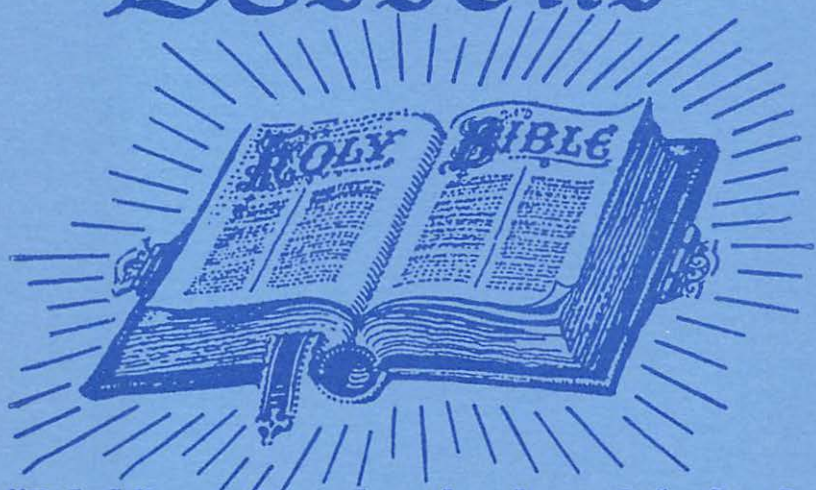


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 24, No. 3
July, Aug., Sept.
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People
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Volume 24

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No. 3

Table of Contents

	Page
July 5 Confidence and Hope in the Gospel	1
12 Having the Mind of Christ.....	6
19 Pursuing the Goal of Life	11
26 Our Citizenship is in Heaven.....	17
Aug. 2 Abounding Fruit to our Account	23
9 The Sacred Trust of the Gospel	28
16 Our Concern for the Spiritual Welfare of Others	34
23 God's Call to Sanctification and Honor	38
30 The Hope of God's Calling	43
Sept. 6 Sanctified Wholly and Preserved Blameless	48
13 Enduring Tribulation to be Accounted Worthy	52
20 Triumphant Over the Mystery of Iniquity	57
27 Good Behavior, a Mark of True Christianity	61

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Jesus Christ and His Church
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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 1992

We have found in studying the Bible, through the years, much inspiration and spiritual edification in the epistles that the apostle Paul wrote to the various congregations of the believers in Christ in his day. We feel inspired and directed of the Lord to bring a series of lessons for this third quarter of 1992 from Paul's epistle to the Philippians and from his two epistles to the Thessalonians. Our study will not cover the entire writings in these epistles, but rather the main sections that contain the writings of special spiritual value. We trust that each Bible student will be spiritually benefited by the studies from these lessons.

The Philippians dwelt in the city of Philippi, which was, as the city of Thessalonica, located in Macedonia. The two cities were less than one hundred miles distant from each other. Paul planted the gospel in both of these cities. The Lord raised up a host of redeemed souls in both of these cities despite all the opposition that was raised against the truth. Judging from the tender expressions found in both of these epistles, it is very evident that the people who accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ were very dear to the heart of Paul. Thank God that we can also share in the spiritual food that Paul communicated to these dear saints of long ago. The same Jesus who was precious to them can still be precious today to every seeking heart.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee



JULY 5, 1992

CONFIDENCE AND HOPE IN THE GOSPEL

Philippians 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; .

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing

confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

MEMORY VERSE: For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil. 1:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The confidence that we have in Christ and His cause gives us the strength and courage we need to meet all adversity and hardship. And our hope in Christ enables us to look beyond this present fleeting life to eternal dwellings with Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel"* (v. 12): Resulted or caused to be. *"My bonds manifest in all the palace"* (v. 13): The news of Paul's imprisonment was spread even throughout the civil courts and even among the household of Caesar. (Phil. 4:22.) *"Some preach Christ of envy and strife"* (v. 15): There were those who preached Christ, that is, they openly proclaimed Christ as the Messiah, yet were against Paul because he did not require the new converts to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. *"This shall turn to my salvation"* (v. 19): The preaching of Christ by some in opposition to me will not harm me, but will result in my spiritual victory and deliverance. *"Through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ"* (v. 19): The comfort and blessing of the prayers of those who faithfully support me along with the grace and power that the Spirit of Christ will furnish will help me prevail over all. *"I wot not"* (v. 22): I know not. *"I am in a strait betwixt two"* (v. 23): Hard pressed by a desire to die and enter the presence of the Lord and a desire to tarry in the flesh and be a help to others. *"Furtherance and joy of faith"* (v. 25): The spiritual progress and increase of the joy of believing in Christ. *"Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ"* (v. 27): Act as worthy citizens of the gospel of Christ.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There was a very strong bond of love between Paul and the faithful brethren at Philippi. It is generally believed that Paul wrote this loving letter to the Philippians from his captivity in Rome. Though many worked against Paul,

there were those who clave to him in holy love and the tender Spirit of Christ. He thanked God upon every remembrance of them. They were always in his prayers, being thankful for their fellowship, and being also confident that the good work God had begun in these brethren He would finish it to the end. He had them in his heart, and they proved themselves to be real partners with Paul in his imprisonment and in his defence and confirmation of the gospel. He longed after them in the deep tender feelings of the Spirit of Christ. His prayer for them was that their love would abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that they would approve things that are excellent, and that they would be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. He bore witness of them as being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. Paul had in all of this epistle no reproof or rebuke. He issued some warnings, but the general expression was to a congregation that was a great joy to his heart.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is there anything that will harm us if we keep filled with the Spirit of God?
2. What will adversities do for us?
3. What effect will being brave and steadfast in the battles of life have upon others?
4. If someone is preaching Christ and at the same time working against us, should we try to stop them?
5. What will the Lord do about such things?
6. What should be the utmost desire of our life?
7. What should be our purpose if we live?
8. What does death hold for us?
9. What should be our purpose concerning our life before others?
10. Can you give a word description of one whose conversation is becoming to the gospel of Christ?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, what a blessing to the servant of Christ is the life of a faithful and humble child of God! There is enough evil in the world and mixed up people to make it hard for a minister, but there is a joy that fills the heart through the sweet association of those who love and appreciate the truth of the gospel. Paul was a prisoner at Rome waiting to stand trial before Caesar. But the joy that filled his heart in thinking of and communicating with those dearly beloved brethren at Philippi and other places helped to bear him above it all. The faithful and holy saints were so dear to him that it was hard for him to decide on what he would rather do: to go on and be with the Lord, or to stay in the flesh and enjoy the fellowship of the saints of God. There are many false spirits about us, but thank God for those who are true! These false spirits will not hurt us if we keep lowly and meek at Jesus' feet! We can triumph in Christ regardless of the evils and deceptions about us. Through the love and prayers of the righteous and the constant supply of the Holy Spirit we will conquer though we die! Our hope is steadfast. Whether by life or by death, we want Christ to be magnified and lifted up in our mortal flesh. It matters not which way the Lord will choose for us to go. If we live, we will live for the Lord, and if we die, we will just go right into the presence of the Saviour. Oh, what a joyful hope this is! He is so near and dear to our hearts and the saints are so dear that we gladly tarry here with a desire that our life will count for others. Oh, what confidence and hope is ours as we follow in the steps of our beloved Master and Friend!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Paul was persuaded and thoroughly convinced that Jesus truly was the Saviour and Deliverer from sin for all who would come to Him. He loved Jesus for forgiving him of his sins and giving him that 'peace that passeth under-

standing' deep down in his very soul and being, and he wanted others to love Jesus, too. He wasn't satisfied to enjoy being saved alone. He wept and longed for his people and the Gentiles to be saved. Again and again he risked his life that they might believe on Jesus. This gave him great courage. In our lesson we find that he gladly suffered that others might know about Jesus. He called being in prison with a chain to hold him and a guard to guard him as 'bonds for Christ.' Through those bonds, many were blessed. The brethren were given more confidence in God and were 'waxing. . . more bold to speak the word without fear.' Paul said, 'I am set for the defense of the gospel.' He said, 'I am not ashamed but with all boldness. . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.' Paul was sold out to God, dead to the desires of the flesh and all that the world had to offer. God stood by him. Even those in the king's household were saved. Many believed because of his God-given courage that came from a full surrender to God." —Marie Miles (Written in 1970.)

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JULY 12, 1992

HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

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

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

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

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

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

MEMORY VERSE: Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Phil. 2:5.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Seeing that Christ gave up His position in heaven with God to come down to this world to die on the cross for our salvation, we must have the same mind in our dealings with our fellowman. We must try to

help them and be willing to be a sacrifice to serve and minister to their needs of life.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *Bowels* (v. 1): Deep and tender feelings of love, affection, and sympathy. *Vainglory* (v. 3): Empty boasting and self-conceit, pride and high regard for one's self. *Mind* (v. 5): One's disposition, sentiment, attitude, and desire. "*Thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation*" (vs. 6-7): The Greek rendering on this is a clearer expression: Who being in the form of God, counted not equality with God to be taken ahold of and held on to, but emptied Himself. This refers to Christ's willingness to leave the high position He had in heaven to come down to take upon Himself human flesh. "*Fear and trembling*" (v. 12): Reverence and a quaking; hesitancy and carefulness; deep sense of one's unworthiness and inability. "*Murmurings and disputings*" (v. 14): Complaining; debating; excess discussion. "*Without rebuke*" (v. 15): Unblameable; without blemish. "*If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith*" (v. 17): If I pour out my life's blood for the sake of your faith and spiritual welfare, I will do it with joy.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson in the first chapter of this epistle of Paul to the Philippians, we learned of Paul's intense love and appreciation for these brethren who had supported and stood with him in the gospel. He exhorted them to stand fast in one spirit, and to strive with one mind together for the faith of the gospel. He encouraged them to be in nothing terrified by their adversaries, stating that people's opposition to the truth and the saints is a sign of their perdition, but to those who are following the Lord it is a sign of their salvation of God. He reminded them that it was given to them in the behalf of Christ to suffer for His sake as well as to believe on Him, meeting the same opposition that Paul had met in their city and was still

meeting it in his imprisonment at Rome. He continues his loving counsel to them in our lesson today.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What four things are mentioned in verse one?
2. How will the presence of these things mentioned in verse one influence our attitudes toward others?
3. Can people be of one accord and of one mind without these things?
4. Why is trying to excel and outdo each other foreign to the Spirit of Christ?
5. Do we have this kind of spirit working in our world today?
6. What did the mind of Christ cause Him to be willing to do?
7. What will the mind of Christ in us cause us to do?
8. How did God reward Christ for His humility and obedience in dying on the cross?
9. What means must we employ in working out our salvation?
10. Would you be willing to lose everything including your life, and do it gladly, for the Master's sake and the welfare of others?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, how vitally important are the instructions that we have in our lesson today! It is very easy to overlook their value. In zeal for truth and right and the service of God we have a tendency to lose sight of the tenderness and mercy of God. If man could have corrected himself by conforming to God's laws and mending his own character we would never have needed a Saviour. And man today needs this Saviour. This Saviour is to shine out in the lives of those who will let His mind work in them. In this world of competition and strife, of pride and vainglory, it would

seem the mind of Christ is at great disadvantage. But it can and will triumph if we will let it work in our hearts and lives. His mind put the Saviour at a disadvantage, and it cost Him His life's blood. But God did not leave Him alone, but brought Him back from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. And if we will take that same humble attitude, that same spirit of love and mercy and compassion, we can reign with Him, also. Christ is not going to force His mind upon us. We are going to have to let, or permit, Him to do so. We must set ourselves steadfastly to be of the same mind as Jesus. We must discipline our whole life-style accordingly. It is one thing to believe in Him as Lord and Saviour, and it is another thing to really follow His example. We must diligently apply ourselves to His leadings with a carefulness and a deep sense of our unworthiness and weakness. We must eliminate all strife and evil speaking, criticizing and complaining. We must accept the challenge of the cross of Jesus and seek to follow the counsels we have in our lesson today. Success and happiness are sure to follow. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The apostle Paul made a paradoxical statement when he said, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love . . ." The Scriptures tell us that "God is love." Many times we accord love as an attribute of God, but John said He is love. I John 4:16. So there is no question about whether there is any comfort of love in Him. God is a spirit, and that spirit is love, so if that spirit dwells within our heart we will have love. "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

No matter how frigid the wintry weather may be in Alberta, Canada, there is one area where the grass is always green. In 1919 an underground fire broke out in the coal mine of Cadomin and the fire has never been extin-

guished. Likewise, people should be able to find warmth and comfort from the love of God that burns in our hearts. Relationships should flourish and grow no matter what elements of life blow around us.

"...if any bowels and mercies." In Bible times, the philosophers believed that our bowels were the deepest seat of our affections. This belief is somewhat understandable if you relate that when you hear something which is a shock to your system, your stomach is affected. The apostle Paul was saying in this Philippian letter that the deepest feeling it is possible to have should be one of mercy. People of our present time have varied deep feelings. We are in the midst of political elections, and we see people's deep-seated beliefs being strongly expressed. The environmentalists recently had a platform on which to protest what they felt was the destruction of our earth. Religion is one of the greatest areas in which people are riled if their particular persuasion is questioned or belittled. The deepest feelings by which a Christian is motivated should be mercy.

"...in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This is the mind of Christ, and if we have the love and mercy that has been mentioned, it will automatically bring about humility. If you love someone you will do all you can for them. If you feel mercy, you will be putting yourself on the same plane as the beneficiary.

—Wayne Murphey



JULY 19, 1992

PURSUING THE GOAL OF LIFE

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

MEMORY VERSE: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We should set Jesus Christ and the standard of His Word before us as a goal to attain to in hope and confidence of the prize of eternal life.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *Dogs* (v. 2): Figurative of men who tear and devour souls with their ways and doctrines of perdition. *"The concision"* (v. 2): The Greek word from which this word is translated means a cutting down or off. Paul is warning them of evil spirits, working in men who sought to cut precious souls from the doctrine of the Lord. Clarke observes that "the word is used by the apostle to degrade the pretensions which the Jews made to holiness in holding to the rite of circumcision, which as a sign of the covenant was an honorable thing. But as they now had rejected the new covenant in Christ, their circumcision was rendered uncircumcision, and as a mere cutting of the flesh." Natural circumcision no longer has any spiritual value, for it has been fulfilled in the circumcision of the heart. That is the circumcision that Paul refers to in verse three, a spiritual circumcision which is the cutting away of the sins of the flesh. *"That I may win Christ"* (v. 8): Losing all of what he had in the law Paul "gained" Christ. To gain is to possess; have to one's credit; own; have full use and enjoyment of. *"Not having mine own righteousness"* (v. 9): Not holding nor clinging to my own self righteousness that consisted of obedience to the law. *"That I may know Him"* (v. 10): To learn; experience; be acquainted with; partake of. *"Being made conformable unto His death"* (v. 10): Being crucified and dead with Christ from the things of this present evil world; braving the dangers that attend a life of faith and obedience to God; being willing, if necessary, to be a martyr for Christ. *"If by any means"* (v. 11): By these things aforementioned: gaining Christ, having His righteousness, knowing Him, etc. By these means alone can we hope to attain unto the resurrection of the dead. *Apprehend* (v. 12): Arrest; lay hold of; seize upon.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have Paul's expression of his deliverance from the law system to the faith of Christ and the pressing of his soul to lay hold of the Christian experience in pursuit of the goal of eternal life. It is a serious as well as a vital thought, worthy of everyone's consideration. For a hope of a heavenly home without laying hold of Christ and everything that He taught is a vain hope. Paul pictures the Christian life here as a press toward a mark, or goal. That goal is to be like Jesus in every way, and it sums up to a life-long endeavor. Learning, pursuing, following, pressing, seeking, reaching forth, and laying hold adds up to the real spiritual labor that must be employed if we are to be accounted worthy to share in Christ's resurrection.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What were some of the things Paul had to his credit under the law?
2. Were they really much of a loss when he gave them up to gain Christ?
3. Did he really have to give them up in order to win Christ?
4. How did he feel about the things he had lost?
5. Name the things Paul purposely pursued in his quest of eternal life.
6. Is there ever a place in the Christian life where there is nothing to press forward for?
7. What if a person receives Christ but never reaches out for the things mentioned in our lesson?
8. From what we have in our lesson can you identify the mark and the prize?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We have pictured in our lesson today the Christian quest and press for attaining the goal of life. The goal is to

follow Christ and lay hold of everything He has for us. The prize is being resurrected from the dead unto eternal life. We can not hope to share the prize if we fail to reach the mark. Doing the will of God, being always led by the Spirit, praying, giving, worshiping, serving, loving, helping, and any other Christian activity that Christ enjoins upon us are means of pressing toward the goal. How sad that many are going to wake up in a lost world, supposing that they were to be in heaven. And it will be because they neglected their spiritual responsibility to conform to Christ and be like Him. The language used in our lesson is very plain. Note the action words used: "win," "be found," "know," "being made," "attain," "follow," "apprehend," "forgetting," "reaching forth," and "press." These are activities we must partake of earnestly, carefully, and faithfully. Let us not be deceived by false teachers who teach that once you are saved you are bound for heaven no matter what. Paul did not have that kind of concept. He reckoned his life as an answer to an heavenly invitation from Christ Himself to come and share eternity with Him. In heeding the calling, or invitation, Paul recognized that he had a mark to aim at, a goal to pursue. He summed it up to being conformed to Christ in everything. How can we hope to be with Jesus in heaven when we have not pursued Him here on earth? How can we hope to be saved forever if we seek our own ways and pleasures here in this world and neglect the Word of God? It just can not be. God help us to pursue the goal and attain to its blessed fulfillment.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." Psalms 19:5. This is how the Christian should be about running the race of life. When a bridegroom comes out of the anteroom and walks to the front of the chapel to wait for the entry of his bride, his face is aglow and he is there to claim what has been pledged to him. He is not in the frame of mind to be

denied or to leave without his bride. When a professional runner who has trained for a particular event comes to the starting line, he does so with the carriage of one that bespeaks confidence and eagerness. Have you seen the Christian who had to be coddled, cajoled, prodded and begged to keep going? It goes without saying which of these two demeanors the child of God should have.

We do not want to leave the impression that we should never feel the buffeting of adverse winds. Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." With God by our side we can press with enthusiasm, for we know the heavenly prize at the end of this earthly pilgrimage will be beyond all our hopes and fantasies.

—Wayne Murphey

Upheld

When the storm's rumblin'
And our strength's a crumblin'
And Oh! so sore we're tried;
When the wind's a blowin'
And our spirit's lowerin',
O Lord, support us on the leanin' side!

When the loved one's taken
And the heart's a breakin'
And sorrow's multiplied;
When we're crushed and grievin'
And our hope's a leavin',
O Lord, support us on the leanin' side!

When the thunder's roarin'
And the torrent's pourin'
And sweepin' in the tide;
When we're rowin', rowin'
And our courage goin',
O Lord, support us on the leanin' side!

—Edith L. Mapes

JULY 26, 1992

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Philippians 3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

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

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

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

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

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

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

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

MEMORY VERSE: For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 3:20.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We should live godly and careful lives before the Lord, keeping a guard against the evil and strife around us, for our true citizenship is not in this world, but in the world which is to come where we will live with Jesus in the glory of His resurrection.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample"* (3:17): The Greek renders this: "You become joint-imitators of me, brethren, and you watch those walking thus, as you have us for a pattern." *"For our conversation is in heaven"* (3:20): The word "conversation" here is the translator's word for the Greek word "politeuma" which means commonwealth or citizenship. The Greek text says that our citizenship "begins" in heaven, or is from heaven. In being children of God, born from above by the Spirit of the Lord, we are citizens of that heavenly country to which we are going. We are legally citizens of our native country here in this world, but our real citizenship is in that eternal world beyond this fleeting world. *"Our vile body"* (3:21): The Greek text more appropriately renders this phrase: "the body of our humiliation." It is speaking of the corruptness of this fleshly body so subject to weakness, affliction, disease, and death. Christ will transform this corruptible body into a like form with the body of His glory. *"According to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto himself"* (3:21): It seems that Paul in his various

writings on the subject of the resurrection refers to the Scripture in Psalm 8:6, "... Thou hast put all things under his feet:" He uses this Scripture in I Corinthians 15:24-26 and also in Hebrews 2:6-9. Christ subdues death by His own resurrection through the power of the Father. Paul also alludes to this in Ephesians 1:22. And by the operation of the same working power He will transform our corruptible bodies like unto His glorious body. *Yokefellow* (4:3): Colleague or close associate. *Moderation* (4:5): The Greek word means appropriate, mild, gentle. In other words, be gentle and mild toward all men. "*Be careful for nothing*" (4:6): The word "careful" here means anxious or overly careful. It is the same word used in Luke 10:41 where Jesus told Martha that she was "careful and troubled about many things." It is the same word in Matthew 6:25 where Jesus said, "Take no thought. . . ." *Supplication* (4:6): Petitioning or making request. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding" (4:7): God's peace goes beyond all that the human intellect can take in. *Virtue* (4:8): The Greek word means manliness; valor; excellence.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we had Paul's expression concerning the goal of life that he held always before him. We continue his discourse today, finding that he issues a warning concerning many who were not pressing toward that mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He warns us about them, and rightly so. We live in a society that is teeming with such people. The general run of humanity today have no thought of heavenly things. They mind only earthly things. They are enemies of the cross of Christ. We should be on our guard against their influence at all times. We also have Paul's counsel on living above the cares and frets of the carnal world around us by prayer, faith, and thanksgiving to God, knowing that He will care for us. We will avoid much heartache and stress if we will learn to pray and commit things to God! There are

many things in the world around us that are not true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. But we do not have to let our minds dwell on those things. With our affections toward heaven and with the Lord Jesus before us we can keep our hearts and minds free from worry, fret, and trouble.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Paul so confident of his life that he could counsel others to follow him?
2. Why is humanity prone to follow someone?
3. Why did Paul label the people he mentioned in verses 18-19 as enemies of the cross of Christ?
4. In what way is the God of many people their belly?
5. Why is it detrimental and dangerous to allow our affections to dwell on this present evil world?
6. What will Christ do with our vile bodies when He comes again?
7. With what power will Christ accomplish this?
8. How can we let our moderation, or gentleness, be known unto all men?
9. If we will follow Paul's counsel here about not being careful but bringing in faith our requests to God in prayer, will we be prone to have nervous trouble or break-downs?
10. Why is it good to keep our minds on things that are edifying?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There are many people who walk and live in our world today who have no thought, desire, or concern about the citizenship that is from above. Their hearts and minds are absorbed in fleshly and earthly pursuits. They are enemies of the cross of Christ. The care and well being of the body occupies their concern with no realization that our bodies are the temples of Christ, and that our bodies are vile and corrupt. The physical body is publicly exposed and glori-

fied. But we know that our bodies are full of the seeds of corruption. If we would live forever we must partake of Christ and set our affections on things above where He sits at the right hand of God. We must make our citizenship in heaven and pray and live as fit subjects of that blessed world to come. Instead of the stock market and the financial balance of life we should have our minds on the spiritual blessings of Christ and the treasures of faith, hope, and love. Instead of the sports and games that the world is so carried away with we should be interested in the work of the Lord and what the Lord would have us to do. Instead of the places of entertainment and revelling we should be interested in a good camp meeting where the saints will worship God and be in His presence. Oh, the things of the world will captivate us if we are not diligent to keep our hearts on things above! How we need to be interested and concerned about souls and the work of the Lord! Let us exercise our minds to be on good things. The Bible should be our main attraction. Its treasures are so soul filling and satisfying! We need to walk softly and be gentle and patient with all men. We know that the Lord is coming soon. Let us pray daily that God will help us to be accounted worthy to escape all the things that will befall this wicked world and to be able to stand before the Son of man! Things are falling to pieces all around us. Moral values have degenerated, the financial system is ruined, and the economy is in an upheaval. Our only real hope and consolation is above. Let us set our hearts thitherward, building up ourselves on our most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The believer's position is: their "Citizenship is in heaven." Phil. 3:20. They have been born from above, and have their home in the City of God. So they have "no continuing city" here, but they look for that city whose "Builder and Maker

is God." Heb. 11:10. They know that in their Father's house there are many rooms, and that a place is prepared for them there. (John 14:1, 2). Knowing that they are citizens of a better country, they love not the world nor the things of this world, but are loyal to Him who rules in the "Heavenly Jerusalem."

The expectations of the believer are as great as the promises of God. They expect that Christ will come again. They eagerly look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:20). They believe that He will appear the second time.

They expect a transfigured body. "Who shall change our mortal body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Phil. 3:21. The Lord Jesus showed His disciples a pattern of this new body, when on the mount He was transfigured before them. (Luke 9:29). So when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with Him in glory. (Col 3:4).

The watchword of the early Christians seem to have been, "The Lord is at hand." Phil. 4:5. In view of His appearing, they were exhorted to be careful for nothing. Let no harassing care trouble your mind with regard to the seemingly conflicting experience of this life or the signs of the times. He who is coming would have us to cast all our care upon Him, because He careth for us. (1 Peter 5:7). He who bore our sins is the same Lord who carries our sorrows.

They were exhorted to be prayerful in every thing. (Phil. 4:6). Nothing that troubles us is too trifling to bring to God. Those who have learned this holy practice know what it is to "pray without ceasing."

They were exhorted to be thankful for anything. (Phil. 4:6). It is easy to thank God when we receive the things we desire and that please us; but when disappointment comes, when our plans are thwarted or friends betray us, it may be easy to forget this: but it is then that we need the faith that God doeth all things well, and we may still say, "Thanks be to God".

—Taken from *Handfuls on Purpose*

AUGUST 2, 1992

ABOUNDING FRUIT TO OUR ACCOUNT

Philippians 4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheth me. Phil. 4:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: As we give and minister to one another and to those who are in need, we are laying up treasures in heaven where God is keeping an account of our lives.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: "*Ye did communicate with my affliction*" (v. 14): Ye jointly sympathized with me in the affliction.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today Paul is commending and expressing his gratitude to the Philippian brethren for their thoughtful care manifested toward him in his time of trouble. It seemed that for awhile they had been unable to have contact with Paul to be able to get anything to him, but the way had opened up, and through the brother Epaphroditus they had sent gifts and means to help Paul in his needs. It is interesting also to note that Paul was not afraid to commend himself to the brethren as one to follow and imitate. He was bold enough to say that the God of peace would be with them as they followed his example. It means much for a person to do this and be right in doing it. "Do as I say, but not as I do" is the message so many times. Paul made it clear that the blessings that the brethren sent to him were appreciated, not just because of his want or desire for a gift. He stated strongly that he had learned to suffer want and be content in those difficult times. And also he was glad to receive the gift because he knew that it was going on record in the book of heaven as

an addition to their treasures above. He felt that their account was in good standing. He deemed their gift a sweet smelling savour, and a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing unto God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the main reason why Paul was so glad to hear from the Philippian brethren and to receive the offering they had sent him?
2. Can you imagine Paul at any time putting out a special plea for financial assistance to the people?
3. How is a godly minister to feel about times when income drops and things get close financially?
4. Is there spiritual good to be found in times of dire need and shortage?
5. What are some of the things we can be victorious in through the strength of Christ?
6. Does everyone have an account with the Lord in heaven?
7. What are some of the things we can do to add to our heavenly account?
8. How does a minister who is living by faith and trusting God for his needs feel about an offering given in love by his beloved congregation?
9. How does God feel about gifts of love from sincere hearts to His servants?
10. Can we lose by giving to the work of God even in a sacrificial way?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The Christian life and the service of the Master is filled with many vital lessons to learn. Paul explains one of these lessons in our Bible Lesson for today. He had learned to be happy and contented in whatever situation of life that God permitted him to be in. There were times when he was pressed and hard put financially. He learned to count those

times as from the Lord. I well remember a certain time when things were close financially with my family, and I was wondering what was going on. We had not had a hard time of it for awhile, and my impression was that something was wrong. One evening during this particular season of trial we went out to visit a family in the country. While there the children wanted to sing, so we started singing the song, "Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken." As we sang the words, "Naked, poor, despised, forsaken, Thou from hence my all shall be," the presence of the Lord filled my soul and I began to weep for joy. He made me to know that He knew what we were going through, and that it was to help me realize what my real treasures were. At that time He also assured me that things would be better. He was faithful. He did supply my needs, but the most wonderful part of it was the spiritual visitation He gave me and the comfort of His Spirit.

Paul set a splendid example of faith and trusting in God. He appreciated the help of the brethren, but he put them under no pressure. If they came short of what he was needing, He was content for He knew that God was caring for him. It is a good example for us to follow today. And let us remember that giving to help in the work of the Lord and for the needs of others is a sacrifice that God is well pleased with. He is faithful to supply our needs and make up for what we might sacrifice for the sake of others.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Our lesson today is a vital role in how each individual, as well as the Church on a whole, should function. Each person's trust must hinge 100% on God. Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil 4:13. The Christian who has had experience in trusting God for their living, knows that people cannot be relied upon. You cannot financially obligate yourself under the conditions of what others have been providing. It is not in

the least to say that Christian's are untrustworthy, to the contrary they are the most reliable people upon the face of the earth, but many factors figure in. A giver may fall upon hard times, or the death of the provider will cause the finances to stop. But when one brook dries up, God will always have another that will flow. "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Psa. 50:10. So our trust can safely be in God, and it is with Him that the burden of providing lies.

But where does the ultimate burden lie? "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." I Cor. 16:2. And the only way to give in which a reward will return from God, is to give with a burden. "Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Phil. 4:17.

There is a story that exemplifies the child-like innocence of giving which tells about a boy named James. As he was eating his dinner, his father observed that he shifted to one side of his plate, choice morsels of meat.

"What are you doing, James?" asked his father.

"I'm saving this for Squiggles, my dog."

The father said sternly, "You eat that meat, James. Squiggles can have the scraps."

After dinner James took a dish of scraps to Squiggles, and said dejectedly and apologetically, "Squiggles, I wanted to give you a love offering, but I can give you only a collection."

How many people give to God only a collection rather than gifts which represent an expression of love for Him and His work?

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 9, 1992

THE SACRED TRUST OF THE GOSPEL

1 Thessalonians 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard

of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

14 For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16 Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

MEMORY VERSE: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. I Thess. 2:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is a serious and weighty responsibility for a person to be entrusted with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much carefulness and prayerfulness and humility must be exercised to behave one's self in a manner that would be becoming for such a sacred trust.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain"* (v. 1): Our introduction, or first contact with you was not useless or disappointing. *"The gospel of God"* (v. 2): The good news or glad tidings from God. *"With much contention"* (v. 2): With much striving and earnestness. *"As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel"* (v. 4): As we were approved of God to be entrusted with the glad tidings. *"A cloak of covetousness"* (v. 5): A pretence of covetousness. Paul and his fellow workers had no thought of getting gain nor making merchandise of those to whom they ministered. *"When we might have been burdensome"* (v. 6): The

Greek text renders this phrase thus: "being able to be with a weight of authority." The apostle's language here seems to imply that though he and his co-workers were with such great authority as the apostles of Christ, yet they did not demand to be treated as such, but were gentle, patient, and very gracious. "*We would not be chargeable unto any of you*" (v. 9): We would not burden any of you. "*Fill up their sins alway*" (v. 16): The Jews in their relentless opposition to the believers in Jesus Christ went to the awful depth of wickedness and sin, making them the object of God's wrath and dooming them to the most weighty sentence of destruction.

LESSON BACKGROUND

After Paul and his companions had preached the gospel at Philippi where they had been thrown into prison and were miraculously delivered, they travelled westward and came to Thessalonica, where they found a synagogue of the Jews. Paul went in unto the people who worshiped there and for three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, proclaiming that Jesus had died, had risen again, and that He was the Christ. A great number believed but a great opposition arose against the brethren. It was here at Thessalonica where it was said, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." (Acts 17:1-7.)

Adam Clarke notes that this First Epistle to the Thessalonians is believed to be the first epistle that Paul wrote to any of the churches of God. This epistle is full of expressions of the Spirit of love. The church at Thessalonica was pure, upright, and faithful, as we scarcely find any reprehension or reproof in the whole epistle. The apostle Paul highly esteemed and greatly appreciated this congregation of saints at Thessalonica, and the loving epistle we have on record that he wrote is a message for us even today.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. In preaching the gospel whom should we seek utmost to please?
2. Is a minister's behavior an important part of his or her ministry?
3. Are we going to have to give an account of how we have handled the Word of God?
4. It is possible for a person to use the gospel in an effort to get gain for himself?
5. Is there a temptation in preaching the gospel to get lifted up in pride?
6. Is a minister supposed to hold over the people the power and authority of his office?
7. What kind of relationship should a minister seek to have with those to whom he ministers?
8. What would you say that Paul's opinion was about the saints at Thessalonica?
9. What else did Paul desire to impart to them besides the gospel?
10. How did the believers receive Paul's preaching?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Paul declared in his epistle to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. (Rom. 1:16). Paul felt very responsible before God to be entrusted with proclaiming the glad tidings of the salvation of Christ. And it is a great responsibility. But it is also the greatest work in which a person can ever be engaged, and brings the greatest joy and blessing that one can ever experience. It is also attended with great sorrow and suffering from those who reject its sacred message. One must be a praying saint to be successful in the ministry of the gospel. One must always feel the weight, the solemn weight of responsibility and his or her own unworthiness to such a work. We must be earnest and sincere, humble and meek, devoted and

true-hearted. We must be studious and teachable. Never feel self sufficient and capable. Our sufficiency is of God, and only by His power and grace can we be made able ministers of the New Testament. We are never to have a censorious spirit or critical attitude toward those to whom we minister the Word of God. Reprove and rebuke, but with all longsuffering. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle and patient, showing meekness unto all men, speaking in kindness and tender love, hoping and praying that God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We must hold fast the faithful word and be on our guard against extreme attitudes and viewpoints. Keep low down at Jesus' blessed feet in much prayer and weeping before Him. It is not the loud voice and the articulate manner of speaking that is going to avail with God and precious souls. It is that spirit of love and humility, patience and longsuffering, holiness and faithfulness that will carry one through the years of service to God. The main business of the minister of God is to feed the souls of humanity with manna from heaven—the gospel of Christ. When the Chief Shepherd shall appear we will receive a crown of glory if we will minister as He would minister. We will have to give an account of how we have handled the gospel. May we be solemn, earnest, prayerful, careful, diligent, studious, and faithful to God who has given us this solemn charge!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The salvation of our souls depends on the trust we put in the Gospel. To do so is our primary duty in life. The Apostle Paul was a big help to the Thessalonica church in believing on Christ. Paul considered himself one of the apostles, (I Thess. 2:6) and the things he preached to them they were able to accept as being directly from God and not of man. (I Thess. 2:13). How very important it is for our day that hearers can feel the same thing. The flesh can be of great detriment to the believing of the Gospel, and therefore

we have the directive, "Preach the word. . ." II Tim. 4:2.

God has ordained for the Church to have offices in it for the express purpose of helping people to understand the things of God, and it is of tremendous help when the holders of these offices operate by the spirit of God. Notice where Paul said, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." No wonder the Thessalonians were able to accept the truth from Him, and stake their souls upon it. Gentleness is a trademark of Christ. No one will be successful in imparting the Word of God unless they really care about each individual person they are ministering to. A caring attitude will cause one to be gentle.

It is true, and Paul experienced it, that some will not believe your report no matter how you handle them, but if no one is accepting the things that you teach, then the problem may lie in the bearer of the Word and not the Word. There is a quote passed down from Alexander Whyte which says, "I am as sure as I am of anything that a minister's own soul will prosper largely in the measure that people prosper through his pastoral work." —Wayne Murphey



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AUGUST 16, 1992

**' OUR CONCERN FOR THE
SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF OTHERS**

I Thessalonians 2:17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18 Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20 For ye are our glory and joy.

3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2 And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4 For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5 For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

6 But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

7 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8 For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9 For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

MEMORY VERSE: For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy. I Thess. 2:19-20.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The love of Christ in the hearts of His people causes a great and charitable concern for the spiritual welfare of one another.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"When we could no longer forbear"* (3:1): The Greek text reads, "No longer holding out." Paul had tried twice to go to the brethren at Thessalonica, but had been unable. He was deeply concerned about their spiritual welfare, and finally could stand it no more. He decided to send Timotheus to find out how things were with them. *"We are appointed thereto"* (3:3): The Greek text says, "For this we are placed." In accepting the Lord Jesus and taking upon us His cross and reproach, we are placing ourselves in a position to suffer persecution and affliction. *"Lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain"* (3:5): Paul was fearful lest in the absence of the ministers Satan would take advantage of these newly saved brethren and lead them off into error, thus causing his earnest labors to be in vain. *"But Timotheus brought us good tidings"* (3:6): Timotheus had recently returned and told Paul that the brethren at Thessalonica were holding fast to faith and charity, and that they had good remembrance of Paul and all the brethren. *"We are comforted . . . by your faith"* (3:7): In all of Paul's afflictions and distresses he was greatly comforted to know that the brethren at Thessalonica were holding fast. *"Perfect that which is lacking in your faith"* (3:10): The Greek text says, "to supply the things wanting in your faith." Paul carried a great loving concern for these dear brethren and was desirous to see them enjoying everything that God had for them. Sometimes people have lacks and shortcomings in their experience. They need a loving hand and wise counsel to help supply what they need.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today contains the expression of the apostle Paul toward the ones who had heard the gospel through him. It is an expression of tender love and concern for their spiritual well-being. He was unable to go to them, but it kept weighing on his mind and finally he could bear it no more, and decided to send Timotheus to see how they were all doing. Oh, the loving concern that a true minister of Jesus has for his flock! It is the same love that Jesus has for the sheep of His pasture. He knew they were facing opposition and persecution just as he was. No doubt his heart was heavy with concern and care for them! How joyful he was when the report came back of their steadfastness and faithfulness to God!

He was anxious to help them in any kind of deficiency they might have in their souls. This is the spirit and love of Jesus. Jesus has that tender love and concern for us, and He intercedes above that we might be blessed and preserved in the midst of all our troubles of life. Let us cultivate that spirit of brotherly love and concern for one another. We are our brother's keeper.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is love and concern for the spiritual welfare of others a good indication of spiritual life?
2. Can we do anything for others when we are unable to be with them in the flesh?
3. What is going to be our hope, joy, and rejoicing at the coming of Christ?
4. If a person is unaware that hardship and adversity are a normal and necessary part of the Christian life would there be danger that he might become discouraged?
5. Is Christian fellowship with others of like faith very needful?
6. Can a person have a lack in their faith and still be saved?

7. What should we do for another Christian if we see there are lacks in his experience?

8. Do we need to pray and seek God for wisdom and guidance in our dealings with those who have need?

9. Is it possible for us to go with the wrong spirit or attitude?

10. How much did the spiritual welfare of the Thessalonian Christians mean to Paul?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, the love that we need to have and cultivate in our hearts for one another and for the souls around us! It is a great treasure to a Christian to be used of the Lord to benefit someone in a spiritual way. There is a bond between us and those we are able to help in the Lord like no other bond. In my life for the Lord I have been blessed by many ministers and saints. When I would hear a message that would bless and feed my soul, oh, how I loved and esteemed that dear servant of God. Even if I heard critical or unkind words spoken about that one, I held my confidence because I had seen the hand of the Lord upon them. I was taught early in life to be careful what I said about the ministers of God. Many and most of the dear ministers who have ministered to my soul through the years have gone from this life out into the great beyond. I think of them often and call to remembrance their messages. The memory of these brethren is very dear and special to my heart. Hope burns in my soul that some day I will meet them again in that better land. And then I think about the souls whom I have ministered to through the years and the holy bond of love that is between us. Oh, how sweet! Surely the work of the Lord is the most rich and wonderful vocation that one can ever be engaged in! Let us be encouraged to work and toil on until our crown is won!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

One of the greatest aspects of the joy that a Christian has is in helping others. "For what is our hope, or joy, or

crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." This hope, this joy, is not just for ministers or teachers, it is for all who love God. Do we really care about others? The theology of many in the pursuit of temporal things interprets this to mean that you favor those who can be of help to you, and have nothing to do with those who can't. If we aren't careful, this line of thought can color our attitude.

What a glory and honour it is to be used of the Holy Spirit to lead others into a saving knowledge of the Son of God. And the crowning of this joy will be when we stand before God, and there are those also there whom we have been of help to. As we gaze upon the Lord on that judgment day, there is no doubt we shall be satisfied in seeing God as He is, and it is important that He will be satisfied when He shall see us as we are. We will grade out infinitely better in His estimation if we make our appearance possessing a love and concern for His creation. This is the succession of the joy we can have. We take joy in others being encouraged, and our joy is heightened by God's joy in us for it. —Wayne Murphey

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AUGUST 23, 1992

GOD'S CALL TO SANCTIFICATION AND HONOR

I Thessalonians 3:11 Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13 To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;

11 And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you.

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

MEMORY VERSE: For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; I Thess. 4:3-4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is God's will and He has made provision for us to be holy in heart and in all our ways, so that we can live and walk well pleasing in His sight.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Abound in love" (3:12):* The Greek word for "abound" means to superabound, be in excess, and have more than enough. *"Stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness" (3:13):* The

Greek word for "stablish" means to set fast, and to confirm. *Sanctification* (4:3): The words "sanctification" and "holiness" are translated from the same Greek word "agiasmos" which means purification; state of purity; hallowed; consecrated; sacred to God. "Know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (4:4): The word "vessel" here can be applied to one's own body, and it also refers to a wife. The import of this is that God wants every man to know how to live and function in his body in all ways and manners of life according to the law of holiness and purity, pleasing God who has called him to holiness. This includes right and holy relationship with his marriage partner. "Not in the lust of concupiscence" (4:5): The Greek expression is, "not in the passion of evil desire." The holiness of God in Christ fully adjusts the relationship of man with woman into a state of purity, tenderness, godly consideration and treatment. *De-fraud* (4:6): To be covetous or overreach; to take advantage of; to seek to get gain from. *Despiseth* (4:8): To set aside and not consider; not esteem or give heed to. "Study to be quiet" (4:11): Strive earnestly to be of a meek and quiet spirit.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There were, no doubt, many in the congregation at Thessalonica who had not progressed in their faith and love for Christ to a point of entire sanctification and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This is and always has been true with congregations of believers in Christ down through history. Paul is graciously instructing and encouraging them to progress to this important step of consecrating all to Christ and to be sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit. He desired them to be established in their hearts, blameless in holiness before God. This is still the desire of the Lord and the burden of the gospel. Not only do people need to be saved in Christ, but they need to go on to the full life of sanctification. There is much to learn in pleasing God and living as He has ordained. And the Holy Spirit is the Teacher who wants to set up His abode in the heart of man and guide him in all

truth and righteousness. The Holy Spirit enables a person to keep his appetites, feelings, and desires in proper control and function. How many homes and marriages there are that are mismanaged, out of harmony and control that could be a happy scene of peace, purity, love, and sacred honor if the hearts of those concerned would be sanctified and filled with the Holy Spirit! The Lord wants us to keep moving forward in our Christian life, increasing in the love of God and walking in the footsteps of Jesus. Thus He will lead us to the fulfillment of His gracious plan in sanctification and a life that is led by the Holy Spirit. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does God want every saved soul to be established in?
2. If a person will be diligent to seek the Lord and keep moving forward in faith and love, will he be brought to the place of consecration to be sanctified?
3. What are the things that must be brought into control in possessing one's vessel in sanctification and honor?
4. What will be the state of a marriage that is kept within the laws of sanctification and honor?
5. What will be the state of a marriage that is under the lust of concupiscence?
6. What has the Lord promised to do to all who defraud and deliberately get unjust gain from another?
7. What is God calling everyone to?
8. If we count lightly the wise counsel of a servant of God, who are we really despising?
9. What kind of spirit and manner does God want us to cultivate and manifest?
10. Does God want the life of a Christian to intentionally offend and disgust people?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The way of holiness and being sanctified before God is a despised and misunderstood way to the worldly minded.

But it is the only way to true happiness and success, because no matter how successful and prosperous a person is in this time world, it is all in vain if he is not in full fellowship with his Maker. And the only way that a person can be in full fellowship with his Maker is to be sanctified and filled with God's Spirit. Such a state of mind and soul will enable one to walk and live holy and righteously before God and man. Every Christian who receives Christ as Saviour and Lord is counselled and charged by the Word of God to increase and grow and progress in his faith and love for Christ. It is a continual moving forward and increasing through prayer and daily obedience to Christ that we will be brought to the place of utter resignation and consecration to do the will of God. It will be a gift of love that we bring to Him to be His alone forever. When the perfect consecration and gift to God is made, God will pour out the Holy Spirit upon the earnest seeker and will bless his life with victory and peace. Then there must be a continual moving forward and upward, increasing and learning of the ways of the Lord. One will learn how to possess his body and everything that pertains to his life in subjection to the holiness of the Lord. This is something that every soul should seek after. How sad that many live their lives never attaining to the holiness and purity that God wants them to have! It is for us, and we need to draw near with a sincere and true heart with a full assurance of faith that God will sanctify and cleanse our hearts as we yield fully to Him. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is a gift from God to have the wisdom to know how to possess our vessel in sanctification and honor. Perhaps we feel fornication is not an outstanding temptation to our personal salvation experience, yet it was written to the church and is for our admonition. The apostle Paul said he really didn't need to write to them about brotherly love, for it should only be natural for this to be. Yet what about some of the other things Paul made mention of? What about studying to be quiet, doing your own business and working

with your hands? Have you ever considered these things as possessing your vessel in sanctification and honor?

To study to be quiet means to consider under what conditions it is beneficial to speak. There aren't too many people who are proficient in making instant judgments and being right every time. If you wait until you are in the heat of a discussion and try to make an instantaneous decision as to whether something ought to be said, you very likely will be ruled by the flesh rather than sound judgment.

Doing your own business is a profitable pursuit. Many a Christian reputation has been sullied by someone wanting to be involved in something in which they had no call or need to be involved in. A man who had become rich was asked by a friend the secret of his success. "I have accumulated," he replied, "about one half of my property by attending strictly to my own business, and the other half by letting other people's alone." This story relates to a temporal prosperity, but spiritual prosperity hinges on the same principal.

Many ills of a person, a family, or a nation can be laid at the feet of laziness. Charles Kingsley once said, "Thank God every morning that you have something to do which must be done whether you like it or not. Being required to work and doing so to the best of your ability will breed in you self-control, diligence, contentment and many other virtues which the idle never know." Proverbs 6:6 admonishes, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." This too is possessing your vessel in sanctification and honor.

—Wayne Murphey



AUGUST 30, 1992

THE HOPE OF GOD'S CALLING

I Thessalonians 4:13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that

we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

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

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

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

MEMORY VERSE: For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. I Thess. 5:9-10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord will soon suddenly appear, thus fulfilling the great word of His promise to come again. At His call those who have died in His favor will arise to eternal life, while we who are still alive will join them in being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (4:14): The Greek text says, "those having slept with Christ God will lead out with him." The real sense of the text is that those who have died in the faith and love for Christ will be resurrected even as Jesus was resurrected from the grave. *"Shall not prevent them which are asleep"* (4:15): The word "prevent" here means beforehand or to precede. The apostle speaks thus to clearly show that those who are living and those who have passed away will be united in one throng to rise to meet their coming Redeemer! *Travail* (5:3); *Birth pangs*. *Sober* (5:6, 8): The Greek word means "not drunk." We who are endeavoring to live in readiness for Christ's coming must not be drunk on the things of the world and the cares of this life. We must keep awake spiritually, constantly on guard and aware that the Lord could come at any time.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The doctrine of the resurrection of Christ and the promised resurrection of all who believe and follow Him was a new and glorious truth for the Gentiles who were saved. It was so wonderful that it was hard for them to really grasp in their minds. And we find it so today with many people. Paul is instructing these young Christians of the surety of the hope of the reward of living for Christ in being raised from the dead with Him in that last great day. He did not want them to be in ignorance of that great truth. And the Lord does not want us to be ignorant of it, either. He speaks about us being of the day, of the light. The worldly and fleshly minded are of the night, drunken on the things of time and

earth, unheeding the promise of the Lord concerning His second, final coming. We want to be wide awake and aware that the Lord's coming is near. Christ died for us, that whether we are alive or have passed on into paradise above, we can be in fellowship with Him, our Saviour and Friend.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we not have to sorrow concerning the ones who are asleep in Jesus as having no hope?
2. Will everyone who has believed and obeyed the gospel of Christ actually be brought to life again?
3. What does our faith in a risen Saviour give us as an assurance for all who love and serve Him?
4. Will the Lord have any difficulty raising the dead?
5. What three things will be employed in raising the dead?
6. Why will the coming of the Lord be as a thief in the night?
7. What kind of sleep and drunkenness is the apostle speaking of in our lesson?
8. What does being sober mean?
9. How can we keep from being appointed to wrath?
10. How do we put on faith, love, and hope?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, what a blessed hope we have in Christ by being His beloved Bride! After this short life we will pass into the great beyond and will wait for the great resurrection day when we will be reunited with our bodies which will be glorified in the likeness of Christ's resurrection. No need to wonder how it will happen, for we know that by the power of God it will occur. Let us be sure that we are walking in the light of the Word of God and are children of the day, and not of the night. Let us be on our guard and watch in readiness for His coming. I believe that His coming is very near, much nearer than what we can realize. The world is sinking in the awful

pit of demoralizing shame and wickedness. How much longer the Lord of glory will allow it to go on we know not. But the cup of iniquity is filling up fast. People by their evil and lustful ways are filling up their sins, bringing the wrath of God upon them to the uttermost! It is for us to keep saved and under the blood of the Crucified. We must keep ourselves unspotted from the world. We must set our affections on things above. We must pray daily that we will be accounted worthy to escape all the destruction that is surely coming to this wicked world and be able to stand before Jesus in that day. How wonderful it will be to be with Jesus and all the dear beloved saints who have gone on before! We will never part from each other again. We will be there forever with our Saviour and that heavenly host! Let us hold fast to this hope, and keep moving forward for the Lord. Heaven will surely be worth all that we have to suffer or give up in this life.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“. . .the dead in Christ. . .”

“A monogram is a cipher formed of letters interlaced. Among the Greeks, the monogram was of high antiquity. But what was the Christian monogram?

“Place on the Greek capital letter X, the Greek letter R, which is our P, and we have the first letters of Christ’s name, in Greek, corresponding to CHR. This is commonly called the monogram. When placed on a tombstone, it means ‘In Christ.’

“The literal meaning of the word cemetery is, ‘a sweet, transient sleep;’ and the early Christians, in the catacombs of Rome, have with the monogram an inscription thus:

TO CLAUDIUS
THE WELL-DESERVING AND AFFECTIONATE, WHO
LOVED ME.
HE LIVED ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE YEARS,
IN CHRIST.

“With the monogram were often combined the two Greek letters *Alpha* and *Omega*, to indicate that Christ was the beginning and the end of all things. Abbreviations of His

name and titles were also employed, as I. H. S., *Jesu Hominum Salvator*, 'Jesus Saviour of men.' Sometimes a mystical word or figure was used instead of the monogram. In the Greek language (the original language of the New Testament), the word *fish*, which in English would be thus expressed in five letters: I-CH-TH-U-S. Then too, these five letters were the initials of five words which in the same order of sequence expressed "Jesus Christ of God the Son, Saviour." So that by the simple word *Ichthus*, or the simple picture of a fish, there would be suggested the sublimest truth of Christianity. Take the monogram of the early Christians, with the rude outlines of a fish under it: in this was portrayed, in the simplest, and least expensive, and inartistic yet most significant manner possible, the grand outlines of the Gospel faith. With the name and age of the departed written on the tomb, the epitaph would be:

IN CHRIST-JESUS CHRIST.
OF GOD-THE SON-SAVIOUR.

(Taken from: *Anecdotes Illustrative of New Testament Texts.*)



SEPTEMBER 6, 1992

SANCTIFIED WHOLLY AND PRESERVED BLAMELESS

I Thessalonians 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16 Rejoice evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

- 19 Quench not the Spirit.
- 20 Despise not prophesyings.
- 21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
- 22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.
- 23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.
- 25 Brethren, pray for us.
- 26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.
- 27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.
- 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE: And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I Thess. 5:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Every born again Christian must press forward in spiritual growth, obeying the Word of God, and be sanctified wholly by the infilling of the Spirit of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Know them which labour among you"* (v. 12): The word "know" here can be defined by a number of expressions that will involve our relations with those who labor as leaders. To know means to understand, be acquainted with, be close to, communicate with, and seek to receive spiritual good from their labors. *"Over you in the Lord"* (v. 12): Stands before; presides; leads; bears rule. *"Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake"* (v. 13): Consider and deem superabundantly in love on account of their work. It is a great blessing to a minister of God to know that his flock loves him, is praying for him, is supporting him, and is abundantly considerate and understanding of him. *Unruly* (v. 14): Disorderly. *"Comfort the feebleminded"* (v. 14): Encourage the little-spirited, the fainthearted, the despondent. *"Pray without ceasing"* (v. 17): Pray continually; without interruption or omission; always live and move in a prayerful

attitude before God. *"Quench not the Spirit"* (v. 19): Do not hinder, grieve, or deny the Holy Spirit His rightful place in your life. Yield fully and obey the Spirit of God in all things. *"Despise not prophesyings"* (v. 20): Do not disregard nor count lightly the prophecies found in the Scriptures and the warnings of those who prophesy as the Spirit inspires. *"Abstain from all appearance of evil"* (v. 22): Hold yourself away from; refrain from every form of evil. *"Sanctify you wholly"* (v. 23): Make you holy entirely, completely, through and through. *"Your whole spirit and soul and body"* (v. 23): The words "spirit" and "soul" here refer to our spiritual life and relationship with God and the life that we have as a human being. Along with our natural bodies God wants our whole being preserved blameless until Jesus comes again. Through the sanctifying and preserving power of the Holy Spirit this can be accomplished in us.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It has been said that this fifth chapter of I Thessalonians is a real directory for the soul who is seeking sanctification and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. If a person will carefully consider and follow the counsels given in our lesson today, it will lead him to a wonderful experience of being sanctified wholly. And then one must continue to willingly follow the counsels of this chapter in order to maintain a sanctified experience and be preserved blameless all along life's way. Think of the love that was in the heart of Paul that constrained him to write this wonderful letter to the congregation at Thessalonica! And it is for us today to take heed to and obey. Each distinct command carries great importance and value. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean for us to "know" them that labor among us as leaders?
2. How should we take any admonishment they may offer us?
3. What should we do if we see a minister not being what we think he ought to be?

4. Is it important to be at peace among ourselves?
5. Do you think a person can be sanctified if he is continually criticizing and finding fault with the pastor?
6. What kind of attitude should we maintain for all people?
7. Must we rejoice even if we do not feel like rejoicing?
8. How can we pray without ceasing?
9. What will obedience to these counsels help to bring us to?
10. In what way can the body be preserved blameless as well as the inner man?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God has wonderful things in store for the soul who seeks Him with their whole heart. The depth and magnitude of the experience that Jesus purchased for us with His precious blood goes far beyond what carnal man can even imagine. But we know that we can have and experience the fullness of His grace in sanctification if we will apply ourselves to His Word and seek Him with our whole heart. Let us consider every precept of our lesson today. Let us diligently follow and submit to everything that Paul teaches here! It will bring us to the place where God can be glorified in sanctifying us wholly and filling us with His Holy Spirit. It takes diligent obedience and earnest seeking to bring one to completeness and full salvation. To neglect and fail in any one of these commandments in our lesson will hinder us that much. If we do not love and esteem the ministers, if we are troublemakers, always retaliating and getting people back, if we are impatient and hard on people, if we are not prayerful, and if we do not have a mind to hear and consider the Word of God—if we are guilty of any of these things we will be hindered from receiving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit yearns for entrance to our heart, but He will not come into a heart that has foreign elements inside. We must exercise ourselves unto godliness. It takes pressing effort to make our heart fit for the presence of the Holy Spirit. We must guard and keep our heart from all evil and influence of evil, keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. All these things are important factors in our reaching forth to lay hold of the blessings of sanctification, the infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Consider these things and may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and may your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“Our lesson today reveals one clear-cut route to the sanctifying grace of God. If we will faithfully follow all the commands lined up by Paul here, we can be assured that the God who called us to holiness will sanctify us wholly and we can, and will be preserved blameless unto His coming. Thus, we are not only sanctified by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 13:12), but also we are sanctified through the washing of the water by the Word. (Eph. 5:26). There are some things that we must see about if we are to be blessed with the assurance of His sanctifying fullness.

“Give some serious thought to each of these commandments here. We find in this, respect and honor for our elders, peace and harmony with other believers, merciful attitudes toward the unruly, feeble-minded (faint-hearted, Greek) and the weak, besides patience for all men, the principle of following that which is good always in all things with all people, rejoicing, praying, the giving of thanks, yielding to the Spirit of God, respect for preaching of the gospel, and a carefulness to the holding fast to the right and turning away from every form of evil. This is a high calling, and behooves us to be diligent to consider and follow faithfully. If we will obey, we will eat the good of the land. God will faithfully fulfill His promise and send the Holy Spirit’s power into our hearts and lives, preserving us and enabling us to live and work for Him.”

—Marie Miles (Written in 1974)



SEPTEMBER 13, 1992

ENDURING TRIBULATION TO BE ACCOUNTED WORTHY

II Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2 Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other aboundeth.

4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5 Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

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

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

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

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

11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12 That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: When he [Christ] shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. II Thess. 1:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must bravely endure all hardships, adversity, persecutions, and sufferings without losing our integrity with Christ if we would be accounted worthy to enter the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: "A manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" (v. 5): A clear

indication of God's special acceptance. "*Counted worthy*" (v. 5): The Greek word from which this phrase is translated means to be deemed entirely deserving. "*A righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us*" (vs. 6-7): The Greek text reads thus, "It is a just thing with God to give affliction in return to those afflicting you, and to you—those being afflicted—a relaxation, or rest, with us." God is going to recompense to every soul for what he has done in his lifetime, whether it be good or bad. People who have suffered for righteousness sake will receive a great reward. "*To be admired*" (v. 10): To gaze upon in wonder, worship, awe, reverence, devotion, and supreme affection.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is believed that this Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written within a short time after the First Epistle was sent. The names of Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus were at the heading of both letters. Both letters were evidently written from Corinth, and, as stated before, were the first of the epistles written by Paul to the churches of God. Paul had spoken in the First Epistle about the coming of the Lord and what it would mean to the saints. It is probable that word was brought back to Paul that some of the brethren at Thessalonica were of a mind to believe that the Lord was going to make His second appearance very soon, and perhaps were preparing for it by undue and inconsistent neglect of secular and earthly responsibilities. So Paul gives instruction in the Second Epistle that the coming of the Lord was not going to be that speedy, but to rather look for a falling away and the rise of the spirit of the mystery of iniquity in full development. In the first chapter he commends them for their enduring faith and holy purpose of life. He also mentions again the coming of the Lord but with more graphic detail and intense description of the horrors for the wicked and the joy for the righteous on that day of days.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How can we assume that persecution and affliction because of our faith in Christ is a clear indication of God's pleasure?

2. Is there a special spiritual benefit in enduring persecution for righteousness' sake?
3. Do those who hate and persecute God's children deserve punishment?
4. What state do we want to be in when Jesus appears from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire?
5. Who is God going to take vengeance on?
6. What will happen to those who haven't obeyed the gospel of Christ?
7. What will it mean to the righteous to be privileged to look upon the face of their Saviour?
8. Will we be admiring Jesus at His coming if we haven't admired Him and His precious Word now?
9. Will we ever really be worthy of His mercy and acceptance?
10. How then can we be accounted worthy?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and King and begin to be led by His Word and His Spirit we will find ourselves at variance with the dominant spirit of the world around us. His holiness, His meekness, His purity, and His wisdom, His righteousness, and His hope are foreign to the carnal minded. And because of this, there will be times when the conflict will erupt in persecution and opposition. This has been true of the righteous saints of God all through the ages. For millions, the contrary stand taken for God for the sake of pleasing Him has cost them their lives. But the suffering that is endured on account of faith and love for the Lord becomes a means of assurance and hope. It is a clear indication of the favor of the Lord. But woe to those who bring affliction and trouble on the saints, it will prove to be their perdition. Anger aroused in a carnal person towards someone who for righteousness sake crosses their path or incurs their displeasure can be so intense and heated that the most wicked devices are employed to express itself. Thus their sins are filled up and they come in line for the wrath of God as they never have before. They take advantage and wield the upper hand while the righteous have to meekly suffer. But, oh, at the Lord's coming it will be

different! Those who have suffered at the hands of the wicked will be at rest from all fear and condemnation as they see the Lord coming in the clouds of heaven! Oh, let us pray much that God will count us worthy of His holy calling and will fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Most every one reading this lesson probably has a desire to live for the Lord. So let us consider the position of the one who is persecuted. A child of God's name should never be found on the other side of the ledger. Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matt. 5:11-12. First, a Christian should live intelligently. The persecution you receive should not be for your own faults and failures. However, even at our very best, we will still suffer persecution because of our belief in the Gospel. The apostle Paul told Timothy this. "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." II Tim. 3:10-13. The beautiful thing about persecutions, and what we can rejoice about, is how God will give us victory. Deliverance in persecution, and the Divine judgment against the persecutor, is a thread that runs all the way from the martyr, Abel, to us.

Persecution comes from unbelievers or those who don't have an intimate relationship with God, even though they may have a profession. (John 16:1-3). Man by nature, as passed on by Adam, is addicted to persecuting. Have you ever seen a small child pinch a baby just to hear it cry? The fact of persecution should not give Christians a complex, nor should they think it strange when it comes, but be sure that God's name is glorified in you.

—Wayne Murphey

SEPTEMBER 20, 1992

TRIUMPHANT OVER THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

II Thessalonians 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by your gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or by our epistle.

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

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

MEMORY VERSE: And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. II Thess. 2:11-12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Every soul should be very diligent to receive a love for the truth, and have no pleasure in unrighteousness, lest, being given by God a strong delusion, that soul should believe a lie and be damned.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him"* (v. 1): The Greek text reads: "And we entreat you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our assembling to him." *"Falling away"* (v. 3): The Greek word is "apostasy" which means a separation or defection from the truth. It is interesting to note that the term "divorce" is from this same Greek word. *"Mystery of iniquity"* (v. 7): The secret and hidden working of disobedience to the law of Christ, undiscerned by the carnal and rebellious. Just as there is the mystery of godliness, (I Tim. 3:16), there is the mystery of iniquity. The unenlightened soul can behold neither, and only by receiving a love for the truth in Christ through the gospel, can understanding be given concerning these two mysteries. *"Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way"* (v. 7): The Greek text says, "only the one restraining now." The obvious sense of the verse is thus: The mystery of iniquity is already working, but at present it is being restrained, but soon the restraint will be taken out of the way. Then that wicked one, the man of sin, the son of destruction shall be revealed.

The man of sin, the son of perdition, and the mystery of iniquity and the apostasy all had their direct fulfillment in the development of the popery and the Roman Catholic church. But it has also developed through time as any religious system or church becomes untrue to the Word of God. *"Deceivableness of unrighteousness"* (v. 10): Power and ability to deceive people who do not believe and obey the whole Word of God. *"They received not the love of the truth"* (v. 10): No matter how difficult and hard the truth is on the flesh and one's self, if a soul is earnest and willing for God to help him, the Lord can bestow in the heart a love for the truth that he might live by it. But if we foolishly harden our hearts against the way of the Lord, and refuse to listen and give heed, then we will be open for a delusion, or deception.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul is giving the brethren warning concerning the falling away which was to come upon the visible and professed church, and the rise of the mystery of iniquity. He states clearly that this kind of thing would develop and be revealed before the Lord would come again. We see in the world today this spirit of error in full tone and development. The warning is for us to receive a love for the truth lest we be deceived. In Isaiah 66:3-4 we find God giving this warning that if people choose their own ways and delight in their abominations, He would choose their delusions. Paul echoes this same warning in our lesson today. In this age of deception it behoves every one to be very humble and submissive to God and all of His truth and thereby escape the awful works of Satan.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. By what means are we gathered together unto Christ?
2. If we refuse to be drawn unto Christ by the true gospel, what may happen to us?
3. Can apostasy work in the individual heart and life as well as in a nation or church?
4. What are some of the gods that can sit in the temple instead of the true God?

5. In what way is iniquity a mystery?
6. How can we be enlightened as to what the mystery of iniquity is?
7. How can we be sure to escape the trap of delusion and being deceived?
8. What will happen to a person who fails to renounce sin and keeps pleasure in unrighteousness?
9. Are there people like that today?
10. What has God chosen or planned us to have?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Christ came to gather to Himself a people pure and true,
 Redeemed and washed in His own blood like creatures made all new:

A host of men and women strong with zeal for God and right,
 Completely sanctified and filled with Holy Spirit might.

But then there came apostasy, and many fell away,
 And woeful dark conditions rose with Satan in full sway.
 Throughout the ages has it grown in magnitude and might
 Until today earth's scene presents a most dismaying sight.

There are doctrines all erroneous and spirits dark and vile
 Who change the truth of God to lies with cunning rank and file;
 There are ways and modes of life impure and deeds of lust and vice,
 And laws permitting awful sin and murder, what a price!

And we who live must make a choice between the right and wrong,
 Between the pow'r of selfish strife and sweet salvation's song.
 We can be gathered unto Christ with all the pure and true,
 Or cast our lot with this old world and all its vain ado.

If we the love of truth receive, and turn from sin away,
 We will be saved and go with Christ to heaven some glad day;
 But if we joy and pleasure find in sin's unrighteous path,
 We'll reap the bitter harvest of perdition's aftermath.

Take heed, dear soul, the choice is yours; God weighs your inward part,
 He's judging the decision that you make down in your heart.
 Come, take His way, though humble, plain, and holy though it be,
 'Tis best to follow and obey, turn from iniquity.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Paul is warning concerning the undercover work of Satan who seeks to deceive souls. But he also explains that he will only be able to deceive those who will not love the truth and be honest with their souls. We recall what Jesus said in His parable about the seed and the sower and how that the only seed which really flourished was that which was sown on good ground, representing those who had an honest and a good heart. From the Roman letter, [Rom. 13:12-14] we notice Paul's warning against dishonesty and the works of darkness. From John [I John 1:6, 7] we learn that if we will be honest and come out of darkness into the light, we will have fellowship with God and one another, and the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from all sin. These truths we must face and recognize, and humble ourselves before God and be honest with ourselves lest we be deceived by this great host of wickedness that is now loosed in the world." —Marie Miles (Written in 1974.)



SEPTEMBER 27, 1992

GOOD BEHAVIOR, A MARK OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

II Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8 Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9 Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13 But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14 And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15 Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16 Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

MEMORY VERSE: These things write I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Tm. 3:14-15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We need to walk orderly and behave ourselves in a godly manner well pleasing unto the Lord, so that we can set a good example for others to follow.

WORD DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: *"That the word of the Lord may have free course"* (v. 1): "That it may run." Greek text. *Unreasonable* (v. 2): Out of place. *Tradition* (v. 6): Teaching and instruction. *Busybodies* (v. 11): Being above work.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The apostle here is dealing with a problem that effects about every kind of organization under the sun, that of some

not behaving themselves properly and bearing the responsibility that is theirs. For the most part people who are involved in any kind of enterprise who see the value and benefit of such are willing to bear their responsibility. But there are always those who are inclined to shirk their duty and ride the free horse. They become dead weight to the progress and forward move of the work. The Plymouth Rock pilgrims and the pioneers who settled our country westward had this problem. "Let George do it" is an attitude that some seem to succumb to. And in so doing they ride the free horse to death, and make things difficult for themselves as well as for others. Proper behavior and filling one's own place faithfully are indispensable measures for success in the Church as well as in any other kind of endeavor.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the Word of God accomplish when it can have free course and be glorified?
2. How can we glorify the Word of God?
3. Why is a person who doesn't have faith unreasonable?
4. How can we withdraw ourselves from a disorderly person and still count him as a brother?
5. Why didn't Paul use the power he could have used?
6. What did Paul say about those who would not work?
7. What does a man who is responsible and dutiful have over the man who rides the free horse all the time?
8. Why is good behavior such an important part of Christian living?
9. Can a person be successfully Christlike and not take heed to his or her conduct?
10. What is the danger of having too much companionship with people who walk disorderly?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

When a person fills his place in life dutifully and faithfully bears the responsibility that falls on him, he has a satisfaction and good feeling inside that nothing else can give. God wants us to trust in Him for all things but He gives us certain things

to do, also. God will make the grass grow, but He will not come down to put it in the barn. He will cause the grain to ripen, but He will not harvest it for us. He will provide for our needs, but we have to work honestly to earn the means to procure them. I heard about a man with a family once who got it in his mind that he didn't need to work, but just trust in God. The brethren admonished him about it, but he refused to listen. They finally brought some food but let him know that it was not for him, but for his family. Another story was told of a man who was so lazy that he would not turn a hand to do a thing and the neighbors decided to take him to the cemetery as he was so worthless. As the wagon carried him closer to his final resting place, some good hearted neighbor offered a load of corn for him. The man raised up and asked, "Is it shelled?" The answer was "No!" The man lay back down and told the driver, "Move on." That is just a figurative story, but it is true with many people spiritually as well as materially. Lord help us! The Lord has provided salvation and all the good things we need, but He does not just dump them in our lap, so to speak. We have to press and have faith and be obedient. We have to do our part. There are things that His Word is calling us to do. Let us be stirred to put on the Lord Jesus and adapt His Word to our lives that our behavior will be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

J. F. Oberlin was distinguished by his benevolence and charity; hence he was beset with beggars. "Why do you not work?" said he to a man one day. "Because no one will employ me." "Well then, I will employ you; there, carry those planks; break these stones; fill that bucket with water, and I will repay you for your trouble." Such was his usual mode, and idle beggars were taught to come there no more.

"What makes it possible for you to work so hard?" a man asked his friend. "Well, it's this way," was the answer. "I stick the match of enthusiasm to the fuse of energy, and I just naturally explode."



