
6. How did Paul take the counsel of the Lord concerning this unanswered petition?
7. Can you give an illustration of how the Lord's strength is revealed in the weakness of humanity?
8. What were some of the things Paul found that he could take pleasure in?
9. When a man is weak in himself, can he expect the help of God in his life?

## ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The infirmities that Paul faced and suffered every day in his life were a special blessing from the Lord. They helped to make manifest the power of Christ in his life. When Christ uses weak things to confound the mighty, the weak vessel takes no credit. In every Christian, sooner or later, there will be this special working by God. God will allow some difficulty to come your way. It will test your courage and decision over and over. It will root out the tendency to be slothful and overly self-confident. To press against this thorn in the flesh will be the most difficult thing you have ever done. Sometimes it will seem that you are going to falter and not be able to make it, but press onward and hold steady. That physical problem, that vexing situation, that unusual difficulty has a very special mission in your life. It will help you to witness the power of Christ more clearly and more closely in your heart.

Look for unusual and special blessings when you enter these times of dire need and temptation, and when heaven opens its windows and pours out its blessings in a special way, do not be surprised if it will be accompanied by some unusual trials of faith. As Ecclesiastes 7:14 says, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." God sets the day of adversity over against (or to balance out) the day of prosperity. It helps keep us humble and to remember that we are absolutely nothing in ourselves. If you haven't already, you will need this lesson someday. The time will come when you will know what it means to be truly strong when you are weak.

—Leslie C. Busbee

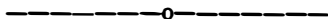
### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Do you ever get tired of having to go through some kind of trouble? So did the Apostle Paul. In fact he became so weary that it almost became a contention with him and God. But God let him know that although the problems would continue, His grace would be sufficient. With God as our helper we can bear all things and keep a good, wholesome attitude. We can continue to work for God and actually gladly be spent for Him. We don't have to complain as we go through life.

There is an Aesop fable which tells of a heavily laden wagon, pulled by a yoke of oxen over a dusty road. Each time the wheels turned on their axles they set up a tremendous creaking. Driven almost frantic by the ear-piercing noise, the driver cried, "Wagon, why do you make all this clamor and complaint, when they who are drawing all the weight are silent?" If God is willing to do the pulling for us in problems, surely we can bear a little weight without complaining.

If God is doing the work for us in the hard places it is easy to understand the point that is made in the verse, "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is all contingent on the One to whom we are hooked to. When the hard times come then we can feel the Lord starting to pull. We can feel a divine power working in our lives.

—Wayne Murphey



**December 31, 1989**

**EXAMINING AND PROVING OURSELVES  
TO BE IN THE FAITH**

**II Corinthians 13:1** This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

**2** I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

**3** Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

**4** For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

**5** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

**6** But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

**7** Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

**8** For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

**9** For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

**10** Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

**11** Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

**12** Greet one another with an holy kiss.

**13** All the saints salute you.

**14** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

**Memory Verse:** Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? **II Corinthians 13:5.**

**Central Thought:** We should be very attentive to the reality and genuineness of our faith, examining it constantly

that it be kept in right order, fulfilling every requirement and meeting every responsibility that Christ in love has handed down to us.

**Word Definition:** *Reprobate*: Unapproved, rejected, worthless, counterfeit.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul is bringing his second epistle to a close. He calls it his third time to come to them. He came the first time when he visited there and the work for the Lord was started. His second time to come to them was in his first epistle which proved to be such a great blessing to them. He may have counted each visit a witness. He tells them that if he comes again he will not spare. They were seeking a proof of Christ in him, and he was proving to them that Christ was mightily working in him. He explained that though Christ was crucified through weakness, yet He lived by the power of God, and that Paul was weak (in the flesh) in Christ, but would live with them by the power of God toward them. Instead of making such a stiff requirement that Paul prove himself, he tells them that they need to turn the searchlight on their own lives, examining themselves whether they be in the faith or not. He warned them about the possibility of being reprobates, and the chance they had of being cast away at the last. He wanted them to be assured that he himself was not a reprobate. All through this we see that loving and tender concern that he had for their state. So convinced was he of this thing that he declared that nothing could be done against the truth, but for the truth. The truth will stand by itself. It needs no one to support it. As the poet William Cullen Bryant said, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again, The eternal years of God are hers; But error, wounded, writhes in pain, and dies among her worshippers." Paul expressed himself boldly but with desire that his authority would not be for their destruction, but for their edification. Then he closed with loving words of comfort and courage, admonishing them to greet one another with an holy kiss, praying that the grace of Christ, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit would be with them all.

—Leslie C. Busbee

## QUESTIONS:

1. Who is to examine who in this matter of who is in the faith?

2. How can we know that we are in the faith for sure?
3. What must we have in our hearts and minds that will correspond with the weakness of Christ?
4. Can we be in the true faith without sharing Christ's weakness?
5. Make a list from the previous studies in this series and from the Word of God in general, of the things that are vital to be in the faith.
6. Can we really do anything against the truth and prevail against it?
7. What were the final things that Paul lovingly entreated them to do as he closed his epistle?
8. Why was Paul glad to be weak?
9. In what way did Paul want to use his power and authority?
10. What three things did he pray to be with them all?

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

"Examine yourselves," our lesson tells us. It didn't say for us to examine someone else, but this often is the case, and we fail to examine ourself. Not only are we to examine ourself, but we are to prove ourself. Watch how you act in times of trouble or distress. How do you act when others talk about you or cast your name out as evil? Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and told them that they were careful to pay tithes of mint, etc., but they had omitted the "weightier matters of the law," which were "judgment, mercy and faith." (Matthew 23:23). They were careful to pick mint and be sure that they gave the tenth sprig, but they were not careful to "judge righteous judgment." (John 7:24). Some say that the Bible says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." This is true, but many do not judge "righteous judgment" when they inspect another person. We need to be careful about being fruit inspectors. We need to see that we have mercy and faith. We need to do as our lesson says for us to do—"examine ourselves." Many judge from appearance, and that is not righteous judgment. We can know if we are the Lord's. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we have passed from death to life. (Read Romans 8:14-17). If Christ dwells in us, we are not reprobates, but have the power of Christ working within us. We can't mix the worldly spirit with the Spirit of Christ. We must reject worldliness and cling to the true Spirit of Christ to be acceptable in the sight of the Lord. We can't mix truth with error. We are under the influence of the spirit of Satan or the Spirit of the Lord. Praise God, we can know if we are the Lord's, and if we



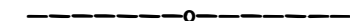
measure our lives to the Word of God, we belong to Him!  
—Sis. Marie Miles, December, 1975

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When an airplane ticket is purchased in advance, it is a good idea to confirm the ticket before you go to take the flight. Things can happen that make an airline ticket void. How disappointing to attempt to board the plane only to find out you have been "bumped" from that flight. How much more important it is to confirm our salvation. This needs to be done frequently and is accomplished by examining ourselves. I Cor. 1:8 tells about the words and life of Christ which shall "confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." As we read the Word of God and apply it to ourselves, we can have an assurance that all is well. Disappointment is hardly the appropriate word to use when describing what it would be like to stand before God on the day of judgment and find out our experience is not up-to-date. Eternally devastating might convey more the proper feeling.

One way to know if we will be reprobates at the close of our life is to see if we are of any use to God in this life. Those whom Satan is the master of lead a very unproductive life. Their time and talents are wasted. There are some who have a Christian profession, but because Christ is not the motivation for their actions their experience is a counterfeit. But these things do not have to be, for God has something better. We can maintain a vibrant experience with God in which He gives daily assurance that all is well.

—Wayne Murphey



### MARY SLESSOR OF CALABAR

From early girlhood Mary Slessor of Scotland had dreamed of being a missionary to Africa. During her early life she helped her widowed mother support the family, but while toiling in the mills, she planned for the day when she would carry the Gospel to the lost in West Africa.

The time came when she exchanged the cold grey skies of her native land for the warm tropical breezes of Africa and she began to learn of the awful conditions of the heathen—their sin and ignorance, their superstition and degradation.

She knew the Gospel was the only power on earth to turn them from their degrading practices—and she made up her mind to do all in her power to help them.

There was one custom that grieved her—and that was against twins born in the home. Twins were not allowed to live, but were stuffed into containers and thrown into the bush to be eaten by wild beasts. The mother was also driven into the wilds and left to starve or to be eaten by wild animals because her body was supposed to be inhabited by evil spirits.

### **Devotion To Christ**

Purity was unknown among them in those days and only the love of God in her heart could cause a girl, who had been brought up as had Mary Slessor, to live under such conditions.

But Mary did it for Jesus' sake and for the sake of the souls He had died to redeem, and so great was her devotion to Christ and to the people that she soon won the hearts of all and became almost supreme among them.

Her fame spread from tribe to tribe and from chief to chief, and far back into the jungles, and they sent her invitation after invitation to come and bring them the Gospel.

The life dream of Mary Slessor seemed to be realized when she at last landed among the people of a very needy tribe.

There she began in the same tender way giving them the Gospel and sacrificing her every comfort for their welfare. She won the hearts of these people and gained such power over them that they soon learned not to resist her wishes.

Many times when war seemed inevitable between tribes, and their wild passions ran high, she would throw her life into the situation and the trouble would be averted.

She did not attempt to save herself, but even when chiefs were heavily drinking and very dangerous, she did not hesitate to appeal to them in the interest of the people, and she nearly always won.

The tribe where she worked was especially cruel and was constantly fighting among themselves and with other tribes. They had practiced every horrible custom imaginable. Every man carried a defense day and night.

There are no words that can describe the depths to which these people had fallen in their social and moral customs. From the standpoint of men, they were beyond hope. But Mary Slessor did not depend upon human resources.

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

She knew the Gospel was the power of God—and the only power in the universe that could change the hearts of these people. It did change thousands of them from the cruel and benighted people that they were into new creations in Christ.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17

In fact, Mary Slessor had not been long among this tribe until she began to see changes for the good among them. Many of them accepted the Gospel and became wonderful Christians, upright, moral, clean citizens of their community, and thousands of others, moved by their example, left off their evil practices.

Mary Slessor's chief reliance was prayer. She said she did not believe there was anything that prayer could not do. She had resorted to it on a thousand occasions, and it had never failed.

#### **Yielded, In Every Fiber Of Her Being**

She was powerful in prayer because she was yielded to God in every fiber of her being. Prayer had many times restrained drunken chiefs from their cruel purposes and kept them from those evil practices that they had long followed. It had done away with the wicked practice of twin and wife destruction.

She knew, in a way that only a few have known, that prayer is the greatest power that God has put into the hands of His people for service!

She often said that prayer is harder than work, but that it lies in the way of every advance in God's kingdom.

"I have no idea how or why God carried me over so many hard places and made these people subject to me, except it was in answer to the prayers of those in the homeland for me. It is all beyond my comprehension. The only way I can explain it is that I have been prayed for more than most."

#### **That We May Learn The Meaning Of Sacrifice And Service**

To Mary Slessor, Christ was real and even more real than any person. She said, "When I am out in the bush, I have no one to talk to but Him, and so I just talk to Him."

Yes, she talked to Him and He listened to her, because there was nothing in her life that she had not given up for Him.

She knew that He had given up all for her and why should she not give all to Him, such a wonderful and dear Saviour and Friend?

### **Thread Of Her Being**

She had heard from childhood God's call to go, and she had obeyed with every thread of her being. There was nothing that she kept back from Him, and how small do the meager sacrifices of the average one of us seem when compared to those she made for Christ!

We are of the opinion that God gives us such characters as Mary Slessor that we may learn the meaning of sacrifice and service. There was no sacrifice that she was not willing to make for the Lord Jesus Christ who had saved her from the power of sin, and made her a member of His heavenly kingdom.

### **Instant In Service**

There was no service too menial for her to perform. Her labor for those around her was incessant. She had rescued one of the twins sacrificed in the bush, brought it to her home, and cared for it as tenderly as she would have cared for her own child.

She had in her home a number of these rescued children and she served and trained them as carefully as she would have cared for her own. She did as much manual labor as any man, always seeing the necessity of leading the natives in work, for without, they were always in favor of putting the work off until 'tomorrow' and we know tomorrow never comes. —Sel.

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