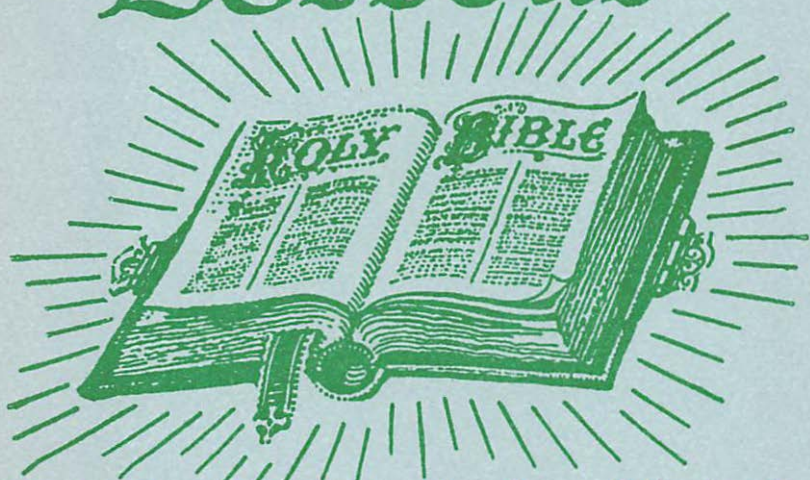


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Jesus Christ and His Church
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THEME FOR FIRST QUARTER, 1993

For our studies this Quarter we will consider the teachings of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Taken from the sacred accounts of His sinless life as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we will cover a varied number of important topics and subjects. We have been inspired and stirred in heart of late concerning the great and important values that are found in the teachings of our beloved Master. He is the highest Authority on all truth and beneficial counsel for us mortals in this short sojourn of life. Truly it is a tragic mistake to overlook, neglect, or refuse to accept His wonderful teachings. It is the greatest wisdom that we could ever have to obey and follow His words of godliness, faith, and knowledge. May the Holy Spirit that He sent down from Heaven after He went thitherto inspire our hearts with understanding and holy, rightful purpose as we study the doctrines of Him who now reigns forever and ever as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

—Leslie C. Busbee



JANUARY 3, 1993

CHRIST OVERCOMES THE TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN

Matthew 4:1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Mark 1:13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

Matthew 4:2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.

3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.

4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,

6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge

concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them (in a moment of time). Luke 4:5.

Luke 4:6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whosoever I will I give it.

7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Matthew 4:11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

MEMORY VERSE: Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. James 1:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus was in all points tempted like as we are, yet did not yield to the evil and remained without sin. Hebrews 4:15 In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to render aid and power to overcome for us when we are tempted. Hebrews 2:18.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (V. 5), "*Pinnacle*": the highest point

of the structure of the temple. Adam Clarke thinks that this is very likely a part of the temple called "the king's gallery" where Josephus says Herod had erected a gallery so high that if any looked down from its height he would grow dizzy. (V. 6), "*Angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up*": Satan is quoting from Psalm 91:11 and Clarke observes that a very important part of the original text Satan chose to leave out, as it was quite unsuitable to his design. The scripture in Psalm 91:11 says, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." There is no disputing that God has promised to protect and support His servants; but, as the path of duty is the way of safety, they are entitled to no good when they walk out of it. To expose ourselves to any danger naturally destructive, with the vain presumption that God will protect and defend us from the ruinous consequences of our foolish conduct, is to tempt God. (James 1:12), "*Temptation*": the meaning of the Greek word translated as temptation is to put to proof through adversity; to test faithfulness through allurements. (James 1:14), "*Drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*": attracted and allured through the avenues of one's fleshly appetites or desires unto a trap that Satan has set. (V. 15), "*Lust conceived*": When a person consents in his heart that he will follow the way that the temptation is opening up for him and purposes to carry it out. "*And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*": When the deed or action is carried out and completed it bringeth forth spiritual death and separation from God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had made his appearance to the river of Jordan and requested John the Baptist to baptize him. As Jesus came up out of the water the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove descended upon him while from above a voice declared: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Thus Jesus was introduced to the people by the witness of God Himself. The Messiah had made His entrance among the society of mankind, but before He would begin His work it was the will of God for Him to fade from view to endure the pressures and allurements of the devil out in the places

away from human tread. Mark uses the word "immediately" in his account of Jesus' departure into the wilderness. For forty days Jesus fasted and met Satan in spiritual conflict. For Christ to be a real Saviour to men He must overcome the powers and forces that overthrew man in the beginning. In every point that man was tempted Christ must be tempted, also. And what was the basis of Christ's triumph over the forces of the devil? It was the Word of God that had been written and preserved for the soul to follow and adhere to. All three scriptures that Jesus quoted in his encounter with Satan are from the book of Deuteronomy. When Satan sought to pressure him to wrong directions by using the scriptures, Jesus was able to counter him with another scripture. Satan still uses scriptures today. But let us remember that "it is written again". Let us not allow the devil to get us on his territory through misuse of the holy scriptures. We have included the writings of James on the subject of temptation. It is not wrong to be tempted. The wrong is in the yielding to the allurements and becoming willing to partake of the wrong.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God allow man to be tempted to do wrong?
2. Is it a sign of spiritual defect if a man feels an allurements to fulfill a desire of the flesh that would be sinful?
3. Why would it have been wrong for Jesus to turn the stones into bread?
4. What was wrong with Satan's use of the scripture?
5. Does Satan still use scripture today to get his point across?
6. Is there any temptation to a person in the glory of the kingdoms of this world?
7. What was the strength that Jesus had to resist the attractions of Satan?
8. Is it possible to be ensnared in the devil's trap simply because we lack understanding of God's Word?
9. By what means can we keep ourselves on guard against the wiles of the devil?

10. How does enduring temptation prove our love for God?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

It is very good for us to take note of the three avenues of the temptation that Christ met and overcame. They are the same three points in which our mother Eve was overthrown in the beginning. Satan tempted Eve in these three ways: First, he caused her to sense that the forbidden tree was good for food. He was drawing her through her fleshly appetite. He tempted Jesus in that way, also, by suggesting in his hungry condition to change the stones into bread. This seemed to be an innocent suggestion. But the suggestion proved to be a mixture of doubts ("If thou be the Son of God") and a desire to prove Himself as the Son of God along with satisfying the craving for food that was so strong. Christ's response to the temptation was a firm utterance of His faith in His Father's love and care: "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." The second temptation to Eve was that of outward beauty of show. The fruit was pleasant to the eyes. Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Oh there are so many pretty fleshly things to attract the mind today! Things look so good outwardly. The world has a tendency to bewitch and captivate one's love and allegiance. But we had better look beyond all of that glitter. There is a sting coiled under those roses of pride. The third phase of the temptation to Eve was the pride of being wise. The pride of life covers many areas. From unnatural and abnormal efforts for beauty and admiration to the craving for pre-eminence and the praise of men we find pride alluring the unsuspecting soul into his web. Perhaps jumping from the peak of the temple in the eyes of the populace of people with a conviction that God would prevent one's injury would be the fruit of pride in the heart! I heard recently of the practice of certain religious groups of handling rattlesnakes as part of the service and devotion to God. Oh, they believe that this proves their love for God and their courage to risk and brave danger for the Lord. But "it is written again". To yield to such activities and ideas is truly to tempt God and one is getting on the devil's territory when he does.

Let us be strong and wise to recognize the devil and his temptations and to resist them steadfastly in the faith of the Lord Jesus who overcame the powers of Satan on our behalf.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

As previously mentioned, Christ's temptations directly followed the heavenly witness of His baptism. Spiritual high places in our lives do not save us from the onslaught of the enemy. To the contrary, when we draw close to God, sometimes we find the devil most active. One writer of times past said, "All the while our Saviour lay in his father's shop and meddled only with carpenter's chips, the devil troubled him not: now that he is to enter more publicly upon His mediatorship, the tempter pierceth His tender soul with many sorrows by solicitation to sin." If we are contented to drift with the cares of life and the direction they take us from spiritual things, the enemy will be content. But when we rouse ourselves to new love for God and activity in His service, He will try to destroy us.

"Man shall not live by bread alone...." This is a truth that can be applied to the farthest extent of physical life. A verse that substantiates this is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Applied in the extreme, it may be a little difficult to understand, yet it has a spiritual aspect which will not fail. If you were actually starving to death from lack of food, would it be alright for you to steal a loaf of bread? Life's true object is to obey every word of God, not the survival of the outward man. If we are living for God, where our temporal means of survival comes from is not our worry; it is God's. We have the promise that He will give us that which His wisdom dictates. This is what Christ was acting upon in refusing to assuage His hunger.

—Wayne Murphey



JANUARY 10, 1993

**THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING BORN
OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD**

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

I Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

MEMORY VERSE: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: For a person to really be in the kingdom of God he must be changed in his heart and affections from the old life of sin and the flesh to a life of righteousness and true holiness by the power of the Spirit of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (V. 3), "*Born again*": the real proper meaning from the Greek text is "born from above". (V. 5) "*Born of water and of the Spirit*": the term "water" here refers to the Word or the doctrines of Christ which acts as a cleansing agent for the soul in obedience thereto. (V. 8), "*The wind bloweth where it listeth*": the Saviour seems to use the wind as a similarity to the Spirit. But reading from the Greek text it more readily appears that He is speaking directly of the Spirit: "The Spirit breathes where it wills, and thou hearest the voice thereof." The Spirit is expressed in the Scriptures as the Breath of God. (I Peter 1:22), "*Unfeigned*": pure and genuine. (V. 23), "*Corruptible seed*": the natural or physical part of man.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Some time has elapsed since Jesus made His appearance unto the people and began His work. In Cana of Galilee He had turned the water into wine at a wedding. Jesus went up to Jerusalem to attend the Jewish Feast of the Passover. While there He found in the temple the money changers and those who were making the temple a house of merchandise. Making

a small whip of cords, Jesus drove them all out of the temple, poured out their money, and overthrew the tables. While in Jerusalem Jesus did many miracles of healing and help for those in need. It was probably these miracles that impressed Nicodemus and brought on his night visit to the Saviour while Jesus was still in the city. What a surprise met this man when Jesus presented to him the thought of man's need of being born again! His poor flesh and earth bound mind could think of nothing but entering in once more to his mother's womb and being born again! But Jesus introduced the truth that is still the requirement for us today if we would partake of the blessedness of the kingdom of God. Oh, to be made alive by the Spirit of the Lord and the Word of the Lord! This can be done if we will believe and obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus. As we incline our hearts to Him and become steadfastly persuaded of the truth of His word we can experience the new birth of the Spirit. The flesh is corruptible and will perish, but the Spirit is eternal, and of this we must be a true partaker if we would have hope of eternal life with Jesus. —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of power does Jesus have to give to those who receive Him?
2. What are the two agents that will produce the new birth in the life of a person?
3. What kind of heart and life does a person have who has not experienced being born of the Spirit?
4. What kind of heart and life does a person have who has experienced the birth of the Spirit?
5. How much desire must a person have to receive the new birth?
6. Is it possible for a person to be very religious and yet not be born again?
7. Is it possible for a person to be knowledgeable in Bible truths and yet not be born again?
8. What would you tell a person if he or she asks you how to be born again?
9. Does one HAVE to be born again to be saved?

10. Is there danger of one being lost in eternity's night if they have neglected to be born again?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, how important and vital is the truth in our lesson today of the need for being born from above! It is so easy for a person to go through life and not be aware of this need. Many people grow up in religious surroundings of Church services and Sunday School and fail to attain to this blessed experience of being born of the Word and the Spirit of God. It is easy to slide along and hear the Word of God with the natural ears and not with the heart. It is possible to be like Nicodemus, religious, prominent, full of head knowledge, and zealous, and yet be totally ignorant of what God wants us to have. But the sincere and eager soul who seeks for God with all the heart can find and attain to this blessed experience. We must be born again, born the second time of the Spirit of God and the Word of God. This is done by hearing with an open heart, believing with all the heart and soul, and by obeying the truth of the Word willingly and gladly. This kind of faith and obedience with earnestness and humility of heart will bring about the wonderful new birth of salvation and the grace of God! Let us not neglect this great salvation by not moving forward to seek for the new birth. It is a blessed experience to have. A new life comes into the soul. We become a new creature. Old things, the things of the flesh and the world, pass away and we find the delight of new and better things, things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God! As mortals we are perishing. We are on our way out the moment we come into this world. But while we are here we can experience a birth of incorruptible seed, and though our natural life as the grass will wither and perish, we will abide forever even as the Word of the Lord abides forever. Oh, the good news of being born again! Let us avail ourselves of this golden opportunity of receiving this precious experience with Christ and partake of His blessed kingdom of peace forevermore!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus, being a normal, natural human being, was not able to comprehend this spiritual teaching. It was foolishness to him because he didn't have the faculty with which to perceive it. I was recently made aware, that through the aid of a microscope, a whole new world of life can be opened up to a person's view. It is amazing what life one drop of water can contain. How foolish it would be to say that these things don't exist because they can't be seen by the unaided eye. It is likewise foolish to say that there is no such thing as a new birth because the natural mind can't conceive it. The powerful lens of a living faith is needed to see these spiritual and eternal truths. To those whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, a whole new world of life and beauty appears in every droplet of Christ's words.

Nicodemus was not condemned for the lack of being able to understand the new birth. There is a point in every man's life when he is in the exact same place that Nicodemus was. It behooves all Christians to take the same stance Christ did, in not condemning inquiring minds, but to point them in the direction of spiritual things. It is the love of darkness rather than the light that brings condemnation. Jesus said in John 3:19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

—Wayne Murphey



JANUARY 17, 1993

THE LIVING WATER AND TRUE WORSHIP

John 4:7 There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

9 Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the

gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

11 The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

12 Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

15 The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither.

17 The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:

18 For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

MEMORY VERSE: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. John 4:24.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is the fountain of living waters for the souls of men, inspiring love and true worship in the heart to God through the influence of His Holy Spirit.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (V. 22), "*Ye worship ye know not what*": the Samaritans, according to Adam Clarke, had rejected the use of the Jewish scriptures and had their worship system so stained with idolatry that they had no real understanding of God's Spirit and nature, thus they knew not who or what they were worshipping. Israel still held to the scriptures and to the law, although much of it was the mere letter without any spiritual understanding. But they had a chance and opportunity to be enlightened and to recognize the Saviour that was coming from their people. (V. 23), "*Worship the Father in spirit and in truth*": Clarke's expression on this phrase is very well stated: "A man worships God in spirit, when, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he brings all his affections, appetites, and desires to the throne of God; and he worships God in truth, when every purpose and passion of his heart, and every act of his religious worship is guided and regulated by the Word of God." Jesus said that the true worshippers worship God in this manner. The expression "true worshippers" is a good indication that there are false worshippers, also.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus and his disciples had left Jerusalem and Judea and were on their way back to Galilee. The New Testament map of Palestine shows two different routes from Jerusalem to Galilee. One went northeasterly to Jericho and then swung north through the low lands along the Jordan River. The other route went due north from Jerusalem directly through the middle of Samaria. It is probable that many Jews travelling to Galilee took the Jordan River route to avoid going through the towns and villages of the Samaritans. It is evident that the Samaritans were looked down on with contempt and hatred by many of the Jews. Verse 4 of this chapter says that Jesus "must needs go through Samaria". Jesus knew that there was someone there who needed help and that a door of utterance

would be opened for him. The city of Sychar is very near to the city of Shechem. It was here at Shechem that Jacob had promised a portion of land to Joseph before he died (Gen. 48:22), and it was here at Shechem that Israel buried the bones of Joseph that they had brought up out of Egypt. Joshua 24:32 This woman of Samaria that Jesus met here was probably very proud of the historical heritage of this area. But the historical values and the religious worship she was acquainted with had done very little to keep her out of trouble and distress. Here was a woman who had been married five times and was evidently living with someone who she was not even married with. But these things did not stop Jesus from introducing her to the water of life and the true worship of God. These truths along with the stark realization that her life was an open book to this Man helped her to realize that she was in the presence of the promised Messiah. She lost sight of the Gift in the presence of the Giver! She left her water pot on the well and ran into city with glad tidings! —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Jesus get this Samaritan woman's attention?
2. Why was the woman surprised at Jesus' request for water?
3. What kind of state was the life of this woman in?
4. What did she think this "living water" would do for her?
5. Why did Jesus ask her to go and bring her husband to him?
6. Is it possible for a person who has been married 5 times and is just living with someone in an unmarried state to drink the water of life and be saved?
7. What caused the woman to know that Jesus was a prophet?
8. Why is it important to have a rightful and clear understanding of who we worship?
9. Is there a right way and a wrong way to worship God?
10. Why must God be worshipped in spirit and in truth?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

What a wonderful blessing it is to have a plentiful supply of good tasting and pure water! In our day it is something we use and take for granted with very little thought or appreciation. Jesus took advantage of the situation he was in with the Samaritan woman to introduce the wonderful truth about the water of life that He was bringing to mankind. Living water! Oh, what a beautiful thought! Here is another aspect of the Word and the Spirit of God. These two divine agents bring us the Living water. In our lesson last Sunday we studied the new birth that the Word and the Spirit can bring about in our lives. Today we are looking at the Word and the Spirit bringing living water for the happiness and health of our souls. Jesus also introduced to this woman the blessed truth of true worship to God. It is one of the first, and greatest, and most sublime and necessary of the great truths of the scripture. Drinking of the water of life and worshipping God in the Spirit go hand in hand. God is infinite Spirit. He is the Living God! All essence of life and existence comes from Him. Let Him withdraw His Spirit and creation dies and goes back to dust. Let Him send forth His Spirit and life returns to warmth and vigor. Psalm 104:29,30. Thus we should earnestly seek to live and walk in the Spirit of the Lord. Turn from the flesh and its vanity and pride. Sow to the Spirit and reap life everlasting!

About forty miles from where I live, up north of the Salt Plains Lake, is an artesian well gushing out in a strong stream. It has been there for many, many years. Many people come with their jars and vessels to get water. It is good tasting and pure. Brother Sam Chrisman and I make the trip up there with vessels to get our drinking water. I get a rich spiritual blessing every time I visit that beautiful well of sparkling water. It pictures to me the blessedness of the Lord Jesus and the well of water He has put in our souls springing up into everlasting life!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"If there are true worshippers, then there are false worshippers. Are we true worshippers? The Samaritans believed

in the same God that the Jews did, but Jesus told the woman that ye worship ye know not what.' People worship according to their mental image of the supreme Being. A cold, formal, lifeless conception of God will produce that kind of worship. Some forms of worship will demand human sacrifices. We are glad that there is a high act of spiritual worship where true satisfaction can be found, as we come to Christ who has been revealed to us. God is a Spirit and is full of power, wisdom, love, holiness and all spiritual perfections. His Spirit is free from the boundaries of time and space. God has no limitations of nature because He is the creator of nature. He is a free personality, knowing and willing absolutely. God formed man as a spiritual being and he is founded upon righteousness and truth. Through these qualities, man can rise to his full potential. These are the eternal attributes of God. These are guiding principles. God has revealed Himself through Christ. Those who become His children approach Him with holy reverence and boldness with gratitude and love. Their hearts are drawn to Him through His great love for them, and by Jesus taking the punishment for their sins. The spirit within them rises into loving and joyful fellowship with the divine Spirit. Thus we are to worship Him."

—Marie Miles (Written in 1972.)



JANUARY 24, 1993

JESUS PROCLAIMS HIS RESURRECTION POWER

John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

11:25 I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

MEMORY VERSE: The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. John 5:25.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Father, the Almighty God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, has power to quicken and make alive. He has invested in His Son, Jesus Christ, this same power to be used in quickening lost men who are dead in their trespasses and sins to a life of righteousness and peace. By this same power He will quicken all the dead in the last day and bring them forth to meet the deeds that they have done.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (V. 21), "*Quicken*": bring to life. (V. 24), "*Passed from death unto life*": the Greek word for "passed" means to change place or residence. When we hear the Word of the Gospel and truly believe from our hearts in God and His Son we change our place of residence in the realm of death and move over into the realm of life eternal. (V. 25), "*The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God*": the dead in trespasses and sins shall hear the gospel and those who respond in faith and obedience will be resurrected from their dead state of sin.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem to another feast of the Jews. While there he had visited the pool where a great number of afflicted and crippled people lay waiting for the moving of the water which was caused by an angel who came down at a certain season and troubled the water. Whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. Jesus saw a man lying there and knew that he had been in his sore need for a long time, thirty and eight years. Jesus simply healed the man right there and he was able to get up and take up his bed and walk. The Jews saw the man carrying his bed, and, because it was the sabbath day, they got after him for it. When the man told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him, they began to persecute him. And then Jesus declared that He was working in conjunction with God, alluding very pointedly that what had been done in the healing of the crippled man was the working of God even if it was on the sabbath day. And then in response to their indignation and wrath Jesus proclaimed the glorious truth of His close association with the Father and the resurrection power that was given to Him as the Son of God. I am sure that what He said there meant very little to these blinded Jews, but to us who are saved it is a revelation of grace and goodness that we as mortals need so, so much. After declaring the power invested in Him by the Father to quicken people, Jesus reveals the two resurrections that He will accomplish. The first is a spiritual resurrection, raising the sinner to a new life in God. The second resurrection is a general resurrection to come to pass on the last great day when all the

dead shall arise to meet the judgment. Oh, let us honour the Son and be thankful that by His grace and power we can be resurrected to a life of victory and peace and that we have hope of sharing His eternal resurrection in that last day!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the relationship that Jesus has with God?
2. What kind of power did God grant His Son Jesus to have?
3. For what reason has God committed all judgment unto His Son?
4. Who is it that will pass from death unto life?
5. What is the first resurrection that every soul needs to partake of?
6. What must a person do to have a part in this first resurrection?
7. The Father has given Christ the power to quicken the dead. What other kind of authority did He give to Christ?
8. Does this mean that Christ will judge the world in the last great day?
9. Will the wicked be resurrected as well as the righteous?
10. Is there any way we can escape the judgment that Christ will bear in the last day?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The power to quicken and bring to life was the divine strength of the Almighty God when He created the world and brought forth all the life and activity therein. He took dust from the ground and shaped a human. Then he breathed into that shape of dust the breath of life and man became a living soul. All things live by God's decree and gift. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. (Isa. 40:29.) God has quickening power to cause the dead and infertile womb to bring forth a child. He quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (Romans 4:17.) This is the power that God has. He can make a dumb animal speak like a man. He can make a dead piece

of wood grow leaves, branches, and almonds overnight. He can fill a empty net with fish that were not there heretofore. He can bring to life a dead person who has been dead for four days stinking with corruption! He can restore to life and health and consciousness a man or woman who has been dead hundreds of years. And this is the power that He has invested in His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus executed this power while he was on earth. The main thrust of this resurrection power, however, is toward the souls of men who are spiritually dead in sin and wickedness. He wants to resurrect them to a life of purity and righteousness and truth. And He will if they will hear His word and believe with all their hearts. We are living now in the time of the first resurrection. Souls can awake from sleep, arise from the dead, and be given life and light in Christ. (Eph. 5: 14.) Jesus has that power now to give us a risen life in Him. But He also has the power to judge the world and bring all of humanity from their graves to His feet. Oh, what a surprise people are going to have when they wake from their sleep of death to consciousness and awareness of the wrath and judgment of God! Oh, let us be sure that we are partaking of the first resurrection, the spiritual resurrection, so that the second death will have no power on us! (Rev. 20:6.) —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The action that converts the theology of our lesson into a working resurrection is faith. There is a phrase to describe many people's situation concerning the belief in God and a resurrection. That phrase is "credibility gap." Many people just can't accept the fact of a spiritual or a temporal resurrection. Neither is it something peculiar just to our time. King Agrippa, in the Apostle Paul's day had this credibility gap. Paul asked him, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Acts 26:8.

In an internal combustion engine there is a firing that takes place across spark plug gaps. Unless that gap is spanned by electricity, the engine has no power and is dead. But with this gap being bridged, great weights can be moved and high speeds attained. It is the same in our life. If we will bridge this credibility gap of the resurrection with faith, God

will put the power of life within us just like He did His Son. Then we can find the obstacles of sin surmountable, and on the day of the general resurrection, the shackles of the grave falling away.

—Wayne Murphey



JANUARY 31, 1993

JESUS PRESENTS HIMSELF AS THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?

31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread

that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

MEMORY VERSE: And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. John 6:35.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must not be content with natural food alone. We must seek for that food that endures unto everlasting life, which Christ has brought to us in Himself, the Bread of Life. We must eat of Him, that is, obey His precious Word and receive and be led of His Holy Spirit if we would have the hope of life eternal.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (V. 27), "*Him hath God the Father sealed*": Jesus was pointed out and proclaimed as accepted and approved of God for the great mission of saving a lost and dying world. (V. 44), "*Draw him*": souls must be attracted and allured to Christ, not driven or pushed. We are drawn to Christ when we see His beauty, grace, power, goodness, mercy, and help. (V. 51), "*My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*": Christ's mortal body given and offered as a sacrifice for our sins becomes the bread of life to us as we obey His precious word and put our faith in him.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Just the day before the scene in our lesson took place Jesus had fed a multitude of five thousand men besides the women and children with a little lad's lunch of five barley loaves and two small fishes. The multitude had all they wanted to eat and twelve baskets full were taken up that were left over.

The people were so overwhelmed at this great miracle that they would have taken him by force and made him a king had he not got away from them right away. His disciples entered into a ship and headed across the sea of Galilee toward Capernaum. There in the midst of contrary winds and tossing waves Jesus went walking to them on the sea. While their hearts were full of fear when they saw Him, Jesus spoke reassuringly, "Be of good cheer, It is I; be not afraid." The people who had been on the other side and had seen his great miracle of feeding them caught up with him the next day. In our lesson we hear him reproving them for seeking him only because he had fed their bodies. He wanted to point them to a much more important food that He had for them. I believe that in this food-mongering world of today people need to wake up to their need of this more important food, the Bread of Life! He wants us to seek and strive for that meat that endures unto everlasting life. His Word and His Spirit once more is presented to us as it has been in our previous lessons. This time it is presented as food for the soul, food to be received and absorbed in our innermost being and digested in our ways and conduct of life. How sad it is to note that the latter part of this 6th chapter of John shows these very people who seemed to be interested in following Jesus became offended and went away to follow Him no more. Even so it is today. The offense of the cross turns many away who are not willing to really and truly follow the Lord.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus not want the people to follow Him for the loaves and fishes alone?
2. What did He really want them to seek from him?
3. How are we to eat Jesus?
4. Who is it that comes to Christ?
5. How does the Father draw a soul to Christ?
6. What is there about Christ that attracts and draws a soul to him?
7. What are the two things about Christ that we must partake of?

8. How is coming to Christ and believing on him related?
9. Is it possible for us now to eat of Christ, the Bread of Life?
10. Is there any other way to have everlasting life besides eating of Jesus?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

God fed old Israel in the desert as they journeyed on toward the land of Caanan fair, with each morning's dawn. Covered o'er the ground it lay, like the hoar frost dew, bread with honey taste that gave them strength for each day through. Just an earthly bread it was, though from heav'n 'twas sent, wonderful it was to gather of its nourishment. Jesus fed the multitude with a meager fare; multiplying, filling all to ease their "tummies" bare. How they wished that He would be their king and fill their need; They'd never never want again, to Him they'd daily plead. But Jesus had a better plan, and better bread to give; a bread enduring evermore, to help them really live. He saw the hunger of their souls, their empty heart and mind; He saw their real need for help more of a spiritual kind. And so He offers them Himself, a living Bread to eat; a Bread from Heaven giving life abundant and complete. His mortal flesh to riven be upon the cross so cold, an offering to the Father free to loose transgression's hold. His body and his flesh became all broken, bruised, and torn; His blood down flowing from the wounds of nail, and spear, and thorn. And we who hunger for God's love and mercy come to Him, accepting this His sacrifice of hope to never dim. We eat His flesh and drink His blood, His Word and Spirit true; We let Him lead us in His way our mortal pathway through. He is our strength for ev'ry day, our joy of life so sweet; We follow His example, sitting often at His feet. Oh, friend and fellow pilgrim, come! Partake of Christ today! Obey His word, and prove that He's the Life, the Truth, the Way. Some day we'll see Him as He is when earthly cares are past; With Him, the Bread of Life, we'll live in Heaven's home at last!

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Manna is called once in the Bible 'angel's food;' but this was only a poetical designation, referring to its falling from the sky. Manna did not really come down from heaven. It was not angel's food. It was food for bodies, not for spirits. Angels could not have lived on it. Imagine an angel taking up his abode in some millionaire's palace on the earth. Would he care for the magnificent things filling every apartment? Would he sit down and feed at the rich man's luxurious table? And souls and angels are much alike in their needs; both are spirits, unable to subsist on material food. Yet many people live as if their souls could be clothed in earth's finery, and fed and satisfied with earth's dainties.

"Bread for souls must literally come down from heaven. It is the nature of the soul to feed upon immortal things. Its hungers and cravings are for pardon of sin, for peace, for communion with God, for holiness of character, for Christlikeness, for restoration to the divine favor. The bread for these spiritual hungers must come down from heaven. It must come in the form of mercy, of grace, of love, of divine friendship, of gifts of life. Such food is found on no table on earth; it grows in no earthly clime; it can come only from God. It is for God, the living God, that our souls hunger and thirst."

—Taken from *Come Ye Apart*.



FEBRUARY 7, 1993

JESUS OFFERS FREEDOM FROM THE BONDAGE OF SIN

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Romans 6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

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

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

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

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The worst bondage that a man can be in is the bondage of committing sin. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by His awful death on the cross, but He rose triumphantly from death to give us a life that will set us free from the yoke of sin that we might live unto God in righteousness and holiness.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (John 8:34), "Sin": the Greek word for sin means to err, or to miss the mark. Sin is defined by the

scripture as the transgression of the law. I John 3:4. (Verses 35 and 36), "*The servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*": a servant does not share the inheritance with the family, but the Son does. When a person is in the bondage of sin he is a servant and not a Son. But the Son has the power to set a servant free and make him part of the household to share the inheritance. This is what Christ did for us. We were the servants of sin, and He was the Son of Heaven. By His death and resurrection He sets us free from the bondage of sin and we can share in His eternal inheritance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Pharisees had just brought a woman to him who was guilty of the sin of adultery. They wanted to hear what Christ said should be done with her, stating that Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned. Jesus stooped down and began to write with his finger on the ground. They kept pressing him for an answer, so finally he straightened up and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Then he stooped down again and wrote on the ground. One by one, the woman's accusers went out, being convicted of their own conscience. Jesus set the woman free from condemnation and said, "Go, and sin no more." Later, while the people were questioning him, Jesus said, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." At one point in His discourse He testified that he did always those things that pleased the Father. As he spoke those words, many believed on him. Our lesson begins at that point when Jesus spoke to those who had believed on him that if they would continue in his word they would know the truth and the truth would make them free. It is evident by their answer that they were not aware of what kind of bondage they were in. And so it is today. Most people are not aware of the awful prison that they are in because of their sin. The words of the apostle Paul in Romans are so well spoken on this subject that we want to include them in our study today. He makes it so clear that we can be set free from sin and that we do not have to yield to its domination any more. How can any

one read these scriptures and still believe that we cannot and do not have to live free from sin? —Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the sure way to know what the truth is?
2. How can the truth make us free?
3. Does ignorance and darkness have any thing to do with the hold sin can have on a soul?
4. What does the real truth cause a person to be aware of?
5. How did these people manifest their ignorance?
6. Are there very many people today who are ignorant of their bondage to sin?
7. Can a person find freedom from sin without being aware of the bondage thereof?
8. To what extent can we be set free from sin?
9. What steps should be taken to avail ourselves of this opportunity to be free?
10. What should we do to keep ourselves free from sin?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There are many religious people in the world today that have drawn a conclusion in their own minds that everyone has to sin more or less every day, and that there is no way that a person can live free from sin. But we have in our lesson today the plain truth that Jesus taught and that Paul taught. There is a way that we can be set free from sin and grace to help us to live free from transgression and wrong. It is not in the plan of God for man to live in sin and condemnation. Our memory verse today is a good verse to learn and commit to memory. Verse 9 following states it thus: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Several years ago I was staying with a family while my car was in the shop for repairs. This was in a city in the western states where the car broke down. This couple offered to let me stay with them while the necessary repairs were being made. On this particular evening the minister of their church and his wife paid them a visit. We were visiting and the subject of sin came up. I remember

casually referring to these two scriptures in I John 3:8,9. I quoted them to the people. The minister stopped me, saying, "Now wait a minute! That is not in the Bible!" I affirmed that it was, and asked for a Bible to prove it. He stood over me while I read these scriptures. He went back to his seat, saying, "Well, it's there! I'm going to have to study up on that!" Thousands of people are convincing themselves in their ignorance that living free from sin is not a privilege or a responsibility. Thank God for the truth! Jesus can set us free from sin, and as we yield our members to Him we will have our fruit unto holiness and the end will be everlasting life! —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is an Aesop story which says that on a moonlight night, a lean, half-starved wolf, whose ribs were almost sticking through his skin, chanced to meet a plump, well-fed house dog. After the first compliments had passed between them, the wolf inquired:

"How is it, cousin dog, that you look so sleek and contented? Try as I may I can barely find enough food to keep me from starvation."

"Alas, cousin wolf," said the house dog, "You lead too irregular a life. Why do you not work steadily as I do?"

"I would gladly work steadily if I could only get a place," said the wolf.

"That's easy," replied the dog. "Come with me to my master's house and help me keep the thieves away at night."

While they were trotting along together, the wolf spied a mark on the dog's neck. Out of curiosity he could not forbear asking what had caused it.

"Oh, that's nothing much," replied the dog. "Perhaps my collar was a little tight; the collar to which my chain is fastened."

"Chain!" cried the wolf in surprise. "You don't mean to tell me that you are not free to rove where you want?"

"Why, not exactly," said the dog, somewhat shamefacedly.

As the wolf started back toward the forest he said: "Good night to you, my poor friend, you are welcome to your dainties - and your chains. As for me, I prefer my freedom to your fat."

In living in sin, you are not your own person. It is a life of bondage. Sin does hold a certain attraction to, as our lesson states, "the infirmity of your flesh." And in living for God there are some persecutions, or hardships, to be conquered, but there is the joy of freedom.

The Apostle Paul also felt the comparison of the culmination of these two lives worthy of consideration. The end of sin is death, and the end of holiness, everlasting life.

—Wayne Murphey



FEBRUARY 14, 1993

THE VALUE OF HUMILITY

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

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

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

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

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

Luke 14:7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him;

9 And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

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

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

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. Proverbs 16:19.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Humility is the only pathway to the favor and blessings of God. Lowliness, meekness, and humbleness of mind brings a person to a place where God can lift them up to true and lasting joy.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (Matt. 5:3), "Poor in spirit": sensing one's need and true condition of having little or no means and being destitute; inferior, and needy. (Matt. 18:3), "*Converted*": in the Greek this term means to be turned around to go in the opposite direction. It means a lot to be willing to be changed from the way we are heading, and to turn our feet toward God's way of humility. (Matt. 18:4), "*Humble*": depressed and down low. (Luke 14:10), "*Then shalt thou have worship*": honour will be given to the person who humbles himself. (Luke 18:11), "*Extortioner*" one who takes from another by fraud, deceit, or any other unjust or unlawful means.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we will consider what Christ taught about being humble. The first of the beatitudes that He spoke

of in His sermon on the mount is that of being poor in spirit. This means humility and is close kin to meekness. In Luke 14 Jesus had gone into the house of one of the Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day and was being closely watched by His critics. A man was brought to Him who had the dropsy, and Jesus asked those looking on if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. When they did not answer, Jesus healed the man, saying, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day?" It was there that Jesus noticed how those who had been invited chose the best seats. He gave us an important truth of being willing to take the lowest place in life first instead of seeking the best first. This lesson can be applied in the home, in the business, at school, at play, and in the Church. Jesus also observed the spiritual pride that attended the religious people of His day. Thus He gave us the parable of the publican and the Pharisee, showing the vanity of lifting up one's self to God, and being so busy commending ourselves for our virtues and forgetting to confess our needs and ask for mercy.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Does being humble and meek come naturally, or do we have to diligently work at it?
2. Is humility the law by which the world in general goes by?
3. Is it possible that man does not understand the value of humility?
4. What generally happens to a person who exalts himself?
5. Which is better: To be humble and never be exalted or to exalt yourself and never be humbled?
6. If an humble person is never exalted in this life, will his humility still be rewarded? Will an exalted person who is never humbled be recompensed anyway for his pride?
7. Was there anything wrong with the Pharisee doing all of those good things that he was giving himself credit for?
8. What was the Pharisee's problem?

9. How did the publican who had no good thing to say about himself come out ahead of Pharisee?

10. Is there any danger of a person becoming lifted up in pride for his accomplishments and character?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Man is so prone to carry himself in pride. It seems that man feels that he has to hold himself up in pride so that he can face life. He cannot bear to face up to his true condition of poverty and helpless need. And the reason why he cannot come to grips with his personal need and low condition is that he does not have understanding of what God has in store for him if he will but acknowledge his poverty and call upon the Lord for help. That is why men refuse to pray and call upon God's name. They do not want to consign themselves to be in need of doing that. Men are ashamed to get on their knees. Pride is such a dominating thing and holds people closely bound, keeping them from confessing their need. They do not want to appear needy to others. I was walking with a young man one icy evening in winter across the parking lot to my car. We had both just gotten off from work. While making our way across the slippery lot this young man suddenly slipped and fell on the ice. When he picked himself up he remarked, "I'm glad no body saw me". He was ashamed that he had gone down and would have been greatly embarrassed if he had had an audience. This is the manner of pride, an unwillingness to acknowledge our weakness and helplessness. Jesus is teaching us the value of being humble and waiting on God and the right time to be blessed and given what we need. It takes patience and faith to be humble. Pride takes hold when a person loses sight of the real blessing of patience and waiting on God. It should be a daily prayer in the heart of every one of us: "Lord, help me to be humble and never to be proud."

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." This should paint a picture in our minds of a particular type of person; one we should

strive to be. The type of spirit Jesus was speaking of here is our own carnal spirit. One poor in this kind of spirit, or who doesn't possess a lot of it, is retiring and not endeavoring to put himself in the limelight.

I know of a very good way to be poor in spirit—be full of God's spirit. Our hearts are like a container; they will hold a certain amount. Just as much of the Holy Spirit as we have in our hearts, so the level of the carnal spirit rises or falls.

It is like the incident told concerning a certain woman who had trouble of this kind. Years ago they had what was called "protracted meetings." This was where a brush arbor, or a similar type of shelter was procured, and a revival would be held until the preacher felt his burden lifted. This particular woman could be found at the altar every time a protracted meeting was held. On the incident in question, she was at the altar praying, "Lord, fill me with your spirit." Someone else in the congregation spoke up and said, "Don't do it Lord; she has a leak." This was a rather rude thing to say, but aptly describes the condition of many people. If the carnal spirit is exerting itself in our lives, it is because we are losing the softness and humility of God's spirit.

This is not to say that we can possess both the Holy Spirit and the carnal spirit at the same time, but an analogy of the war against the two of which we should be aware.

—Wayne Murphey



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FEBRUARY 21, 1993

A LESSON ON PRAYER

Matthew 6:6 When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Luke 11:2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

MEMORY VERSE: For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. I Peter 3:12.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is a wise and profitable thing to pray and worship before God concerning all things, trusting His wisdom for the fulfilling of our needs, and holding on to Him with faith and patience for the answer.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (Matt. 6:7), "Vain repetitions": needless repeatings. (Luke 11:2), "*Hallowed be thy name*": we reverence and hold sacred thy name. "*Thy kingdom come*": let thy kingdom come and reign over every function and principle of our lives. (Luke 11:8), "*Because he is his friend*": the man in bed is not afraid of refusing his friend's request (seeing it would be very inconvenient and unhandy for him to comply) because he is a true friend, and his friendship would not be endangered if he refuses his request. "*Yet because of his importunity he will rise*": his friend keeps knocking and keeps calling and will not give up, so he finally sees that he must rise and come to the aid of his friend. "*Importunity*": this word means the opposite of bashfulness, shyness, and being reserved. It indicates boldness, determination, and steadfast petitioning. (Luke 18:1), "*Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*": pray and not be weary or lose heart about it. (Luke 18:7), "*Avenge*": do justice and bring about an answer. "*Though he bear long with them*": God will answer the prayers and cries of His children even though He allows them to suffer long, hard, and difficult trials, He will avenge them in due time. (Luke 18:8), "*Shall he find faith on the earth?*": prayer must be mixed with faith and patience to avail with God. This is what the Lord is looking for now and when He comes to reward mankind.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the sermon on the mount in Matthew and from two different discourses in Luke we draw the text for our lesson today on the teachings of Christ concerning the value of prayer. The scriptures in Matthew counsel against much wordiness in prayer while Luke quotes Jesus as stressing the value of importunity in seeking God. Jesus gave us two different illustrations of situations where importunity paid off. We must be aware that prayer is not made up of words but of fervency and earnestness of the heart. Also let us remember that prayer is not for the purpose of informing God, for He already knows all things. It is, as Adam Clarke well expressed it, "to give man a sight of his misery, to humble his heart, to excite his desire, to inflame his faith, to give life to his hope, to raise his soul from earth to heaven, and to put him in mind that THERE is his Father, his country, and his inheritance." Both parables as recorded in Matthew concerning prayer are very striking in their illustrations of our position in the matter. We are down here in need, while God is in heaven. He can get along well without us, but we are in desperate need of Him. He loves us dearly but wills that we sense deeply our need of him and has planned that prayer, patience, importunity, and faith be employed in our coming to Him. He sees that it is for our good that we keep coming to Him in prayer, and though the fulfilment of our desires are delayed in His infinite wisdom for a season, His gracious care for us will ultimately grant to us the promised blessings.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is God pleased when we pray to Him with an earnest sincere heart?
2. Does a prayer have to be lengthy in words to influence Him?
3. Is the prayer form that Christ gave us a good guide to follow in our approach to God in prayer?
4. Is it possible to say words from the lips in prayer and it not be true in our hearts?
5. Why did Christ say to use the words "our" and "us" in praying?

6. Is it possible for a person to be more prayerful in public than in private?
7. What other dispositions and attitudes of heart must we have to accompany our prayers?
8. Can prayers be hindered?
9. Can we put a time limit on the answer to prayer?
10. For what reason did Jesus give the parable about the widow and the unjust judge?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Along with many other scriptures in the Bible, we can surely see from our lesson today that prayer is vital and important in one's life as a child of God. No one can live a successful and happy Christian life without the holy exercise of prayer. One of the first lessons to be learned in the Christian life is the duty and value of frequent and earnest prayer, both public and private. One must exercise himself in private prayer. In secret prayer where no one else is present, one must meet himself as he goes to the throne of grace. To neglect prayer is to invite spiritual defeat and ruin. We do not need to understand all the whys and wherefores of the counsel of God to pray. It is that we constantly feel the need for God's nearness and help, and prayer is a spontaneous outflow of the heart of a righteous soul. Prayer is not something that we relate to others. It is to God and to God alone. Even when we are praying together with others, each individual must bear his own soul before the Lord. Prayer brings emotions and dispositions into the heart and attitude that cannot be attained to in any other way. Prayer conditions the spirit to a proper relationship with God. We must be diligent and consistent in prayer. We must not be in a hurry in prayer. There are times when our time schedule may limit the length of our outward petitioning, but prayer is a fire that burns in the child of God always. But there is a need of being alone with God to pray and pour out the heart with no hindrance or limit. Tarry in prayer, linger at the mercy seat. Learn the joy of prayer and progress in your development of a prayerful and fervent spirit. Let the exercise of prayer be the most important exercise of your life. There is a great reward

for the prayerful saint who refuses to faint nor be discouraged in this holy activity.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The value of prayer cannot be overestimated. I especially have often thought that before anything is done for God it should be preceded by prayer. Prayer stirs the workings of the Holy Spirit within our heart, and gives us the holy unction that is needed to properly represent God. A minister of years back, by the name of John Shepherd, was felt by many to have had a successful ministry. When on his death-bed, he said to some young ministers who were present, "The secret of my success is in these three things: 1. The studying of my sermons very frequently cost me tears. 2. Before I preached a sermon to others, I derived good from it myself. 3. I have always gone into the pulpit as if I were immediately after to render an account to my Master." This is what this man did "in the closet," and what propelled him in his work for God. Christ knew the need for a "closet" experience, for we often read of where He would leave the crowd and go to be alone with God. Neither should we think it is just something only a minister should do. Jesus spoke these words to a large crowd gathered around Him. If we want to live an inspired, victorious life, we must know the blessedness of the "closet" life.

In Luke 11, Christ gave us a format for our prayer. Thomas Carlyle, who lived in the 1800's, had this to say about the prayer. " 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy will be done';—what else can we say? The other night, in my sleepless tossings about, which were growing more and more miserable, these words, that brief and grand prayer, came strangely into my mind, with an altogether new emphasis; as if *written*, and shining for me in mild, pure splendor, on the black bosom of the night there; when I, as it were, *read* them word by word, with a sudden check to my imperfect wanderings, with a sudden softness of composure which was much unexpected. Not for perhaps thirty or forty years had I once formally repeated that prayer; nay, I never felt before how intensely the voice of man's soul it is; the inmost

aspiration of all that is high and pious in poor human nature;
right worthy to be recommended with an 'After this manner
pray ye.' "

—Wayne Murphey



FEBRUARY 28, 1993

FORGIVING THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US

Mark 11:25 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him a hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they

were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

MEMORY VERSE: For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14,15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Any kind of trespass or offence that our fellow man commits against us must from our hearts be instantly forgiven with no malice, grudge, or desire to get even. Since God forgave such a great debt that we had with Him, we ought to easily forgive the injuries and offences of our fellow man.

WORD DEFINITIONS: "*Forgive*": to pardon, to cease to bear resentment against; to cancel (as a debt). The Greek word here means to send away (as to send away guilt and condemnation). "*Trespass*": error, transgression, sin, fault, offence. (Matt. 18:24), "*Ten thousand talents*": There are various figures presented as to how much this amounts to in our terms of money, but as a general rule it amounts to several million dollars, an impossible figure. My Bible definition says, \$52,800,000. (Matt. 18:25), "*An hundred pence*": my Bible definition says \$44.00. The comparison of the two figures will bear out the Saviour's point of how small the offences of our fellow-humans are in comparison to the great debt that God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus was very plain in His teachings on forgiveness. There are no two ways of looking at it. If we do not forgive from our hearts our fellow-man's transgressions God will hold our transgressions against us. It is just that simple. In our lesson we have the debt we owed to God compared to the debt that someone of our fellow creatures might owe to us. It bears it out very clearly that in obtaining forgiveness from God we ought to easily forgive any kind of injury or wrong inflicted upon us by our fellow-man. It is very necessary that in being saved and seeking to follow the Lord we should seek grace to overcome in this matter and discipline our hearts and minds to never harbor any hard feelings or resentment toward any one for a trespass against us no matter how serious it may be. This is vital for the welfare and success of our souls.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Can we put in terms of dollars and cents the value of the forgiveness of God for our sins?
2. Is there any wrong that others could inflict upon us that would come near equalling the gross weight of the sin that we have committed against our loving Maker?
3. What kind of spirit would a person have who would refuse to forgive his brother in the face of what God had forgiven him?
4. When should we forgive a person who does us wrong?
5. If we go off and spread gossip about what he has done to us, have we forgiven him?
6. If we say, "I forgive, but I will never forget it", have we really forgiven from our hearts?
7. Are we supposed to wait until we hear a confession and an asking of forgiveness before we forgive?
8. When did God forgive us for our sins?
9. What vital ingredient must we have in our hearts to enable us to truly forgive as Jesus did?
10. If we cannot act friendly and kind toward the offender, have we truly forgiven him?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Many years ago Brother Cecil Carver was sitting in a service in Pacoima, California listening to a message on the subject of forgiveness which was being brought forth by Brother Ostis Wilson. At a certain point in the message one of the members of the congregation put forth a question to Brother Wilson. This was the question: "Must I forgive a person who has wronged me before he asks for forgiveness?" Brother Wilson's response to the question at that point was that he would deal with that question later on in the message. Then he continued on speaking. Brother Carver testified later how he sat there thinking. He thought, "God did not forgive me of my sins until I asked him. So it must be that I do not have to forgive others of their wrongs to me until they ask for it." He was drawing this conclusion in his mind and feeling quite safe and satisfied with that idea. But at that moment he heard God speak to his soul, and the words opened up to him a truth that he had never seen before. The Lord said to him, "I forgave you before you were ever born!" And then he saw that when Christ died on the cross he purchased forgiveness for the whole human race. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (II Cor. 5:19.) Then the Lord gave him an object lesson. Brother Carver worked in the Post Office and sold money orders. When a person has a bill or debt to pay and he wants to send a money order, he comes to the window and buys the money order, paying for it there. He fills out the money order and puts it into an addressed and stamped envelope and drops it in the mail. As far as he is concerned he has paid the debt. But the person on the other end of the line will not receive the benefit of it until he opens the letter and endorses the money order and takes it to the bank or Post Office to be cashed. The Lord showed how that Christ paid the debt for our forgiveness, but it does us no good until we put our name on it and accept it for our salvation. Thus it was made plain that we are not to wait until the other party repents and asks forgiveness from us. We are to forgive them now and never hold any resentment toward them regardless of what they do. It is not a person's sins that will

cause him to be lost. It is his stubborn refusal to accept Christ's forgiveness and to follow Him. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Forgiveness is not always an easy thing to do. A small boy, repeating the Lord's Prayer one evening, said, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are dead against us." At times in life, we find individuals who seem dead set against us. It cuts directly against the grain of self to not repay that person in kind. And God does not expect us to be gullible and take a snake into our bosom of confidence to be hurt time after time, but He does have grace for us to treat each and every individual, no matter what they have done to us, in a civil and courteous manner. We often think that the test of forgiveness is if we have done everything required in order to get to heaven. But a deeper test is if we have done everything that is within our realm to get the one who has offended to heaven. Many times barriers are erected during a conflict, and limitations are imposed, yet the least that we can do is to sincerely pray for our enemies.

An outstanding example of a forgiving spirit is told concerning a young chief of the Cree Indians named Maskepetoon. When the first missionaries came to the province of Alberta, Canada, they were fiercely opposed by Maskepetoon, who was also waging war against the Blackfeet Indians. Eventually Maskepetoon became a Christian. Shortly afterwards his father was murdered by one of the Blackfeet. Maskepetoon rode into the enemy camp and demanded that the murderer be brought forth to him. When this was done, he said: "You have killed my father. Now you must be my father. You shall ride my best horse and wear my best clothes." Whereupon the old man exclaimed, "My son, you have killed me!"

—Wayne Murphey



MARCH 7, 1993

THE ISSUES OF LIFE FROM THE HEART

Matthew 15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jersusalem, saying,

2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.

5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;

6 And honour not his father, or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.

7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:

11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.,

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

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

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

Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Luke 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide
(45)

yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus shows us that the real root of the problem with people today is the sinful condition of their hearts. The grace of God in Christ affords cleansing and healing for the heart of man.

WORD DEFINITIONS: "*Heart*": both the Hebrew and the Greek rendering for this word is basically "the center of a thing". For man it would be the center of his whole being, referring to his desires, affections, appetites, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, intentions, and purposes. (Matt. 15:5), "But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift": the tradition of the Jews provided that a man could take the means that he should employ in the care and provision of his parents and give it to the religious rulers as a gift and they would be released from the God-given obligation of providing for his parents. It was really a covetous practice and for this cause Jesus denounced it strongly, charging those responsible as being as the prophet had said, drawing near to God with the mouth but having a heart that was far from him. (Mark 7:22), "*Lasciviousness*": unholy relations between men and women; loose morals, unrestrained passions. (Prov. 4:23), "*Out of it (the heart) are the issues of life*": the deciding factor of what we really are comes from the heart. Thus it is of utmost importance to have the heart cleansed and kept pure by the blood of Jesus and the power of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have pictured in our lesson today one of Christ's conflicts with the rulers of the Jews who were big on ceremonial cleansing but were overlooking the most important part

of man to be cleansed, and that was his heart. Quoting from Isa. 29:13 Christ accused them of the sin of serving God with their lips and not their heart. He then put forth the parable about man not being defiled by what goes into his mouth. This account in Mark's gospel said that the Pharisees and all the Jews ate not except they often washed their hands. There were also other strict measures of keeping germs from their mouths in careful washing of pots, eating utensils, and tables. Christ declared that such measures taken were worthless as far as the man's real need was concerned. Mark gives this account in more detail, and we quote from him concerning the things that Jesus stated were in the heart of man, defiling him. There are many other scriptures that we could bring out about the heart, for the Lord deals with that matter over and over. But we have those scriptures that teach what Christ taught concerning the heart and the need for it to be pure and perfect before God.

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the reason for the provision in the Jewish tradition for a man to give his money to the religious leaders instead of using it to provide for his father and mother?
2. Is it possible for people to be worshipping God with their mouth and lips and their heart not be right?
3. Are people today as a general rule careful about the condition of their hearts?
4. Why is God so concerned about the heart of man?
5. Is it possible for a man to have an evil heart and not be aware of it?
6. Is it wise to take heed to the condition of our hearts?
7. How can a person commit sins and wicked deeds that are so plainly forbidden in the scriptures and do it with such determination?
8. Is it a blessing if a man comes to the realization of the evil in his heart?
9. Why should we be careful about what we set our hearts upon?
10. What is God going to judge about us?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

The prophet Jeremiah said in 17:9,10: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." The root of all man's problems and troubles comes from the sinful and rebellious disposition of his heart. John the Baptist said that the ax is laid unto the root of the tree. (Matt. 3:10.) Get the heart cleansed and straightened out and the man will go straight. The gospel affords cleansing and deliverance from the defilement of the heart. "The blood will work a perfect cure, will cleanse the heart and keep it pure." People will act, talk, conduct themselves and live rightly if their heart is right. Jesus names them right out, those sinful and evil shoots from the defiled heart of man. People commit adultery because it is in their heart to do so. People lie, steal, cheat, murder, fornicate, blaspheme, exalt themselves, and are foolish because it is in their heart that way. Our world is polluted with sinful and unholy hearts. They can spend all the money they want to on cleaning up the environment but the main pollution they are overlooking, and make no effort to get rid of. Pride and vanity stain the human race from the high down to the low. Jesus came and gave His life on Calvary so that the heart and life can be cleansed completely from sin and evil. People need to clean up their hearts by obeying the gospel and turning from their sins and pleading the blood of Jesus as a means of escaping the awful corruption that is pulling their souls down to endless hell.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It seems very wrong for the Pharisees and scribes to place so much significance on the washing of one's hands while at the same time neglecting the weightier matters.

By taking note, you will probably discover equal misconceptions and misplaced values in people's thoughts today. To please God, we must be careful in every aspect of our lives.

There is a story of a man who, in speaking of his Christian life, often said, "I am doing pretty well on the whole." He took

great pride in his morality. He admitted that there were areas where he was weak, but on an average, he was pretty good. One day he hired a workman to build a fence on his property. The workman appeared after the day's work and the employer asked him, "Well, is the fence built, and is it tight and strong?" The workman replied, "I cannot say that it is all tight and strong, but it is a good average fence. If some parts are a little weak, others are extra strong. I don't know but what I may have left a gap here and there, a yard wide or so; but then, I made up for it by doubling the number of rails on each side of the gap." The employer, greatly upset, informed the workman that the fence must be perfect or it was worthless. At that the workman replied, "I used to think so, but I hear you talk so much about averaging matters with the Lord, it seems to me we might try it with the cattle. If an average fence won't do for them, I am afraid an average character won't do for you in the day of judgment."

Let us take care, lest in our pride of outward observances we feel we are over-all alright, while the condition of the heart leaves gaps in our Christian profession. —Wayne Murphey



MARCH 14, 1993

LIGHT AND DARKNESS

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

2 The same was in the beginning with God.

3 All things were made by him: and without him was not any thing made that was made.

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

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

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Luke 11:35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

36 If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus brought the light of salvation to a lost and dying world, and everyone must open their hearts and let the light shine in to give them understanding of what God wills for them.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (John 1:5), "*The darkness comprehended it not*": there are two different ways of taking this scripture. 1. The darkness of the world could not understand and receive the light of the Saviour. The word "comprehend"

in the the Greek literally means to take down. That could mean that it could not hold or receive the light. Or, 2. The darkness could not hinder or keep the light from shining. I am more disposed to take the latter meaning. For it is the absence of light that creates darkness, and the breaking forth of light dispels darkness. (Matt. 6:22), "Single": bright and clear. (V 23), "Evil": defective or diseased with sin. "*If the light that is in thee be darkness*": An evil eye can cause the light that is in a soul to depart, bringing a state of darkness upon the mind.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Light is one of the more abundant things that is dealt with in holy scripture. The soul of man is in darkness without Christ. The dark and dreary world brings about a languishing and wretched bitterness to a person. Christ comes to bring the light. But with light comes responsibility, yes, a responsibility that too often men are not willing to accept. Thus they are prone to crawl back into their holes of selfish pursuits to escape the challenge and discipline that the light has revealed. Jesus brought the light of hope, truth, righteousness, faith, and salvation. But it reveals our sinful condition, pride, lust, and selfish attitudes. No man can be the same after the light shines on his pathway. Many have pushed the light away and fled from its responsibility because they lack understanding of happiness that the light alone will bring. As termites and roaches prosper in the dark, so the sinful practices of men operate in the darkness of people's minds. Satan seeks to keep man in the dark, ignorant of God's ways. But light has come into the world, shining into the soul to give understanding of the love of God and the salvation that He has brought down to us in Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is it possible for a person to keep the light from shining into their heart?
2. Why would a person want to refuse the light?
3. What eye was Jesus speaking about when he said that the light of the body was the eye?

4. Why is it important to walk in the Light while it is shining on your way?
5. Why does Satan want to keep people in ignorance and darkness?
6. Is it possible for a person to have some light but not the full light?
7. Is it possible for a person to have his soul full of light with no darkness at all?
8. Has God promised that every person will have a chance to see the Light?
9. What can cause a person's eye to become evil?
10. Is a person in darkness prone to not realize he is in darkness?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

Oh, what a wonderful and precious blessing is light both naturally and spiritually! As the hours of the night wear away the whole earth looks forward to the rising of the sun. And what a blessing it is when the eastern sky begins to glow and at last the beautiful light of the sun streaks across the horizon illuminating the earth again! Just so the night of sin of the world and humanity needed the light of Jesus Christ. Ignorance, error, wrong, evil, wickedness, and strife all prosper and thrive in the absence of light. Jesus brought the light of the knowledge of God. To the person who seeks for the light and is weary of his darkness the light is a welcome blessing. But to the person who loves their darkness and is content to let sin have the upper hand the light is not welcome. Jesus came to enlighten every man. But only those who will walk in the light will be blessed by Him. It is up to every man's individual choice whether he will have a clear eye to be able to see the light of Christ or whether he will have an obscure eye that will be content in the darkness. And the serious thing about it is that the light will not tarry always waiting for us to make up our minds. We should be desirous of the light, so desirous that when it shines we will welcome it and walk in it right away. How sad it is when the light has visited a person who is unwilling to walk in it, and the light moves on and leaves them in darkness. How great is that darkness! Let us rejoice

in the light of God and obey it fully. Let us walk in the light as He, the Lord God, is in the light, and as Christ is in the light. Let us seek to have the fulness of light, bright and clear, shining through the means of His Word and His Spirit. Then we can be the children of light indeed. —Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“ ‘In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.’ Why is the Life spoken of as the light of men, and not of creation? He has made the Light of the material universe, but He is the Light of men. Man is something distinct from and superior to other created things. He is a personality that needs the Divine Personality to meet his every want. ‘In Him was life.’ The source of life was in Him, and God, in giving us His Son, hath given to us eternal life. (I John 5:11.) The life manifested in Christ Jesus is the true light which should lighten every man coming into the world. ‘I am come that they might have life.’ Christ, as the Word of God, is that living bread which came down from Heaven, that man may eat and not die. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

“ ‘The light shineth in darkness.’ Christ as the Light did not shine on the darkness of the world, but in the darkness. He was made flesh, and dwelt among us. His own words are, ‘I am come a light into the world.’ John 12:46. The purpose of the light is to overcome the darkness. The center of this darkness is the human heart. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness is He who hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God. (II Cor. 4:6.)

“The darkness of willful unbelief remained unconscious of the dawning of this new day; ‘...they knew not the time of their visitation.’ Luke 19:42-44. Thank God, that in the case of many the darkness of sin and fear was not able to overcome or resist the bright shining of His truth. No matter how dense the darkness is, it cannot in any way overcome the purity or purpose of the light. The light shines on, but men may condemn themselves by loving the darkness rather than the light.”

—Taken from *Handfuls on Purpose*



MARCH 21, 1993

BEARING THE CROSS: LOSING TO GAIN

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross "daily" (Luke 9:23), and follow me.

25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Luke 14:25 And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them,

26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?

29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,

30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.

31 Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

32 Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.

33 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Matthew 10:37 He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

John 12:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of

wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.

MEMORY VERSE: He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. John 12:25.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There is a cross of self-denial and sacrifice that everyone must be willing to bear if we would share in the blessings and glory of Christ in eternal life.

WORD DEFINITIONS: (Luke 14:26), "*Hate*": to love less. (V. 32), "*Ambassage*": a person or persons sent as representatives to negotiate terms for peace or good will. (John 12:24), "*Corn of wheat*": kernel of wheat.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today concerns the cross that Jesus said we must bear if we would follow Him. This cross is not particularly the wooden structure upon which Christ died. It is a symbol of the reproach and sufferings incurred when we seek to follow His way which is contrary to the world around us. This is a daily occupation of the child of God. To draw back from any part of the cross that comes to us in the Christian life is to forfeit the blessings that Christ wills that we share with Him. The cross will involve self sacrifice of feelings, joys, pleasures, comforts, desires, ideas, and life itself. No one can be a successful Christian who does not learn to daily take up his own personal cross. Each must bear his own burden and cross. But let us look away from the cross to the glittering crown of life that the Lord has promised to the faithful. As the song says, "Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for every one, and there's a cross for me."
—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Is there any real profit for us without the cross?

2. What is meant by the term "his cross"?
3. Is there any temptation to draw back from bearing the cross?
4. What gain will a person have if he refuses to accept the cross?
5. Should a person be aware of the cross before he starts out in the Christian life?
6. Does the Lord help us with our cross?
7. Is it possible to profess to be a Christian and avoid the cross?
8. Can you name some of the things that one might be called upon to suffer for the cross?
9. Where do we bear the cross today?
10. What will we receive if we will bear the cross faithfully to the end of life's journey?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

We must take diligent heed that we know and understand what the cross is that we each one personally are called of the Lord to bear. Jesus said that every man must take up HIS cross. Each one has an individual cross to bear in his life. It will involve things that will differ from others. But whatever the Lord allows to be put on us, we can bear it as He gives grace and assures our hearts that it is a part of the cross. We are to love Christ above everything else and we are to prove that love by being willing to sacrifice every thing that He calls upon us to. If we hold back in one point we are judging ourselves unworthy of the Saviour, not fit for His holy presence. People need to sit down and weigh the matters up. Am I willing to bear the cross that the Lord wants me to all the way? Am I willing to be counted lightly and put down by others? Am I willing to give up the dearest treasure of my life? Will I prove my love for Christ to be above everything else? These are questions that we need to ask ourselves. Then we need to weigh up what it is going to cost us if we don't bear the cross. Like the king with ten thousand facing a battle with another army of twenty thousand we need to do some serious thinking. We are going to meet Christ when He comes from heaven with His mighty angels. Do I have enough to meet Him? I must send an

ambassage of repentance, prayer, and faith to make peace with him. And if I do not bear His cross I will not be ready to meet Him. What is my life anyway? Just a few years down here in this fleeting world is all I have with death coming sooner or later. The cross becomes a refuge. The cross becomes my standard of hope: lose all, gain all; or gain all, lose all. If I hold on to this life and refuse to consecrate it to God I will lose it all in the end for sure. But if I yield it up to God in a sacrifice of love for His cause, I will gain and keep it forever. The choice is ours to make.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A European was once taken prisoner in a Mahometan land. During his captivity he amused himself by sketching. His enemies saw his handiwork. As they gazed at his skillful and curious productions, it struck them that they might turn his talent to profitable account. He was promised his liberty, on condition that he would design a new mosque. He agreed to the proposal. An elegant and substantial building was planned. At first it pleased them, and the hour of his emancipation seemed near. Some keen eye, however, made a discovery. It was found that the mosque was drawn in the shape of a cross. Disappointed and angry, they put the architect to death. Likewise we find those that reject the gospel. They are well pleased with the beauty of salvation, and the reward it promises, until they discover that it is all shaped in the form of the cross of self-denial.

The secret to living a successful Christian life is knowing the proper mixture of the cross and crown. If we focus entirely on the cross, although our witness will be immaculate in ceremony and zeal, it will be lacking in gentleness and an inner glow. If we have eyes only for the crown, our love for the Lord will be less than He requires, and our service little more than that of a hireling.

As we have a willingness to recognize the cross of self-denial, and take it up because of love for Christ, the crown of life will glisten the brighter through the darkness of the burdens we bear. It will all end in the brightness of effulgent life, and an existence with God in eternity. —Wayne Murphey

MARCH 28, 1993

**CHRIST WARNS OF EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT
FOR THE WICKED**

Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:

20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:

28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

29 Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.

30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.

31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Mark 9:43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better

for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Matthew 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

MEMORY VERSE: The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. Psalm 9:17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The teachings of Christ warn us of an everlasting punishment for all who will not be saved by His grace. Every soul needs to flee for Christ for refuge so that he will escape that awful place.

WORD DEFINITIONS: "*Hell*": there are two Greek words translated in our language as "hell." One is "Hades" which is used in the the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Hades means the unseen realm, the place of departed spirits. It has two compartments: one for the righteous and one for the wicked. The other word is "Gehenna" which is the word used for "hell" in the scripture in Mark. The word "Gehenna" was originally the name of a valley in the region of Jerusalem where trash and garbage was dumped and burned. It becomes the name of the lake of fire, the final place of eternal punishment for all who refuse to follow the Lord and be saved. (Luke 16:24), "*Torment*": torture and suffering. (Mark 9:44), "*Worm*": remorse, regret, and anguish that will never cease.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider some of Christ's teachings concerning the future of the unrighteous who neglect to obtain salvation. In our world today many try to deny the existence of a burning hell. But the scriptures are plain, not only in what Christ taught, but in other places as well. Let us not question the truth about it. Hell is real and is the future abode of the ungodly. Christ taught it clearly and definitely, and poor deceived souls who deny its existence have a great surprise coming. Jesus quoted in our text from Mark a passage from Isaiah 66:24, the last verse of the book. It reads

thus, "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The very fact that Christ used this scripture as a reference to hell is a very important contribution to the truth of the matter. What a terrible condition to find one's self in at the end of life's short passage! Oh, whatever it takes in humility or self denial or suffering to escape that awful place it will be well worth it for every one!

—Leslie C. Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What would cause a person in the light of these plain scriptures to deny the truth about hell?
2. How did Jesus express the importance of keeping out of hell?
3. What was the main thing that was said concerning the rich man concerning his life in this time world?
4. Does the Lord impose sufferings and hardship for His children in measures to keep them from missing heaven?
5. Why was God not willing to send someone from the dead to warn people of hell and its torment?
6. What if God would send someone from the dead back to testify in a human body? Would people believe them?
7. What will be the worst torment of a person who ends up in the lake of fire?
8. What steps can we take in life to be sure that we will not be in hell?
9. Do the people in hell welcome more company there?
10. What will be the "worm" that will torment and torture the lost?

ADULTS' AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMENTS

There are many people in our world who live from day to day with no thought about their future beyond the landscape of this life. Their carnal minds are so concerned about the material things of this fleeting world that they have no time to think of heaven or hell. Oh, how foolish! And there are some

people who profess to be Christians who do not live the deep spiritual lives of perfect holiness and closeness with God like they should. Proverbs 15:24 wisely declares that "the way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." The way to escape hell is to live close as you can to heaven. Proverbs 16:4 also says, "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." God has no recourse but to cast the ungodly into the furnace of eternal fire. He does not send people to hell. Man makes his own choice and God but grants man what he chooses. How sad that with all the provision that God through Christ has brought to us in His grace, many will go on to hell regardless. We do not need to do that. If we will hear and believe the Bible we can be forewarned and prepare ourselves for the hour of death. Satan will have no power over us if we will live all our lives for the Lord. Be assured that we will meet God at the end of the road. Let us give our hearts and lives to Him now and let Him prepare us for eternity! That is the wisest thing we could ever do.

—Leslie C. Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is an erroneous theory concerning hell that I have seen taught. It states that Biblical references to fire meant a "refining." According to this belief, hell will simply be a refining of the soul, and another chance will be offered for souls to accept God, who have previously rejected Him. The fact that there is a gulf fixed around hell, which no man can pass over, is excluded from the false teaching. Once a soul enters hell, it becomes an eternal home. All opportunity to accept Christ and His salvation is past.

In our lesson, Jesus exhorts us to be aware of anything in our lives that may affect our salvation. If a hand, foot, or eye would cause us to be lost, we should direct our efforts to ridding that avenue of temptation. In the natural life, if a part of the body becomes infected to the point that it will not heal, it has a deteriorating effect on the rest of the body. This part must be quickly and unceremoniously severed or amputated. There would be no desire to retain that which was life-threatening. How much more should we exercise care with our

eternity-bound souls! Many are holding to sin and are unwilling to accept the realization of what the consequences will be. If people would comprehend that sin is an infected area in their spiritual life, causing death and decay, they would find it much simpler to cast away the shallow satisfaction the world offers.

—Wayne Murphey



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