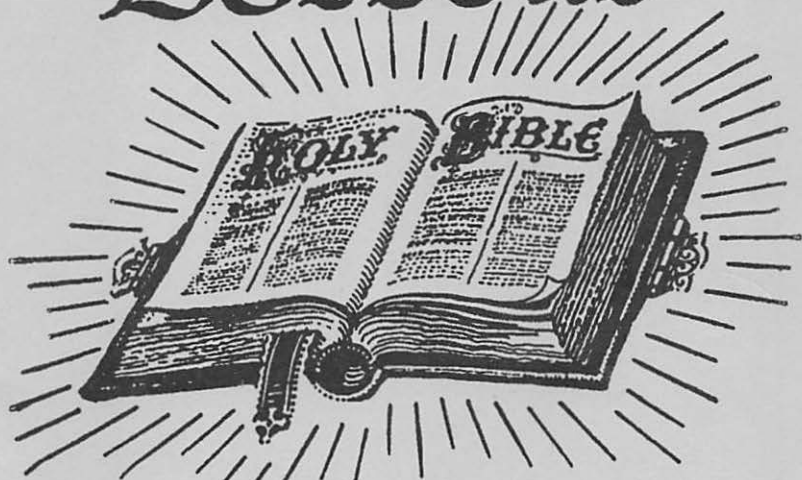


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

**Vol. 35, No. 3
July, Aug., Sept.
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Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Volume 35

July, Aug., Sept.

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

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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 2003

We feel greatly impressed of the Holy Spirit to bring forth a series of lessons from the gospel according to St. Luke. Luke brings out a number of things from the life of Christ that the other gospels make little mention of and sometimes none at all. We want to study these different incidents as Luke reported them in his treatise on the life of our beloved Lord and Master. We appreciate the other gospels but Luke brings out some wonderful truths that have been so inspiring to our hearts through the years. We surely hope and pray that God will bless us all in this series of lessons. —Bro. Leslie Busbee



JULY 6, 2003

ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH, PART ONE

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were *now* well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,...

11 There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

MEMORY VERSE: Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37:5.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We should not doubt the power and goodness of the Lord to fulfill the promises of His Word. Looking at conditions and circumstances can keep us from really believing God and can bring upon us difficulties that are hard to endure.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 1:5), "*the course of Abia*": There were twenty-four groups or classes that David had divided among the priesthood who took their turns in serving at the temple. The class of Abia, which was really called Abijah, was the eighth in turn. (I Chron. 24:10.)

(Ver. 7), "*well stricken in years*": They were advanced in their days, aged and well past the time of bringing forth children.

(Ver. 17), "*to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children*": In order for the redemption of the coming Saviour to take effect, the hearts of the people must be prepared. Men must turn from their

selfish and greedy ways to the care, responsibility and loving concern for the spiritual welfare of their offspring. As long as man neglects this God-given charge of being a godly influence for his children, all the salvation God might provide would be of little value. *"the disobedient to the wisdom of the just"*: There had developed in the Jewish nation as well as all mankind a great breach between fathers and children. This condition still persists in humanity today. Fathers and mothers are prone to shirk the responsible roles that true parents should fill before God and children have such a tendency to be unruly, rebellious and disobedient to their parents. In order for God to bring about a reformation both parents and children must be turned back to a proper relationship with each other. We must turn with all of our heart to God our heavenly Father and to the faith of Abraham, the spiritual example God gave to us all. We likewise have a responsibility to give due respect to our earthly fathers.

(Ver. 22), *"beckoned"*: Nodded or expressed by signs or signals.

(Ver. 25), *"to take away my reproach among men"*: It was considered a reproach or a disgrace for a woman to be barren in those times. In our lustful and selfish age it is turned around. Many think it is a shame and a disgrace to bear children. Elisabeth rejoiced that God had visited her and her hiding herself for five months was not that she was ashamed to be seen in public, but she wanted the fulfillment of the promise of God to her manifested in the proper time. She believed, according to the scripture, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward," and "He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." Psa. 127:3 and 113:9.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have for our lesson today the first of Luke's exclusive accounts of things not mentioned by the other gospels. The time had come for the fulfillment of the prophecy God had given aforetime. Malachi 3:1 says, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me," and also in 4:5-6 of that same prophet it was written, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,

and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." The world was ripe for destruction and God could have been justified in destroying the world in such a state of sin and transgression. But the holy prophets through the Holy Spirit inspiration had spoken and prophesied of a salvation and deliverance for the sons of men from their woeful bondage.

The hearts of the fathers needed to be awakened to their serious need of being holy and righteous before God for their own spiritual welfare and for that concerning their children. Children needed to be convicted of their sinful and lost condition before God to cause them to humble their hearts before their parents and to remember the law which commands them to "Honour thy father and thy mother." Terrible conditions prevailed in Israel because parents and children were alienated from each other. And it is the same today. The family relationship of happiness, love, honor and respect toward one another as fathers to children and children to fathers has been broken down and deteriorated to such a terrible degree. Our present society is a testimony of this. And no reformation or revival will ever take place among men until this breach between parents and children is mended.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were godly people and were blameless in their lives. That is the way God wants His people to be. People need to be aware of their sinful and lost condition in the the sight of God. Every mouth must be stopped and all the world must become guilty before God. (Romans 3:19.)

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of people were Zacharias and Elisabeth?
2. What news did the angel bring to Zacharias?
3. What caused Zacharias to doubt and question the angel's word?
4. What sign did the angel give to Zacharias that his word was true?
5. What was the reproach that God took away from Elisabeth?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Sometimes a person's unbelief and doubts will not stop God

from His purpose, but will cause great trouble and adversity in a person's life. It is for our advantage to take God at His Word and count it so regardless of the conditions, circumstances and how things appear. In the case with Zacharias I am confident that in those long months of being not able to speak he pondered well the whole matter and in the end learned his lesson well. Being dumb was not a curse from the Lord, but rather a measure of teaching him the goodness of God and the error of doubting and looking on the circumstances and outward appearance rather than what the Lord can and will do. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Many times we pray to the Lord for a burden that is weighing heavily on our heart. It is important for us to also have faith to believe that He hears us and not be shocked and surprised when He answers those prayers.

Doubts, fears and unbelief are tools the enemy has often used to hinder the will of the Lord being done among mankind. Unbelief is not limited to only those who are outside of an intimate knowledge of the Lord, but it shows up among those who are closely associated with His workings. Jesus spoke of a prophet not having honour among his own country and his own house and then it says, "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Matt. 13:58.

The disciples had problems with unbelief. Shortly after Jesus fed the five thousand the disciples were toiling on the sea with contrary winds blowing. "And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not *the miracle* of the loaves: for their heart was hardened." Mark 6:51-52.

When the angel of the Lord delivered Peter from prison and he knocked on the door of the gate of the house where the saints were gathered praying, Rhoda recognized that it was Peter and ran to tell the others "And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel." Acts 12:15.

Oh, how the Lord would be pleased to show His mighty power among us in a richer way if we who know Him would cry out with tears like the father of the man who had a foul spirit, "...Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Mark 9:24.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

JULY 13, 2003

ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH, PART 2

Luke 1:57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so, but he shall be called John.

61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

65b And all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.

66 And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

MEMORY VERSE: That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. Luke 1:74-75.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God brought forth John by a miraculous conception and birth as a special prophet to be the forerunner of Christ Jesus the Saviour in accordance with His plan to bring salvation and victory over sin and death to those who were in darkness and the shadow of death.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 1:58), "*shewed great mercy*": Magnified His mercy. (Greek.)

(Ver. 66), "*laid them up in their hearts*": They were moved by godly fear to take special attention to what was spoken about this child. Adam Clarke comments about these hill country folk: "The inhabitants of this hill country seem to have been an open, honest-hearted, generous people who were easily led to acknowledge the workings of God, and to rejoice in the comfort and welfare of each other. They were more remarkable for these qualities than those in towns and cities who, through that evil communication which corrupts good manners, are generally unrestrained, immoral, selfish, disregarding of God, and inattentive to the operation of His hands." How sad but true is this with so many of our day!

(Ver. 71), "*enemies*": Namely, our spiritual enemies, Satan, sin, and death.

(Ver. 72), "*perform*": Execute or put into fulfillment what God had spoken to Abraham and those of old.

(Ver. 75), "*holiness*": Piety (godliness), that which is hallowed, reverent and sure. "*righteousness*": Equity, that which is justified before God.

(Ver. 77), "*remission*": Forgiveness.

(Ver. 78), "*dayspring*": The rising of the Sun of Righteousness, the Dawn of Redeeming Grace.

(Ver. 79), The Greek text says here, "To appear to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death." Only to those who are aware of their darkness and dire condition of death and condemnation before God will the true light become visible.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we see the wonderful birth of the promised son to Zacharias and Elisabeth, and the influence of this blessed event upon those round about. But even more wonderful than this is the deliverance of the father Zacharias from the nine months of not being able to speak. Surely this experience was a very difficult ordeal, but as all of God's judgments and dealings are, it ended up with a high note of blessing and victory.

The wonderful words of Zecharias are full of spiritual content and blessing for us today. He expressed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wonderful truths of the work of this great salvation. We who were under the bondage of satan, sin and death rejoice in the great deliverance that Christ has brought to us. This, being the fulfillment of the holy covenant and oath that was made between God and His servant Abraham, is the victory that every person needs today. We can be delivered out of the hand of our enemies so that we can really serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

The Dayspring from on high has shed His gracious light upon the scope of humanity. "The long dark night is past, the morning's come at last, The Comforter has come!" The Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings! (Mal. 4:2.) It is "the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds". (II Sam. 23:4.) To the poor and needy, the defiled and guilty, and those who sense their darkness and need for light and the counsel of God is this Dayspring given. Oh, what a message poured forth from this godly servant of God after he had been shut up from speech and expression those long months!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Elisabeth not want to call her son Zacharias?
2. How did all of this affect the people of this hill country?
3. Can you imagine how difficult it was to be dumb for so long?
4. What did Zacharias speak mainly of when his tongue was loosed?
5. What does God grant to us in accordance with His oath to Abraham?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

This wonderful account of the birth of John the Baptist and the dealings of God with Zacharias and Elisabeth, his godly parents, should excite the hearts and minds of us today even as it did the people of the hill country round about where they lived back then. Here was an old couple who, according to the flesh, had passed their child-bearing years, the mother being barren in the first place. They were probably well-known by everyone. And now a son has been born to them of extraordinary circumstances. The father has not been able to speak since he returned from his temple services during which it is reported that he had a heavenly visitation by an angel of the Lord who informed him that he and his wife were to have a son. This is the setting for a story that would have made the front page!

Fear came upon all that dwelt round about as all this was told throughout the hill country. Word got around about it all right. Instead of naming the child after his father (as everyone thought would be proper) he is given the name of "John." Why? It was the name that the angel told Zacharias to name him. This godly man is making sure he believes and obeys the will of God. The nine months of being dumb has had a good effect upon him. And listen to what he speaks in prophecy of his child! This is going to be no common child. He will have a special place to fill in the great plan of God for humanity. He will be the forerunner for Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. All the mercy promised to Abraham and those of old is summed up to be the salvation that every human soul stands in dire need of. We need to be delivered from Satan and the power and dominion of sin and transgression. We need power and grace to live and

serve God in the beauties of holiness all the days of our life. Yes, it all came to pass just as Zacharias spoke it, and we rejoice in this wonderful grace and salvation today. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Zacharias, inspired by the Holy Spirit, draws a direct connection from the oath given to Abraham at the time he offered his son, Isaac, to the salvation which was to be revealed through Jesus, the Messiah about to be born. This oath was that we would be delivered out of the hand of our enemies, and serve the Lord in righteousness and holiness. "And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." (Gen. 22:17.)

Now, what is it that we possess? Land? Conquest of literal nations? Palestine? This clearly shows us that it is spiritual conquest of a spiritual land and triumph over our spiritual enemies. Jesus alluded to this oath when He said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18.)

The land of Canaan was referred to as a land of rest, and we as believers enter into that rest when we cease from our own works. (Heb. 4:1-11.) When we are meek and yielded to Christ, we inherit the land. (Matt. 5:5.) We triumph over our enemies. We burn down the cities, break down the walls and take back the strongholds that satan had in our lives.

What enemies rule your land? Pride, stubbornness, lust, envy, a sharp tongue, abuse, anger, drug addictions, rebellion, self-pity, unbelief, deceit? Yield yourself upon the altar with Isaac, upon the cross with Christ, and receive with Him the covenant of victory—your own inheritance.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



JULY 20, 2003

LOWLY MARY HIGHLY FAVOURED

Luke 1:26 ...The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that*

art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

35b The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

52 He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

55 And he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

MEMORY VERSE: My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Luke 1:46-47.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God chose a lowly maiden from among the daughters of men to be the mother of the Saviour of the world. She received this wonderful message of God's special favour with faith and submission to the Lord God, and rejoiced greatly in what God was bringing to pass at last.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 1:27), "*virgin espoused*": The Greek says: an unmarried maiden betrothed. Betrothed means to be promised to be married.

(Ver. 28), "*highly favoured*": To be indued with great honour.

(Ver. 35), "*holy thing*": More properly rendered, "Holy Being."

(Ver. 38), "*be it unto me*": The Greek expression here is that of being generated or caused to be. Mary had faith in the generating power of the Most High God. She had wondered at first about her having a child without knowing a man, but when the angel explained that it was the work of the generating power of the Almighty, she accepted and believed it at once. And, as Elisabeth proclaimed later in verse 45 of this same chapter, "Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

(Ver. 46-47), "*magnify*": To extol, to make or declare to be great, to increase or enlarge upon. "*rejoiced*": To exult or jump for joy, be exceeding glad.

(Ver. 48), *regarded the low estate of his handmaiden*: The Greek says, "He looked upon the humiliation of his bondsman." This term "humiliation" is the same as is spoken from prophecy of Christ in Acts 8:33, where it said of Him, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away." It means "depression" in rank or feeling. From this word comes other terms such as lowly, lowliness, humble and humility. Mary was no doubt very poor in this world, but she was especially poor in spirit, ready to receive the Word of the Lord. Being thus is a must for us who would be successful in pleasing God.

(Ver. 52), Here is how the Greek text reads: "He pulled down Potentates (kings, dynasties, lordships, rulers) from thrones, and exalted humble ones." How true this is! He will abase those who lift their selves up and will exalt those who humble their hearts to obey Him.

(Ver. 53), "*filled the hungry, and the rich sent away empty*": Mary's statement here tallies with Hannah, the mother of Samuel, in I Sam. 2:5, "They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased (to be

hungry, or were filled): so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble."

(Ver. 54), "*holpen*": To help, to take hold of, to succor.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We thank the Lord for Luke's account in our lesson today about the wonderful working of God in blessing the precious Mary of Galilee to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour. Matthew has a short account of Mary's husband-to-be, Joseph, and what it meant for him to accept the fact that the maiden he had chosen to marry was chosen to be the mother of the Christ. (Matt. 1: 18-25.) But the tender, touching account of Mary and her faith taking it all in and her testimony of praise and honour to God, the writer Luke brings out so beautifully. We cannot be critical of Mary's query about how this was all to be because she had not yet entered the married state with Joseph. She was troubled at the angel's message because of this. But when the angel explained how God was going to so work, this precious young woman had no more questions, only acceptance and a believing heart. She sets an example for us to receive the promises of God in His Word and take hold of them in perfect trust and confidence, no questions asked. In other words, "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!" —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Mary troubled when the angel first spoke to her?
2. Why did she question how she would have a child?
3. How did the angel explain how it was to be?
4. What was Mary's answer to the angel then?
5. For what reasons did Mary have such an expression of praise?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

As Mary did the truth receive,
The Son of God to thus conceive,
Ought we to thus believe much more
And make our hearts an open door,
The Son of God to welcome in,
The triumph of His grace to win?

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:19. These words portray the holy quality of this God-fearing woman. We see her experiencing many joyous things; the angel's proclamations, the bearing of God's Son, seeing Jesus perform miracles and minister to the needs of mankind.

But Mary also endured many hardships. She endured poverty, ridicule, gossip and unbelief. She even endured the crucifixion of her own Son. She was there! Yet, we never see any murmurs or complaint, any selfishness or any question. What a wonderful example to us.

Mary defined for us what being an earthen vessel truly is. She was not interested in her own glory but in the glory of God. She did not question God's authority but was a willing servant. She believed even when she saw her Son die. May we each one be challenged by this example and be faithful to the responsibility that the Lord places within our hands. The Lord is still searching for willing earthen vessels to further His kingdom.

"I am only an earthen vessel,
The graces within are not mine;
For the love and the power and glory
Belong to the Saviour divine."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



JULY 27, 2003

SIMEON AND ANNA WAITING FOR THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL

Luke 2:21 And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

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: Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we can with the eyes of our understanding, behold, the Lord Jesus Christ as the salvation of God, the light of the world and the glory of the true Israel of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 2:22), "*days of her purification*": According to the Mosaic law this amounted to 40 days when it was a male child. If it was a female child the time was double, 80 days. (Lev. 12:2-5.)

(Ver. 25), "*waiting for*": The Greek says, "expecting eagerly." "*the consolation of Israel*": The Anointed One, promised through the holy prophets and Scriptures, was looked for to be the relief to the sorrow and distresses that weighed down the Israelites. Those in touch with God and enlightened by the Holy Spirit discerned the spiritual values of this, while the carnal minded visualized a deliverance from Rome and a restoration of Israel as a great literal nation again. The salvation of Christ from sin, self and the world to a spiritual experience of holiness and victory and hope was the real answer to Israel's need.

(Ver. 27), "*came by the Spirit*": He came in the Spirit, by His guidance and direction.

(Ver. 31), "*the face of all people*": the visage, the sight and the understanding. This was the making of God's salvation manifest and available for all men to know and experience.

(Ver. 32), "*the glory of thy people Israel*": This was not to be the outward glory of a great nation to rule over people and to be held high in acclaim. It was the lasting, eternal glory of spiritual life and renewal in the heart, in the Spirit, "whose praise is not of men, but of God." Rom. 2:28, 29.

(Ver. 34), "*the fall and rising of many in Israel*": Christ would become a stone of stumbling whereby many in Israel would be offended and fall. But He would also be the means of those who received Him, the power to rise up as the sons of God to sit in heavenly places with Him. "*a sign that would be spoken against*": The only sign that would be given to Israel was, as Jesus said, the sign of Jonas the prophet. This was the death of Christ and His resurrection from the dead, which sign the Jews disputed and refused. (Matt. 12:39-40.)

(Ver. 35), "*sword shall pierce through thine own soul*": A symbolic expression of deep agony and grief that Mary experienced as she stood by the cross where her Son was dying as a criminal.

(Ver. 36), "*seven years from her virginity*": This evidently means that she was married for only seven years. She was now 84 years of age.

(Ver. 38), "looked for": The same expression as "waiting for" in ver. 25: that is, expecting eagerly.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we have before us in our lesson two elderly people people who were really in touch with God. They were not mere nominal Israelites who like so many held to the letter of the law but were ignorant of the real truth that it contained. They were both righteous and very well disposed to the worship and fear of God. Their minds and hearts were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Here were two people that the Spirit of God could work with and richly bless. They both had a vision of the Messiah, the Christ which was to come. They were eagerly anticipating His appearing. Simeon had a personal instruction from the Lord that he was not to see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord God. Anna, a woman who was able to instruct and help others in the holy things of God, spent most of her time in the temple, joining with others in the hours of prayer, and in seeking God with fastings and prayers night and day. She had lived with a husband for seven years, and he had evidently been taken from her by death. Since that time she had given herself to the Lord God and had lived many years in His service.

Both of these elderly saints were at the right place at the right time, and did the right thing in the right way. Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph brought Him to the temple in Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord and offer the required sacrifices. While they were there these two precious saints came in and recognized the infant as the One they were looking for. With great joy the old Simeon received the precious baby in his arms and rejoiced to know he at last was beholding the salvation that God had promised to send to the world. His words were full of spiritual depth and meaning, as if the Holy Spirit was speaking through him. And Anna, too, coming in at that moment, joined in the praise and giving of thanks unto the Lord for His unspeakable gift.

These two precious people had waited a long time for this blessed experience to behold their Saviour and King. Truly it was a fulfillment of Isaiah 25:9, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. By what means was Simeon so inspired and enlightened?
2. What was Anna doing that put her in such a blessed state?
3. What all can you see that Simeon understood about Christ?
4. What were both of these old people looking for?
5. What did Simeon prophecy about what would happen to Mary?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is a blessed, wonderful experience to be moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. It is the sweetest and richest blessing one can ever have in this life. The Spirit of God has been here in the world ever since time began. The Spirit of God is the breath of God, the out-breathing of His holy Person and eternal Being. God breathed into the nostrils of that first man Adam and he became a living soul. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:2.) This means that the Almighty was brooding over things and preparing and planning His wonderful creation. As a hen sits quietly and faithfully on her eggs, and as a mother ponders the thought of the little one being formed in her body, so the Spirit of God formulated and devised the plan for His creation.

Through the ages God's Spirit has worked with man, inspiring, moving, blessing, strengthening and protecting. The prophet in Joel 2:28 foretold the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh. On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the waiting disciples of the Lord Jesus, Peter declared that it was a fulfillment of that prophecy in Joel.

Simeon was a man who was receptive to the dealings of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit was upon him. Simeon could hear His voice and understand it. Very few people in that day could do this it seems. He was eagerly expecting that wonderful blessing from heaven that would fulfill what God had promised through the Holy Scriptures. He had a definite persuasion that He would see the Anointed One before he died. This hope took control of his being. Who knows how many days he had visited the temple in hopes of seeing the Christ child!

How sad that so many saw the Christ but did not recognize Him! He came unto His own and His own received Him not.

(John 1:11.) Today Christ can be seen by those who seek for Him with all their heart. But to those who are selfish and lustful for worldly things the Christ is hidden. Through the avenue of the Holy Scriptures and the enlightenment of the Spirit of God we can see the blessed Son of God and the spiritual kingdom He established of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I remember a stanza that went like this:

“There is a station up in heaven,
From which wavelengths ever roll;
Tune in and catch the message
In the radio of your soul.”

On a radio dial, too far left or too far right and you receive lots of static and it is very difficult to understand what is being said. By fine-tuning many times you can pick up a clear signal and you're able to understand. Our soul is that way. It must be tuned in frequently. It is so easy for us to get out of tune.

Cares of this life, pride and self-pity are just a few items that can get us off the “still small voice” frequency. When we are off the right frequency we fail to receive the clear message, of guidance, understanding, comfort and etc., from heaven that we so desperately need. If we are not getting a clear signal we are probably picking up confusion or perhaps even the wrong station.

Sometimes we can pray then wait for an answer and fail to recognize our responsibility of getting our heart in the right place. This can bring frustration and confusion. Through humility and prayer we can tune our soul. Communication with heaven doesn't have to be difficult or complicated if we are tuned in. We can be encouraged that the Lord is not a respecter of persons and He wants to commune with each one of us. He said that His sheep hear His voice. Anna and Simeon were tuned in that day the Christ child was brought to the temple and their soul was blessed.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



AUGUST 3, 2003

DESPISED AND REJECTED BY HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

25 But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land:

26 But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Serapta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,

29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

30 But he passing through the midst of them went his way.

MEMORY VERSE: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Romans 10:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Too often familiarity breeds contempt for the most precious blessings from heaven that should be welcomed joyfully but instead are despised and rejected.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 4:17), "*book*": roll. Clarke says, "The Sacred Writings used were written on skins of parchment, and rolled on two rollers, beginning at each end; so that, in reading from right to left, they roll off from the left, and roll on with the right. "*opened*": unrolled.

(Ver. 18), "*gospel to the poor*": Good tidings to the needy. Clarke speaks well: "To those who feel their spiritual poverty, whose hearts are broken through a sense of their sins, who see themselves tied and bound with the chains of many evil habits, who sit in the darkness of guilt and misery, without a friendly hand to lead them in the way in which they should go—to these, the Gospel of the grace of Christ is a pleasing sound, because a present and full salvation is proclaimed by it; and the present year is shown to be the acceptable year of the Lord, the time, in which He saves to the uttermost all who come unto Him in the name of His Son Jesus. Reader! what dost thou feel? Sin, wretchedness, misery of every description? Then come to Jesus—He will save thee—He came into the world for this very purpose. Cast thy soul upon Him, and thou shalt not perish, but have everlasting life."

(Ver. 20), "*minister*": attendant or assistant, one who serves and helps those officiating.

(Ver. 21), "*fulfilled*": brought to pass; accomplished, become a reality.

(Ver. 22), "*gracious words*": Words of grace to minister favour, benefit, pleasure, joy and happiness to all who will

receive them. *"Is not this Joseph's son?"* Let us notice how Mark 6:2-5 describes this scene: "And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of JudaH, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them."

(Ver. 25, 27), *"many widows, many lepers"*: He is comparing the times of Elijah and Elisha with this day in Nazareth. His meaning is very obvious and plain. Not every person is prepared in heart and spirit to receive the blessings and favour of the Lord. Only those who are deeply aware of their true destitute and wretched condition are receptive and appreciative of the salvation and help of the Almighty. The widow of Serepta, according to the account in I Kings 17 was on the verge of starvation and death. She was also evidently a victim of sin and under the blight of guilt and condemnation. She truly needed a visitation from God. It is evident that our Lord was implying that very few, if any at all, of the many other widows in Israel would have been worthy or receptive of the prophet of God. The same comparison shows in Naaman, the leper, in II Kings 5, who went to the prophet of God on the strength of the testimony of his wife's maid. Here was a man important and under great responsibility who had a desperate need. Many other lepers were in Israel, but he was the man who received and responded to the message. And even he almost missed it when his pride asserted itself against the instruction of the prophet who told him to go and dip in Jordan. But at the advice of his men, he humbled himself to obedience. This is a great and serious warning and it is true and being fulfilled yet today. Too many miss the blessings of the Lord that they so desperately need simply because they are not prepared in heart to place the proper value on healing and deliverance to respond and properly obey.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Lord Jesus in our lesson today had just returned back to Galilee from the Jordan area where He was baptized, and from His forty days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness. He had conquered and overcome the devil in the temptations that had been offered to Him. Oh, our blessed Jesus! How strong and valiant He was for our salvation and deliverance! Our hearts are melted with love and adoration for Him as the sweet Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. He came to His own city where He had been brought up as a child. Oh, He had a wonderful message to bring to these people! His heart was full of love and compassion for them!

From one of the prime and most vivid prophecies of Isaiah He read to the people that day of His mission and offer to them. We find it in Isaiah 61:1-3. The account in Isaiah has more to it than what is quoted in Luke's account. He speaks also of "the day of vengeance of our God." This refers to the day when the Lord will avenge that adversary, the devil and satan, who brought woes and damnation upon the sons of earth. Other things He mentions were "to comfort all that mourn; To appoint (give or bestow) unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." How tragic that they did not welcome these tidings!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the message that Jesus had for the people in Nazareth?
2. What was the text of His message?
3. What was their reaction to His message?
4. Why did they esteem Him so lightly?
5. What two Old Testament incidents did Jesus recall to them?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is a sad thing that happens so many times to so many people. The grace of God and His blessed kingdom is brought near. But because of a contemptuous attitude on the part of

those to whom it comes the good news of the salvation of God is lost on the air. It finds no lodging place nor welcome. Instead of people being hungry they are full. Instead of being aware of their sickness they are whole already. Instead of sensing their darkness they walk in the light of a fire that they have kindled. They are not seeking nor hungering and thirsting for righteousness. They deem themselves rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing. To these the Gospel of Christ is despised and rejected, according to Isa. 53 and "who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Let us take warning lest that come upon us as is spoken by the prophet in Habakkuk 1:5, "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you." —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Isaiah 40:5 says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" What a sad condition Jesus found the children of Israel in. They still considered themselves Abraham's seed, but they had become so twisted in their lives and thinking that they rejected the precious Son of God.

Jesus came to heal, forgive sin and to set the captive free but they wanted to bind Him up, to destroy Him and dispose of the One who spoke the truth that condemned their evil ways. Because of their rejection of the Son of God, God rejected them. That is far worse, Man's rejection is bad, but it can only last a lifetime. God's rejection is tragic and will last for eternity.

Jesus foretold of the pending destruction. He gave fair warning and opportunity to repent, but instead of repenting they crucified the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace and squandered their divine visitation from God.

Let us not repeat the same mistake the children of Israel made, but let us embrace the dear Son of God with all of our hearts and escape the "Woe" that is pronounced unto the wicked.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



AUGUST 10, 2003

THE SERMON IN THE PLAIN

Luke 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.

17 And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases.

19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed *them* all.

20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed *be ye* poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye* that weep now: for ye shall laugh.

24 But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.

25 Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

MEMORY VERSE ...So labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. Acts 20:35

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is better to be poor, and weep, and hunger, and suffer now for Christ's sake with the hope of righteousness than to laugh, be rich, and full now and have nothing at the end of this life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 6:13), "*apostle*": A delegate; one who is set apart and sent out on a mission; an ambassador of the gospel; a commissioner of Christ.

(Ver. 17), "*the plain*": The Greek says: a level place. He came down from the mountain where He had spent the night in quietness and communion with His Father, and where He had called His disciples to Him and chose from among them the twelve apostles. He came down and stood in the plain.

(Ver. 19), "*virtue*": A miraculous force or power.

(Ver. 24), "*Woel*": An exclamation of grief. "*your consolation*": Personal comfort. This is security and a confidence that wealth and riches give to a person. But it is not the true comfort that the soul needs. Riches can "certainly make themselves wings; and fly away as an eagle to heaven." (Prov. 23:5.) The comfort that material wealth brings is unreal and uncertain.

(Ver. 36), "*merciful*": Compassionate. In Matt. 5:48 the word used in this statement is *perfect*, which means complete.

(Ver. 38), "*the same measure that ye mete*": The same amount, portion or degree that you "dish out" to your fellow man whether in material help or ministering aid or comfort: you will receive back in direct proportion to what you put in. This is a rule of life that covers many things. Jesus used it in speaking of the ear that we give to His Word. He said thus in Mark 4:24, "Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given." Take heed "what" ye hear. We are made up in life of what we give our ear to. Our soul's welfare hinges greatly on how much attention and interest we give to the Word of God. Note: Blessed is that person who eagerly pursues to know and understand every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. As Jesus said various times: "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." The apostle Paul put it this way, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." II Cor. 9:6.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Just previous to this meeting with His disciples and the message He gave in the plain, He had healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. This had brought on madness and anger from the scribes and Pharisees and they were plotting what they might do to Jesus. In a previous conflict He had with them on another Sabbath they questioned Him about Him allowing His disciples to pluck ears of corn, and eat, rubbing them with their hands. To them this was gross transgression, a breaking of the law of the Sabbath. But Jesus pointed them to the time when David, in his hunger and need, was given of the shewbread of the house of God which was not lawful to eat but for the priests alone. Jesus declared openly to them that He was Lord also of the Sabbath. Mark 2:27 says that He added, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." He is saying in all of this that the Sabbath was given for the benefit of man and is not a mere statute that must be obeyed regardless. He, as the Lord (Giver, Owner and Ruler) of the Sabbath can apply it as He sees is wise and best for His children.

Sensing the great need of special help from His Father, He went up apart from His disciples into a mountain and spent the night in prayer and communion with God. The next morning He called His disciples to Him and chose from among them the twelve apostles. This was an important step for our blessed Master to take and it is no wonder that He preceded it with a night of prayer.

This gathering of Jesus and His disciples with the great multitude that pressed near to receive His healing virtue is a sacred and precious scene to picture in our minds. And oh, the message and the solemn weight of the words He spoke! I am deeply impressed with His thoughts on the poor, and those who hunger and weep now. This has been fulfilled in many afflicted and heavy-laden men and women down through the years who clave to the Lord with purpose of heart in the midst of adversity, privation, and the bitter cup of suffering. In this Jesus points us to a bright future. We that suffer now will rejoice later. I have looked at it this way: Do I want my good times of pleasure and plenty now and be without hope of eternal life, or am I willing to "bear affliction, be a hated pilgrim here, miss the diadems terrestrial, and obtain a crown up there?" Take stock concerning these apostles. They were destined for persecution and suffering

for Christ (except for Judas the traitor), but they became a part of that eternal city that Christ brought forth, as is pictured in Rev. 21:14.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus go out into the mountain for, and why?
2. What were the people pressing to touch Him seeking for?
3. What hope does Christ give for those who are poor and hungry now?
4. In what way does the rich receive their consolation now?
5. Which would be better: to be rich now and poor later, or vice versa?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

If the pages of history could be fully opened and we could see the lives of the true saints of God who have lived and suffered for the Master, I am sure that it would reveal many, many hard and bitter things that have been borne for the Master's sake. We are often called to "go forth therefore unto Him without the camp (outside of the favor and help of man), bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Heb. 13:13-14. There have been many who were "destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy." Heb. 11:37-38. Millions have spilled their blood for Him. Life is so short and the sufferings for the Master will soon be over. The pleasure and fullness that so many are pursuing will also soon be over. The praise, popularity and physical delights of this world will all be worthless when we stand before the Lord in that day. What little we might suffer for the Master in being true to Him is not worthy to be compared with the glory we shall share with Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In the year 1529, an account was given of some believers who sought to live faithfully in a time where many people recognized the Word as truth, and were called Christians, but continued in their sinful lifestyles. Those who did seek to live according to God's Word were hated, even though they were known as those who sincerely forgave every one, assisted their

neighbors by lending to them without usury, and prayed for their persecutors and enemies.

This was publicly witnessed when seven Christian brethren were executed with the sword in Germany. Among them was a young man, fourteen-year-old, whom they confined in a tower for almost a year before putting him to death with the six other men. He suffered many assaults but remained unmoved, even though they frequently tried to force him to forsake his faith.

As the moment of execution drew near, a ring was drawn in the dirt, and the prisoners were herded into the ring. The young man stood in the ring, about to be beheaded, when a count rode up to him.

"My dear child," he pleaded, "desist from this error, and I will give you great reward, and always keep you with me."

The youth replied, "Should I love my life and forsake my God, and thus seek to escape the cross? This I must certainly not do!" Then he fearlessly added, "Thy wealth can be of no help to either of us, but I expect a better reward in heaven in the kingdom of my Father, who has chosen me, and who can order and equalize all things as is best. Hence, cease these entreaties; to Him who has always fed and sustained me, I desire to show obedience also in this my last distress. If we do not depart from Him, He will give us the everlasting, glorious crown."

—Taken from Martyr's Mirror

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



AUGUST 17, 2003

THE SINNER WOMAN WHO LOVED MUCH

Luke 7:36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he

spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

MEMORY VERSE: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Psalm 51:17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The heavy weight of guilt, remorse and condemnation upon the soul of man will cause tears of repentance and love to flow, drawing such a one to the Saviour. But to him who feels no such guilt and shame, the forgiveness of the Lord will mean very little.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 7:36), "*sat down to meat*": The Greek says simply, "reclined."

(Ver. 37), "*a sinner*": It is not known about the depth of this woman's transgressions. Some have supposed that this was Mary Magdalene out of whom went seven devils. It could have been that she was Mary Magdalene. But let us remember that all sinners are condemned and under the guilt and condemnation of sin. Jesus said that hersins were many. And this woman knew that she was a sinner condemned and unclean and felt the heavy burden of her sinful state as lost and undone before the Almighty God. Such is the feeling we all should have concerning ourselves when we think about seeking the Lord to be saved. "*alabaster box of ointment*": The Greek says, "a stone vase or vial of myrrh." Myrrh was a bitter tasting, yet fragrant oil.

(Ver. 38), "*at his feet behind him*": "In taking their meals, the eastern people reclined on one side, and the feet of each person were turned outwards behind him." Adam Clarke. "*kissed his feet*": The Greek says she was earnestly kissing his feet.

(Ver. 42), "*frankly*": freely and kindly.

(Ver. 47), "*to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*": One's love for God will be in proportion to the weight that he or she feels in the heart of the need for forgiveness and the desperate condition of guilt and woe that is met and satisfied with mercy and deliverance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today two different kinds of people exemplified. These two kinds are yet evident today in humanity. The one was a Pharisee, a man who felt little or no condemnation, guilt, or need for mercy and forgiveness. He had many good works, no doubt, to his credit. But, like Nicodemus in John 3, he had probably seen things in Jesus that attracted him and aroused his curiosity. So he had invited Jesus to come and take a meal with him at his house.

The other was this sinner woman, an outsider who somehow had gotten word that Jesus was in the house of Simon. Now this spells different things. She was desperate enough to brave intruding into this house. She was not afraid. And her heart was reaching out ardently for the Master. Then, we consider her actions after she got in there. She was weeping. It says nothing about what she said, but that she was weeping. She was probably so full of tears that she could not speak. You know how

difficult it is to speak when you are full of weeping. And she wept so profusely and her tears were so many that she literally bathed the feet of Jesus with them. Then she wiped them with her hair. And she was constantly ardently kissing the feet of the Lord. One might have read lust and inordinate affection into this. But Jesus saw the depths of her soul's attitude of repentance, love and devotion. And then she anointed His feet with the ointment. She was going all out to express the deep feeling of her heart and soul for the Master.

The Pharisee loathed company and association with this woman. That old "holier than thou" attitude ruled him. He felt he was a much better person than this woman. "If He just knew what kind of woman she is!" Well, Jesus knew what kind of woman she was, and I mean the real woman! Simon did not really know. He thought he knew, but he missed her a long ways. And he missed himself. That was his worst error. He failed to discern his own true condition before God as condemned and guilty just as the woman was. He did not love as the woman did because he was not aware of his own need. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the sinner woman have that Simon did not have?
2. What did Simon have that the sinner woman did not have?
3. What did the sinner woman do to express her love for the Lord?
4. What was Simon's feeling toward the sinner woman?
5. Which one of the two was in a worse condition before God?
6. Does a person have to have many sins to obtain forgiveness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How important it is for every person to view his soul and discern his true condition before God! Many times we attribute so many virtues to ourselves that are really not there and are guilty of many faults and defects that we do not know are there. We soothe our conscience with words like "I am not as bad as some people are." We are warned in the Scriptures to "harden not your heart." (Psa. 95:8.) There is a dire shortage in our society of good old time conviction for sin. People just do not realize what sin is. From childhood they grow up with no teaching on what pleases God. They are allowed to act and feel and dress and

conduct themselves in accordance with the standards around them and are void of understanding what really is right in the sight of God. God gave His Word for the purpose of helping man see to what extent he has erred and fallen short of the glory of God. But for some reason it escapes our notice. "Fools make a mock at sin." Prov. 14:9. It is not a popular thing to be conscientious and careful with one's words and actions. The norm is to do and speak as you feel.

Sometimes it takes something unusual or drastic to awaken man's conscience to his true condition. Luke 5:8 quotes Peter's expression after he saw the miraculous draught of fish that the Lord Jesus had caused to come into their fishing nets after they had fished all night and caught nothing. "When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Sister Essie Wilson told about a young man who witnessed the change in her when she was healed of dread diseases back in 1902 in Dallas, Texas. (Read about it in her tract "Marvelously Healed," available from the Faith Publishing House.) This young man, who later became her husband, said that before this he thought he was a pretty good Christian, but after seeing so much of the power of God he felt like he was the worst sinner in the world. Blessed is the man who recognizes his true condition before God and confesses it in repentance and humility before God and his fellow man. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"...Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Luke 7:47. The enemy loves to twist the meaning of this verse by making us think that we cannot truly love our Saviour until we have gone "all out" into the depths of sin. How false this is!

Each of us was born with the root of sin. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of GOD." Romans 3:23. Sin separates us from our LORD, whether large or small, few or many. One sin carries the same penalty as a million sins—death. Without salvation, we are each one born to be the vilest of sinners. Children receiving salvation at an early age have no less reason to love their Savior than the one who has committed many sins by an older age. Salvation covers committed sins and keeps us from committing sins.

The parable of the prodigal son points this out. The prodigal son was welcomed by his father even though he had wasted his substance. The elder son was angry at the grand welcoming over the prodigal because he never truly saw himself as a "bad person." He failed to receive the blessing from his father because he just did not see himself as a prodigal son also.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



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AUGUST 24, 2003

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

MEMORY VERSE: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We are not only to love, worship and obey the Lord God, but we have a debt of love that we owe to our fellow man. We must be a neighbor to everyone we meet in life, showing them mercy and offering help in their time of need.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 10:25), "*lawyer*": One who was an expert concerning the law of Moses. "*tempted*": Tried or put to a thorough test.

(Ver. 27), "*neighbour*": One who is near or close by. "*as thyself*": On the same level and with the same carefulness and attentiveness. In the New Testament it is carried farther: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35. And: "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Phil. 2:3.

(Ver. 28), "*right*": In a straight manner, correctly. This lawyer gave the right answer, the same answer Jesus gave in Mark 12:29-31.

(Ver. 29), "*justify*": To render or show or regard as just or innocent. "*Who is my neighbour?*": This lawyer is inquiring in the wrong direction. He should have asked, (as Jesus referred to later) "What does it mean to be a neighbor?"

(Ver. 31), "*by chance*": It happened at the same time. "*the other side*": The opposite side of the road.

(Ver. 34), "*bound up*": Washed and bandaged.

(Ver. 35), "*host*": Innkeeper.

(Ver. 36), "*Which was neighbour?*": It is not "who is my neighbour?" that we should seek for an answer of. It is rather to seek for knowledge, love and grace in our hearts to be the neighbor, the one near and ready to lend a helping hand. It is not, "Who is my friend," but "How can I be a friend to everyone I meet in life?" Whether my fellow man is a neighbor to me is not my responsibility; but rather I seek and want to know—What kind of neighbor will my life show?

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have a very important matter for us to consider and take to heart. First, we must remember that it is the law of God given in the Old Testament, but carried over explicitly to us in the New Testament. This law that commands us to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourself was not done away with. The blessed truth in Christ is that His love abiding in us constrains us, (compels, moves and inspires us) and it springs from the love that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The law "Love thy neighbour as thyself" comes from Leviticus 19:18, which reads: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

Adam Clarke asserts that the Jews understood the word "neighbour" to mean principally people of their own nation as is expressed in Leviticus 19:11-18. But Clarke follows that "our Lord shows here, that the acts of kindness which a man is bound to perform to his neighbor when in distress, he should perform to any person, of whatever nation, religion, or kindred, whom he finds in necessity. Neighbor, signifying one who is next, or near, makes any person our neighbor, whom we know; and, if in distress, an object of our most compassionate regards." Oh, think of the turmoil and wretched misery that envelops our society and world because people are ignorant of and disregard this "royal law." (James 2:8.)

How accurate is the lesson our Lord gives in the incident of the man who fell among thieves! It is to be especially noted that the priest and Levite who were supposed to be godly examples shunned the unfortunate man and passed by on the opposite side. And then we have the one who showed mercy to be a Samaritan, a race that the Jews looked down on and despised! We must receive and bear the impact of our Lord's question: "Who was neighbour to him that fell among thieves?" We are to be the neighbor to all that we come in contact with, and be ready to show that kind of benevolent spirit. And then in answer to the lawyer's answer of "He that showed mercy on him" we hear our Lord's counsel: "Go, and do thou likewise."

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the lawyer ask the question: "Who is my neighbour?"
2. Why was this the wrong question to be asked?
3. What question should he have asked?
4. What does it mean for ourselves to be real neighbors?
5. By what grace and strength can we be real neighbors to others?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

This law that James 2:8 labels as a royal law is still to be obeyed and followed in this New Testament dispensation of grace. But under the law of Christ and with His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live up to this law every day of our lives. I remember my wife's mother, Sister Vera Forbes, when she moved into an apartment in Guthrie, Oklahoma, to be near us, moving from California. After she got settled in she was pouring out her heart to the Lord that she so dearly loved and served from her youth. Thanking Him for blessing her in getting moved, etc. she asked the Lord what He would have for her to do. The answer came very readily to her heart: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: and love thy neighbour as thyself." When the Holy Spirit spoke this to her soul, she thought: "I have a great work to attend to!" And so it is with all of us. On these two commandments Jesus said hangs everything. It is a full time job keeping these two commandments. And sometimes it is very

challenging. It is not always easy to minister help to people. We have to go out of our way, put ourselves in jeopardy, and take off from our busy schedule in life. But if we will seek the Lord earnestly in prayer and live close to Him we will find Him ever present to lend us His help and support in living up to this royal law.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I find the illustration of the good Samaritan challenging. Those who should have been the ones to offer help (priest and Levite) passed by on the other side. If anyone should show love, tenderness, kindness it should be the children of God. In a self-righteous zeal, we can easily be corrupted from the simplicity of the gospel.

Titus encourages us in verse 8 of the third chapter - "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." Also in verse 14, "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful."

I Peter 2.12, "...they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Good works are not our salvation but should be evident or seen in the believer's life. The Lord is endeavoring to touch the world with His love through you and me. This will take time and a conscious effort on our part. It is said of our Savior that He went about doing good (harlot, publican, tax collector, sinners). What an example!

—Bro. Bob Wilson



AUGUST 31, 2003

THE PERIL OF EARTHLY RICHES

Luke 12:13 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

14 And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

15 And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

31 But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

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

MEMORY VERSE: But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. I Timothy 6:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is foolish to seek earthly wealth, ease and security, and neglect the true riches of faith and holiness before God, and to be lost forever in eternity's night.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 12:15), "*Take heed and beware*": The Greek says, "Beware and keep back from." "*covetousness*": Desire to hold more and an eagerness to get gain; avarice, which means greed and a desire to get more money. This is a pitiful and wretched disease of the mind and heart of man. And wealth is so deceptive in its appeal to the carnal mind, that very, very few people are not tainted with it.

(Ver. 17), "*thought within himself*": He reasoned, reckoned thoroughly and deliberated. This means he arrived at a decision in his own thoughts.

(Ver. 20), *"thy soul shall be required of thee"*: The Greek says, "Thy soul they shall demand back from you." Eccl. 12:7 says, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

(Ver. 32), *"little"*: Small in size, quantity, number or dignity. This is a quaint and precious statement our Lord makes concerning His flock of poor, humble and helpless souls of mankind. None of the other gospels record this saying. It is the expression of our dear Lord and Saviour toward those who have rejected the world and its treasures and have attached their hearts to Him and Him alone. It is the heavenly Father's delight to give unto us the everlasting Kingdom of His righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Blessed be our wonderful and gracious God!

(Ver. 33), *"alms"*: Compassionateness for the poor and needy. *"bags"*: Purses to hold and preserve forever the riches of Heaven for those who love Him supremely.

(I Tim. 6:9), *"perdition"*: Eternal ruin and loss. Is it worth it to lavish one's affections on the fleeting, uncertain riches of this present, temporal world and forfeit the eternal riches of Christ?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Christ spoke much about the perils of earthly wealth and prosperity. In our lesson today He thwarts the effort of a disgruntled man who seeks to get Him to settle the age old strife that has defiled so many souls. The one who willfully withholds from others what is rightfully due them is defiled with this sin of avarice, and the one who engages in lawsuits and strife to get such is just as defiled. Jesus would have nothing to do with such things. And here He gives His most serious warning. Stay away from this awful curse of the love of wealth. It is defiling and damning.

He gives the account of the rich man who has to decide on what to do with the bumper crop of produce from his fields. He does not have room to store it all. He is faced with a decision. And what direction does he go? Yes, he took the route of the selfish and inconsiderate and was deceived in thinking that ease and happiness comes from abundance of earthly riches. It happens to so many people. All of this took place in his mind. But that is

as far as it went. That very night he was ushered out into eternity. He never got to tear down the barns that he had and build greater ones. He never got to harvest his crop. Someone else did all of that. And that poor soul is still out there somewhere in eternity naked and lost without the house that he should have been working on.

Oh, to be in that number who are willing to be a partaker of Christ's poverty and receive the kingdom that He has promised to those who love Him! How people need to wake up and be aware of what the true riches really are! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Jesus not interested in helping that man get his money?
2. What threat does earthly wealth have toward us?
3. Why did God label this rich man a fool?
4. What would have been the wise course for the rich man to take?
5. To whom is the Father pleased to give His kingdom, and why?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We learned in a previous lesson of Cain who instigated the system of weights and measures. Before that the people lived simply and traded with one another in their commerce. But the introduction of weights and measures made it possible for one to accumulate and have a good idea of how much he possessed. Trading has been carried on through the ages in various manners, but the system of money that we have in the world today has enhanced and glorified worldly wealth because it enables one to accumulate and increase their possessions. Thus the love of wealth has been greatly increased. This fascinating charm of having and owning great amounts of valuable things that are desired by others and bartered for greater amounts of gain, I say, this has swayed the majority of men and women in our world today. And yet, when we consider the lightness and unstable element involved in possessing and merchandising wealth we ought to wake up to its deceptive powers and renounce it devoutly from our hearts. But this does not happen to very many. The multitude still is charmed by the glitter of abundance of worldly commodities.

Covetousness was mentioned several times in the account of Jeremiah. In speaking of Jerusalem in Jer. 6:13, he said, "For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness...." Ezek. 33:31 spoke of the people as showing much love with their mouth, "but their heart goeth after their covetousness." This lust for earthly abundance is a disease of the heart. We should all be on our guard against its damning influence. Oh, the sin of covetousness! Twice in the Scriptures it is labeled as idolatry. The worship of money is idolatry of the worst kind. (Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5.)

We all must have money to get by in this world. We cannot really get around it. We have to use money to buy food and the necessary things of life. The work of the Lord needs support and this is done through gifts of money. But we must be on our guard against the love of money, we must not make it our god. This is the challenge and the command from Christ to us. It is not to be hoarded and misused. We can use it but not allow our hearts to cling to it. Some have spoken about money thus: "Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can." But you had better watch those first two parts very closely. They can take you for a spin if you are not careful. It is for our eternal good that we deal rightly and successfully with this serious matter.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If you walk into a bookstore today you will see that there are many books written on "tried" and "proven" methods of gaining wealth in a short time. The idea is to gain wealth quickly and stay out of prison at the same time. In the right economic conditions some of these methods may even work. Obviously some have found that they make more money by writing the book. But our lesson today illustrates there are other pitfalls that surround those who develop a love for riches. It is often the sad story of those who crave one thing so greatly that they lose something else in it's pursuit. These may include family, friends, health, peace of mind and even their own soul.

We need the Spirit of the Lord in our life to help us know how to balance all of these things so we can truly be successful. How

important it is for us to put God in His rightful place in our life—to seek Him first and then allow Him to supply these other needs that we have.

Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a merchant seeking goodly pearls “Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” When life is considered in it's entirety, having found the source of life in Jesus Christ is worth more than all earthly possessions combined. While planning our life around a few short years of retirement, we should also take into consideration our soul's need for an eternal home in glory. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey



SEPTEMBER 7, 2003

THE PRODIGAL SON AND HIS BROTHER

Luke 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

MEMORY VERSE: ...Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Luke 15:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord God of mercy and love will welcome any poor, lost sinner to His fellowship and embrace those who return to Him in humility and godly sorrow for sinfully going away from the way of truth.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 15:12), *"the portion of goods"*: The share of the property. *"living"*: The estate, his possessions and means of livelihood.

(Ver. 13), *"wasted"*: Scattered, squandered, and dissipated (threw it away). *"riotous living"*: Living dissolutely, that is, living immorally, loosely and without any restraint or control.

(Ver. 16), *"would fain"*: longed for. *"husks"*: pods, shells and skins. This is figurative of the pleasures of sin, just a lot of bulk with no real value or profit.

(Ver. 17), *"came to himself"*: He came to his senses, awakened to the reality of life that he had cast aside in his vain thirst for pleasure.

(Ver. 25), *"music and dancing"*: The Greek words are "symphony" (music) and "choir" (singing).

(Ver. 27), *"safe and sound"*: The Greek says, "In health."

(Ver. 29), *"Lo"*: Behold; look; consider.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the first part of this 15th chapter of Luke we see how there "drew near unto him (Jesus) all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." This drew criticism from the Pharisees and scribes. These were lifted up in pride and high opinion of themselves and their good works. They were overlooking the fact that what good they had without the grace and mercy of God was vain. As Jesus said in Luke 18:9, "They trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Jesus answered them by showing a comparison of a man with a lost sheep and a woman with a lost piece of silver. Both were engaged in retrieving and gaining back that which was lost. He emphatically declared that there is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents and comes back to God "more" than those who need no repentance. The fact is that we all need to repent. No one is relieved of that charge. We must feel the weight of our guilt and condemnation before God and be willing to give up our sinful ways and come back to the standard of godliness. If a person does not realize he or she is condemned and unclean, there will be very little, if any, drawing to Christ. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 3:23. But not all have been made aware of their sinful condition. The general trend in humanity is to resist any kind of conviction for sin. Prov. 14:9 says, "Fools make a mock at sin." People do not want to think evil of themselves. This was the state of so many in that day, and it is still the same in our day.

Jesus gave us the story of the prodigal son and his brother. Much is said of the younger son and his foolish enterprise in the ways of shame. But we must also consider the older brother who did not go away from home, and yet we find that his attitude and spirit was not so good. He needed to repent of his self-opinion and unforgiving, unmerciful disposition. It is hoped that he listened to his father's counsel and joined with the others who were rejoicing that his brother had come home safe and sound.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think caused the younger brother to want to leave?
2. What caused him to want to come back to his father?
3. What was his attitude when he came back to his father?
4. What was wrong with the older brother's attitude?
5. What lessons can we draw from these two brothers?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There is an old saying: "Familiarity breeds contempt." People have so much to be thankful for, and being thankful is a very wise quality of heart to strive to have and maintain. "Count Your Blessings" is not only a beautiful and inspiring song, but it is also a wise thing to practice. The younger brother in our lesson had many things going for him at home. But he became discontent. And that is another trap that catches many people. Eccl. 6:9 says, "Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire:..." We are counseled in the Scripture to "be content with such things as you have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Far better is the state of the righteous than the state of the ungodly. Men are tempted with this world so rich and fair, but when you get out there in the din of worldly strife and lust, it is not so nice. Restraint and control are to be valued and appreciated. The way of looseness and lustful living do not bring happiness and satisfaction.

On the other hand, the person who seeks to avoid the vanities of this world and strives to be faithful to God needs to watch his attitude. We must seek to be merciful and long suffering and forbearing. When you get to the place where you find it hard to bear with people and put up with their humanity, you had better pray for a better vision of Calvary and what the death of our blessed Saviour really means. We can look on sin and evil with disdain and godly abhorance, but we must maintain a merciful and pitiful feeling toward those who are caught in satan's destructive snare. "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." II Timothy 2:24-25.

Let us remember the loving and merciful Spirit of our Father. He would that all men be saved and come to repentance. He will not cast out any that come to Him in the right spirit of humility and godly sorrow. —B ro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

When I was a young teen, I heard a message that impressed me greatly. The title of the message was, "Lost in the House." The minister brought out the fact that both of these boys were in need of salvation. They both needed to be reconciled to their father; however, one of them didn't realize his need. He was lost and "away" from his father's heart, even though he had never left home. In a sense, he had the greater fault, because he felt justified in his attitude and did not seek forgiveness, as did his younger brother who repented of his wasteful life.

Sometimes we feel that we have been "good." We begin to feel "deserving" of our blessings, and develop quite the scornful attitude toward people who are down and out in sin. We become standoffish and judgmental. Not only will we cease to follow our Master's call to win souls to the kingdom, they will feel our condescension and be barred from the door of salvation, and we ourselves will find ourselves thrust out at the end. Do you know where the older boy should have been? Out in the yard with Dad, looking down the road, and running right beside him to take his brother into his arms.

I am reminded of a song that says:

"There are those who have never walked away from home;
But their hearts are so very far away.
And the Father in Heaven is the only One Who knows,
And if they listen, they will hear Him say,
"Turn your heart toward home..."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



SEPTEMBER 14, 2003

A GREAT SUPPER AND COUNTING THE COST

Luke 14:16 (Jesus said) A certain man made a great supper, and bade many:

17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready.

18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.

20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

21 So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.

22 And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room.

23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

25 And there went great multitudes with him (Jesus): and he turned, and said unto them,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORYVERSE: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. Luke 9:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: To truly be a partaker of this great salvation that Christ is offering us, we must make it chief and most important over and above anything else in this life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 14:18), "*one consent*": All of the same mind and disposition. *make excuse*": Depreciate in value, beg off, decline, shun.

(Ver. 19), "*bought*": Purchased at the market. "*prove them*": Try them out. How inconsistent! He bought five yoke of oxen (ten animals) without trying them out, and yet straight out and without hesitation rejects the invitation of honour offered to him.

(Ver. 23), "*hedges*": Fences or barriers. "*compel*": Urge, constrain, make to seem necessary, convince.

(Ver. 26), "*hate*": This means to love less. The Lord Jesus is worthy of the uppermost place in our hearts and affections, and He will have that place or none at all.

(Ver. 32), "*ambassage*": An ambassador or delegation, someone with authority to negotiate a settlement of peace.

(Ver. 33), *"forsaketh not all that he hath"*: Does not abandon all of his possessions.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus, just previous to His speaking as we have in our lesson today, had gone into a house of one of the chief Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread. He was being watched closely by the religious leaders. One of the touchiest matters that He was constantly being scrutinized about was that of doing any kind of work on the Sabbath day. And they deemed making someone well who had been sick to be work. He healed a man who had dropsy right before their eyes and then compared healing him with pulling out one of their domestic animals from a pit. "Would you not do this on the Sabbath day?" was what He asked them, and they could not answer Him. He then cautioned them about choosing out the chief rooms at a feast, saying it was better to take the lowest room and be asked to come up higher than to take the upper room and have to be put down. He then advised them to make a feast for the poor and those who could not return the favor, and their reward would be at the resurrection of the just.

Then one of those at the table with Him spoke up and said, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." His response to that statement was the parable of the great supper we have in our lesson today. Whatever caused that statement to be made was met with a warning in our lesson about the great supper in the kingdom of God being so lightly esteemed and carelessly dealt with. All three of the ones mentioned who declined the invitation to come to the feast did so on account of earthly matters that are common to all of us. It does not take bad things to keep us out of the kingdom of God. The common, ordinary labors and activities of living absorb many a person to quench any desire that might arise for the eternal things of God. A piece of ground, a yoke of oxen, or a wife are lawful and harmless of themselves. But when they are allowed to come in between us and our righteous heritage of the Lord, then they become culprits of evil.

The latter part of our lesson goes well with the parable of the supper. Great multitudes were following Him, no doubt fasci-

nated by what they were seeing Him do. But He would have us all know that, though His works drew admiration from the persons of men, what it takes to really grasp what He came to bring the souls of men is not easily accomplished. Worldly love of self and ease will keep a person out of the kingdom of God. We need to think seriously of what it costs to really gain entrance into that eternal kingdom. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did those invited to the feast decline the invitation?
2. What warning is this giving to us?
3. Why is God angry with people so lightly esteeming His offer?
4. What does it cost a person to really take hold of God's grace?
5. Who is coming soon that we need to make peace with?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The great supper, the building of the tower and the meeting in battle of a ten thousand men army with a twenty thousand host are all pointing to the same thing. It is gaining the victory for the salvation of our precious souls in Jesus Christ and His triumphant kingdom. This deliverance from sin and the hope of eternal habitations with Christ is by far the most precious commodity that we can ever barter for. It should rule and have pre-eminence over every other faction or function in our lives. More important and precious than material needs or riches or earthly things to be desired is the treasure of the kingdom of God. It has attracted many minds and hearts down through the ages, but very few have proven to be willing to pay that price that will make it their own. Jesus came down in human flesh to make available this wonderful blessing. He attracted people with His great works and deeds of goodness. But when it came to receiving what He really came to bring, the price for such was too often beyond what the ordinary individual was willing to pay.

Jesus came in a different manner than what people expected of Him. So many were offended at Him. Their expectations were carnal, earthbound imaginations that He failed to fulfill. His doctrines were aiming at spiritual things of eternal worth. The second birth, the spiritual worship in the heart, the water of the indwelling Spirit, the Bread of Life that He termed His flesh

and blood, the Kingdom within, the riches and treasures in heaven, and other spiritual values that He upheld were passed off and counted so lightly. And they are still so counted today. The price of putting every other thing secondary and being willing to bear one's own personal cross of self-denial every day cuts across the desire for Christ that one might have. These are things we must deal with. How many people through the years have started out in the Christian life and fell by the way, offended by the things that came their way that they took action against by giving up the good Lord that had bought them with such a great price! Let us remember that, however great the price we must pay, it will be worth everything to make peace with that One who will soon invade upon this world with His mighty angels and tens of thousands of His saints! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This lesson clearly illustrates the lack of vision or focus the invited guests had regarding the marriage feast. They were each involved with the cares, responsibilities and relationships of life and could not look beyond these things to the blessings that they would have received at the marriage feast. These cares, responsibilities and relationships in this life are still a part of us, but they should not be the focus of our lives.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish:..." Proverbs 29:18. Just as in taking a picture with a camera, we should:

Aim - our spiritual camera window should be aimed on that marriage feast. Remember, to properly aim the camera, you just close one eye. "...If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Matthew 6:22.

Focus - We must adjust the focus until we clearly see Jesus. It will not work if our vision becomes dimmed or blurred.

Press the Shutter - While our finger should always be on the shutter button, it is only the LORD who takes the final picture. That final "flash" will tell our true goal and vision.

Where is your spiritual camera aimed? Is it on people? Is it on all of your possessions or what you hope to obtain? Are you focused on things above or on things of this earth? Has your vision become blurred by the enemy?

May we all be challenged to truly adjust our vision and clearly see the Bridegroom and His marriage feast.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



SEPTEMBER 21, 2003

PERSISTENCE AND HUMILITY IN PRAYER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. I Peter 5:6-7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must be persistent in prayer and supplication before God for the things we need from Him, and yet we must be humble and poor in spirit, not trusting in our own righteousness, but in His abundant mercy and grace.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 18:3), "*avenge*": Carry out justice.

(Ver. 5), "*weary*": Subdue or break down.

(Ver. 7), "*bear long*": Being long forbearing and patient. Though God will avenge His saints and answer their cries, yet He often allows the distress to continue over a period of time, and bears long with them until He sees it is the proper time to relieve them of their trouble. This delay and lengthy period of waiting proves to be the most difficult trial and proof of our faith in Him. Thus the question in verse 8: "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Thus the delay and period of waiting will be the ultimate test. In Matthew 24:48-51 Jesus showed how the evil servant, thinking of his lord's delay in coming, will give over to smiting his fellows and eating and drinking to drunkenness. Then in 25:1-5 He portrays things at that stage of the delay of His coming to be like the virgins who, while the bridegroom tarried, did all slumber and sleep. The extra supply of oil on the part of the wise got them over the delay, while the foolish were shut out because their supply of oil for their lamps ran out. Note: The delay of the fulfillment of the answers to our prayers will be our greatest trial. Who will keep fervently praying with expectancy and patience no matter how long is the delay? Heb. 6:12 exhorts us to "be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Then in 13-15 he spoke how Abraham, "after he had patiently endured, obtained the promise." Safeguard yourself against the delays by steadfastly holding on to faith and assurance in the promises of God.

(Ver. 9), "*trusted in themselves*": Relying on their own works to be righteous.

(Ver. 10), "*Pharisee*": A separatist, counting himself exclusively religious more than all others. "*publican*": A tax collector.

(Ver. 11), "*extortioner*": One who greedily plunders and takes by force.

(Ver. 12), "*tithes*": One tenth of one's income.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have two parables that our Lord gave us that convey some very vital truths that we must never overlook. He is illustrating to us the persistence we must have in our prayers to the Father, and also the humility of heart that we must have toward Him.

The first is portrayed in a poor widow before a hardhearted judge. He was not disposed to regard her need, but when she kept coming back to him day after day, he grew weary of it and decided to grant her the justice that she was begging for just to get rid of her. Now Jesus used this extreme case to remind us (1) that God is much more desirous to attend to our distresses and needs than that wicked judge, and (2) how much more ought we to be in a persistent and steadfast way of coming to Him and never fainting or giving in to despair. This is a very vital truth for us to take in. It is portrayed over and over in the Scriptures. God's people, all down through the ages, have been the victims of abuse and ill treatment from the people of this world. Our greatest access to help is the hot-line of prayer to God. But we must pray and keep on praying, never stopping nor giving up our claim for His help. God will answer prayer, but He bears long with us. That is, He allows the burden to tarry for a time. The various characters in the Scripture show this to be true. Think of Abraham, Noah, Joseph, David, Job and others who went through lengthy seasons of adversity and mistreatment. They were patient and faithful to their trust until the time when God saw fit to deliver them.

Then the other thought He presented was the humble attitude of full reliance upon the goodness and mercy of God rather than our own goodness as the key to our reception of His blessings. This self-righteous spirit and attitude that we see in this poor deluded Pharisee is not dead in the world yet. We must be on our guard against assuming such an exalted and proud spirit. Those who trust in their own selves to be righteous are just natural critics of other folks. It works that way. We are never worthy of ourselves of God's goodness, no matter how good we may think ourselves to be. We need to humble ourselves and confess our destitute condition before Him. Let us combine

these two principles and maintain a balanced attitude of courage and faith in our blessed God. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was it about the widow that broke down the unjust judge?
2. Why does God allow us to suffer delays in answers to prayer?
3. What must we do when we encounter these delays?
4. What was the main problem with the Pharisee?
5. Why was the publican justified rather than the Pharisee?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The privilege of praying unto God as our heavenly Father is by far our greatest privilege in this life. To be able to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need is the only real hope of surviving and overcoming in the trials and battles of life. A life without prayer and communion with God is not weak, but it is rather dead. Where there is no prayer and communion with God there is no life in the soul. We must pray and give ourselves to prayer. There is a joy and richness found in praying and seeking God's face in prayer and diligent effort. The greatest example that a parent can portray to his or her child is the holy practice of prayer and communing with heaven. I heard the story of a praying father who had a son that was wayward. After his father died this son visited his father's place of prayer in the woods near his house. The sight of the print of his father's knees in the turf awakened this son's soul and helped to bring him to repentance. There is no greater important activity to engage in than prayer. We must pray and keep on praying. We must pray and not faint. We must supplicate in prayer. This means we must pray again and again, just keep praying and holding the matters before the Lord night and day.

"The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly." Prov. 18:23. The meaning of entreaties is "earnest prayer." Earnest prayer is the poor man's only means of obtaining help. He has no price in his hand to bring. He is a beggar, destitute of

means. Psalm 102:16-17 says, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." It takes this poverty of spirit, which is the basis of real humility, to get us in a position to really receive of the help of the Lord. The woman of Canaan in Matthew 15:22-28 in seeking Christ's help for her afflicted daughter came to the place where she did not resist the implication of her being on the level with dogs. If there would have been any pride in her heart she would have recoiled against what Jesus said of it not being "meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." But, no, she was in such a need that she accepted that position and said that "the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." This broke the Lord down, touching and moving His sweet Spirit. Let us be attentive to the lesson Jesus gave us. Be persistent in prayer, but be humble in our attitude toward ourselves. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

We have an Old Testament picture of persistence and humility given to us by Jacob. You remember he was just getting ready to meet his brother who had wanted to kill him years before. Jacob was desperately needing God's assistance. That night he wrestled with a man valiantly and said, "I will not let you go until you bless me." He held on through the night and near morning he received his blessing.

We have also the example of Daniel. The angel, after many days of praying, told Daniel that it was known from the first day that Daniel set his face to seek the Lord. However, he said that the prince of Persia had hindered. Daniel's persistence and patience paid off.

Jesus Himself gave us this example when in the garden He went a little farther and prayed more earnestly. He prayed until He found that assurance in His heart. The Lord is encouraging us in these scriptures to this purpose that men should continue to pray and not faint or give up. This persistence coupled with humility will touch the throne of grace. —Bro. Bob Wilson



SEPTEMBER 28, 2003

THE STRANGER ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Luke 24:13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him,

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.

35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

MEMORY VERSE: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Luke 24:26.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus draws near to us in our times of distress and perplexity, and we should open our hearts to Him and the words from the Holy Scriptures that He will speak to us, entreating Him to abide with us and reveal His risen glory to our souls.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 24:13) "*threescore furlongs*": This is a distance of about 8 miles.

(Ver. 15), "*reasoned*": Discussed together.

(Ver. 16), "*holden*": Held back from recognition.

(Ver. 18), "*Cleopas*": Adam Clarke says he is "the same as Alphaeus, father of the Apostle James, (Mark 3:18,) and the husband of the sister of the virgin Mary." John 19:25.

(Ver. 28), "*made as though*": Pretended, or made it appear. This was not a deceptive move, but rather a test of the interest and desire of these disciples. Jesus was yearning to go in with them, but wanted to have their expression of desire and invitation.

(Ver. 29), "*constrained*": They compelled by entreating Him.

(Ver. 31), "*knew*": Recognized.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have for our lesson today the beautiful scene of the two men on the road to Emmaus and the wonderful Stranger who encountered them there. It is mentioned in Mark 16:12 briefly thus: "After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country." We are glad that Luke included in his account this wonderful experience that came to these two brethren. They, along with the rest of Christ's followers, had been through a traumatic time of disappointment and sorrow in the arrest, trial and the subsequent crucifixion of their beloved Master. As their words to Jesus reveal, they had high hopes of Jesus bringing Israel up again from bondage and lordship of Rome to the great nation she once was. In this is shown the strain of it all, Christ's rejection by Israel and their leaders and the great let down His disciples felt to see Him cruelly killed as a criminal without saving Himself. They did not comprehend what He was doing in all of this. To them death closed the story as far as Jesus was concerned. They could not see that anything could be beyond the grave. The arrogant Jews mocked and sneered at Christ's weakness and shame on the cross because they could not visualize anything beyond His death.

The horrible scene of Christ's death on the cross and His burial in the tomb was only part of their perplexity. With that was the report of several of the women who had visited the tomb early that morning and came back with a report that He was alive. Peter and John had gone to investigate and had come back without seeing Him. Only the women could affirm that they had seen the Lord in risen form. So we can see why these men were engaged in such a deep and dark discussion, conversing and

questioning the whole matter that seemed an unsolvable puzzle.

Jesus knew the dilemma that the hearts of these two disciples were in. And, even so today, He still knows how to administer comfort and light to us in the perplexities of life. Wisely keeping them from recognizing Who He really was, He took on the pretext of a travelling stranger who seemed to be ignorant of what the problem was. But, oh, the answer that He gave to them! From the Holy Scriptures came forth a message that day that we in our day need to know and understand. Think of what was contained in the words: "In all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Beginning at Moses and up through all the prophets Jesus took them on a safari of beholding the truth of the long awaited Messiah of Israel. While He talked they were fascinated and filled with wonder. Who was this Stranger, and where did He get all of this? To walk a distance of about 8 miles could consume up to 2 hours, so you can imagine the lengthy discourse that the Lord engaged in!

And how wonderful was the climax of that wonderful walk! Entreating Him to tarry with them, He went in and at the table broke the bread and made them aware of who He really was. Oh, let us stay with Him and receive the personal revelation of His risen glory. It is for all that really love and follow Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why were these two disciples so perplexed and sad?
2. What did Jesus turn to in answer to their problem?
3. Why is it so important to know and understand the Scriptures?
4. Why did Jesus make as though He would have gone farther?
5. What did these two disciples do after they knew Jesus, and why?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How blest to have Christ Jesus known, revealed unto the heart!

It is the richest treasure Store that we can share a part.

To yearning hearts who seek to know His risen life and grace
our Saviour wills to shine the sunlight of His lovely face.

No greater joy we e'er can know, no sweeter bliss to feel,
than having Him to set aglow our hearts with Him so real.
He is our Saviour, Lord and Friend, the Lover of our soul;
and happiness without an end lies in His blest control.

It is for us to search to know the holy mystery,
to seek in pray'r for Him to show His life for us to see.
Unless enlightened are our eyes by His sweet Spirit's pow'r,
His truth we cannot realize nor feel His holy show'r.
But as we cling to Him and pray, beholding all His love,
We can perceive His gracious way this cold dark world above.

While mortals feast their eyes upon this fading earthly scene,
by faith's strong eye we see the dawn of things that are unseen.
Eternal things revealed so sure, Christ Jesus and His peace,
our hope unfailing to endure, Our life to never cease!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The followers of Jesus suffered a tremendous blow when the object of their adoration was rudely seized in the night and taken in for a mock trial "after hours" then put to death the next day. They had committed their life to Him, left their occupations and believed that He would deliver Israel from the harsh Roman rule and now He was gone.

There are times that you and I may be called to travel this same road to Emmaus. Our heart may be heavy with grief or our life shattered by the loss of someone dear to us. Perhaps our dreams and ambitions have crumbled or financial reverses have left us with great debts we are unable to pay. Maybe our health has broken and through pain and suffering our cries seem to go unheard. The future looks dark and uncertain. Decisions must be made and we don't know which way to turn. May I encourage you today, those who are in the midst of trial, Jesus has not forgotten you. His heart is touched with your need. He is still alive and will walk with you on this road that you travel. His presence will bring comfort and courage to overcome in the darkest hours of life. He will not allow you to be destroyed if you place your hand in His. Hold your faith steady and follow His gentle voice and He will bring you through this trial with victory.

One day the saints of God will lift their eyes in a land of delightful splendor. A wonderful welcome will greet us as we enter the celestial city and meet the untold number redeemed of every nation. We will meet face to face with the Onewho gave His life for us. What a glorious day! "Then the toils of the road will seem nothing." This is the bright hope of a child of God.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



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