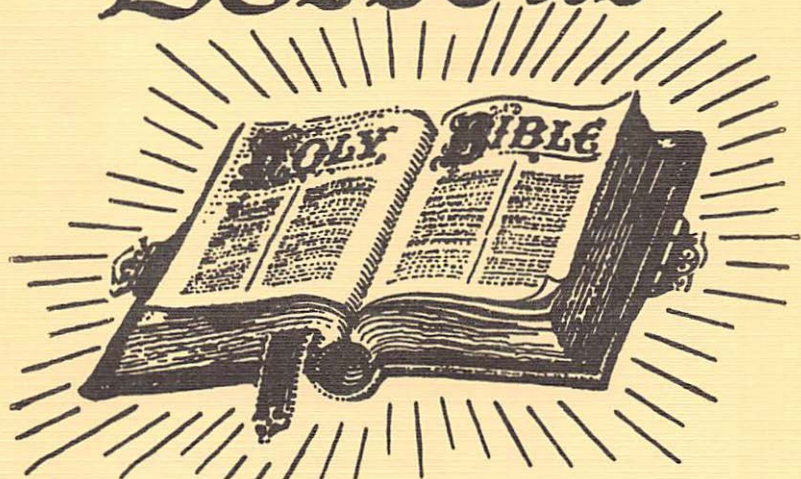


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Volume 34

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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 2002

We feel greatly inspired for the *Bible Lessons* this quarter to have a series of lessons about our heavenly Father. His name in the Hebrew was Jehovah, which means the Eternal Self-Existent One, the great I AM. We have found it to be a wonderful and inspiring study from the Holy Scriptures. We hope and pray that it will be a great benefit to you who will join with us in this study.

The cause of the heavenly Father and His good pleasure was the first and foremost thing in the heart of Christ in His visit to earth. The Lord Jehovah had been grieved and bereft of fellowship with mankind. Sin had separated the souls of men from His great loving Spirit. Jesus came as the living Son of God, (conscious that the Lord Jehovah was His Father) to repair that woeful breach and reunite His Father with a lost humanity. The first words we have on record that Jesus spoke when but a twelve year old boy was His answer to His parents when they scolded Him for tarrying behind in Jerusalem: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And then all the way through His earthly life it was constant referral to His heavenly Father. This was the main structure of His doctrine and teaching.

We need to better understand the truth about Jehovah and His will concerning us. Remember Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matthew 7:21.

Prayerfully yours,

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



JULY 7, 2002

THE GREATNESS OF THE HEAVENLY FATHER

Isaiah 40:12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?
13 Who hath directed the spirit of the LORD, or *being* his counsellor hath taught him?

17 All nations before him *are* as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

18 To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

22 *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.

26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these *things*, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power; not one faileth.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding.

29 He giveth power to the faint; and to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.

30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Isaiah 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where *is* the place of my rest?

2 For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

MEMORY VERSE: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah 57:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Our heavenly Father is so great, and we are so small. But His love and concern for our welfare is just as great. Therefore we would be wise to recognize our need of Him, be submissive to His will, and hold fast to faith and confidence in His strength to help us in every need.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isa. 40:12), "*Meted out*": In the Hebrew this means to balance, that is, to measure out (by weight or dimension), to arrange or equalize, through the idea of leveling. This denotes forethought and pre-designing, the work of a Master-Mind and Loving Spirit. "*With the span*": Or, by the span. The span is a unit of measure, the spread of the fingers of the hand. "*Comprehended*": Enclosed or contained. This is saying that the Lord God knows the exact measurement and dimensions of the earth and all it is made up of. No mortal man has such knowledge.

(Isa. 41:17), "*Less than nothing, and vanity*": The Hebrew meaning is "empty and ready to cease." This is the weight of humanity before the Lord. "...Every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Psa. 39:5

(Isa. 41:27), "*My way is hid from the Lord*": It is the trick of the devil to crowd our minds with negative thoughts about God. He does not want us to be aware of the loving care and tender regard that the Almighty has for every living soul.

(Isa. 41:31), "*Wait*": To expect, patiently look for, and tarry.

(Isa. 66:1), "*The place of my rest*": This is referring to where the Spirit of God can find entrance and dwelling, where nothing grieves nor offends Him. The next verse tells where this place is.

(Isa. 66:2), "*To this man will I look*": Here is where God will find a rest and a place where He can comfortably and joyfully dwell. "*Poor*": The Heb. meaning is "depressed." Several words can be used to illustrate its meaning. They are: afflicted, humble, lowly, meek, needy, submissive, destitute, inferior, helpless, defenseless, and yielded. "*Of a contrite spirit*": The word "contrite" here means smitten, wounded, or rejected.

"Trembleth at my word": This means one who shudders with terror, fears, hastens with anxiety, and is very reverential toward the Word of God.

(Isa. 57:15), ***"Contrite":*** This "contrite" in the Hebrew means to be bruised, crumbled, or crushed to powder. Webster says, "to be crushed in spirit by a feeling of remorse or guilt." ***"Humble":*** Lowly, abased, put down, and subdued.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the prophet Isaiah we draw the rich treasures of Holy Spirit inspired expressions portraying the greatness of Jehovah. Whenever you see the word "LORD" in capital letters in the Old Testament it is referring to the term "Jehovah," the Hebrew name that means the "Self-Existent or Eternal." It is the Jewish national name of God.

The apostle Paul in two different places quotes from Isa. 40:13. In Rom. 11:33, after enlarging upon God's working with the Jews and the Gentiles, Paul fervently magnifies God, saying, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Then, quoting from our text in Isa. 40:13 (the Septuagint Greek rendering) he went on: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" Then in I Cor. 2:16, after speaking of the inability of the natural man to receive or discern the things of the Spirit of God, he said, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?"

Our text in Isaiah 66:1 is quoted by Stephen in his answer to the council in Acts 7:47-50. He spoke of David's desire to find a tabernacle for God, "But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet." Then he quoted from Isaiah 66:1-2. He then charged the Jews as being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Ghost as their fathers had. This, along with other scriptures, shows that no man can build a house big enough for God to inhabit. God seeks to live in the hearts of men. Only there is found the place of His rest.

—Bro. Leslie Fusbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How does God want us to feel when we see His great works?
2. Why do we have no authority to counsel and direct God's Spirit?
3. Can we ever be tempted to think that our judgment is hid from God?
4. What can God do for us when we come to the limit of our strength?
5. What kind of man is God looking for in which He can find His rest?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Man has done some great big things in his sojourn and fleeting days on earth. But there is a Higher Power. Man at his best state is altogether vanity. The Spirit of God can blow on man's prime accomplishments and bring them all to nought. So many people's lives are sickled over with the things of the flesh, inventions and gadgets of men. Our recent ice storm in Oklahoma showed how quickly the works of men can be quenched to nothing. Oh, how we need to love and worship God, putting Him first and above everything else!

There are times in our Christian life that the Lord brings us to the end of our strength. Even in our youth we have fatigued and fainted. But in those times we have witnessed so wonderfully the renewing of the Lord within us. He truly is the strength of our life. We can thank God for letting us come to the end of our own powers, so that we can experience the quickening of His power. Christ "was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. We also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God." II Cor. 13:4. It is in our weakness and poverty of spirit that we are drawn to behold and experience the blessing of God's strength.

Since God is so great, heaven being His throne and the earth being His footstool, there is no way possible for vain man to build a house suitable for God to live in. Solomon built a great big temple for God. But that fine temple was eventually destroyed. But Jesus came, a greater one than the temple, to make it possible that we can furnish God a habitation in our

hearts. We are the temple of God now, and God can live in us, walk in us, and be our God. Oh, what a great salvation for Jehovah to give to us such an honour! — Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Everywhere man looks the greatness of God is evident. If you go to the seashore and walk along the sandy beach, you can see the handiwork of a Master Designer in the intricate shapes of the creatures that inhabit the shoreline. If you go to the mountains and witness the breath-taking view of many miles of beautiful countryside laying thousands of feet below your lofty perch, your heart pounds the realization of a mighty Creator. Go to the desert and look at the sublime beauty of the bloom on a cactus plant flourishing in the dry sandy soil; lift up your eyes and look at the pattern formed in the sand dunes, do you not see the fingerprints of God? Take a microscope and study the delicate structure in a leaf from an ordinary tree; God's workmanship has such fine detail. Step out under a dark sky and look at the Milky Way streaming across the heavens, peer into a powerful telescope and see the moons around the planet Jupiter. Focus on the rings of Saturn, look at the Andromeda galaxy or experience the thrill of seeing the wispy streamers of the Veil nebula. Surely, when you see God's marvelous creation your heart harmonizes with the Psalmist, "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

The greatest joy comes when you humble your heart in worship to the heavenly Father and in repentance discover the forgiving love of His dear Son. Then the blessed hope of eternal life springs into our consciousness and we truly begin to realize how great God is. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey



JULY 14, 2002

JEHOVAH, LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Acts 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Psalms 95:1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

5 The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land*.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To-day if ye will hear his voice,

8 Harden not your heart,...

MEMORY VERSE: Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We all owe to Jehovah everything. He has given us our being and we need to seek earnestly His face to love and obey Him, and be careful that we do not allow our hearts to be hardened against Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Acts 17:24), "*Lord*": One who is supreme in authority and control.

(Acts 17:26), The Greek reads: "And He made of one blood every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, ordaining fore-appointed seasons, and the boundaries of their dwelling."

(Acts 17:27), "*If haply*": This means "if perhaps," through the idea of a definite conclusion. Since God has done all of this creation with our happiness and well-being in mind, we should strongly conclude that we ought to seek Him with all of our heart. "*Feel after*": To seek to make contact, and to get in real touch with Him.

(Acts 17:28), "*Have our being*": We exist. "*Offspring*": We are "kin" to Him, of the same stock and substance.

(Acts 17:30), The Greek says, "Then indeed the times of ignorance God was overlooking, now charges all men everywhere to repent." To repent means to change one's mind and heart in a deep sense of guilt to that which is pleasing to God.

(Acts 17:31), "*Appointed a day*": This means that God has declared that He will one day bring all mankind to judgment for the way he has lived on this earth. When that day will be, no one knows but God Himself. "*He has given assurance*": The Greek says, "He has given proof." By raising up Christ from the dead God has proven His love, power, goodness and also His truth toward mankind.

(Psalm 95:3), "*Above all gods*": This means God is above all rulers, magistrates, power and authority.

(Psalm (95:4), "*Deep places*": All the recesses, caverns, mines, and the depths of the ground. "*Strength of the hills*": The Hebrew says, "The summits of the heights."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we want to study some more about the greatness of our heavenly Father, Jehovah, the Self-Existent One. We are

greatly impressed and inspired by the apostle Paul's message to the people at Athens, Greece. Paul, while waiting for Timotheus and Silas to come to him, was greatly affected in spirit to behold the city of Athens so full of the worship of vain idols and the imaginations of men. He began to discuss and dispute with the people and was finally given freedom to bring forth his views in the highest court of the city. His message concerning the true God we have included in our lesson, as it is a most excellent treatise on Jehovah. All the other gods were false, but Paul felt he could introduce the Lord God as the "Unknown God" to which he saw that one of the many city altars was so named.

To go along with this message we felt inspired to include a part of the 95th Psalm's wonderful appeal to us concerning Jehovah and how we need to worship and yield to Him. It is truly a wonderful expression, so accurate and vivid of the magnificence of our God. The warning is worthy of our careful heed, to be sure that we do not allow our hearts ever to be hardened against such a great God. It can happen, as it has thus been with so many through the ages. He mentions in the rest of the Psalm about Israel and what being stiff-necked and hard-hearted brought to them. Let us all take good heed to this today.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God not seek to dwell in a house made with hands?
2. What kind of house is God interested in inhabiting?
3. What kind of activity is God most desirous for man to engage in?
4. How can man truly make contact with God today?
5. Why is the Psalmist so concerned about not hardening our hearts?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God created the world in all of its goodness and beauty with a good and wholesome purpose in mind. He wanted to be wanted. Yes, He wanted to be sought after and desired. He made the world a desirable and beautiful place and gave man

such a place to live in. He wanted man to know that He, the LORD GOD, had created this wonderful world. He knew that if man could but be aware of how great and good He was, he would want to make contact with Him. He worked and is still working in many other ways to attract man's interest and desire. He wants man to seek after Him, and desire to be in contact with Him.

To become interested in something enough to put forth effort to find or get hold of such, then the finding of it is a precious experience. God wants man's finding of Him and a personal contact with Him to be that rich and enjoyable experience.

God is a Spirit, and He made man with a kindred composition of spirit. But He also gave man a fleshly body, a material house to contain that spirit. This gives man an alternate, an option. He has something else to seek after and desire other than God. God wants man to want Him so ardently that he is willing to deny that fleshly part of him in preference to seek for the contact of the spirit with His Spirit. He wants man to be interested in Him, to desire Him, to seek after Him wholeheartedly, and then to find Him. He is not far from us but He is hidden from us, hidden by the feelings and aspirations of the fleshly part of us.

The fool says there is no God. There is too much evidence of a Master Mind and a Wonderful Being revealed in nature, the heavens and the earth, for anyone to be so senseless as to try to prove the opposite. Look at the moon and the sun and the stars. Who would be so stupid as to say that they all just happened to be? No one but a blind fool would try to prove such a theory. Oh, if we could but open our eyes we can sense the need of seeking earnestly to make contact with this wonderful and precious Father of spirits! — Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Today's lesson is a call to worship. God is worthy of our worship; He has also set the guidelines for worship. (John 4:21-24). An easy way to remember these could be in this way: True worship must be:

1. Heartfelt. God isn't worshipped with men's hands. Jesus said, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit

and in truth." We sing and make melody "in our hearts" to the Lord. (Eph. 5:19.) It is with our whole heart, mind and understanding, our inner man, our spirit, that we worship God.

2. Honest. Jesus not only said "in spirit," but also "in truth." Paul confronted the erroneous ideas of the Stoics and Epicureans with the truth of repentance—turning away from sin, error, and false worship systems. We should worship without hypocrisy in "sincerity and truth." (I Cor. 5:8; Josh. 24:14.)

3. Humble. He will only dwell with the "contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15), and will only draw nigh to the humble, (James 4:6-8), and those who "tremble at His Word." (Isa. 66:1-2.) Our manner of worship should be humble—to "bow down" and to "kneel." (Psa. 95:6.)

4. Holy. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (Psa. 96:9.) In the Old Law an atonement for sin had to be offered before worship would be accepted. Today we trust Jesus to cleanse us from all sin, and we call on Him, with others, who have pure hearts. (II Tim. 2:22.)

5. Happy. "Come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." The redeemed in Revelations are pictured with harps—a symbol of joyful songs flowing out of the heart. God desires the fruit of our lips; praise and thanksgiving. (Heb. 13:15-16.)

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



JULY 21, 2002

THE GOODNESS OF JEHOVAH

Psalm 36:7 How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

9 For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

Psalm 31:19 Oh how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast

laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

Psalm 119:68 Thou *art* good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

Psalm 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.

5 For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

Psalm 116:7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

Psalm 145:8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.

Psalm 65:4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.

Romans 2:4 Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Romans 11:22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in *his* goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Ephesians 5:9 For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

MEMORYVERSE: Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! Psalm 107:8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Every good benefit and profitable blessing that one can justly desire to receive can be found in being right with the LORD God and having His favor and fellowship.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psa. 36:7-8), The Hebrew reads: "How precious is Your mercy, O God! and the sons of man take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They are satisfied from Your house's fatness (abundance, richness, anointing); and You make them drink of the torrent of Your delights."

(Psa. 31:19), "*Laid up*": Hidden and reserved. God hides and conceals His rich goodness from the proud and selfish soul, but reveals it to the lowly and poor in spirit. "*Before the sons of men*": Not only does this mean in sight of man, but it also indicates a going before or preceding, that is, working ahead of man's ideas and wisdom. God has special workings of goodness that He accomplishes beyond what we can ask or think.

(Psa. 31:20), "*Pride of man*": The Hebrew says, "the plots of man." Man devises many things against his enemies, who are often the children of God. But God has a way of protecting His children from their scheming plots.

(Psa. 100:5), "*Good*": Synonyms include: suitable, effective, efficient, favorable, beneficial, unspoiled, uncontaminated, valid, genuine, real, sound, dependable, honorable, worthy, enjoyable, agreeable, reliable, right, proper, thorough, adequate, ample, sufficient, satisfying, excellent and benevolent. All of these and more can be attributed to our gracious heavenly Father.

(Rom. 2:4), "*Forbearance*": Self-restraint and tolerance. It escapes our notice too often just how much God puts up and forbears with us. I am reminded of a saying in Job 11:6, "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." The Hebrew on this says, "Know then that God forgets for you some of your iniquity." The Lord Jehovah is so long-suffering. If He would mete out to us the full force of His judgment and anger there would be none of us who would stand any chance at all. Let us not count His goodness and forbearance and long-suffering lightly, not take it as an excuse for indulgence in wrong.

(Rom. 11:22), "*Continue in his goodness*": When we are made aware of the judgments of God we must submit and let His judgments accomplish in our hearts that good and accept-

able will of God. We must continue and progress in what is well pleasing unto the Lord. If, in preference to our own desires and pleasure, we forego and neglect His goodness we will be cut off.

(Eph. 5:9), "*Fruit of the Spirit*": The Greek says, "The fruit of the light." Paul had just spoken of them being sometimes darkness, but now they are light in the Lord, and are to walk as children of light, "proving (finding out, learning, and discovering) what is acceptable unto the Lord." He inserts this statement about the fruit of the light being in all goodness and righteousness and truth. The effect of His light is to illuminate our minds and hearts to know what is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our Bible Lesson for today we want to consider and seek to comprehend more of the goodness of God. Everything about God and everything He ever did was good and worthy of our regard and appreciation. God is all-wise and cannot do wrong. He is reliable and never makes a mistake. We have gathered from the Scriptures several wonderful expressions of esteem for His great goodness. Anyone who ever has a good contact with God and gains a clear concept of Him will confess and declare that He is good in every way. Even in His ways that conflict with our human thoughts we are won to acknowledge that what He does is well done and for the best.

Many other scriptures can be quoted and applied, but the one in Romans 8:28 pretty well sums it up: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." When it is all said and done, if we have anywise judgment about us, we will be able to testify that this is true. Joseph made this statement to his brothers concerning their former abuse and mistreatment of him, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good." As the song says, "He will turn what seems to harm me into everlasting joy."

It is very expedient for us to have a good and balanced understanding of the goodness of God. Satan clouds people's minds and has many thinking adverse thoughts about God. Many become bitter and count God as unfair and cruel. This

is a serious thing and it goes on in this dark world. Let it not be thus with us. Let us be open-minded and teachable and willing to be instructed. He will help us to behold His goodness and a great burden of stress and sorrow will be rolled away. We can find rest to our souls when we behold how bountifully He has dealt with us. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How many qualities of goodness can you name about the Lord?
2. What causes man to fail to see the goodness of God?
3. What can help us to properly understand God and count Him as good?
4. What is meant by His forbearance?
5. Is it possible for us to possess the qualities of goodness like Him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the devil's main devices that he uses on humanity is to accuse God of being wrong or not fair. He used that on Eve, first suggesting that God had told them not to eat of every tree of the garden. When Eve gave him the right answer for that, then he shifted his tactics to suggest that God did not want them to have their eyes opened and to be as gods, knowing good and evil. This cast a reflection on the Creator in Eve's mind. Thus she was enticed to take of the forbidden fruit. It did not seem right for her to deprive herself and it made God seem unjust.

And so it has been all down through the ages. Cain groaned when God's anger fell on him, and felt he was given too much to suffer. Lust and strife infested the human race causing them to look on holiness and purity with disdain. Losing sight of goodness and holiness, man went in relentless pursuit of vain pleasure and selfish gratification as the most beneficial.

But the result of such darkness and error was far from good. Soon the wickedness of man became so great that the Lord decided to destroy the world. He needed a good man to work through and He found one in Noah. God searches and

seeks to find a heart that can be a depository of His goodness. He found Abraham to be such a man who would believe and obey His word regardless. His eyes are still running "to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." II Chron. 16:9.

Wise is the soul who gains a clear perception from the Holy Scriptures concerning the true goodness of God. God works with every one and we must learn to justify Him in everything He does and allows to come our way. Even the hard and bitter things can come out good if we will count God faithful as He really is. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Have you ever tried to hold your arms out straight for maybe five minutes? It is very difficult to do. In Romans 10:21 it says, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." When we consider in our lesson God's goodness, we can hardly fathom what "all day long" means. Consider God extending His arms of goodness for hundreds of years and very few people loving Him for it. All the time He waits patiently for someone to see His great goodness.

How do we respond to His great goodness toward us? How does He feel when folks complain and criticize His doings. How often should we thank Him for His goodness? It would be good to stop seven times a day and specifically thank and praise Him for things.

Also in Exodus 34:6 it says, "...The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Our God is still abundant in His goodness and truth today, and His supply never runs out. Praise the Lord! —Bro. James Bell



JULY 28, 2002

THE HOLINESS OF JEHOVAH

Leviticus 11:44 For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy:...

Psalm 30:4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Psalm 96:8 Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

I Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear.

I Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

II Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

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

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

MEMORYVERSE: Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The LORD JEHOVAH, Our Creator and heavenly Father is perfect in purity, holiness, righteousness and truth. If we would be His children we must also be holy in all our ways and doings. This means that we should separate ourselves from all things that would defile our souls and live in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Lev. 11:44), "*Holy*": Sacred, clean and pure.

(Psa. 30:4), "*Saints*": There are two different words in the Hebrew that are translated as "saints." One, as it is here, means godly, pious and reverent people. The other word simply means "a holy one," whether to God, to an angel, or to a human. Uniting the two terms, which are strongly related, we have a good idea of what a saint of God is supposed to be. "*Remembrance of his holiness*": The calling to mind, the instructive means of reminding us, and the influence of God's holy laws and commandments in our lives. This holy way that God wants us to go can slip away from us very easily if we are not diligent to keep it in memory, and maintain a thankful appreciation for it.

(Psa. 96:9), "*Beauty of holiness*": The magnificence, splendor, honour and majesty of the pure and holy attitude, spirit and life that is pleasing to God. The real beauties of holiness are not outward in the flesh, but they are inward qualities of the heart and spirit. The world seeks after and lifts up the physical beauty, but God is looking for the beauty of a holy attitude and disposition in the spirit of man.

(I Pet. 1:15), "*Conversation*": Conduct and behavior.

(I Pet. 1:17), "*Sojourning*": Foreign residence, living as strangers and pilgrims. The true Christian is out of joint with the spirit of this present evil world. He does not "fit in" with society and its vanity and pride. This draws ridicule and persecution from the world against the saints of God. We should live in the fear of God a careful and conscientious life of modesty, simplicity and holiness while we pass through this fleeting world.

(I Cor. 3:17), "*Defile*": To corrupt, waste, spoil or ruin. This is also the same Greek word for "*destroy*." The Greek text reads: "If any one corrupts the temple of God, God will corrupt this one." This includes defilement of the body through filthy habits and indulgent practices such as tobacco, liquor, drugs and immoral relationships between men and women.

(II Cor. 7:1), "*Perfecting*": To fulfill completely, not being short or lacking.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Along with the qualities of greatness and goodness that we find in our gracious heavenly Father, there is the wonderful attribute of holiness. He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. (Psa. 145:17.) Righteous-ness and holiness go hand in hand, and our God is both of them. Our first scripture is what the Lord told Israel through their leader Moses. He wanted them to know that He was holy. He was pure, clean and undefiled, without any kind of wrong or evil. What He did was very good and had a stamp of perfection on it.

But then the Lord makes it plain that as He is holy He wants His people to be partaker of that same holiness in life and character. People too often get the idea that God is not expecting us to be as holy as He is. With this in mind they find excuse for sin and imperfection right along. But this is error. God has made a way for us to be holy through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on Calvary. We can be washed from our sins and made pure and clean in the sight of God. But we are to purge ourselves from the filthiness of this evil world if we are to partake of His holiness. We are to have practical holiness in word, deed and action even as He has.

Our New Testament scriptures bring this out. God requires us to be holy. We need to know this and apply ourselves to His grace and blessings so that we can attain to the experience of holiness before Him. If we see that God requires something of us, and if we really love Him, then we are going to put forth an effort to reach for that. God is holy and it truly follows that we who take His name and profess to be His children must be holy also. — Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What benefit is it to us that God is holy?
2. Why is it so important and expedient for us to be holy as He is?
3. Why is being holy such a beautiful and desirable state?
4. What will be our end if we fail to be holy as God is holy?
5. What do we have to do to attain to holiness with the Lord?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The Lord God Almighty who created the world and all of us is perfectly holy, pure, righteous and true. There is no sin or wrong in Him at all. God speaks in holiness, He sits upon a throne of holiness, and holiness is at home and suitable in His House. We must be holy as He is, and be thankful that we can partake of His holiness, and worship Him in the beauties of that holiness that He loves and esteems. It is a state that we should desire and seek to have with all of our hearts.

We were all at one time in the unholy ways of sin and this present evil world. Our conversation was impure and stained with pride, selfishness, greed, strife, immorality, lust and dishonesty. This was the inheritance we received from our fathers. We were defiled and unfit for God's holy presence and fellowship. But Jesus came into the world to make it possible for us to be holy and pure from sin. He shed His blood as an atonement for us. Now in His grace and goodness we can be delivered from the unclean elements of the world that had us all messed up. We must "come out from among them," and give up the evil communications we had with the unholy society around us. We must be holy, and we must live holy lives. Our actions, our attitudes, our thoughts, our desires and purposes must all be raised up from worldliness and selfishness to a plane of purity and holiness. We must consecrate and die out to self and the pleasures of the flesh that God is not pleased with. We must seek Him with all of our hearts until we are given the witness that we are holy as He wants us to be. Then we are to continue in that holiness all the days of our life.

Then there is something we must also remember. The cost of not being holy is much, much greater than the cost of being

holy. Our lesson says that if we corrupt this body that is the temple of God, then God will bring us to corruption and ruin. We must not be caught in an unholy condition when Jesus comes again. Let us take this thought seriously to heart. Let us be diligent to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Man has entered into God's holiness only through the avenue God has provided. Under the law they were deemed holy as they followed the ordinances of God. In the New Testament we can be holy through the provision of God's Son. We can be thankful that holiness does not come from meats and drinks, washings and carnal ordinances.

Many religious people looked upon Jesus as anything but holy. He ate with unwashed hands, He ate and mingled with sinners, and He let a sinner woman wash His feet; but His pure, sinless, devoted, sacrificial life stands as a beacon and enables us to obtain the same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is an inner fountain producing, through the mind, the motives and the attitudes, fruit unto holiness. —Bro. Bob Wilson



AUGUST 4, 2002

THE WORKS OF JEHOVAH

Psalm 111:2 The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

3 His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

Ephesians 2:4 God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

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

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

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it *is* the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

MEMORYVERSE: ...Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Besides all of His wonderful and mighty works of the creation, God works His greatest work in the souls of men, delivering them from the power of Satan unto a life of honour and praise to His name. As we maintain our faith and obedience to Him, He continues to work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psa. 111:2), "*Sought out*": Followed after, pursued, searched for, and frequently visited. To have Jehovah work in one's heart and life His good pleasure is the greatest, most wonderful, sweetest and most enjoyable experience a man can ever have.

(Psa. 111:4), The Hebrew says, "He has made a memorial for His wonders; Jehovah is gracious and full of pity." Oh, let us take heed that we be not as those who "forgot his works, and

his wonders that he had shewed them." Psa. 78:11. The Lord fervently desires that His workings with us will mean so much to us that we will cherish their memory unfailingly.

(Psa. 111:6), "*The heritage of the heathen*": This is referring to the souls of men from all the nations of the world. It is the same wording of Psalm 2:8 where God promised to Christ, "Ask of me, I shall give thee the **heathen for thine inheritance**, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The salvation of the human spirit from the prison house of sin and the working of His Spirit therein is the great work of God! As Paul said to the Philippians in 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform (finish) it until the day of Jesus Christ."

(Psa. 111:7), "*Verity*": Certainty, truth, and trustworthiness. "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him." Eccl. 3:14.

(Eph. 2:5), "*Quickened us together with Christ*": We are made alive unto God by the same spirit which resurrected Christ from the dead; hence, we are quickened together with Christ. "...ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead." Col. 2:12.

(Phil. 2:13), "*Worketh*" and "*do*": Both of these words are translated from the Greek word from which we get our English word "energy." It means the effectual, efficient, and active exertion of God's power and quickening life which alone can enable us to do and to be what He wants us to be. Oh, how weak we are in ourselves, but with God working in us we can do all things!

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider the great and wonderful works of our gracious heavenly Father. Oh, how great He is and His works are so great, also! We look up at the heavens on a starlit night and are enthralled with the majesty of the starry orbs so high above us and so many light-years away. We think of the sun and the moon in their beauty and blessing. Then in the earth we see so many wonders that reflect the goodness and ingenuity of the LORD JEHOVAH. Pick up a pecan, crack it

open, behold its wondrous formation and arrangement, then put it in your mouth and taste its deliciousness! This is but one of the many, many examples of the works of our God of love.

But let's also behold with wonder and delight the great work of God in the salvation of our souls! Oh, what love and goodness He showed to us in accomplishing His great work of redemption! It is not our doing, or our puny human strength that does it. It is His working alone, the energetic force of His wondrous power. Man boasts himself of his works of inventions and scientific accomplishments. But how inferior and vain is man's best performance when compared to the great works of God in His triumphant grace and virtue!

We have selected the scriptures from Psalm 111 because it speaks so extensively of the works of God. They are great, honourable, glorious, verity, sure and steadfast forever. And to experience His working in your life in saving, sanctifying and keeping you from the powers of the darkness of this present evil world is truly the greatest of all of His works.

We want to work with God, work out as He works in. Let us humble our hearts in quiet submission, being willing and obedient to His word completely. He wants to work within us, but He will not force His way. He must have our complete submission and trust. Oh, it is worth all of our giving up of self and the world to experience the blessed working of God in our souls!

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How many of the various works of God in creation can you list?
2. Are you truly persuaded in your heart that God made them all?
3. What is God's greatest work to you?
4. What work is God doing for us today?
5. What works is God going to do for us in the future?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our God, the LORD JEHOVAH, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is not an idle, inactive, inefficient, unconcerned

God. He is a working and energetic Father of mercies and is gracious and helpful to His creation. He has manifested His goodness and wisdom in the magnificent world that He brought into being. As Psalm 104:24 says, "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." And in verse 31 of that same chapter it says, "The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works." He fashioned the first man with His very hands from the dust of the ground. He fashioned the first woman from a rib that He took from the man's side.

Today He still wants to work in man's life. He oversees the formation of each of us in the womb and directs in that process. And from that time of our conception He wants to work with us and in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He wants to save us from our erring ways and practices, and bring us to a "good land" of purity and holiness in the light of His countenance. He wants to direct us and guide us in all of life's decisions. If we are to have a lifetime companion, He wants to make the choice of that one and have His way about bringing it to pass. He wants to have the freedom to bring trials and afflictions into our lives where He wants to "work together all things for good." "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. 11:33.

But all of this is contingent upon our will and submissiveness to Him. He will not override our will nor work against our opposition. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 1:19,-20. Be assured that if we will submit to Him for His works in our lives, it will be much better for us than if we have our own way.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I'm sure most of us have had things happen in our life that have caused us a lot of extra work. Maybe you have been assembling a piece of machinery and lost or broke a part that was hard to replace. Perhaps you have just finished mopping the floor and someone came tracking across it with muddy shoes. God's wonderful creation of man in his pure state was

ruined with sin. Satan succeeded in bringing a separation between man and his creator. But, thank the Lord, God was not without resources; His marvelous contingency plan went into action and He brought about a daring rescue of mankind. By sending His Son to die in our place and then bringing Him out of the grave to live eternally, He purchased our salvation. Jesus stated in Rev. 1:18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore,..." Jesus' sacrifice atoned for our sin and "Hast redeemed us to God."

God's work in rescuing lost sinners, forgiving their sins, cleansing their lives and transforming them into saints of God, is continuing to this day. Once again man can be restored to a state of purity and be able to enjoy sweet communion and fellowship with God.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



AUGUST 11, 2002

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF JEHOVAH

Psalm 90:1 LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Ephesians 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

MEMORY VERSE: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. Romans 8:28.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The LORD JEHOVAH had the great plan of salvation fully in mind before He created the world. It was His purpose that all nations would have an opportunity to have fellowship with Him and to enjoy the blessings of His goodness and grace.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psa. 90:1), "*Dwelling place*": Home. What sweeter word could be used to describe what Jehovah is to all who really know and experience His wonderful grace!

(Psa. 90:2), "*Brought forth,.....formed*": These terms in the Hebrew have a likeness to mortal birth, the bringing forth of children. God actually brought forth the heavens, the earth, and all that in them is, as a mother conceives in her womb and brings forth a child.

(Jer. 31:3), "*Drawn*": To be attracted, charmed, or enticed.

(Eph. 1:5), "*Predestinated*": Limited, ordered, planned, designed and made sure in advance. This predestination is not

the choosing in advance who is to be saved, and who is to be lost. It is rather the predesign of the ways, method, means, provision and assurance of a salvation to be within reach of all men. It is for us to choose or reject by the power of our own will. For Jehovah, it is His will that all be saved, but He leaves the reception of His saving grace up to us. No one can truthfully say, "I was predestined to be lost." No, it is rather to be said, "I am predestined to be saved." But whether one will be saved or not is up to the individual choice.

(Eph. 1:10), "*Dispensation*": This word is the same as "stewardship" in other places. It means an administration, a distribution, a dispensing out of wealth and commodities for the use and benefit of mankind. This makes for each and every man a solemn responsibility to receive or reject, to use or to misuse, to keep or to cast away. The Greek word is "oikonomea" from which comes the English term "economy." Webster defines this as "careful management of wealth, resources, etc.; avoidance of waste by careful planning and use; thrift or thrifty use."

(Romans 8:30), "*Called*": To be invited and granted the privilege of sharing another's wealth and happiness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we see the wonderful truth that God planned and prearranged His wonderful salvation and grace before He created the world. He had our happiness and benefits fully in mind when He created everything. Many more scriptures could be used to bring this out, but the ones we have selected are vivid in the expression of the good will of Jehovah, the Eternal, Self-Existent One.

The matter of the predestination of God has been a tanglement of false ideas and misconception in the minds of men down through the ages. Let us remember that no matter how much or to what extent God knows and preplans for us, He never takes away from us the power of our own volition or choice. He wants us to know about what He has for us, and how good it is, but it is for us to make the choice of what we are to do with it. He gives an opportunity for another influence to seek to affect our decision, and this is where the devil has

his place. He is always there with his ideas, logic, pressure and persuasion. But we must keep in mind that we have the right to choose the fear of the Lord and its blessings and benefits regardless of how much the devil has to say about it.

God planned it all from eternity, being shaped and molded in His great loving mind and wise purpose. This can assure us that it is fully worthy of our consideration and choice. God makes no mistakes and what He planned and arranged for us is good in every way.

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God have in mind before He created the world?
2. Does God predestine some to be saved and some to be lost?
3. What does God really predestinate concerning us?
4. Who really decides whether we will be saved or lost?
5. What does His economy of grace convey to us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Oh, how wonderful to see that God loved us before the foundation of the world and planned such wonderful blessings and happiness for us to enjoy! He wants every soul to have the privilege to survey His wonderful grace and behold its benefits and opportunities. But God has set it up to be the object of the individual's personal responsibility to have or not to have. The Lord Jehovah wants us to have His blessings, but He wants us to desire and choose His blessings. It would not give Him any pleasure to bestow His goodness upon us if there were nothing else to have. So He has permitted His grace to be contested by other enticements and attractions.

He chose that we would be holy and without blame before Him in love. That was His design, and is that not wonderful and beautiful and attractive? This was His will and eternal purpose. This is true happiness and pleasure. To be pure and without blemish or fault, free from contamination and evil, is safety and assurance of life and peace. But we must give our decision and put forth effort to possess this holiness by submission and obedience.

God gave Adam and Eve the choice of whether to have His blessings or His curse. God purposed beforehand and arranged everything for their joy and happiness. They could have continued indefinitely in His presence and prosperity if they would have been obedient. But Satan beguiled them and got them thinking in wrong channels that brought about their decision.

So it is today. Regardless of what God provides it is still our responsibility as to what we are going to do with it. God forces no one to serve Him. He will work to get the light and knowledge to us of His grace, but we have the responsibility to choose or to reject. Sad to say, so many let the devil talk them out of receiving God's grace. But to them who will receive the Lord's salvation there will be manifold blessings and benefits here, and life everlasting in that world to come.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

How wonderful, when we think of "God's eternal purpose," to bring it right down to us individually. He has a plan, and I am in it. His plan was to create me, to draw me to Him, to fellowship with me, to dwell in me. He can then manifest this wonderful mystery of godliness in and through my life. He can work His eternal purpose in me! So then, my focus in life should be to conform to His will, and so yield to Him that He would be pleased to dwell in me, live His life through me, that His very mind and thoughts will be lived out in my deeds and actions. Thus, all humanity will be able to see what was in the very mind and heart of God. His glory will be spread throughout all the earth, His plan will be completed through His people. That is the mystery of godliness: "Christ in you." Is my life in conformity to His will? Are the thoughts, words, deeds, affections and purposes of my life godly, holy and unblameable? Do I walk in love? Do I recognize and see the purpose of God working through the events of my life, through my trials, afflictions, joys, blessings and even through the people God has brought into my life? Does my life reflect the glory of God?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

AUGUST 18, 2002

THE LORD JEHOVAH, A GOD OF LOVE

Deuteronomy 7:7 The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people:

8 But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you...

Deuteronomy 33:3 Yea, he loved the people; all his saints *are* in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; *every one* shall receive of thy words.

Isaiah 38:17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

Isaiah 63:7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, *and* the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.

9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.

I John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jehovah is the Supreme Being whose disposition and nature is that of love, mercy and goodness. He is gracious and kind to all of His creation and especially to all who receive His love and who will, in turn, seek to love, worship and obey Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Deut. 7:7), "*Set his love*": The Hebrew meaning is to cling to or delight in.

(Deut. 7:8), "*Loved*": Having affection, concern, interest, deep feeling of tenderness and sympathy.

(Deut. 33:3), "*Loved*": This word in the Hebrew means to hide in one's bosom, that is, to cherish with affection. "*Every one shall receive of thy words*": The Hebrew says, "He lifts up each at Your words."

(Isa. 38:17), The Hebrew says, "Behold for peace was bitter, bitter to me, but You loved my soul from the pit of destruction, for You have cast behind Your back all my sins."

(Isa. 63:7), "*Lovingkindnesses*": "Mercies, pity, compassion and a bowing down of the heart in graciousness and help. The Hebrew renders this: "I will mention the mercies of Jehovah, the praises of Jehovah (things about Him that are to be commended) according to all that Jehovah has benefited us, and the great good to the house of Israel, which He benefited them by His mercies and by His much lovingkindness."

(Isa. 63:9), The Hebrew says, "In all their affliction He was not a foe; the Angel of His face saved them: In His love and in His pity He redeemed them. And He bore them and carried them all the days of forever."

(I John 4:7), "*Love*": The Greek word is "agape," which

means, affection and benevolence, the very nature of God.

(I John 4:9), "*Only begotten*": The sole offspring; the One and Only true Man that bore the unmarred image of God.

(I John 4:10), "*Propitiation*": Atonement; to unite in one, satisfaction and amends for wrongdoing; reconciliation; restoration of fellowship and harmony.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We want to consider for our lesson today the wonderful attribute of Jehovah that perhaps means more for the benefit of us poor mortals of humanity than anything else. And that is His love. One who is so great and powerful, august, and overwhelmingly wise and unfailing is also a loving, kind and compassionate Being. His love is so great and wonderful that we cannot magnify it too much.

We have selected various scriptures that speak of His love. Moses, speaking to the people of Israel whom God so marvellously delivered from Egyptian bondage, in Deut. 7 reminds them that it was God's love for them that caused Him to be so good to them. And then in the final blessing that Moses gave the children of Israel in Deut. 33 before he was taken from them, he states the truth assuredly that God loved His people and the control He had over them was a loving control, a relationship of His Word to them and their being low at His feet to hear His Word and be lifted up thereby.

In Isaiah 38:17 we find the words of Hezekiah when the Lord spared him from death as at first He had so decreed. Hezekiah had wept sore at the message of the prophet Isaiah to set his house in order for he was to die and not live. God saw those tears and the anguish of his heart and His love changed the sentence of death to an added fifteen years to live. This is the same love that is in Christ to save us from hell to life, sweet life, again. In Isa. 63:7,9 the prophet again declares that it was the love of God to Israel bearing them through the years of their captivity and saving them from their enemies. They were a nation crowned with many wonderful benefits from the hand of Jehovah.

Then we go to the New Testament to the testimony of the beloved disciple of the Son of God, John. He bears witness anew of the love of God, and its crowning expression of sending

the gift of His only begotten Son down to this sin-cursed world to save us from eternal destruction. God is love. Simple, plain, and vibrant with meaning is this declaration. It is His nature to love and bless. And this love revealed in Christ inspires and draws from the heart of man the greatest depth of love and devotion one can ever have. This love, this tender compassion of good will and outreach of help and deliverance, is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and is so sure and triumphant that nothing in this world can ever separate us from it. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is love the most powerful force and influence in the world?
2. How did God manifest and prove His love for Israel?
3. What is the reaction in the heart of man to a true vision of the love of God to him?
4. What was the greatest expression of the love of God for humanity?
5. If God so loved us what should be our disposition toward others?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The greatest and most powerful influence in the world is love. It is the deep-seated desire of every human being to be loved and to love. God put this sentiment in the very heart of man. It is because that this is His nature and very disposition. He created the world in the spirit of love and thoughtfulness for man's happiness and welfare. He wanted to be able to express the great love that glowed in His holy and almighty Being. He loved us from eternity. And today His love is still warm and fresh and tender.

He wants us to love Him. He wants us to prove our love to Him by being obedient to His good pleasure. He was so pleased that Abraham was willing to obey His command, even to the sacrificing of his only son, Isaac. God wants to be loved supremely in each and every heart. He is jealous in that respect. He is worthy of our love and supreme affection. And when we selfishly deny Him of that love and devotion that is rightfully His, He is offended and grieved, and He has a just cause to thus be.

He has proved His love beyond all doubt. What more could He do or what more could He say that would make His love any more clear and plain? And the most recent and most wonderful thing that He did in expressing His love was to allow the only Man who really pleased Him perfectly to suffer and die in our stead to atone for our sins against Him. This was His beloved Son, but He was willing to do it to get across to us His love.

The thought came to me one day when I was feeling accused and depressed concerning my love for my children. The Lord said, "Do you love your children?" And I answered firmly, "Oh, yes!" And He responded: "Just that much and more do I love you!" Oh, what comfort and help that was to my spirit!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

His love is far greater than tongue or pen could ever tell. It goes beyond the highest height and reaches to the lowest hell. Children have a tendency to think of God close to what their parents are. How wonderful when we can relate the love of our heavenly Father to a very kind and loving earthly father! When we express the love of God to our children they will automatically relate it to someone they love here on earth. May we make a wonderful impression of love upon our children that they may see this great God of love we speak of in our lesson today.

Just as a father does all he can that his children may enjoy life to its fullest, God has given us all things that we might share in His divine nature having escaped the corruption of the world. The more we know Him, the more we feel His love toward us. He gives us the treasures of heaven as we read and experience His word.

—Bro. James Bell



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AUGUST 25, 2002

THE WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

I Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

20 Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

I Corinthians 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

MEMORY VERSE: But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. I Corinthians 1:30.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God's thoughts and ways of working are on a much higher plane than that of the sinful fleshly minded men of this present evil world. This causes God's wisdom to be counted as foolishness by man. In man's fall into sin and transgression he obtained a wisdom that is contrary to God's wisdom. Thus the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. This is a great and serious conflict being waged constantly in this life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Cor. 1:19), "*Bring to nothing*": Set aside or reject.

(Ver. 20), "*Where is the scribe, the disputer of this world?*": The scribe is a writer, and the disputer of this world is the long-tongued talker who argues and employs logic and human reasoning, "Wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason." Prov. 26:16 Yes, where are these empty clouds and wells without water? You can hear them everywhere blasting and foaming out their own shame. They are outside the kingdom of Christ despite the praise and honour foolish man gives them.

(Ver. 21), "*The world by wisdom knew not God*": In consenting to eat of the tree with the thought of making her wise, Mother Eve gained a wisdom that dimmed the closeness and inspiration of her Maker. This base and unholy disposition to seek for fleshly wisdom passed upon all men. It is contrary to faith and submission to God and is for going after selfish pursuits. "*Foolishness of preaching*": To seek for life's answers in listening to the spiritual message of the Word of God is dull, uninteresting, and vain to the proud and scornful of this world. "*Them that believe*": Those who have faith in, upon, or with respect to a Man (Christ Jesus); who give credit to and who entrust their souls to Him.

(Ver. 22), "*Sign*": An indication or outward show such as a miracle or wonder. "*Wisdom*": This is worldly wisdom that consists principally of human reasoning and scientific experiment and calculation.

(Ver. 23), "*Stumblingblock*": The Greek word is "scandal," which is an offense, snare, reproach, disgrace or cause of displeasure. "*Foolishness*": absurdity, silliness, vanity, worthlessness, emptiness. Such is the opinion that the worldly wise hold about Christ crucified as the means of salvation.

(Ver. 25), "*Foolishness*": Foolish things: those simple truths that even a child can grasp. "*Weakness*": Weak things: those simple and lowly deeds or accomplishments done in obedience to the Word of God.

(Ver. 26), "*Mighty*": Powerful; capable in one's own ability, feeling no need for prayer or seeking God's help. The result of such can include human accomplishments in inventions, sports, discoveries and material progress. "*Noble*": Well born, lofty, worldly, famous, distinguished and dignified.

(Ver. 27), "*Confound*": To shame or to put down.

(Ver. 31), "*Glorieth, glory*": To boast. This is not to brag, vaunt, swagger, or crow. This is rather to rejoice and give praise to the Lord for the strength He gives to enable us to do and be successful.

(I Cor. 3:18), "*Become a fool*": This is to be willing to be counted as a fool by the proud and fleshly-minded society because of our meekness, modesty, simplicity and holy manner of conversation.

(Ver. 19), "*Taketh*": Entraps.

(Ver. 20), "*Thoughts*": Reasonings and imaginations.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today the wisdom of the Almighty in conflict with the wisdom of this present evil world. We are drawing our material from the epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. He quotes from several places in the Old Testament. In I Cor. 1:19 he quotes from Isa. 29:14. In ver. 20 he alludes to Isa. 33:18. In ver. 31 he quotes from Jer. 9:24.

In I Cor. 3:19 he quotes from the words of Eliphaz, one of Job's miserable comforters in Job 5:13. Even though this man misses the mark in his judgment of Job, yet, in Paul's estimation, he spoke enough truth that merited his being quoted. And then in ver. 20 he quotes from Psalm 94:11.

Paul started this subject by stating that Christ sent him not to baptize, but "to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (Ver. 17.) We can sum it all up simply by recognizing the threat that the works and wisdom of man void of the Holy Spirit's inspiration and enlightenment is posing against the wisdom of the Lord Jehovah. It is something we have to be on our guard and watch against with prayer to God for His help and guidance. May God help us to recognize every contradiction of the wisdom of God that is promoted in the world.

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is the simple message of Christ so offensive to the world?
2. What are some of the things of Christ that are of such offence?
3. How can we avoid being influenced against the wisdom of God?
4. What is there about Christ crucified that is a stumblingblock?
5. Can you relate an experience you have had with this conflict?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There are numbers of things that a true follower of Jesus believes and practices that ignorant fleshly-minded people take offense to and ridicule. We might mention a few of them as a way of illustrating the thought of worldly wisdom being in conflict with the wisdom and the way of God.

The way of simple faith and trust in God, not resorting to medicine and the worldly physicians is a great offense to so many. The attitude of forgiveness and love for one's enemies is rejected and held in contempt. Modesty, plainness of dress, and stress upon inward beauty and not outward beauty and adornment is a great stumblingblock to people today, so many of them being great professors of being saved.

Being generous and self-denying in sacrificing for others is not a cultivated spirit by the world. The spirit of not seeking after earthly gain and treasure, but rather seeking for things above is not a popular way of life and is scorned by the majority of our society. Being willing to suffer and not to defend one's self is surely not a worthy practice for the most part in human nature. Humility and lowly attitudes is about a lost art in our world.

Not clinging to earthly life in preference to yearning to go on and be with the Lord, especially in youth and the prime of life is just almost unheard of. Most people seek for their good times now and are not willing to count it all joy to suffer for Christ. God help us to have a vision of the cross of Jesus and what it really stands for.

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is much head knowledge and earthly wisdom in the world today. This has hindered many people from finding the true wisdom found in God. The wisdom that fails to help us recognize our dependency for God's deliverance, grace and guidance is not the wisdom of God. The purpose of God choosing the foolish, weak, and base things is so that no flesh would receive the glory and honor that is due our heavenly Father.

Earthly wisdom is composed of pride, flesh and self. In contrast, true wisdom will bear the marks of humility, submission, purity and good fruits and is always found at the foot of the cross.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



SEPTEMBER 1, 2002

JEHOVAH, THE HEAVENLY FATHER

Psalm 100:1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath

made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercys everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

Psalms 103:13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

Isaiah 63:16 Doubtless thou *art* our father,...O LORD,...our father, our redeemer; thy name *is* from everlasting.

Proverbs 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

Hebrews 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness.

I Peter 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God relates to us as a loving, gracious, and faithful heavenly Father; protecting, correcting,

pitying, communing with and providing for us. We owe to Him all of our love, reverence, submission and obedience.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psa. 100:1), The Hebrew reads: "Shout joyfully to Jehovah, all the land."

(Psa. 103:14), "*Frame*": Gen. 2:7 says: "And the LORD God *formed* man of the dust of the ground." These two words, "frame and form," are from the same in the Hebrew. The meaning is that God predetermined, shaped, and molded man. He used the dust of the ground as the basis. He has great pity and compassion for us, for we are frail and very needy of His help.

(Prov. 3:11), The Hebrew reads: "My son, do not reject the chastening of Jehovah, and do not loathe His correction."

(Heb. 12:8), "*Bastards*": Illegitimate or false.

(I Pet. 1:3), "*Blessed*": Adorable, worthy to be praised and worshipped.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today has various scriptures that portray Jehovah, the Self-existent, eternal One, as a wonderful Father. In the light of these holy scriptures we see Him as good, merciful, wise, kind and very disciplinary. It is the role of a good parent to be thus with his offspring.

Let us notice the various things we are called to do. "Make a joyful noise;" "Serve the LORD with gladness;" "Come before his presence with singing;" "Know ye that he is God;" "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving;" "Enter into his courts with praise;" "Bless his name;" "Do not despise the chastening of the LORD, neither be weary of his correction." We would be wise to be attentive to obey these directives.

The final one mentioned is doubtless to be reckoned as the most serious and the one we are most likely to fall down on. As our heavenly Father, God should have freedom to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct us in whatever way He sees fit. There is something in the disposition of man that causes him to recoil and resist discipline and correction. It is

not very pleasant to us, but rather grievous. But it is something we must accept and submit to humbly and faithfully if we are to be the real children of the heavenly Father. Yielding and submitting ourselves to the counsel and discipline of God will bring the greatest blessings to us. But to resist and deny God of this freedom to correct us will bring the greatest woe imaginable. — Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of a Father is God to us. How would you describe Him?
2. Why should we expect reproof and correction from our Father?
3. What are we proven to be if we reject His discipline?
4. What danger is there of us refusing His correction?
5. What are some of the blessings as our Father He gives to us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

As the children of our heavenly Father we receive the most wonderful inheritance and benefits, but we also have the greatest responsibility to bear. If we would receive the benefits we must also bear the responsibility. We are to submit ourselves to all the will of God. It is proven true that too many people take the name of God upon themselves who fail to be obedient and submissive to His discipline.

To be the children of God requires us to commune much and often with Him so that we can be under His divine influence that will help us to view His laws and demands in the right light. Seeing them with the right understanding will inspire strength and courage to do the same. A loving relationship between a child and his parent will help strengthen submission in the child. There must be something more than just the law and the rod. There must be a bond of warm and deep affection between father and child.

Jesus counsels us in Matthew 5:44-45 thus: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the

children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise of the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This is an example of beholding the love and beauty of our heavenly Father and allowing it to influence our attitude toward others. To obey this truth, we must bring ourselves and our feelings into subjection to the Father. To be ignorant of this will result in bitterness, hatred and revenge.

The same is true with so many of Jesus' teachings. He refers to His heavenly Father and His way over and over again. Let us be wise and diligent to be obedient to the heavenly Father's will. He will bring us to rich blessings and happiness that we can know in no other way.

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God has given us everything that is essential for our existence. We live in a world filled with air to breathe, we have sunshine and warmth, food and clothing, and all of us enjoy these temporal blessings. Yet, these temporal things do not supply all of the needs of mankind. Man also has been given a soul that is bound for an eternal destination. That destination will be determined by the deeds done in this life. God, who is the "Father of Spirits" has also provided for our spiritual growth. Jesus said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If we will humble ourselves to the correction and teachings of God's Word, we will be able to live with God eternally.

As we obey the Word of the Lord, we will begin to take on the same glorious characteristics of our Father. His patient, tender training will cause us to develop into His likeness. The fruits of the Spirit will abound in our lives. Peace, love and joy will grace our daily conversation. As we continue to walk in the light and counsel of God's Word, those we associate with will also recognize that God truly is our Father, and we can be "dear children" as we follow God.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

SEPTEMBER 8, 2002

THE LORD JEHOVAH AND MAN SEPARATED BY SIN

Isaiah 59:1 Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

4 None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

8 The way of peace they know not; and *there is* no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions *are* with us; and *as for* our iniquities, we know them;

13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

Psalms 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.

3 They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Romans 3:19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Isaiah 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

MEMORY VERSE: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The communion and fellowship that the LORD GOD had at first with man was broken because man fell into sin. This sinful condition spread upon all mankind of every age. Every man needs to be made fully conscious of his filthy and unholy state that he might be prepared for the great redemption that God wants him to have.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isaiah 59:2), "*Sins*": Both the Hebrew and the Greek define sin as to miss the mark, or to err.

(Ver. 3), "*Blood*": This is referring to that, which when shed, causes death. "*Iniquity*": That which is stubbornly contrary to what is right or acceptable. "*Perverseness*"; Moral evil and the distortion of order and decency.

(Ver. 4), "*Conceive mischief, bring forth iniquity*": To think up and plan lustful and selfish ideas for pleasure and gain, thus producing trouble, vanity and wickedness.

(Ver. 8), "*No judgment*": No righteous verdict or decree to be a guideline for their actions and decisions that they make.

(Ver. 12), "*We know them (our iniquities)*": If people would be honest with themselves, there is enough evidence in nature, common sense, and in the inner voice of the conscience to convince a man of his wrong, even without the uttered or written law of God. But God has given us His law to make us all the more responsible for our sinful condition.

(Ver. 13), "*Revolt*": Turning off, aside, away, against, and any other deviation from the right.

(Psa. 14:1), "*Corrupt*": Decayed and ruined. "*Abominable*": Hateful.

(Ver. 3), "*Filthy*": Muddy, muddled, confused and bungled.

(Romans 3:19), "*Guilt*": Condemned and under sentence of judgment.

(Ver. 23), "*Come short*": To be inferior or deficient.

(Isaiah 55:7), "*Forsake his way*": To quit, desert, give up and completely change from transgression and wrong to what is right. This is true repentance. "*Unrighteous man*": The Hebrew says, "man of vanity." "*Thoughts*": These are plots, devices, intentions, plans, ideas, inventions, schemes and designs that originate in the defiled soul, influenced by the suggestions and temptations of the devil.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will consider the sad and woeful problem that sin has caused between man and God. God made man originally upright, but when man yielded to the suggestions of the devil it brought a breach and a separation between him and his Creator. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5:12. This death was first a spiritual death, which was the separation of the soul from his Creator's fellowship and favor. But it also brought on physical death.

God is holy and perfect and cannot associate with or commune with that which is unholy and impure. Thus the righteous and holy LORD GOD was grieved that mankind, whom He had formed and placed on the earth, had forsaken Him and gone astray.

The 59th chapter of Isaiah is a straightforward exposition of the sinful condition that man had fallen a prey to. Paul quotes from part of this chapter in Romans 3 in speaking of the fact of Jews and Gentiles all being proven to be under sin. We have two scriptures from that chapter also included in our lesson, verses 19 and 23. We also quote from Psalm 14 and Paul also quotes from this Psalm in Romans 3. These are affirmations and declarations by the prophets inspired and moved of the Holy Spirit concerning the deplorable state of the sin laden souls of men, led away like lost sheep, each one turning to his own selfish and sinful way.

We also have from Isaiah 55:6-8 the call of the Lord to repentance and reformation. We must forsake our ways that conflict with the will of God and return to God and His ways.

This is the requirement of God for all who would escape the dominion and penalty of sin. Jeremiah 3:13 agrees with this, saying, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God."

Our memory verse is from the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah concerning our Saviour who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. It pictures mankind as lost sheep going astray, turning every one to his own selfish and lustful way of life, but shows that on Jesus all of our iniquities were laid and He bore the punishment for them.

It is imperative and absolutely necessary for man to come to grips with his sinful state and be willing to repent with godly sorrow for going against the will of his Maker. It is sad that the most of our society live in gross darkness concerning this matter of sin, but such can and will never find God's salvation until they wake up to their sad and woeful condition.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What causes God to hide His face from us?
2. Why is it important for man to become aware of his sinful state?
3. What was the purpose of God giving us His law?
4. What two things does God require us to forsake?
5. Why is man so inclined to be unaware of his sin?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Sad to say, for the most part, this world of humanity is unaware of their true sinful condition before God. The wickedness and evil of our sin-sick society bespeaks the ignorance and past feeling condition of their hearts. God gave man a conscience, an inward voice that reproves and makes man feel guilty when he does wrong. But God knows that this voice in the bosom of man is so often silenced and ignored. So God, in His wisdom, has dealt with man in ages past, leading us up to the fullness of time when Jesus came to bring us salvation. He dealt with us concerning faith and believing in Him and His

promises. This He did when He called and worked in the life of Abraham. Then later, in Moses, God gave in thundering tones and great demonstration of power and might His laws and commandments. These two things are both vitally important for us today. In Christ we see a union of these two factors. We must have faith in what Christ did for us, but we must also be aware of sin and its foreboding danger. Christ dealt with both of these important issues. But there seems to be a tendency in mortals to be more inclined toward faith and be less concerned about their sinful state. To really get a hold on what Christ came to bring we must, first, be made fully aware of the danger we are in because of sin and its hold on us. Then we can look up to Jesus and find the deliverance that we really need. It takes both of these factors to bring about reconciliation with God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When we consider the lost and sinful condition of our lives apart from Christ, it not only should bring us to repentance and faith in Him for salvation and deliverance, but it should keep us in a seeking and humble state of mind. We realize our weakness, we see how horrible our sinful life really was, and how closely we need to cling to Christ for continued deliverance from all sin.

I think of something I once read by G. D. Watson, about godly sorrow: "It consists in a growing hatred of sin, and a growing sensitiveness of the conscience as to what sin is. As we gaze upon the refulgent glory of God, it strengthens our vision to more clearly detect what is imperfect and unworthy. Abiding sorrow for sin will give no resting place for the self-life to put its foot...It is a quiet fountain of tenderness, which inclines to prayer. This very grief for offending God draws the soul closer to God. It embraces the compassion of God with an inexpressible appreciation. This sorrow for sin throws a tenderness into the whole character; it makes us deep and flexible to the least touch of God, it takes out all our harshness; it makes us charitable toward others."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

SEPTEMBER 15, 2002

JESUS CHRIST, THE BELOVED SON OF JEHOVAH

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Galatians 4:4 When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 17:1 Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,

2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

5 Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

Matthew 16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

MEMORY VERSE: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of the Almighty Jehovah. He came in human flesh to redeem us from the bondage of sin. God Himself bore witness that Jesus was His beloved Son, and we would be wise to hear Him, obey Him, and let the heavenly Father reveal Him to our hearts.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Hebrews 1:1), "*Sundry times and in divers manners*": In various times and in various ways.

(Ver. 2), "*By whom*": On whose account, or because of whom. It indicates that Christ was the channel through whom God created all things, the earth and its ages of time.

(Ver. 3), "*The brightness*," The effulgence, which means the lustre, radiance or splendor. "*Express image of his person*": The exact impress, or imprint of his substance (essence, character, nature, disposition and spirit). "*By himself purged our sins*": Through Himself having made cleansing of our sins.

(Matthew 3:17), "*My beloved Son*": My Son, the Beloved. Beloved means dear, precious, close in heart and cherished affectionately and fondly.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today for our lesson we will consider how that this great and wonderful Jehovah sent forth His dearly beloved Son into the world to redeem us from the curse of sin and the law. We see how God, who had spoken in times past through the prophets, now speaks to us through this Son of His love. The message that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, brought to us was directly from Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Included in our lesson today are two different incidents when God spoke in an audible voice from heaven that Jesus was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. The first time was when Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan. John had been baptizing people for some time, foretelling the coming of He who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. God was working through John to prepare the hearts of the people to receive His Son. And one

day Jesus arrived from Galilee and asked John to baptize Him. John at first remonstrated against it, but Jesus assured him that, as He put it, "Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." So John went with Jesus down in the river and submerged our Lord under the water. And as Jesus was coming up out of the water the Holy Spirit came down from heaven in the form of a dove and lit upon Him. And a voice was heard from heaven, the voice of the Almighty verifying that this was indeed His well beloved Son.

And then at a later date when Jesus had taken Peter, James and John, up into a high mountain apart from everyone else, that same voice was heard again with practically the same words, except that God added, "Hear ye Him!" to it.

And then we have the time when Jesus asked His disciples the question: "But whom say ye that I am?" And Peter responded with the positive declaration: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus declared also that it was His heavenly Father who had revealed this unto Peter. And, praises be to Jehovah, He wants to reveal His blessed Son to us still today.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways did God plainly declare that Jesus was His beloved Son?
2. As the Son of God, what did Jesus show forth to us?
3. How vital and important is it for us to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of Jehovah, the living God?
4. How can we know this beyond a shadow of a doubt?
5. What did Jesus especially do for us as the Son of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We would probably be shocked to know just how many of the populace of this earth do not really know nor have any kind of faith in the thought of Jesus Christ being the true Son of the living God. And it is also evident that too many people who profess to believe that Jesus is the Son of God have not really had Him revealed to their hearts by the heavenly Father, as Jesus said to Peter. To really believe from the heart in the effect

of a heavenly and Holy Spirit revelation is the only true faith that really means anything.

This great Jehovah that is revealed in the Holy Bible as our heavenly Father truly did own Jesus Christ to be His well beloved Son. Jesus was in the exact image of God in every detail of life and character. There is a witness that God can give to the human heart that this is so. One only has to look at the spirit and manner of life portrayed in the men and women who do not believe to be assured of their error. As it has been stated, "The Bible is too good a book to be the work of men who wrote it to deceive, and no good man would write such a book to deceive." The testimony of the holy Scriptures will appeal to the hungry heart seeking for peace and deliverance from the blight of sin. The heavenly Father through His blessed Holy Spirit can make His son, Jesus, real to the human heart.

There are too many testimonies of Christ changing hearts and lives from crookedness and miserable corruption to be ignored and counted lightly. Jesus has healed more broken hearts and lives than all the psychiatrists and earthly physicians put together. He can shine from heaven into the human heart and mind so vividly and with such force that all doubts and fears are forever dispelled.

There have been and still are the fools who seek to discredit the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. But they cannot change the real effect that this holy and wonderful revelation of the Son has upon those who give up all to find it. We can give up this vain world and seek the Lord Jesus with all of our hearts and He can be revealed to us so sweetly and clearly that all the vain contradiction of the foolish will have no bearing upon us at all. He will reign in our hearts in the midst of all of His foes. He lives on high at the right hand of the throne of God and through the Holy Spirit He can enter into our very innermost being and be as real as real can be. Oh, what a wonderful blessing and privilege it is to have the Son of God so close and dear to us!

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Jesus Christ is the beloved son of Jehovah but few people really know that fact in their hearts. In Acts 4: 11-12 it tells us

just how important the only begotten Son of God is to us. He is the head corner stone, the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. To live that joyful life of the saved, we must ask that the blinders of this world be removed from our eyes that we really know and believe from the depths of our hearts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. For man to really know Him we must search for Him with our whole heart. If we don't see and know Him for ourselves, we will not have that assurance of life, liberty and salvation. After Jacob had wrestled all night with an angel for a blessing, he said, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." What blessed assurance we can enjoy because we see and believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

—Bro. James Bell



SEPTEMBER 22, 2002

JESUS AND THE GREAT CAUSE OF HIS FATHER

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 4:23 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.

John 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

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.

45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

John 8:29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

John 12:49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. John 14:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had the cause of His Father fully in His heart while here on earth. It was to save the souls of men from sin and eternal death, to make it possible for us to live in the Holy Spirit so we can worship God acceptably, to make a way for us to have the Father living in our hearts, and that we, through His indwelling Spirit, could be fruitful in righteousness and true holiness, well pleasing in His sight.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 6:40), "*Seeth the Son*": To see the Son here carries a deep and serious meaning. In the Greek it means to be a spectator of, to look closely at, to perceive, discern and experience. And it also means to be so persuaded of that it will cause one to acknowledge and give testimony of Jesus as the Son of the living God, our Saviour and Lord.

(John 15:1), "*Husbandman*": A land worker, vinedresser, or farmer. "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 2: 13. The heavenly Father is working with His Son, Jesus Christ, and His work extends down to us, and through His Holy Spirit He can and will accomplish His sovereign will and good pleasure in our hearts and lives as we yield and submit ourselves to Him.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The gospel according to John, the beloved disciple of our Lord Jesus, has more to say about Christ's relationship with His Father, Jehovah, than all the other gospels. Matthew, in his gospel, speaks much about what Jesus said about God being OUR heavenly Father, but not so often refers to Him as the Father of Jesus. So for our lesson today we draw from John's gospel the thought of Jesus in His commitment to the promotion and accomplishment of the great Cause that had been given to Him.

In the first part of our lesson we have a portion of Christ's discourse with Nicodemus who came to him by night to inquire of things concerning His ministry. It was to him that Jesus spoke the wonderful truth about man's need of being born from above. He also spoke of the Son of man being lifted up for all to believe and look to much like that of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. It was "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here was the Cause of the Father, the gift of His Son as an offering for sin so that we might have a chance to escape eternal perdition.

Then we have a part of Christ's conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. Mention was made by the woman about the two different places where God was being worshipped. And Jesus made the emphatic statement that the geographical place was not the critical point, but rather it was the dire importance of being in the Spirit and according to the truth, the Word of God. This was part of the Father's Cause, too, for God was seeking people to worship Him in that way.

In the 6th chapter of John we have Christ speaking to the people who had come seeking Him the next day after He had fed them so miraculously. It was sad that from that large group who sought Him very few were left after He got through explaining

about the spiritual side of things, especially how He was the bread of life that came down from heaven. Jesus quoted in John 6:45 from Isaiah 54:13 which is a vivid prophecy of the Church.

The other scriptures reveal the closeness of Christ to His Father, as always pleasing Him, and the comparison of Christ and His followers as a Vine and its branches under the watchful care of the Father Himself. All of these scriptures help to show the great effort and desire that Jesus put forth for the sake of the great Cause of His Father. — Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the main thing God's Cause was concerned about?
2. Why was God so concerned about our worship to Him?
3. What was Jesus' main purpose in coming down from heaven?
4. Why is it so important for the Father to draw us to Christ?
5. What does the Father want to see as fruit from each of us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We have portrayed in our lesson before us from the gospel of John the cause for which Jesus gave His time, strength, zeal and His very life's blood. The zeal of His Father literally consumed His very being, and became the utmost concern of His soul. He sought to lift up and glorify His Father in everything. This zeal caused Him to run the money-changers out of the temple that day when He found them making His Father's house a house of merchandise and a den of thieves. The ardent passion for the cause of His Father's holiness and goodness moved Him to preach and teach the multitudes of the truth concerning the true God Jehovah. It carried Him up and down the country, through the cities, on the hillsides, on the shores of Galilee, and on the sea of Galilee, manifesting the power and healing that His Father gave to the afflicted and distressed. Yes, and it was this loving obedience and submissiveness to the Father's will that caused Him to not draw back from the cross and the murderous hands of those who hung Him there.

We do not have space to include all the scriptures that have to do with this wonderful subject, but we have a few in our

lesson today that show how close the cause of His Father was to the heart of our dear Saviour. First, He knew that His true purpose in coming into the world was to save all who would believe on Him from the power of sin and death. This meant that He knew that it was the will of His Father to pay the penalty and atone for man's sin and sinful nature. It took supreme self-denial and sacrifice for Him to be willing to allow those unholy men to crucify Him, and not to resist their bloodthirsty abuse.

He sought to point out that God was a Spirit, and that the blessings we need to seek after from Him are spiritual values and things that will truly benefit our inner man. He sought to show the woman at the well what the true worship of God was. He fed the multitude of 5,000 men besides the women and children with a few loaves and fishes, and they were all filled and twelve baskets of fragments were taken up. But He also sought to stress to them in John 6 what the real bread of life was that the Father was wanting them to have

It could probably be summed up in the statement that He made that He did always those things that please the Father. Had He not been obedient and faithful to His Father and His righteous Cause, He could not have been the great Saviour that He proved to be. We today, if we would be His disciples, must needs be concerned and earnestly desirous of upholding this great cause of the heavenly Father, and seek with all of our hearts to likewise do only those things that are pleasing in His sight.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Christ, in the cause of His Father, paid a great price that you and I could never pay. However, we can still be involved in the salvation of men's souls. Christ expressed the urgency when He said, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." People are God's great cause. There is no greater cause or purpose in which we could involve ourselves. Can we comprehend, when this world as we know it has ended, to see someone in bright shining garments with grateful countenance say, "Thank you for sharing the gospel with me."

—Bro. Bob Wilson

SEPTEMBER 29, 2002

FATHER OF MERCIES, THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

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

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

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

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

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

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

I Peter 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Hebrews 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE: Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Isaiah 12:2.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the redemptive price He paid to atone for our sins, we are made the true children of Jehovah. He is our heavenly Father, and is a God of all grace, a God of peace, and the God of all comfort. We have access now to Him and the fulness of His grace and power. We are heirs of Him to receive an inheritance that is unfading and eternal.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Eph. 1:3, 2:6), "*Heavenly places*": The word "places" is an added word by the translators and is not in the original text. It could better be expressed as the "heavenlies," which is the realm of the Spirit of God. It is being lifted up in our hearts and minds from the earthly, the physical, and the material realm of life to the realities of real communion with God. We are lifted up from the carnal, sensual, lustful manner of life to a heavenly life of love, peace, confidence and humility of mind and spirit. This is an experience that God would have His children experience and enjoy right here in this present life.

(Eph. 1:5), "*Predestinated*": The Greek meaning is "planned and designed in advance." All that we receive in Christ concerning being born again of the Spirit and living a holy and righteous life for Him was pre-planned and willed to us before the world was made. We do not believe that the word "predestinated" means that we are predestinated beings, some to be saved, and some to be lost, as some have thought and taught. It is rather that we are all meant to be saved, even as Paul said in I Timothy 2:4 that God our Saviour "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." But, while God predestinates us to be saved, He has respect to our will. He will not override our will and force us to go His way. He gives us the power of choice and permits us to have a chance to do otherwise. He wants us to choose to serve Him in response to His love and goodness, and is not interested in forcing anyone to follow Him. Thus man is within reach and

tempted by other influences, and is called upon and responsible to make his own choice about the welfare of his soul. "Good pleasure": delight and satisfaction.

(Eph. 2:7), Let us notice the Greek rendering for this verse: "That He might show us in the ages coming on the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." This refers to the ages of time that followed the life of Christ and the eternal age of the ages in the world to come.

(I Pet. 1:3), "*Begotten us unto a lively hope*": The Greek says, "regenerated us unto a living hope." This is the hope of being resurrected from the grave in the last day to live with the Father and Son forever.

(I Pet. 1:5), "*Ready to be revealed*": The Greek meaning is: "prepared to be brought out into the open." As Paul said in Colossians 3:3-4: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is our final lesson in this series of studies concerning Jehovah, the God of creation and our gracious heavenly Father. We have learned of His greatness, His goodness, His Sovereignty, His wisdom, His holiness, His eternal purpose, His love and finally in the last few lessons we have studied about the separation between God and man on account of sin, and the great Cause that Jesus suffered and died for in bringing us back to be reconciled with Him. We will draw our scripture text today from the writings of the followers of Christ and their rejoicing in having Jehovah as their heavenly Father and the benefits therein to be enjoyed. Along with these scriptures we want to mention that most of the epistles included in the New Testament start out with the salutation, "Grace and peace from God our Father," or something to that effect. Isaiah prophesied that God's anger would be turned away, and He would comfort us. (Isa. 12:1.)

My soul is greatly inspired with the loving and encouraging spirit that is seen in the New Testament writers toward God. No longer is He to be held at a distance in slavish fear and dread. We still need to hold Him in reverence and godly fear,

but the tormenting and condemning spirit is changed to that of kindness and good will. Paul called Him the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort. He also enlarges upon the wonderful spiritual blessings that we can enjoy from our heavenly Father. Peter speaks of the great inheritance we as the children of the heavenly Father enjoy, and the great hope we have in Him. And we close our lesson out with the message of good will and the blessing of God working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." AMEN!

— Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of Father and God did Paul speak of in II Cor. 1:3?
2. What has God provided for us in Christ?
3. What are the heavenly places we are lifted up to in Him?
4. What is the inheritance and hope that the Father has given to us?
5. What can God accomplish in the soul of all who yield to Him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How wonderful that being reconciled to God through Christ brings us into a relationship with God as that of loving and obedient children to a kind and gracious Father! Although we still pass the time of our sojourning here in fear and seek to serve God acceptably in reverence and godly fear, we can be assured that God is a wise and faithful Father, who is going to deal with us in righteousness and we can be safe to keep submissive to Him and keep a steady faith in His promise to help us.

God is our salvation, our strength and our song. Through His goodness and strength transmitted to us we can overcome the sinful temptations and allurements of this vain world. His sweet Holy Spirit will inspire our hearts and give us the strength to do His good pleasure. We must pray very earnestly to Him daily and in fact keep ourselves in an attitude of prayer constantly. We must be diligent to resist the devil and keep ourselves in complete submission to the Father's will. We need

to ever seek to draw our hearts closer and closer to Him as we go along this pilgrim way. We need not be afraid to approach unto Him and humbly seek His help for any need or burden of life that we would ever have.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Many times we have been in difficult places, facing the battles of life and the God of all comfort whispers peace to our troubled spirit. Sometimes He gives us portions of His word that just fit the particular situation we are in. At other times He gives us a verse of song to lift and inspire our hearts, encouraging us to fight on. When we do not know which way to turn at a critical decision point in our life, He will give us direction and help us know His divine will. When our heart is full of grief because of the death of a loved one, the Lord will give comfort and hope to carry us through those sad, lonely days.

God's mercy for mankind goes beyond human comprehension. The fact that He was willing to give His Son to pay the price of death for our sins is an indication of His great mercy. He wants you to be a part of His kingdom, and is willing to give you the strength and grace necessary to live and reign in this present world.

We can see from this series of lessons that the great God of the universe is still on His throne meeting the needs of His creation. His Son, Jesus, is at His right hand making intercession for us. God wants us to come boldly to His throne with our burdens. Our hearts should be filled with assurance that He hears, and is interested in seeing that His trusting children are cared for.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



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