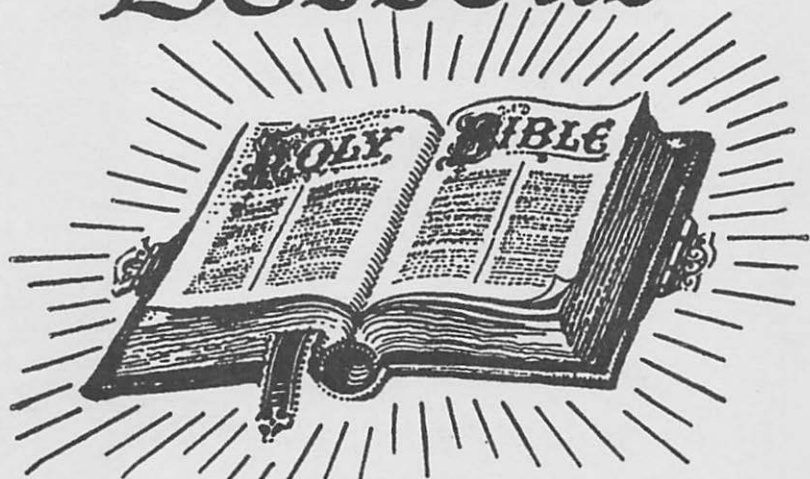


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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**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 FOURTH QUARTER

For our lessons in this series we feel inspired to set forth Biblical truths concerning pride and humility. We will begin with a lesson from the Scriptures on God's creation of Man and Woman and how they failed to obey God's command and the sad result of the choice they made. We will see how pride was sown in their fallen nature that separated them from God. Then we will consider the various ways that pride affected the course of humanity and the threat that it still holds over the sons of men. We are persuaded that it is of vital importance for us mortal creatures of this fleeting life to have a clear understanding of these two character points. We need to be warned and keenly aware of the detriment and harm that pride can cause to our eternity bound souls. And we need to be equally aware of the value and importance of having the humility of heart that the scriptures so plainly declare is well pleasing to our Creator.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



OCTOBER 2, 2005

A MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH

Genesis 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:...

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou

shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be call Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

MEMORY VERSE: ...God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions. Ecclesiastes 7:29.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God made Man and Woman as responsible, free moral agents with the power of choosing between obedience and life or disobedience and death.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 1:27), "*image*": The Hebrew word means a resemblance or representative figure to portray.

(Genesis 1:28), "*replenish*": The word *replenish*, used by the translators, means to refill or fill again. But the Hebrew word simply means *to fill*. "*subdue*": To dominate, conquer, to bring into subjection. This really meant more than just ruling over the animal and plant kingdom, but it involves bringing into subjection one's own desires and conduct to the good pleasure of God who gave us these things.

(Genesis 2:7), "*formed*": Pressed, squeezed and molded into shape. All other living creatures were created by His Word, but God formed Man in a special operation with His hands, producing what was His plan in mind. "*dust of the ground*": The elements of the soil. "*breath of life*": His Holy Spirit, the very essence of God Himself. "*living soul*": A breathing creature with vitality and consciousness and awareness, not only in a natural human way, but also in a spiritual communion and fellowship with God.

(Genesis 2:15), "*dress it*": To work or till it. "*keep it*": To guard it and defend it.

(Genesis 2:18), "*help meet*": A suitable helper corresponding to his need; a counterpart or mate.

(Genesis 2:21), "*closed up the flesh instead*": Shut up the gap underneath where the rib had been.

(Ecclesiastes 7:29), "*inventions*": Things thought up, contrived, devised, schemed or planned by man in his own thinking without the counsel of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we want to study about the formation of Man and Woman by the Lord God Himself. Preceding our scripture text from the first two chapters in Genesis is the account of how God created the heavens and the earth and all things therein. The formation of man and woman was the finishing of His creation, the last item on the list of created things.

Throughout the Scriptures this great creation by God is mentioned. Psalm 33:6, 8-9 says, "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 24:1-2 says, "The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." Paul declared in his message in Athens as recorded in Acts 17:24-28, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

These scriptures reveal the fact that man is nothing, has nothing and can do nothing of himself. We need God. Without Him the best we can do is altogether vanity. (Psalm 39:5.) Great

buildings that man could build, inventions and ideas that men devise and think up are all vain and unprofitable. Here is where pride has entered in. Man is seeking to establish his own accomplishments. As our Memory Verse from Ecclesiastes 7:29 states, Man has sought out many inventions. In our next lesson we will see how Satan influenced man to launch out on his own enterprise of self, flesh and exalted pride. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did Man come into being in the first place?
2. Where did the Woman come from?
3. What part did Man have in the creation?
4. What is the rightful attitude that Man should have toward himself and God?
5. Why did God give Man a commandment to obey?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There are many people, sad to say, who do not really believe in the creation of God. They are completely unaware that a wise and loving God instituted their being. The language of the Scriptures is foreign to them. Here is what the Psalmist said in Psalm 139:13-16, speaking to the Lord God: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance (bones) was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought (woven) in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance (embryo), yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance (day by day) were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." We are the creation of God, the work of His hands. For this cause we should fear and tremble and kneel before the LORD our Maker, for it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves." (Psalm 95:6, 100:3.) If a person can be awakened to the truth about how we are all the creation of a just and wonderful God, it will put a reverent, worshipful attitude in the heart toward God. We owe Him everything. We owe Him all of our love, devotion, obedience, honor, trust, submission and sincere regard. We are the work of His hands, not of ourselves. Our vain ideas, plans, thoughts and desires we should abandon with respect to the perfect will and good pleasure of Him who created us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Adam and Eve were vested with a choice, an ability to choose to obey God or disobey God. While they chose to obey God, His blessings were upon their lives. The beautiful garden was theirs to enjoy. The trees that so bountifully produced their delicious fruit were freely provided for their nourishment. In the cool of the evening they had the delightful experience of communing with God in sweet fellowship. The hand of their Creator graciously provided all that they needed.

Then the tempter came in his deceitfulness and began to point out what they were "lacking." He mischaracterized God in His goodness and incited an appetite for the fruit of the tree God had said not to eat of. When Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit and the Lord barred them from having access to the tree of life, the clock began to tick on their earthly existence. The fellowship they had enjoyed with God was severed. The evil influences of satan poured into and filled the earth like as from a dam that was broken. The consequences of their choice brought much misery and trouble on the human race. The fruit of their disobedience continues to multiply and will do so until God calls this world into judgment.

Satan was so empowered by the choice made by Adam and Eve that at the time of Jesus he tempted Him with all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them. Satan was saying that he owned them and had the power to give them to Jesus if He would only worship him. Jesus referred to him as the "prince of this world" three times. Thank the Lord, Jesus did not make the same mistake Adam and Eve made. Because He was faithful and overcame the wicked one, we are again offered a choice that will bring us back into fellowship with God. Our hearts can be restored to the purity Adam and Eve experienced before they sinned. Our sins can be completely forgiven and we can be washed pure by the precious blood of Jesus, which was offered as atonement for our sin. The "prince of this world" has been judged and Christ is victorious and He wants you to share the victory He won.

May each of us be very careful not to squander the precious opportunity we have been given to choose everlasting life. Follow the advice offered in Romans 13:12, "...let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light."

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

OCTOBER 9, 2005

THE FALL OF MAN BY PRIDE INTO SIN

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Romans 1:21 When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. I Corinthians 1:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Man was allured to partake of the forbidden tree because of the wisdom it offered. This was pride, the desire to be wise as gods. This set the human race on a course of esteeming worldly wisdom above the wisdom of God. In this state man is exalted in his own wisdom and esteems the wisdom of God as foolishness. But in reality man is the fool.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 3:1), "*serpent*": A snake. It is very evident that the snake was the agent that satan, the arch enemy of God and all righteousness, worked through to approach and tempt the woman. "*subtil*": Cunningly smooth and enticing. "*Yea, hath God said*": The Hebrew says, "Is it so that God has said?" "*every tree*": It would be more properly put: "any tree."

(Verse 3), "*midst*": The middle or center.

(Verse 5), "*as gods*": The Hebrew says, "As God." "*knowing good and evil*": It is very evident that God's plan was for Man to know only the good. He did not want man to know what evil and transgression was. But God created Man as a free moral agent, a being with the power of choice. Therefore God made the alternative available and within easy access, right in the midst of the garden. To deliberately partake of the tree that God had forbidden him was to say, "God is not wise to withhold this from me. I will be wiser than God and partake of this tree." This was the birth of pride, worldly wisdom and the exalted spirit of disobedience and unbelief.

(Verse 6), "*wise*": Intelligent, skillful, prudent. But let us remember that this intelligence that man was tempted to gain was contrary to the good pleasure of Him who created him. To reach for this wisdom by means of transgression was the work of pride, the basis of all rebellion and disobedience.

(Verse 23), "*the ground from whence he was taken*": The elements of earth that he was taken or created from.

(Verse 24), "*Cherubims*": The Hebrew word is singular, that is, Cherub, which was an angel or heavenly being. "*flaming sword*": A blazing, fiery sword or weapon. "*turned every way*": The Hebrew says "whirling around." "*keep*": Guard. It was to

keep Man, who had turned to his own wisdom and exaltation, from partaking of the tree of life and to live forever.

(Romans 1:21), "*glorified him not*": Did not honor or exalt Him (God). "*neither were thankful*": By man choosing to reach for the forbidden fruit in quest of the wisdom it offered, he was discrediting God and not being grateful for the many blessings and benefits (the many trees of the garden) that God had provided. "*vain*": Foolish and void of true purpose. "*foolish*": Undiscerning and ignorant.

(I Corinthians 3:18-19), "*become a fool*": A fool in the eyes of the world. "*taketh the wise in their own craftiness*": By means of their own foolish ideas, God allows them to be ensnared and captured to their destructive end.

(I Corinthians 1:21), The Greek says, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through the (worldly) wisdom lost the knowledge of God, God was pleased to save those believing by means of the foolishness of preaching." God planned that such should be. By man attaining to the wisdom offered by transgressing God's law, he lost sight of the true knowledge of God. To restore this back to its original blessed and happy state, God employed the exercise of the preaching, or heralding and proclaiming, of the gospel, the good news of what Christ accomplished for us in His mission on earth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider what happened in the fall of man from fellowship with God. The Lord God had created all things for His pleasure and the welfare and happiness of the man and woman He had formed. He had placed them in the Garden of Eden, a place of supreme beauty and pleasantness. And, because He loved them and wanted from them love and devotion, He had placed the bounds of their blissful existence on the restriction of partaking of one tree. He had put many other beautiful and luscious trees for their nourishment and enjoyment. But He wanted to have proof of their love by something they must refrain from with Him in mind.

But we see the tempter offering to them something that on the surface appeared superior to what God had given. Think how sly and cunning was his approach and how easily he allured them into the forbidden path. What should Mother Eve have

done and what precaution should she have taken? What did she lack that brought on the disastrous step? In our lesson we can see that she was unaware of what the result was going to be. And she also failed to properly evaluate what she and Adam already had. Oh, how the lesson comes down to us today of the importance of a proper sense of values! How we need to be enlightened to the danger and threat of pride, worldliness, selfish greed, self-promotion and every other self enemy! The same tempter that prevailed over Adam and Eve is still knocking at the door today. The wisdom of this present evil world is still a serious threat to the welfare of our souls. May we not be ignorant of His devices and be on our guard against the forces that seek to overthrow our faith and hope in God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was satan's first suggestion and to what direction did it point?
2. How do we know that Eve was fully informed of what God had commanded?
3. What caused Eve to esteem satan's offer so highly?
4. What kind of wisdom did Adam and Eve gain?
5. What are some of the things that worldly wisdom seeks to teach today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How attentive and alert we should be concerning the Word of God and what it is pointing us to! We should search the Scriptures and seek the Holy Spirit's inspiration for the right understanding of all it applies. Ignorance of the spiritual truths and principles of godliness is detrimental and destructive. We should never be overconfident in ourselves or our position. After referring to several incidents in Israel's history of transgressing and grieving God, and stating that all these things were ensamples to us and were written for our admonition, Paul gave this warning in I Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Then in II Corinthians 11:3 he warned us: "I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity (singleness) that is in Christ." Let us be truly wise!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Today's lesson brought a poem to my mind. I read it when I was younger, and it affected me so much that I copied it and keep it in my Bible. The author, Robert Pollock, was a very young man and the piece I will quote today is only a short segment of his entire book called *The Course of Time*.

“...Hear then, in brief, what peopled hell,
what holds its prisoners there.
Pride, self-adoring pride, was criminal cause
Of all sin past, all pain, all woe to come.
Unconquerable pride! First, eldest sin;
Great fountain-head of evil; highest source,
When flow'd rebellion 'gainst the Omnipotent,
When hate of man to man, and all else ill.
Pride at the bottom of the human heart lay
And gave root and nourishment to all
That grew above. Great ancestor of vice!
Hate, unbelief, and blasphemy of God,
Envy and slander; malice and revenge;
And murder, and deceit, and every birth
Of damned sort, was progeny of pride.
It was the ever-moving acting force,
The constant aim, and the most thirsty wish
Of every sinner unrenew'd, to be
A god: in purple or in rags, to have
Himself adored: whatever shape or form
His actions took: whatever phrase he threw
About his thoughts, or mantle o'er his life,
To be the highest, was the inward cause
Of all—the purpose of the heart to be
Set up, admired, obey'd. But who would bow
The knee to one who served and was dependent?
Hence man's perpetual struggle, night and day,
To prove he was his own proprietor,
And independent of his God: that what
He had might be esteemed his own, and praised
As such. —He labor'd still, and tried to stand
Alone unpropped—to be obliged to none;
And in the madness of his pride he bade
His God farewell, and turn'd away to be
A god himself; resolving to rely,
Whatever came, upon his own right hand.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

OCTOBER 16, 2005

THE WORLD CONDEMNED BY THE FAITH OF NOAH

Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

9 ...Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven:...

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

II Peter 2:5 (If God) spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

I Peter 3:20 Once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

MEMORY VERSE: By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Hebrews 11:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Pride and worldly wisdom, in the imaginations of men's hearts, brought about a horrible state in the eyes of the Lord God as time went on. God finally decided to destroy mankind from the earth by means of a great flood, but, finding one man, Noah, and his family, well pleasing to Him, He made a way for them to escape.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 6:5), "*imagination*": The molding and shaping of the ideas of the mind; things thought up, conceived and determined in the realm of man's feelings, desires and passions. "*thoughts of his heart*": The intentions, plans and plots of the center of man's being. God has given Man this power to formulate, reason, purpose and choose the path that he wants to pursue.

(Verse 7), "*it repenteth me*": I regret and am sorry.

(Verse 8), "*found grace*": Found favor, kindness and merciful remembrance.

(Verse 13), "*filled with violence through them*": Wrong, cruelty, injustice, damage and oppression abounded in the earth through the evil purposed and originating in man's selfish and lustful nature.

(Verse 14), "*gopher wood*": The Hebrew says, "cypress timbers." "*pitch with pitch*": Cover it with asphalt (or tar).

(Verse 22), The Hebrew simply says, "And Noah did as to all that God told him, so he did."

(II Peter 2:5), "*preacher*": One who announces, speaks out and heralds. By this, and taking in mind the situation Noah was in as he and his sons worked on building the mighty ark, we can be sure that Noah put forth great effort to communicate with the surrounding society concerning God's sentence of destruction

and the coming flood. And, knowing the nature of the ungodly, we can surely conclude that they were not without retaliation, ridicule and perhaps even violence in their response to his message.

(Verse 9), *"The Lord knoweth how"*: Seeing how God saved Noah and also saved Lot from the destruction of Sodom, we can be sure that God can and will deliver all who love and obey Him from the destruction of this present, evil world.

(I Peter 3:20), *"while the ark was a-preparing"*: During the time that Noah and his sons built the ark and prepared it for its important voyage. We have no way of knowing just how long it took for them to build the ark but, considering the enormity of their task, we can be sure it was a lengthy process of time and energy. And Noah did this in the face of the hostile and worldly wise society. *"saved by water"*: Carried safely through the flood.

(Verse 21), *"the like figure baptism"*: Baptism represents us being submerged in the flood of tribulation, adversity, sufferings and death and then resurrected to eternal life in the end. The passing of Noah and his family through the flood in the shelter of the ark is a figure of our escape from the destruction of this present, evil world. *"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"*: Baptism does not wash away sins but is the expression of faith in God and a pure conscience toward Him.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we are surveying the advance of worldly wisdom and the pride of life to the stage of the wrath of God being kindled to destroy humankind from off the earth. Through the years the wickedness of man had progressed to where violence filled the earth and the thoughts of men's hearts were an unbroken chain of iniquity and strife. Adding up the years of each succeeding generation from the creation of Adam to the destruction of the flood we come up with 1656 years. In that space of time man progressed to the point of being fit for destruction. And it is very evident that our present world is in like manner quickly ripening for eternal destruction

According to what Jesus said, in the final end it will be as it was in the days of Noah. Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage: such was the course of the world. It was not so much the activity of such, but it was that humanity was so absorbed in the physical pleasures that they were quite indiffer-

ent to the Creator, the One who had given them these things. They were carried away with the flesh, just like our society is today. And we have much more than these things now. The love of money, sports, television and many other things occupy the minds and hearts of men to the point of keeping them from really being devoted to God.

And this worldly-wise condition confronted Noah and his sons in their effort to build the ark. No doubt they ridiculed and made fun of Noah and his prophecy of a flood. They were quite unaware of their vulnerable state of things being held together by the Word of God with the potential of being destroyed by that same Word. But Noah's faithful obedience to the will of God saved him and his household from that first destruction of the world and so will our faith and obedience to the will of God save us in that final destruction.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused God to repent that He had ever made man?
2. Why did Noah find favor and mercy in the sight of God?
3. Why was Noah called a preacher of righteousness?
4. Why is baptism similar to Noah's passage through the flood?
5. How did Noah bring condemnation upon the world?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The account of Noah's deliverance from the flood affords great lessons for us today. Noah faced a fallen and degraded society. He chose to refuse their way of life and became decided for his Creator. We today are facing a similar opposition in our world. It takes courage and pure decision to keep true to God. The evil influences in the world around us are abounding. For God to save Noah from the coming destruction He wisely gave Noah a great task to fulfill. It took lots of faith, courage and hard work for Noah to answer that call. Even so it is today. To go against the current of this present, evil world takes decided faith and obedience to the Word of God. Very few people have the kind of faith that will overcome this wicked world. It is so easy to conform to the world and what is around us. It is a strait and narrow way that leads to life and it is attended with much adversity and suffering. Let us take Noah as an example worth following.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him,
so did he." Genesis 6:22.

Said the neighbors to ol' Noah
As he built upon the ark
"We believe not that this project
Need preserve us—what a lark!

We've not seen a single raindrop
Wouldn't know what one looks like
And you're building on a vessel
That may not be water-tight.

We can eat and drink and marry
Do not tell us what to do
Go on and build your ark then
We will laugh when you are through!"

But he warned them, "See ship yonder
Going up toward the sky?
God says it's going to thunder
And the waters will be high."

So Noah continued working
Day and night he toiled on
For he knew of God's great promise
To flood earth till life was gone.

And 'tis true—this fate they suffered
And preserved they could have been
But they listened not to Noah
And their lives met tragic end.

In this wicked world we live in
'Tis no different than of past
For they eat and drink and marry
Hoping life will always last.

They scoff and tell us, "Brother
You've no need to work and fret
Your commitment—'tis too narrow
We've an easier method yet."

But to board the "ark of safety"
Jesus' blood you must apply
To redeem your soul from torments
And be ready then to die.

So remember Brother Noah
And your daily ark prepare
'Twill be worth each tear and trial
Every trouble, pain and care.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



OCTOBER 23, 2005

THE FOLLY OF MAN'S BIG IDEAS

Genesis 11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Proverbs 17:24 Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

Proverbs 14:6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it not*: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.

II Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand. Proverbs 19:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The ideas and plans that man formulates in his pride and selfish lusts will prove to be folly, displeasing to God and a detriment to his own spiritual welfare.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Genesis 11:2), "*a plain*": The Hebrew says "a level valley."

(Verse 3), "*one to another*": Each one to his neighbor. "*Go to*": Come. "*brick*": Blocks formed from the white clay found in the ground. "*slime*": Asphalt: Something similar to the pitch that Noah coated the ark with.

(Verse 4), "*build us*": Build for ourselves. "*make us*": Make for ourselves.

(Verse 5), "*children of men*": The Hebrew says "sons of Adam."

(Verse 6), "*nothing will be restrained*": They have cast off restraint and control, with no desire for discipline and counsel. "*imagined*": Planned, devised and purposed.

(Proverbs 17:24), Adam Clarke has a good comment on this: "Wisdom is within sight and reach of every man, but he whose desires are scattered abroad, who is always aiming at impossible things, or is of an unsteady disposition, is not likely to find it." This has surely been the course of mankind through the ages: always reaching for what he does not have, failing to grasp hold of that which God has set within his reach.

(Proverbs 14:6), "*scomer*": One who scoffs or makes light of godliness. "*easy*": Swift, keen and easily discerned.

(Proverbs 16:9), Clarke also says, "Man may think as he pleases and ask as he lists (as his desires wander), but God will give, or not give (do, or not do), as He thinks proper."

(II Corinthians 10:3), "*war*": This includes to work, serve, contend, execute or operate. "*not after the flesh*": Not guided in our actions and ways by our fleshly desires and human reasonings.

(Verse 4), "*not carnal*": Not fleshly, material, earthly or man-made. "*pulling down*": Demolishing or doing away with. "*strong holds*": Ideas, thoughts and beliefs that are embedded in the minds of people.

(Verse 5), "*imaginings*": Reasonings and things computed and formulated by the fleshly mind. "*bringing into captivity*": Subduing into proper control.

(Proverbs 19:21), "*devices*": Purposes, plans and ideas. "*stand*": rise, be established and not fail.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we saw how one man and his family escaped the destruction of the wicked world by believing God's Word and obeying Him. In today's lesson we see the Almighty frustrating the big idea that the pride of man sought to bring up. This is a plain example and illustration of the operation of men's selfish and fleshly thoughts. "Let us make us a name!" has been the cry of many a society. This is pride, also labeled self-promotion, self-preservation and self-reliance. Although God loves unity and people working and living together in harmony, He also knows what can develop when men get their heads together and conceive big ideas. So the Lord God wisely brought their big plan to nothing by causing them to start speaking in other languages.

We have also drawn from Proverbs several weighty statements that show the function of men's minds relative to what they are capable of coming up with that is at variance with the mind of God. These show that men's ideas and devices are vain and will lead to ruin, while the counsel that God has to give us will lead us aright.

And then we have the solemn words of the apostle Paul concerning the need for us to go against the temptation to think our own thoughts and ways and bring all into subjection to the counsel and knowledge of God. It is vital for us, each one in our own personal life and experience, to seek the mind of the Lord and not go by our own thoughts. Pride and a stubborn, selfish will causes men to formulate their own course in life and not wait

on God for His counsel. Such has been the evil course of history: men pursuing their own thoughts and ideas rather than sensing their need of God's wisdom and seeking His face for guidance and direction.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the people want to make a name for themselves?
2. Why was God displeased with their ideas?
3. What happens when a person fails to restrain his own thoughts and ideas?
4. What must we do if we expect God to direct our steps?
5. What does it mean to bring captive every thought to the obedience of Christ?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In the story of the origin and building of the tower of Babel we see a pattern that has been repeated time after time in the course of this world's history. Man becomes exalted in himself and ideas begin to take shape. Wheels begin to turn in the mind. "We need to ____!" "Let us do this." God created man with the power to calculate, figure, measure, count, evaluate, plan, design and produce what he would like. All the inventions that we have today come from the ideas in some person's head. Man thinks that the things he is thinking up will be a benefit and many times they are seemingly beneficial. But too often man's ideas are grounded in lust, deceit, covetousness and selfishness. But, as it was in the case of the tower of Babel, God knows how to frustrate the devices of men and He has done this many times. God speaks thus in Psalm 75:4, "I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck." Then the 7th verse says, "But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." He says also in Ecclesiastes 7:14, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider (be observant): God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him." After all the ideas and inventions of man have been fulfilled, it still all adds up to vanity and vexation of the soul. Oh, how needful it is to consecrate and give one's self wholly to the Lord God! We need not try to figure things out and think that we can add one thing

to God's program. Paul said in I Corinthians 2:16, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, the he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ." It is much better to have the mind and Spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus than to seek the pleasures of the flesh. As Frances Ridley Havergal said in her song: "Take my intellect and use every power as *Thou* shalt choose." A mind that is not given to the Lord's control is a dangerous thing.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is very interesting to note Josephus' account of the tower of Babel:

"Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers!

Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than any one could expect; but the thickness of it was so great and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water."

Their own pride brought confusion from the hand of God. The recent hurricane, Katrina, has shown us how weak and small we really are and that life is so temporary and material things so fleeting. Let us honor the Lord and recognize our great dependence on His love and mercy.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

OCTOBER 30, 2005

MAN'S WAYS AND THOUGHTS

Psalm 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God*: God is not in all his thoughts.

Psalm 92:5 O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand them.

Psalm 94:11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

Psalm 119:113 I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Proverbs 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

Proverbs 24:9 The thought of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Proverbs 30:32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thine hand upon thy mouth.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

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

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

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

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

MEMORY VERSE: Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. Proverbs 16:3.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There are many vain and evil ideas and thoughts that are formed in the minds and hearts of mankind. To get right with God we must forsake and get rid of these foolish and erring thoughts and become willing to listen to and accept the thoughts of God as revealed in His Holy Word.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 10:4), "*thoughts*": Plans, ideas, intentions, schemes, devices and things that one thinks up and fabricates in his own mind.

(Psalm 92:5), "*deep*": Profound, wise and below the surface of the fleshly mind.

(Psalm 94:11), "*vanity*": Empty, of no value, shallow, unsatisfactory, not enduring nor permanent.

(Psalm 119:113), "*vain thoughts*": The Hebrew word means a halfhearted or divided mind.

(Proverbs 12:5), "*right*": Justice, or that which is equal and true.

(Proverbs 24:5), "*thought of foolishness*": The plot of one void of true wisdom "*sin*": Missing the mark, astray from the right, offensive.

(Proverbs 30:32), "*thought evil*": Had evil plans and intentions. "*lay thine hand upon thy mouth*": Keep your thoughts from passing the threshold of your tongue. As an old saying goes, "Thoughts unexpressed so often fall back dead; but God Himself can't kill them once they're said."

(Isaiah 55:7), "*forsake*": Relinquish, turn loose of, give up, abandon, renounce and surrender. "*unrighteous man*": Man of vanity void of true wisdom. "*abundantly pardon*": This means an increase or a multiplying of pardon and mercy to those who forsake their own foolish thoughts and sinful ways.

(Proverbs 16:3), "*commit*": To turn something over completely into another's hand, to be submissive and follow, to be willing to do as the Lord would do. This means to obey without question what God counsels us to do. "*thoughts shall be established*": The structure of your beliefs, ideas, plans and purposes will all be erect and firmly positioned.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The fall of man into sin was the result of man being influenced by wrong thoughts which caused him to follow the wrong way. Most people are not aware of this, but we know that satan's work is to put wrong thoughts in their minds. He is ever near to whisper and suggest things that will lead us into error. And when we follow these wrong thoughts they become our thoughts and the result will be going our own ways. We have learned that every imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of

men are only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5.) Thoughts were working in the minds of men. God made man with that capacity—to think, study, ponder, meditate, figure, calculate and imagine. If the mind can be open to God's Word and be humble and teachable, then man can use those powers for good advantage. But if love of self is on the throne, then the whole thrust of his thoughts will be evil. In our world today, the power of human reasoning and carnal thoughts dominate the whole realm of mankind.

We have many examples of wrong thoughts in the Scriptures. But there are two that we want to mention. Paul asked king Agrippa the question: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Then he said, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This thought caused him to carry on all the persecution he did against the followers of Christ. It was a wrong thought, a misguided thought. He was ignorant of what Christ was really seeking to do. But it caused him to do the awful things that he did.

Another case of wrong thought was that of Simon the sorcerer. He offered the apostles money to purchase the power to lay his hands on people and give them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter answered him, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." Acts 8:20-23. Simon was no doubt looking at the honor that he might obtain before the people. It was certainly not from a righteous principle. His thoughts were all wrong. His heart was not right and he was a misguided child of the devil.

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts." This is what the Lord God is calling us to do. We must humble ourselves and be willing to unlearn our thoughts and be instructed and led by God's thoughts. To give up one's thoughts is a very difficult thing and not many are willing to do it. But there is no other way. If we would be saved, we must give up our thoughts and be willing to listen and learn of God's thoughts and ways.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did God give to man the power of thought?
2. What action must we take to have thoughts pleasing to God?
3. What usually follows the formation of thoughts?
4. Who is responsible for a man's thoughts?
5. What is the principle influence that causes wrong thoughts?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It was a wrong thought suggested by Satan that got Adam and Eve into trouble and caused them to fall. It was right thoughts that guided Abel in offering the sacrifice that pleased God and brought about His blessings. It was wrong thoughts in the heart of Cain that preceded his sacrifice being rejected by God and caused him to be jealous and to hate and murder his brother. It was pride and lofty thoughts that caused the tower of Babel to be built and necessitated God's judgment of confounding the languages. It was wrong thoughts that caused Lot to pitch his tent toward Sodom. It was wrong and misguided thoughts that caused Sarah to suggest Abraham taking her handmaid, Hagar, to wife. It was the right thoughts of faith and obedience to God that guided Abraham to become the father of many nations and the father of us who are saved in Christ.

Thoughts have guided and influenced the course of history. The imaginations of the thoughts of men have determined their eternal destiny. That is why having the right thoughts is so important to us now. We human beings today are faced with this same challenge. We should be very careful of what thoughts we allow to be the guidelines of our lives. Seeing the result of right or wrong thoughts should cause a great carefulness and reverence for God to be in us. It is a call for us to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and have our works be pleasing to God. To do this we must change our thoughts. All of man's ways and works stem from the thoughts of his heart. This serious matter calls for a fervent, prayerful attitude concerning us. It will help to restrain us from haste and rashness, setting a watch over our lips. "...Be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools;...Be not rash with thy mouth and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God...." Ecclesiastes 5:1-2. Let it be the steadfast purpose of your heart to have your works be well pleasing to God. Seek His help in earnest and submissive prayer and He will guide your thoughts and they will prove to be stable and safe to follow.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The thoughts of man have led many souls far from the truth of God's Word. Throughout history man has sought to explain God with his earthly philosophies and fleshly reasoning but has fallen far short. It only takes a brief look at the many religions that have had great influence in this world to realize how void they are of the Light from heaven. But God, in His mercy, has reached down to man in the person of Jesus Christ and through a sacrificial life and humiliating, painful death brought the plan of salvation to man. Some have said "they found God," but in reality God found them while their honest heart was searching for Him.

The doctrines and creeds of man will only leave a person with an empty shell of religion while their soul languishes in darkness. There are concordances of the Bible that cater to the different views of man's thinking on the Scriptures and wander so far from the simple truth of God's Word that they only leave their readers with doubts and questions about God. The example of the blind leading the blind is so true in our society while its members are racing headlong toward destruction. A trip to a local cathedral should make a child of God painfully aware of the deceptions the enemy of man's soul has planted in our communities. The slogans on bumper stickers and tee shirts portray the evil imaginations of those around us. Our colleges and universities of "higher learning" are teeming with doctrines of devils.

How thankful we should be that in the midst of all the confusion, jangling and clamor of earthly opinions the God of heaven has a kingdom of righteousness that those who are humble and willing to be obedient to the Word of God can find safe refuge in. By giving up our ways and taking His ways we can find the highway of holiness that leads directly to the throne of God. How we appreciate the mercy of God that delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear son.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



NOVEMBER 6, 2005

THINKING SOBERLY WITH THE MIND OF CHRIST

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

I Timothy 6:6 Godliness with contentment is great gain.

7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

I Corinthians 4:7 Who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life. Proverbs 22:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Since we brought nothing into this world, and since we have nothing but what has been given to us, we should be of a lowly mind about ourselves, being like Jesus who laid aside fame, reputation and high position to come down to this world to suffer the shame and humiliation of the cross.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Romans 12:1), "*present your bodies a living sacrifice*": This means to offer to God the sacrifice of your mortal life, in the flesh, to His service, goodwill and pleasure. This far exceeds the animal

sacrifices of the Old Testament, for it is a living sacrifice, the gift that we render to God of our whole life and being, that He really desires. *"reasonable service"*: This is ministering and serving according to what God's Word requires, that, as Christ gave Himself as a living sacrifice, it is logical and right for us to do the same.

(Verse 2), *"be not conformed"*: Be not fashioned alike. This means to reject the worldly mold and pattern of thought and desire, refusing its substance and shape. *"transformed"*: Changed. This change is that from sin and self to the image of Christ's nature and disposition. *"renewing of your mind"*: This is the renovation, rearrangement and setting in order of your thoughts; casting out vain, selfish, sinful thoughts of pride and worldliness and allowing the Spirit of God to teach and instruct you of the mind of God. *"that ye may prove"*: Rejecting the world and being willing to be taught of God will enable us to test, discover and approve to our own personal well-being just what is that beneficial, satisfying, well pleasing and complete will and purpose of our heavenly Father. What we already know to change and be made likened unto Christ we must apply ourselves to accomplish. But then there is the process of growth and development wherein we learn and increase in the knowledge of the mind of the Lord as time goes on from day to day.

(Verse 3), *"not to think more highly than he ought to think"*: This means not to have high and lofty thoughts about one's self and not to esteem one's own ability and strength with self-confidence and smug self-satisfaction. *"think soberly"*: Fear and tremble before God, sensing your own weakness and need of His help. This will be a sound mind, with sound thoughts according to truth and righteousness. *"dealt"*: Divided, distributed, imparted and bestowed. It is not what I can do or what I think that I can do, but rather what God can and will work within me according to His good will and pleasure, as I continue to yield to Him.

(I Timothy 6:6), *"godliness"*: Deep and wholehearted reverence and respect for God. *"with contentment"*: Possessing satisfaction and gratitude with what the Lord provides for us, not lusting or coveting for more.

(I Corinthians 4:7), *"receive"*: Obtaining not by means of one's own selfish desires or efforts but rather from someone else. Everything we have has been given to us from another source. Our life, our breath, our being, what we know and what we have are the gracious gifts of God.

(Philippians 2:3), "*strife or vainglory*": Rivalry or self-exaltation.

(Verse 5), "*Let this mind be in you*": Have the same idea, thought and purpose.

(Verse 6), "*in the form of God*": On God's level, in His nature and likeness. "*thought it not robbery to be equal with God*": Christ counted not equality with God to be held onto.

(Verse 7), "*But made himself of no reputation*": The Greek says, "But emptied Himself." "*servant*": a slave.

(Verse 8), "*being found*": Knowing and perceiving. "*he humbled himself*": He was willing to be depressed and to be humiliated; going on farther down than the human level. Christ had already condescended from the heights of God down to human level. Now He goes even farther down in submitting to the horrible, shameful and humiliating death of the cross. This is a picture of how far our Saviour descended into the depths of shame and suffering, submitting to it all in obedience to His Father's will.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we studied about the straying of man's thoughts from pleasing God to pleasing himself and how God is calling us to forsake our ways and thoughts and return to know and follow His ways and thoughts. In our lesson today we will consider the mind of Christ and how He set the pattern of the thoughts that we should seek to follow after. Our first scripture text is from the epistle of the apostle Paul to the Romans. In the first 11 chapters of this epistle Paul dealt with many things such as sin and the victory over sin that Christ brings to us, the law of God given by Moses, the righteousness of faith versus the righteousness of the law, the Jews and the Gentiles and the wonderful fulfillment of the law in the reign of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of men. Up to this point Paul gave very few mandates or instructions of what we must do, but rather expounded the truth of what God had accomplished in Christ. But now in this 12th chapter he begins to give the precepts of things that we need to give attendance to and seek to obey. A very important part of this solemn responsibility given to us is a willingness to conform to the mind of Christ and way of humility and self-denial. This includes denying covetousness through godliness with contentment and striving to be of a lowly mind and being in subjection to the will of God as Jesus did.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of sacrifice ought we to present to God?
2. Why should we cease to conform to the world and its ways and thoughts?
3. Why is godliness with contentment such great gain?
4. Whose ways and thoughts should we pattern after and why?
5. What was Christ's reward for humbling Himself to obey God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus, in the sacrifice of His body on the cross, set a pattern for us to follow. It was the will of God for Him to suffer and die in this horrible manner. His death was atonement for the sins of mankind. But it was also an example of submission and obedience that we, as human beings, need to follow. It was not easy and the anguish and humiliation that attended such obedience to God was terrible. But Jesus was determined and went all the way to show us the mind and spirit that we must have if we are to overcome sin and the world. May the Lord help us to understand.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Do you know what *zero* means? It means, literally, *nothing*. In math, I learned that the number line stretches indefinitely in either direction, with zero in the middle. To the right of zero, we call the numbers *positive*. To the left of zero are *negative* numbers.

In the spiritual application, the Lord showed me that humility is zero. Before Him, we are nothing. We have nothing of ourselves, we can do nothing on our own. Yet we are loved by Him and He died for us. He deigns to walk with us and to have fellowship with us. We are special to Him, but it's all about Him, not us.

When we move, in our own minds, away from zero, in either direction, we move away from thinking soberly, truthfully, from thinking in reality about ourselves. A move one direction causes us to feel superior to others, exalted and lifted up in our opinion of ourselves—a deception, because in reality we are all nothing. No one is superior, except Christ. We are all brethren, all servants, all on one lowly plane. That's reality.

The other direction brings one into another kind of self-absorption which is just as ungodly. People don't tend to think of negativism as selfishness. Some even think they are being humble when they are self-deprecatory, or down on themselves. Yet this type of thinking is also deceptive. It is also thinking unrealistically. You can't be a true servant, because you are so self-centered that you don't think of others' needs. Or you may try over-serving others with the thought that you might *earn* others' favor or even God's favor.

Humility means thinking realistically. I am nothing, yet God loves me. Through Him, I can do all things. I am free to serve my brother; I am free to love without fear. —Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



NOVEMBER 13, 2005

GOD'S GOODNESS PREPARED FOR THE POOR

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

Psalm 102:16 When the LÓRD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

Psalm 72:4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

Psalm 34:6 This poor man cried, and the LÓRD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psalm 68:10 ...Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

Psalm 74:19 ...Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.

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

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

Isaiah 29: 18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

19 The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off:

21 That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that repoveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.

Proverbs 18:23 The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answereth roughly.

James 2:5 ...Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

MEMORY VERSE: For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. II Corinthians 8:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is the man who senses his destitute and needy condition who will be willing to obey the Lord and receive the help that he needs for the salvation of his soul. The proud and self-sufficient, who are not aware of their poverty and need, will do very little, if any, to receive of the grace of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 5:3), "*poor in spirit*": One who senses his poverty before God and his need of Him. Such is void of pride, being humble and contrite in heart.

(Psalm 102:17), "*will regard*": Turns to and will be moved to answer. "*not despise*": Will esteem, honour and have respect to.

(Psalm 72:14), "*precious shall their blood be*": Valuable is their life; the Lord will not let them perish.

(Psalm 34:6), "*poor*": Having little or no means, needy, destitute, impoverished, helpless, inferior, humble, lowly, contrite and afflicted.

(Psalm 68:10), "*prepared of thy goodness*": Provided for in Thy goodness.

(Psalm 74:19), The Hebrew says, "The life of your afflicted you will not forget for ever."

(Isaiah 66:2), "*trembleth*": Is easily moved by and has great respect and honour for.

(Isaiah 29:20-21), The Hebrew says, "The ruthless ceases, the scorner is ended and all watching for evil are cut off; those accusing man of sin because of a word, ensnaring even the reprover in the gate, and who turns the righteous away as being empty and of no value." The ruthless is the unmerciful, the scorner is the scoffer who makes fun of reverence and godly fear, the accusing man is the fault finder looking for something to accuse about, and the reprover in the gate refers to those called of God to be leaders and in authority, dignities, who should be honoured and respected and not spoken against. (II Peter 2:10.)

(Proverbs 18:23), "*entreaties*": Earnest prayers and supplications. "*roughly*": With strong and vehement words of harshness.

(II Corinthians 8:9), "*he became poor*": Christ laid aside the riches of His eternal glory as part of the Godhead to be submissive to the will of God and to consent to be crucified through weakness. "*through his poverty*": By means of Christ's voluntary obedience to the will of God to submit to the shame and reproach of the death of the cross we can attain to the true riches of salvation and grace in His name.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we will consider the importance of being poor in spirit. This expression is identical to the word "humility." Man has gone into error and sin because of an inflated opinion of himself. He has worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. (Romans 1:25.) He has lost the sense of his debt to the Creator for his life and being and has assumed the idea that he himself is God to be served and gratified. Thus he esteems himself rich, increased with goods and has need of nothing. This was, according to Christ's judgment, the condition of Laodicea, one of the seven congregations in Asia. Pride works that way in the heart of man, deceiving him with self-confidence and self-worth.

We have chosen various scriptures that have been very instructive and inspiring to us concerning the special favor of God to the poor. There are other scriptures that also well

accompany the thought. Jesus said in Luke 4:18, quoting from Isaiah 61:1, that the Lord had anointed Him to preach the gospel to the poor. In another place He told someone to tell John the Baptist that, along with the sick being healed and the dead being raised, the poor had the gospel preached to them. It was also prophesied concerning His Church that He would leave in their midst "an afflicted and poor people," who would "trust in the name of the LORD." Zephaniah 3:12.

God has allowed His people, down through the years of time, to suffer affliction and adversity. Such measures are disciplinary for the good of the souls of men to help to remind them of their poverty and need. But to be poor is more than being in want, privation and adverse conditions. It is a spirit and attitude of the heart, recognition of just how poor and needy we really are. When we can realize how poor and destitute we really are, it will help us to be more submissive and devoted to God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do we need to recognize and acknowledge how poor and needy we are?
2. Why is God so inclined to consider the poor and hear their prayers?
3. Why is man so prone to forget how poor he really is?
4. What did Jesus do to become poor and why did He do it?
5. How should we, as poor and needy souls, approach the living God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What does it mean to be poor in the sense of the Scriptures, in the sense of Christ's words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit?" We are all poor, each one of us being just as poor as his fellow. But our poverty can be covered over with the deceptive spirit of pride and self-esteem. If one does not recognize his poverty and need, then he or she will put forth no effort to obtain what is needed. The true poor in spirit are those who are conscious and fully aware of their need. We must be poor in various ways: poor in the estimation of ourselves, poor in confidence of our abilities, poor in confidence of our mentality. We should be poor in our own righteousness, knowing that the only righteousness that will avail is that of faith in Christ Jesus. We must be poor in the

sense of our accomplishments and the feeling of how important we are or how beneficial we are. We need to feel that, regardless of how much we do, we are still unprofitable servants. We are not our own and the price we are bought with was paid by Someone else. We should be poor in the estimation of our own judgment and ideas. "...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." I Corinthians 8:1-2. We should be poor in rank. Paul counted himself as less than the least of all saints. (Ephesians 3:8.) Humility is something that when you think you have it, you have lost it. If a person thinks he is real spiritual, he is not as spiritual as he thinks. Satan seeks to elevate us and inflate the estimation of ourselves. Let us be on our guard. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Are you thankful you are not a sinner? Are you able to stand on your own spiritually? Do you give of your means to the Lord's work? Are you diligent in your devotion to Him—being willing to fast if need be? Then you would make a very good Pharisee!

Our Lord illustrated this point in His parable found in Luke 18:10-14. Jesus told this parable in the presence of "righteous people." He was seeking away to get through to them of their evil ways. But it is hard for a prideful man to see himself as truly evil.

The contrasting spirit found in the publican was of being lost, unworthy and begging for God's mercy. A truly humble person is easy to entreat, easily taught and moldable—just as clay in the potter's hands. This is the spirit that our Lord displayed while here on earth. Why would we want to be anything different? Let us seek earnestly the spirit of humility. It has so much to teach us.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



NOVEMBER 20, 2005

HUMILITY TOWARD OTHERS

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Colossians 3: 12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

MEMORY VERSE: Ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. I Peter 5:5.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must have and maintain an humble, loving, forgiving and peaceable attitude toward all of our fellow men.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Romans 12:10), The Greek says, "Loving one another fervently in brotherly love, honoring one another to go before you."

(Verse 11), The Greek says, "With speed, earnestness and eagerness; not tardy, sluggish, or lazy; glowing and hot in the Holy Spirit, rendering service unto the Lord."

(Verse 12), "*patient in tribulation*": In trouble enduring and not being affected or moved from the faith. "*continuing instant in prayer*": steadfastly continuing in prayer.

(Verse 13), "*given to hospitality*": Always eager and ready to share with others of your means and home.

(Verse 16), The Greek meaning is: "Treat everyone alike; do not favor the proud and lofty, but yield to the humble; do not become wise with yourselves."

(Verse 18), "*live peaceably*": Seek peace with all men.

(Verse 19), "*give place*": Let people run over you without any resistance.

(Verse 21), "*Be not overcome of evil*": Be not conquered by evil. Do not allow yourself to be embittered or wrongfully affected by any evil that someone might do to you; but conquer it by exercising yourself to do good to the one who is doing the evil.

(Ephesians 4:31), "*clamour*": Outcry, tumult, argument, or grief.

(Colossians 3:12), "*Put on*": Invest yourself with and seek to maintain. "*elect*": Chosen. "*bowels of mercies*": Deep tender feelings of compassion.

(I Peter 5:5), "*be clothed with humility*": Put on, adapt your heart and mind to be of a lowly and humble attitude and disposition. It does not come natural, one has to diligently work at it and pursue it. "*humility*": Lowliness, without pride or selfish exaltation; a willingness to be less than the least.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The manifestations of the salvation of God and the fruits of the Holy Spirit must show up vividly in the way we conduct ourselves toward others. It is not just a life toward God, but it is also a life toward our fellow man, whoever and wherever he may be. God wants us to have right attitudes toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord, toward our husbands and wives, toward our children, toward our neighbors and with whoever we meet along

the journey of life. Let us remember the royal law, spoken of by God's law, by the Lord Jesus Himself and by His apostles: "Love thy neighbor as thou lovest thyself." From the writings of the apostle Paul we have drawn a number of precious counsels that exhibit the right spirit of humility and divine love that is not only commanded us by these faithful words of Scripture but it also proves to be the best and most rewarding way to live and conduct one's self. An humble and loving attitude toward others will help us more than anything to keep the victory over the enemy of our souls. Most of our trials and troubles come through the avenue of other fellow creatures of earth. And to know how to keep the right spirit and attitude in all the situations of life with our fellow man is vital to our success in the Christian life.

The humble Christian life is a truly happy life. Although it is attended by many tears of sorrow and suffering, keeping humble and committing one's self to God's care will help us to go through whatever comes our way. Someone said that humility is accepting and coming on down to where we really are. We do not have anything to vaunt or boast or lift ourselves up about. We have no reason for pride and self-exaltation. Everything we have and everything we are is not of ourselves. We have no lawful reason to give ourselves credit for anything. It is all the gift of God. Let us be thankful, let us enjoy God's blessings to the full, but let us not forget to be humble. We must humble ourselves constantly. Remember that it was the drawing of pride and lifting up one's self that brought sin into the world. Let us go against the spirit of selfishness and pride and put on humility after the example of our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is humility and lowliness of mind the best way to live?
2. How can we conquer and overcome in this world of sin and strife?
3. How should we treat someone who deliberately seeks to harm us?
4. What does it mean to "put on," or "be clothed with," and how can we do it?
5. Why is our attitude and conduct toward others such an important matter?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus showed us what real genuine humility is. Besides ministering to the pitiful needs of humanity, He gave His life as a ransom on the behalf of all humanity of all time. The prophet said of Him, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee (God) fell on me." (Psalm 69:9 and Romans 15:3.) Christ pleased not Himself. He sought not to defend himself and to avoid the shameful fate that awaited Him at Jerusalem. He knew that it was coming and He addressed Himself to it with courage and confidence in His Father's Word. As the apostle Paul said in Philippians 2:8, "(Christ) humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He did not try to defend Himself when He was brought up before the Sanhedrin and wrongfully accused by false witnesses. He could have gotten out of it by calling to His Father for deliverance. But He humbled Himself and became willing to bear the awful, humiliating suffering and death that the evil and hateful leaders of Israel were determined to bring upon Him. He was our example of humility and submission to God. That is why His offering of His body unto God was so acceptable and sufficient to pay the penalty for our sins. It satisfied the great heart of God for His Son to so willingly offer Himself.

How about us? Let us examine our attitude toward our fellow man, toward those who are against us, and are a trial to us. We do not have to agree with everybody, but we must be humble and kind to everybody. It does not pay to argue and contend verbally, although there will be times when we will have to speak the truth in love. We are in a contentious and self-exalted society where men are governed by thoughts of pride and vanity. The Lord can help us and the Holy Spirit will give us a mouth and wisdom that all our foes cannot gainsay nor resist. We must pray continually and seek the Lord at the throne of grace every day for help to meet the forces against us. Let us be strong and valiant and at the same time keep meek and humble.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Most of us are acquainted with Nebuchadnezzar who was the king of Babylon when it was a leading world power. The account in Daniel, chapter four, tells how he was in his palace and said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the

house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was in his mouth, God sent judgment and he lived as a beast for seven years.

Note the change of attitude and what this foreign king had learned. "At the end of the days I...lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion,...And all the inhabitant of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?... Now I...praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." Belshazzar knew what had happened to his father, Nebuchadnezzar, and what he had learned, but Belshazzar chose the way of pride. Pride will take us in the opposite direction from kindness, love, gentleness and meekness.

We have many more exhortations of scriptures, but God also will allow circumstances and situations to help keep us on the humble way. Let us look to heaven and extol and praise our Savior, the God of heaven.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

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NOVEMBER 27, 2005

THANKSGIVING, A MARK OF HUMILITY

Psalm 50:14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

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

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

Psalms 107:21 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

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

Luke 17:12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

MEMORY VERSE: In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. I Thessalonians 5:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: A hearty and earnest expression of thanks and praise to God, given consistently, is the outspringing of an humble and contrite spirit.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 50:14), "*Offer*": Render as a sacrifice. "*thanksgiving*": Adoration, expression or open declaration of gratitude, praise and appreciation. "*pay thy vows*": Reciprocate in return for His blessings your promises, vows and pledges of love to obey, honor and serve the Lord God.

(Psalm 100:3), The Hebrew expression is: "Be assured beyond all doubt that Jehovah is God above all. We did not make ourselves, but it was Him who made us to be His people and the sheep of His pasture."

(Verse 4), *"gates"*: Openings or entrance ways into His fellowship and overshadowing love. One of the most important of these gates is that of an humble and contrite heart, submitting to His will and turning from our own ways and thoughts. *"courts"*: The area that is surrounded and encircled by His walls of protection and loving care. *"bless his name"*: Express your love, adoration and appreciation for His goodness and wonderful blessings.

(Psalm 107:22), *"declare"*: Recount, enumerate, call to remembrance and continue to keep mentioning how graciously He has helped us in His great, loving mercy.

(Philippians 4:6), *"Be careful for nothing"*: Do not be anxious or worried about anything. *"prayer and supplication"*: Humble and earnest entreaty, begging, beseeching, imploring and making strong petition. This attitude and disposition in the heart of man before and toward God is the springing out of an humble and contrite spirit.

(Verse 7), *"passeth all understanding"*: Goes beyond all that we can fathom or measure. *"keep"*: Guard, protect and preserve from harm, injury and trouble.

(I Thessalonians 5:18), *"the will of God"*: The determination, purpose, desire and good pleasure of God. *"concerning you"*: Toward you, in your behalf and for your welfare.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There is nothing that pleases our heavenly Father more than to look down in our very innermost being and behold gratitude, thanks, praise, appreciation and loving adoration for Him. This is what He is desiring and longing for from us. In the 50th Psalm the Lord God is making it known that the animal sacrifices that Israel was offering up to Him was not what He really had pleasure in. He already had all of those animals and He did not need them anyway. What He really wanted was for man to express His loving praise and gratitude for the blessings He had poured out upon him. God wanted a return from the heart of man, coming back in praise and thanksgiving and expressions of decisive pledges to love and serve Him always. Horrid and woeful conditions prevail in the hearts of men who are not thankful but become vain in their imaginations, their

foolish heart being darkened. (Romans 1:21.) Woe be to men who vainly suppose that the credit for blessings enjoyed belong to themselves. In II Timothy 3:1-5 Paul describes the awful character of men in the last days and one of the things mentioned was that of being unthankful. With pride and self-praise there is no real sense of gratitude and praise to God.

Psalm 100:3 reminds us that we are the creation and offspring of God. I have wondered at the emptiness of people's minds who give no thought concerning the origination of their being. They go about as if they are their own. How good it is to recognize that we are the creation of a wonderful, gracious Being! He is looking for thanks and praise from us. Let us not be slack and forgetful of this.

We have included in our lesson the account of the ten lepers, nine of whom went their way without giving thanks to their Benefactor. But that one, a Samaritan whom the Jews were inclined to look down upon, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God. He was so thankful and, falling down on his face, he gave Jesus thanks. Oh, this has touched our heart so deeply! And then we know that Jesus felt the emptiness of the rest, for He asked the question, "Where are the nine?" Oh, let it not be that we would pass a day without expressing, not once or twice, but all through the day, thanks and praise and appreciation to our wonderful God for all He has done. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does thanksgiving and gratitude in the heart help us to be humble?
2. What causes man to forget that he was created by a higher Power?
3. How can we really bless and glorify our God as we should?
4. Why is petitioning, begging, beseeching and imploring good for the soul?
5. What does thanksgiving do to our relationship with our Maker?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

David said in Psalm 119:62, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments." Then in verse 164 he said, "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments." David must have learned to value

the Word of God. He mentions it numbers of times and that 119th Psalm is about nothing else, all 176 verses of it. It is true of the poor in spirit to appreciate and highly value the Word of God. When we have a love for God's Word and highly esteem it as we should, (like Job said in Job 23:12), more than our necessary food, it will keep away delusions and deceptions. We need to be very thankful for all of what God has communicated to us. His judgments we need not fear, for they are for our good and our protection. Oh, we need to cultivate and exercise a thankful heart. The Lord is pleased and honored when we are low down before Him in gratitude and loving appreciation.

The Samaritan leper was a fine example of expressing his gratitude to the Lord. The awfulness of leprosy was a terrible plight for these men. They had to keep at a distance from everyone. They could not be with their loved ones but just wandered around and begged for people to put out food for them. We wonder why the other nine did not think to come and offer special thanks as he did. But they were anxious to get back to their loved ones, no doubt. How about us? Do we take time to stop and offer the thanks to the Lord that He is worthy of? What kind of table-grace do we offer for the food set before us? Oh, it needs to be fervent and earnest. Paul stated in I Timothy 4:3-4 that every creature is good for food if it be received with thanksgiving and prayer. Being thankful is a vital function of the children of God. We should discipline ourselves to be expressive of our thankfulness. When we bow in prayer, we need to approach the throne of grace with much thanksgiving and praise. Our God is worthy of our giving of thanks as often as we can do it. Count your blessings and offer thanks for them. You will find that your experience with God will be sweeter and more satisfying thereby.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Show me a person who is sour, grumpy and cranky and I will show you an unthankful person who is focused on themselves and their earthly surroundings. Some of the secrets contained in the mystery of godliness are that a child of God has found reason to be thankful and is focusing their mind and heart on things that are honest, true, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of virtue and praise. The promise that follows this scripture in Philipians 4:8 says, "...and the God of peace shall be with you." It is impossible for the unregenerate person to think continually

on these virtuous things because self and sin still has control of their heart and the God of peace is not with them. But God has a plan to change a person completely by giving them a new heart of flesh. He will give them a heart that is tender and responsive to the dealings of God and the needs of others; one that is filled with thanksgiving and praise for His mercies that are new every morning.

One may say, "But you don't have to live with who I live with and put up with what I put up with or your life would be miserable too." It is true that another person can make your life miserable but being cross and upset all of the time will not help the situation. A thankful person has the power of God in their life that can radically change situations. Through prayer and a cheerful, thankful disposition even the hearts of hardened sinners have been touched and melted. Some have been brought to repentance because of the sweet spirit and godly example some saint has shown while going through hard trials.

Leviticus 22:29 says, "And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will." Sometimes we have tried to teach our children to say "thank you" when someone has done them a favor and have at times insisted that they give that response. However, for one to be truly blessed of the Lord, the response of thankfulness must be voluntary and come from a grateful heart. May the Lord help us to have a heart that freely flows with thanksgiving. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey



DECEMBER 4, 2005

THE EXALTATION OF SELF

Isaiah 14:4 Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!

13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:...

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.

15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

II Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

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

Luke 18:9 And he (Jesus) 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.

Matthew 23:8 Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.

11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

MEMORY VERSE: He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: To allow ourselves to be lifted up with pride is to sin against God and bring down His judgment upon us to condemnation. But if we would walk with God and enjoy the blessings of His favor we must humble ourselves in submission and faith.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isaiah 14:4), "*oppressor*": Exactor; hard driver; a taxing, harassing tyrant. "*golden city*": The Hebrew meaning for this is "one who covets and gathers gold or worldly gain."

(Verse 15), "*hell*": The Hebrew word is "Sheol," which corresponds with the Greek word "hades," which means the world of the dead, the realm of departed spirits.

(II Thessalonians 2:3), "*falling away*": The word from the Greek is "apostasy," which is the decline of true religion and spiritual life. Here is shown Paul's foresight and prophecy of the corruption of professed Christianity and the rise of the false and corrupt church. "*son of perdition*": This is the same expression as what Jesus used in reference to Judas Iscariot in John 17:12. Paul was referring to sinful man exalting himself to leadership in the professed church.

(Verse 4), "*exalteth himself above all that is called God*": This is man rule, a practice that developed where men took upon themselves to direct the worship service, taking the place of the Holy Spirit leadership.

(Luke 18:9), "*others*": Everyone else.

(Verse 10), "*publican*": Tax collector.

(Verse 11), "*with himself*": To himself.

(Verse 13), "*smote upon his breast*": Adam Clarke comments that "smiting the breast is a token of excessive grief. It seems to indicate a desire in the repentant soul to punish the heart through which the deplored sin had been committed."

(Matthew 23:8), "*Rabbi*": Master.

(Verse 10), "*master*": A leader, guide, or teacher.

(Micah 6:8), "*walk humbly with thy God*": The Hebrew expression is "to humble thyself to walk with God."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is concerning the tendency of man to exalt himself instead of humbling himself. We begin with Isaiah's warnings of judgment against the king of Babylon, who exalted himself above God. This could have directly referred to Nebuchadnezzar, who exalted himself as was related in the book of the prophet Daniel. This has been erroneously believed and taught to be satan and his supposed usurpation against God and his being cast out of heaven. But this is speaking to the king of Babylon, a mortal man who exalted himself against the God of heaven.

Then we bring in what Paul spoke in his prophecy of the apostasy that was coming and was fulfilled in latter times. The early morning Church went forth triumphant, as is pictured in

the book of Revelations for about 270 years. The falling away came and with it came the rise of the Mother of harlots, the Roman Catholic Church, with its popery, man rule and false teachings. As Paul brought out, it all came about because there were those men who lost their vision of the meekness and humility of Christ and who sought to exalt themselves to places of preeminence.

We also include in our lesson Christ's comparison of the Pharisee and the publican. He spoke this parable with those in mind who trusted in their own righteousness and looked down on others, being ignorant of the righteousness of the true faith. This Pharisee was typical of the spirit of the Pharisee sect that contested our Lord Jesus.

Then we have Christ's counsel about titles and lifting up of leaders. We cannot help but notice that his counsel of not being called fathers has been completely ignored and cast aside by the Roman Catholic Church who call their church leaders by that title name. It all adds up to the truth of how easily church leaders can be lifted up in their hearts and lose the humility that Christ taught us to strive for.

In Micah 6:6-8 we find the prophet asking the question about how we should come before the LORD God. Various offerings are mentioned, but it is evident that none of these will prevail with God. Then he speaks of what God is really wanting, the final of which was to walk humbly with God. This is all a warning for us to be on our guard against the lifting up of ourselves. Let us be sure that we will be tempted. But the Lord can help us to overcome if we will watch carefully and pray earnestly with this in mind.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What warning did the Lord give through Isaiah concerning exalting self?
2. What causes man to be so easily influenced to seek to exalt himself?
3. What can we do to escape that snare of pride and self-exaltation?
4. What causes men to want to be called by important sounding titles?
5. What does the Lord seek for and require of us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When a person seeks to exalt himself it is plainly evident that he is totally ignorant of God's Word and counsel. "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility." Proverbs 18:12. A good illustration of this I caught sight of when I was at a grain elevator when truckloads of wheat were being brought in. The wheat was to be elevated up to be stored in the tall elevator. But before it could be elevated up it had to be emptied out of the truck to fall into special openings in the floor. Before it could go up, the wheat had to go down. I thought that this was a good comparison to us and our being elevated up to heavenly places in Christ. Before we can be raised up we must humble ourselves with a broken and contrite heart in repentance and faith in Christ. It was spoken by the apostle Paul of Christ in Ephesians 4:8-10 ascending up on high and leading captivity captive and giving gifts to men as was prophesied in Psalm 68:18. In reference to that prophecy Paul said this: "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth, (which was death and the grave)? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Yes, before Jesus could be exalted to His height of glory at the right hand of God, He had to humble Himself to the death of the cross. And so it is with us. If we would be used of the Lord in His work, we must humble ourselves to obey His Word and Holy Spirit in all that is taught therein. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The lesson today reminded me of a message Bro. Clifford Wilson preached when I was a young Christian. He warned us of people and religious movements that exalted man above Christ. The Scripture he used still stands out in my mind: II Corinthians 11:20, "For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face." Who is it that suffers when someone gets lifted up? It's the Lord's church, His little ones, His sheep.

Think about it. When someone has his mind on his own selfish agenda, he has little time to receive direction from the Lord about where the Lord would have him serve, whom the Lord would have him rescue, what the Lord would have him to say.

Many people who would have gladly received the truth from his mouth continue to starve for lack of spiritual food. Some will get discouraged altogether and go another way. Maybe a family will fall apart because of lack of spiritual instruction and admonition. Little children will be hurt, teenagers will be hard and embittered. The chain reaction of pain resulting from a gospel worker who got lifted up is almost incomprehensible.

Bring it home. In a family, if the husband and father becomes egotistical and stubborn, think how that family, that wife and children and grandchildren, suffer. If the wife and mother gets lifted up in pride, steps out of her place of meekness and submission and begins to seek after the prestige and glamour of this world, consider how she brings pain and sorrow to those she loves the most.

Maybe you never considered the suffering that is caused by selfish exaltation. We each have a realm of influence, a mission that God is calling us to fulfill. Pride will keep us from that mission.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



DECEMBER 11, 2005

THE EVILS OF PRIDE

I Samuel 2:3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

Psalms 12:3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

Psalms 119:21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Proverbs 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 14:3 In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

Proverbs 16:5 Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 21:4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

Proverbs 28:25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

Isaiah 2:11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

Isaiah 23:9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

MEMORY VERSE: A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Proverbs 29:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Pride will bring everlasting destruction to everyone who does not conquer and overcome it in their heart and life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(I Samuel 2:3), *"Talk no more so exceeding proudly"*: Do not multiply words of self-esteem and contempt for others. Be careful of what you allow to come out of your mouth. *"arrogancy"*: Without modesty, carefulness or godly shame. *"God of knowledge"*: He knows everything and observes every thought and attitude of the heart of man. Nothing escapes His all-seeing Eye and all-hearing Ear. *"actions are weighed"*: He is taking note of what is behind every action and move that we make.

(Psalm 12:3), *"flattering"*: Smooth, crafty speech seeking to mislead and hide the real purpose.

(Verse 4), *"With our tongue we will prevail"*: There are many people who get through life with their big talk. They give little heed to the warning of our Saviour in Matthew 12:36 when He said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

(Proverbs 8:13), *"froward mouth"*: That which speaketh what is not right and acceptable with God.

(Proverbs 11:2), *"shame"*: Disgrace and dishonour before God.

(Proverbs 13:10), *"contention"*: Strife, quarrelling and division.

(Proverbs 14:3), "*rod of pride*": This is a rod to hurt and injure others, but the main one who will be hurt is the one who wields the rod.

(Proverbs 16:5), "*though hand join in hand*": No matter how much support and cooperation one gets from other vain and foolish fellows, his pride and vanity will one day receive its just recompense from the Almighty.

(Verse 18), "*fall*": Stumbling, tottering ruin.

(Proverbs 21:4), "*plowing*": The toiling and effort made for one's own selfish gain. Such was the plowing of Cain, who plowed and tilled the ground for ungodly purposes.

(Proverbs 28:25), "*fat*": Satisfied and full.

(Isaiah 2:11), "*the LORD alone*": The Lord God will not share His glory with another.

(Isaiah 23:9), "*stain*": Bore it with holes, dissolve and break it in pieces.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Pride is really not a sin among sins. It is rather the taproot of all sin. And the main weapon of pride is the tongue. Most of the scriptures in our lesson today have to do with the mouth, the tongue and the words that are brought forth thereby.

Our first scripture from I Samuel 2:3 is part of the prayer and testimony of Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel. She spoke these words after she had brought her firstborn son, given to her from the Lord, to the temple in fulfillment of her promise to the Lord when praying for a son. She rejoiced in the Lord greatly, but in our scripture she speaks a warning. Hannah had an adversary that provoked her greatly in the time before she conceived Samuel. (I Samuel 1:6-7.) It does not say who this adversary was, but I am of the opinion that it was the other wife of her husband. No telling what all this woman said to make Hannah fret because the Lord had shut up her womb. But Hannah had prayed earnestly and vowed a vow to give her child back to God. Now the Lord had answered her prayer and she is warning this adversary to take heed to the fear of God. The rod of pride had worked in this other woman against Hannah.

We can observe various elements pictured of pride. There is the smug idea that one's power of speech is his own. "Who is lord over us?" There is a lifting up of one's self, a self-confidence and a questioning of God having any part in the matter. Our world

today is stained with pride and self-achievement. We see contention showing up because of pride. If a man did not think so highly of himself he would not put forth such an effort to promote himself.

Here is a serious warning in our lesson. Pride will not go unpunished. Pride must be dealt with. If it is not eliminated and destroyed through the grace of God, it will be dealt with at the judgment in the last day. It is for us to take heed to this and let the Lord God search and examine our hearts that we overcome this evil and cultivate a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What attitude of heart should we cultivate to help to overcome pride?
2. What does pride cause a person to think and feel about self?
3. Is it possible for us to have our hearts perfect and free from pride?
4. Is it possible for us to be tempted to be proud?
5. What measures should we take to have the victory over pride?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is a sad condition in humanity that people are not aware of the danger and harm that there is in pride. The seed of sin in the nature of man promotes pride and self-esteem. But people are not aware of the awful destruction that pride will bring. I John 2:16 tells us that the things in the world, namely, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Pride causes people to do many things. Pride causes people to want to adorn this outward body for the admiration of the opposite sex. It causes people to undress and expose their nakedness for that reason, also. People fight, steal, lie, drink, smoke, gamble and lust after material wealth because of pride. They do not realize that it is pride and therefore they have no incentive to seek for deliverance from such.

It means so much to be aware of the evils of pride. When we become aware of the woes of this horrible sickness of the mind and heart and where it will take us, it will cause us to seek for help to overcome it. We have the lesson of King Nebuchadnezzar

in the 4th chapter of Daniel where he learned about pride and its evil. God sent him a dream that foretold his future of being dethroned and driven from among men out into the wild to live seven years as a beast. Daniel was one of the king's wise men and he interpreted the dream and gave Nebuchadnezzar warning of what to do—to break off his sins by righteousness and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. But he paid no heed and one year later it came to pass. He spent seven years out in the wild with a beast's heart, living like an animal. Then God brought him back to his kingdom, a much wiser man. Now he spoke of God, the King of heaven, "all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase." Daniel 4:37.

We could name others who had their bouts with pride. There was Judas, who coveted money for himself and was willing to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Haman, chief adviser to the king, wanted everybody to bow down to him and sought to exterminate a whole nation because one man would not bow to him. Each of these men met a horrible end. Pride does not pay. Humility and following the example of our Lord Jesus will bring us rich dividends of happiness and the promise of life without end.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Just imagine for a moment what pride personified would be: "Let me introduce myself. My name is Pride. My parents are Strife and Vain Glory. I have two brothers, Rebellion and Emulation. I also have three sisters, Envy, Self-Esteem and Jealousy. My residence is in the town of Vanity Fair. But I am hardly ever home because I stay busy traveling the world over, teaching men and women to love only themselves. I am not interested in creating peaceful environments, as that would mean apologizing and I never say "I'm sorry." I am very well learned—I know everything and I'm never wrong."

Is it any wonder that "A proud look" was the first item listed of the seven abominations the Lord hates. (Proverbs 6:17.) The Lord knows just what we came from—dust—dirt if you will. And He knows just what we will return to—dust—dirt. It would behoove us to keep this in mind, especially when we are tempted to lift ourselves, or others, up. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Galatians 6:3.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

DECEMBER 18, 2005

GOD'S INVITATION TO PEACE WITH HIM

Isaiah 57:1 The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

2 He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood.

10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

12 I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;

14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

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

16 For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.

19 I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.

20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

MEMORY VERSE: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Ephesians 2:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The almighty Creator and Lord of Heaven and Earth has made a special appeal to the souls of men separated from Him by their sins to repent and return again to His favor and He will heal them and give them peace.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isaiah 57:4), "*Against whom*": On or toward whom. "*sport*": To flirt with; to seek to make attractive and delightful. "*make a wide mouth*": To talk big, to impress and talk with flattering speech.

(Verse 10), The Hebrew says, "In the length of your way you labored; you uttered not 'Despair!' You found the life of your hand, therefore you were not sick." This is spoken to the wayward in sin, and is true with so many poor, deluded people. They are struggling hard in their foolish and lustful way, but it is hard for them to come to the place where they will acknowledge that their way is useless. They will not give up but will persistently pursue their course. If perhaps they are able to overcome their frustrations and find success and peace seemingly, it is not the true peace, yet it is enough to keep them from being sick of sin and ready to turn to the Lord.

(Verse 12), The Hebrew says, "I will make known your righteousness and your works that they will not benefit you." This is the mercy of God in Holy Spirit conviction to the soul of man. He can and will bring it to mind, the helplessness and hopelessness of their state of life. The Holy Spirit has done this with many souls and made them aware that all their best efforts and works are a failure and that they need the saving grace of Jesus.

(Verse 13), "*companies*": Friends and associates gathered during one's sinful life. "*putteth his trust*": takes refuge.

(Verse 14), "*cast ye up*": Raise up; elevate. This means a desire for a higher plain of life than they have found. Sin loses its sweetness and the soul longs for something that will lift it up to higher ground. And those who answer the call of the Lord are reaching for higher heavenly things. "*prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock*": Clear the way of all obstacles, hindrances, worldly clutter, enticements and all causes to fall or offend.

(Verse 15), "*revive*": To bring to life.

(Verse 17), "*wroth*": Angry. "*frowardly*": Against God's way.

(Verse 18), "*I have seen his ways, and will heal him*": Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The Lord God has beheld the forbidden paths we have followed and He yearns to turn us from our foolish ways to His blessed way so that He can bring healing to our souls. "*mourners*": These represent the mourning and sorrow we suffer for the troubles sin has brought upon us.

(Verse 19), "*I create the fruit of the lips*": God desires to put a new song in our mouth and give us a testimony of His wonderful grace and what it can do for the soul. "*far off*": The Gentiles. "*near*": The Jews.

(Ephesians 2:13), "*ye who sometimes were far off*": In this scripture Paul is speaking of the Gentiles and is referring to our scripture in Isaiah 57:19. In this writing Paul brings out how that Christ is our peace, making the Jew and the Gentile united in one body by the cross, abolishing the enmity between them, making them one new man, "and came and preached peace to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." How wonderful that God has fulfilled the prophecy in our lesson by opening the door of faith to all nations! As Paul also said in Romans 10:12, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Praises be to His wonderful Name!

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is one of several passionate messages of God sent through His prophet Isaiah to the souls of men. We are very confident that this message is authentic and true in every sense of the word. God has wisely preserved it through the ages; we are blessed to receive it even today. And it has a special impact upon us when we read how Paul referred to this very scripture in his epistle to the Ephesians and that is one reason why we include part of it, (Ephesians 2:13), as our Memory Verse. Whenever you see an Old Testament Scripture quoted or referred to by the New Testament writers, it gives us a clue to the right interpretation and application of such Scripture.

It is interesting to note what is spoken in the first two verses of our lesson concerning the dead who die in the Lord. What he says here is beautiful and comforting. Although many are not aware of it, the righteous who die are taken to paradise to a peaceful and sheltered rest.

After this the Lord directs His Word to the souls of men who are lost in sin and transgression. He calls them children of transgression, a seed of falsehood. That is just what we are in our original state of separation from God. He speaks of the woeful condition and weary state we are in and how we keep on struggling, trying to pull things together anyway and yet, how useless it all is. "Thy righteousness and thy works shall not profit thee." (Verse 12.)

We want to be impressed with the thought that this is a message of the almighty God to us. He is speaking to all mankind of all ages. He wants to make peace with man. God loves to have fellowship heart to heart with us. He does not want things to continue in a state of separation from His creation. So He is making a special appeal for us to come to terms with Him. He wants that troubled sea of strife in the hearts of wicked men to be stilled to quietness and rest. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who is the Lord, through the prophet, directing His message to?
2. What does the sinner many times do instead of humbling himself before God?
3. Who is it that the high and lofty One will dwell with?
4. What is God's longing and desire to do for the souls of men?
5. Why is it in the best interests for men to return to God's favor?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God is yearning to be reconciled with the souls of men who are separated from Him by their transgressions. For this cause the Lord made a way for us to be reconciled through the offering of His Son, Jesus Christ, once for all. II Corinthians 5:19 tells us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God wants to be reconciled with man, but He is requiring man to humbly acknowledge where they have been wrong and be willing to change their ways

to please the Lord. That is only right and fair. If God would accept man without man making the proper adjustments and corrections on his part, there would be no real reconciliation. The sin that caused the rift between God and man in the first place would still be there if there were no real repentance and amending of ways.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I have a new appreciation for the extent of God's love and mercy as the call continues to go out to those that are afar off. One of these calls came through the prophet Jeremiah when Israel was backslidden. Over and over he called after them; not once or twice but many times. "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 3:1.

Although they kept rejecting the call, it kept going out. I look back in my own life at specific times and places that I remember clearly today where I told the Lord "later," "not now." I am thankful that He didn't give up but kept coming and knocking and I am glad I finally opened the door. Oh, what I had been missing out on! He had everything that I really wanted.

Dear saints, after the Lord's example, let us keep sending out the call though it be rejected and turned down many times. Let us keep doing what we can physically, financially and spiritually to see the call of the Lord continue.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



DECEMBER 25, 2005

THE WAY OF THE LORD

Jeremiah 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Psalms 119:1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

Proverbs 4:18 The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

19 The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble.

Proverbs 15:24 The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath

Isaiah 35:8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Matthew 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

John 14:6 Jesus saith, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Psalms 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

MEMORY VERSE: I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. Psalm 119:59.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We should seek earnestly to know and understand the way of the Lord and be diligent to walk therein. His way is holy, humble, above this sinful world and narrow, but it is good, bright, safe and sure, the only way that brings rest to our souls and will take us to eternal glory.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Jeremiah 6:16), "*old paths*": The way of the Lord that was laid down from eternity. "*the good way*": The way that is profitable, beneficial, worthwhile, well pleasing to God and that will lead us through this short life and take us to everlasting life.

(Psalm 119:1), "*Blessed*": This word in the Hebrew is an exclamation which says: "How happy!" "*undefiled*": Upright, pure, holy and unspotted from this world.

(Verse 14), "*the way of thy testimonies*": The way pointed out by the witness God gave to us before the world began.

(Proverbs 4:18), The Hebrew says, "The path of the righteous is as a bright light going and shining till the day is established." How wonderful to walk in the light of God and have the Day Star shining in His fullness in our hearts and lives!

(Verse 19), "*they know not at what they stumble*": Christ Jesus was prophesied to be a stone of stumbling and rock of offense. (Isaiah 8:14.) People are offended at Christ and stumble at His teachings because they do not know Him nor recognize Who He really is. Their way is spiritual darkness and ignorance. It does not have to be this way, but people are free moral agents and choose for themselves what course they will take. We are all makers of our own destiny.

(Proverbs 15:24), "*above*": This is more properly put as "upward." The Christian's desires are heavenward. We seek those things which are above where Christ sits at the right hand of God. We are pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And that prize is to attain to the resurrection of the dead (Philippians 3:11), being called by the God of all grace unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus. (I Peter 5:10.) Thus the way of the Lord is an exalted highway that has an upward bearing.

(Isaiah 35:8), "*the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err*": Wayfaring means one who walks the way. I believe this refers to people, though simple and ignorant of man's wisdom, who will steadfastly walk the holy way and they shall not go astray.

(Matthew 7:13), "*strait*": Narrow because of obstacles standing close about.

(Verse 14), "*narrow*": Crowded, tight, squeezed, attended with much opposition and affliction.

(Psalm 119:59), "*thought*": Pondered, considered, weighed, mused, evaluated and examined them in the light of God. This

is a very important matter for us mortal beings to do. If we will be honest and open-hearted and sincerely humble before God, He will help us to see that our ways are not the best and will help our spirits to make the move to correct them.

LESSON BACKGROUND

A person's destination depends largely on the road that he is traveling. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Isaiah 53:6. In our scriptures today we are beholding the serious matter of what way we are taking through this short, earthly life. We are so inclined to take our own way. We are not aware of this danger as it seems so natural and in order for us to do what we want to do. If a thing seems to promise enjoyment or some kind of gain for us, we endeavor to head in that direction. If we see danger and hurt, we draw back and try to avoid it. But it is our vision that gets us in trouble. It is how we are looking at things and what values guide our minds. We need the influence of God's Word to guide us. It was the attraction of being wise that influenced Mother Eve to choose to partake of the forbidden fruit. Ever since then the devil has sought to allure the hearts of men to go his way because he makes it seem attractive and beneficial. Thus we have these two things put before us: life and good, death and evil. (Deuteronomy 30:15.)

Our scripture in Jeremiah 6: 16 tells us to stand in the ways and see. Look! Open your eyes and mind. Look on this world and what it has to offer. Is there anything else? Yes, there is God and His promises. Seek for the ancient paths taken by men and women who feared God. See how they came out. Look at Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Moses. They all had to make decisions. We will be responsible for the way we take in life. Face up to this matter soberly.

Jesus tells us that the way that leads to life, the true life, is attended with much opposition and resistance. Very few find that upward way. It is contrary to the current of the world around us. The way of death is broad and with very few obstacles. But it leads to eternal damnation. We have to make a decision on this matter. Is it worth it to avoid the pressures and difficulties that are with the upward way and go the way of the world and lose our lives forever?

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the way that Jeremiah called the old paths and the good way?
2. With what our scriptures say, how would you describe the way of the Lord?
3. What are some of the benefits found in the way of the Lord?
4. Why is the way of life the safest way to go?
5. Is it possible for us to have in us a wicked way and not realize it?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Some of the mistakes we, as mortals make come from being hasty and not taking time to pray and study about our ways and the course we are about to take. It takes time and patience to get the mind of the Lord and many times we are tempted to go ahead anyway regardless of the outcome. This is folly and this is very risky. I remember one move we prayed about for over a year before we got the mind of the Lord. How much does knowing the will of God mean to us? Are we willing to wait on Him? We need to ponder, pray and wait on the Lord for the answer. It is a blessed experience that one cherishes always when we get the mind of the Lord and obey Him. Too many people fail to see the importance of this and their lives prove out their failure. God knows what is best and it pays to seek Him with the whole heart.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In Exodus 33:13-17 Moses was communing with the Lord in the tabernacle at a very difficult time in his leadership of the children of Israel. Earlier he returned with the commandments of the Lord and saw the camp worshipping a golden calf. In his displeasure he broke the tablets of the Lord and he called for those who were on the Lord's side to separate themselves and consecrate themselves to the Lord and they slew about 3,000 men of the camp. Then the Lord also sent a plague on the people. Following these stressful circumstances, the Lord told Moses to lead them to the land that He had promised them and He would

send an angel before them to drive out the inhabitants. Moses was not content with this arrangement and He went into the tabernacle to worship the Lord. Notice some of the conversation He had with the Lord.

"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go *with thee*, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that *are* upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken:..."

Moses was humbly entreating the Lord to show him His way. He also was begging the Lord to allow His presence to go with them and be a witness that they were His people. God granted Moses' request and revealed His divine will for the people by giving the commandments again. Only by the people obeying His will could He allow His presence to dwell with them. But when His presence was with them they were victorious in their battles, their enemies fled before them and there was great power in their midst.

There is great need of people today to follow the pattern of Moses and humbly entreat the Lord to show them His way and to seek the precious Holy Spirit to dwell with them. It will require obedience to His Word and His divine will as revealed by His Spirit. It will require a separation from the world and the evil things that He cannot dwell with, but the power that will be manifested by His presence and the victory, peace, joy and light that He brings is beyond human comprehension. It is truly worth every sacrifice and the light that will illuminate our pathway will cause us to see the way more clearly and that Light will become brighter and brighter as we near the glorious shore of eternal bliss.

Thank the Lord for allowing His Son to come to this earth to make a way for our salvation and for giving His Word and sending His Holy Spirit to dwell within our hearts and clearly show us the way from earth to heaven. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey

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