

Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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Volume 38

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**Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church**
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THEME FOR THIRD QUARTER, 2006

We are greatly inspired and directed of the Holy Spirit to bring forth a series of lessons from the teachings of Christ. Jesus, the anointed Son of God, born of the virgin Mary of the seed of David according to the flesh, has been declared through the resurrection from the dead to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. His Word is with power and truth. He has proven Himself over and over again to be the Master of wisdom, knowledge and counsel. We are grateful to God that He has preserved these holy Scriptures that portray all that Jesus did and taught. May the Lord bless these lessons to our hearts is our earnest prayer.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee



JULY 2, 2006

THE VALUE AND FUNCTION OF PRAYER TO GOD

Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he (Jesus) was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

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

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

MEMORY VERSE: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is the most wonderful and profitable privilege to be able to go to God in prayer with all of our burdens and needs, to commune with Him with assurance that He will send us the help that we need.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 11:2), "*pray*": To implore or beseech; to ask or make request; to beg; to supplicate. To supplicate means to kneel down and humbly and earnestly ask for. "*Hallowed be thy name*": Thy name I hold as sacred, holy, in reverence, deep honor, and respect, as dear, precious and highly esteemed. Let it be lifted up and glorified in my life. "*Thy kingdom come*": Let Thy kingdom come and rule my heart and life. Thy kingdom is loved, desired, longed for and welcomed. Let it rule every part of

me and be my supreme treasure. *"Thy will be done"*: Let Thy purpose, good pleasure, determination, choice, decree and desire be fully accomplished in me. It is not *my* will or desire that I would have fulfilled, but what *Thou* seest is glorifying and pleasing to Thee for my eternal good.

(Luke 11:3), *"day by day"*: For each day, one day at a time. God gives grace for the soul and provisions for the body on a daily basis. Jesus counseled us in Matthew 6:34: "Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow will take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." We have enough of life's woes and ills to deal with today without burdening our minds about what may be on the morrow. *"daily bread"*: The needed supply of food and provision.

(Luke 11:4), *"indebted to us"*: That which people owe, have failed in duty or are under obligation to us. *"lead us not"*: Do not bring us. *"temptation"*: Adversity. *"evil"*: That which is hurtful or destructive.

(Luke 11:8), *"Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend"*: The man has shut down for the night, his household is in bed, and he is not inclined to break the relaxation of the late hour for the benefit of his neighbor, who is his friend, and whom he knows will not be offended for declining his request. *"yet because of his importunity"*: To importune here means to urge or entreat persistently or repeatedly. He will go against his own wishes to respond to the persistent entreaty of his needy friend.

(Luke 18:3), *"avenge"*: Punish. *"adversary"*: Enemy or opposer.

(Luke 18:7), *"avenge his own elect"*: Bring about just retribution to his chosen. *"cry"*: Call or shout for help in a striving and earnest manner. *"though he bear long with them"*: Being long suffering, forbearing and patient over them. This indicates that God does not always immediately relieve the strain and stress His children suffer. He does allow the tribulation to stretch over a period of time. Here is where we must have patience and faith to wait and endure.

(Luke 18:8), *"speedily"*: When God's time for deliverance is come He will move and work quickly or in a brief space of time. *"Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh"*: The Greek says,

"But the Son of man coming then." This can be applied to our temporal relief in answers to prayer, but it is also more importantly pointing to the coming of Christ at the last when He will deliver His elect from the sorrows of this present evil world. Everything points to that final great victory. Will He find faith, that enduring and unfailing confidence, when He comes? It is up to us.

(Philippians 4:6), *"Be careful for nothing"*: Be not anxious about anything. Do not worry, fret or complain, but rather learn to commit things to God and hold fast to your confidence.

(Matthew 6:6), *"closet"*: Inner room or chamber for privacy and retirement, referring to our spirit and prayer in secret, from that hidden life with Christ in God in which we can shut out the world with its toil and strife and look steadfastly to Heaven. *"openly"*: In the clear light.

(Hebrews 4:16), Let us quote from the Greek Interlinear Translation: "Let us draw near, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and grace we may find for timely help."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our Lord and Saviour was a Man of prayer. On one occasion He "went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Luke 6:12. He communed continually with His heavenly Father. He was a prime example of praying "without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17. In our lesson today we have some of His teaching concerning the value and importance of prayer and supplication before the Lord God Almighty. It is so vital for us to follow His example and teachings and live prayerful lives in communion with Him at the throne of grace.

We have two parables in our lesson that Christ gave as figures of fervent prayer. Let us consider them seriously as we consider the importance of praying to Him. No one can live a successful Christian life of service to God and to humanity without a consistent prayer life. Jesus is our High Priest, seated at the right hand of God, making intercession for us. It is life's greatest privilege and opportunity to go to Him in prayer and receive His wonderful grace to help as we pass through this world of sorrow and trouble.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is prayer and communion with God so vitally important?
2. What special point is brought out in the two parables He gave?
3. What should we do if the answer to prayer is withheld or delayed?
4. What kind of faith is the Lord looking for in His chosen people?
5. What three things are mentioned first in the Lord's prayer?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is very important for us to realize that we must live our prayers as well as speak them with words. Prayer should contain expressions that are in our hearts and attitudes. It must be in our heart this way. The model prayer that He gave us contains expressions of worship, praise, honor, trust, confidence, submission and obedience that we must make a reality in our every day life. It is more than just a form of words to repeat, but rather the standard of a life of holiness and faithfulness.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The illustration in our lesson taken from Luke 18 about the widow that wearied the unjust judge has a special message that Jesus wants us to understand. That message was, "...that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" The Lord is not willing that any perish and He does not want us to faint, therefore, we ought to always pray. When times are tough financially and we don't know how we can make ends meet, it is time to pray. When trials and adversity are weighing heavily on our shoulders and we feel we can't go on, it is time to pray. When temptation is threatening to destroy our relationship with God, it is time to pray. When sorrow and grief touches our life, we need to pray. When the blessings of the Lord fill our life and all is going smoothly, don't forget to pray and offer our thanks to God for His goodness.

One song says, "prayer will change the night to day." Prayer is our connection to God, the source of all power and strength.

Paul said that the Lord revealed to him that, "...my strength is made perfect in weakness...." Through prayer we can find strength to carry on with victory no matter what is touching our life.

When it seems that our prayers are not bringing the results we are looking for, then we should keep praying. Don't give up! It is time to remember the blessings and answers to prayer the Lord has given in the past and give thanks for them.

One song says, "Oh, what peace we often forfeit." When things are heavy upon us there is a wonderful peace that we find by emptying our heart at the throne of grace.

When the answer to our petition is delayed we should confidently understand that our heavenly Father is working out what is best for our soul and for those around us. His answer, when it comes, will encompass a much broader scope than our feeble minds can comprehend and we will be in awe of His greatness.

Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Prayer is an important ingredient in our lives that falls under the category of "well doing." May we not miss the reward that is in His hand because of our unbelief, but continually seek Him in faith and He will bless our soul and we will develop a better understanding of His nature and His divine will for our life.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



JULY 9, 2006

CHRIST FORETELLS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 7:37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.

20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 16:7 It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

MEMORY VERSE: When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. John 15:26.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus made known to His disciples that He was soon to ascend up on high to His heavenly Father, the Almighty God, and that He would pour out upon them the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit who would comfort them, teach them all things, and guide them in the truth and their work for Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 7:38), *"out of his belly"*: Out of his innermost being.

(John 7:39), *"Holy Ghost"*: Holy Spirit. The word "ghost" is translated from the same word in the Greek as the word "spirit." Its basic meaning is "a current or breath of air." The Spirit of God is the breath of God. God breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life and man became a living soul. Genesis 2:7. In John 20:22, it said that Jesus breathed on His disciples, and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." When the Holy Spirit came it sounded like a rushing mighty wind that filled all the house where they were sitting. Acts 2:2. So the Holy Spirit is the Breath of the Almighty. Job 32:8 said, "There is a spirit in man: and the inspiration (breath) of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

(John 14:16), *"pray the Father"*: Petition, entreat and make request unto God. *"Comforter"*: One who brings consolation and intercedes on our behalf.

(John 14:17), *"withyou, and shall be inyou"*: Christ and the Holy Spirit was in their presence, but after Jesus ascended to the right Hand of God and was given the power and authority to send the gracious Gift of the Holy Spirit into the world, that sweet Holy Spirit would enter into the very heart and inner most being of every person who would receive Him.

(John 14:18), *"comfortless"*: The Greek word is "orphans," which means bereaved or parentless. Their blessed and precious Lord and Master Jesus was to be taken from their midst, but He was to be replaced by the wonderful Holy Spirit, Who would be able to enter right into the inner man. From this sacred temple of the spirit and body of man, God would work, guide, inspire, strengthen, comfort, enlighten and oversee the operation of His Church in this world.

(John 16:7), *"expedient"*: Profitable or to your advantage.

(John 16:8), *"reprove"*: Admonish, convict, convince and rebuke.

(John 16:11), *"the prince of this world is judged"*: Satan and his power over the souls of men has been defeated and condemned and we can triumph over him and all of his influence and power.

(John 16:12), *"bear"*: Receive, take in and understand.

(John 16:13), The Greek translation says, "But when comes that One, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears He will

peak, and He will announce to you things coming." The Holy Spirit speaks to the soul of man what God the Father speaks through His Son, Jesus Christ. What a wonderful network of communication! The Father speaks, the Son conveys it to the Holy Spirit, who sounds it into the heart of the child of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem to the Jewish feast of the tabernacles. It was on the last day of the feast that He stood and cried out His invitation for men to come and drink of the water of life. And John, the writer of this gospel, inserts the truth that this water of life was the Holy Spirit that was promised. This seems to have been toward the latter phase of His ministry.

It was probably in the upper room where He and His disciples had kept the Passover and where Jesus had instituted the ordinances of feet washing and the Lord's supper that the Lord had His final meeting with them. It was during this meeting that He spoke those wonderful words foretelling the Holy Spirit that was to come in His place after He was to be taken back to the Father. Later, after His death and resurrection and just before He was taken up to heaven, He counseled them that He was going to send the promise of the Father upon them, and that they were to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until they were endued with power from on high. Jesus knew what He was doing and what the Father was going to do. He lived in close communion with God and was fully aware of the procedure He was taking.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus have to leave His disciples?
2. What did He promise would take His place?
3. What are some of the things He said the Holy Spirit would do?
4. Where does the Holy Spirit get the things He speaks to us?
5. How did He say we can qualify to receive the Holy Spirit?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The infilling of the precious Holy Spirit from God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, is the greatest blessing and the

highest honor that one can ever attain to in this world. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is for every child of God. You do not receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit when you are born again. Being saved and partaking of the heavenly birth is done through the operation of the Holy Spirit, but we do not get the fullness of the Spirit at that time. To receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit we must be persuaded of our need of Him and we must seek earnestly for that unspeakable Gift. We must consecrate our lives fully to Christ and put everything on the altar of sacrifice to God. Paul put it this way: "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." Romans 12:1. We must make that perfect sacrifice and consecration to God and His will. Every person must seek for this blessed experience of sanctification and the infilling of the Holy Spirit with all their heart. If we will make the perfect and acceptable sacrifice of all things to God, God is faithful and will send the Holy Spirit in a way that we can know it and be satisfied that we have the blessing. May we encourage you to be sure that you have the Holy Spirit in your heart and life and do not stop short of obtaining a clear witness of it. He works in various manners and ways, but He can satisfy your soul so completely that there will be no doubt in your heart about it. And then, be faithful and obedient to the Holy Spirit all of your days. He will lead you in a life full of joy, happiness and victory all the way.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I came across a book, "The Way to Pentecost," written by Samuel Chadwick, (1860-1932) pastor of a Wesleyan church in Leeds, England. No doubt, Mr. Chadwick was part of the worldwide holiness movement which took place in the years following the Civil War. People were realizing their need of a deeper experience, and began preaching and teaching about the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I would like to share a portion of Samuel Chadwick's words with you.

"The Presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the Church. Nothing else avails. Apart from Him, wisdom becomes folly, and strength, weakness. The Church is called to be a 'spiritual house' and a 'holy priesthood.' Only spiritual people can be its 'living stones,' and only the Spirit-filled, its

priests. Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth till He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not a demonstration of His power. Prayer is vain unless He energizes. Human resources of learning and organization, wealth and enthusiasm, reform and philanthropy, are worse than useless if there be no Holy Ghost in them.

"The Church always fails at the point of self-confidence. When the Church is run on the same lines as a circus, there may be crowds, but there is no Shekinah. That is why prayer is the test of faith and the secret of power. The Spirit of God travails in the prayer life of the soul. Miracles are the direct work of His power, and without miracles the Church cannot live. The carnal can argue, but it is the Spirit that convicts. Education can civilize, but it is being born of the Spirit that saves. The energy of the flesh can run bazaars, organize amusements, and raise millions; but it is the presence of the Holy Spirit that makes a Temple of the Living God."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



JULY 16, 2006

CHRIST'S MISSION AS THE SON OF GOD

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

19b The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

John 6:35 I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

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

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

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

Matthew 20:28 The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus, the Anointed Son of God, came into the world to save the souls of men who are lost in sin, by quickening them from the dead state of sin to a risen life of holiness, and to give them hope of being resurrected from the grave unto everlasting life in the last day.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 5:17), "*worketh hitherto*": The Almighty God, the Father of Jesus Christ, had worked, according to His plan, up to that present time. "*I work*": Christ worked and accomplished in perfect agreement with the works of God.

(Verse 21), "*quickeneth*": Makes alive that which was dead.

(Verse 24), "*verily*": Truly. "*condemnation*": Judgment, damnation and everlasting punishment.

(Verse 25), "*now is*": Is to take place today, at this present time, and not in the future. "*the dead*": This is referring to the souls of men who are dead in trespasses and sins, "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Ephesians 4:18 "*hear*": Give attention and good heed; receive with open heart and mind; hear with understanding.

(Verse 26), *"life in himself"*: This means that God and Christ both have the power within them to dispense spiritual life to those who have no life. No mortal man has that ability. But the Almighty God has it in abundance and has bestowed that same power to His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

(Verse 27), *"execute judgment also"*: To do and accomplish the punishment and destruction of His enemies as well as saving the lost who come unto Him. *"because he is the Son of man"*: Jesus is not only the Son of God, but He is also the Son of man, born of a woman. This puts Him in the position of the mortal state of man and affords Him the authority to recompense righteous judgment to those who refuse to obey Him.

(Verse 28), *"Marvel not at this"*: Do not wonder and be amazed at what the Son can also do beside saving souls and giving them spiritual life. His power goes beyond this present fleeting world into eternity and will be displayed by resurrecting the dead and bringing to every man a just reward.

(Verse 29), *"resurrection of life"*: This is the bringing back to eternal life and being all who have obtained righteousness and salvation through Christ. *"resurrection of damnation"*: This is the bringing back to consciousness, awareness and being all of the ungodly and unsaved, not to eternal life and happiness, but to everlasting shame and misery in the flames of hell.

(John 6:35), *"cometh"*: To approach and draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. *"believeth"*: To steadfastly be assured with unwavering confidence and trust.

(Verse 37), *"nowise cast out"*: In no manner or way reject and turn away.

(Matthew 20:28), *"ransom"*: The loosing of a captive by meeting demands of money or other stringent requirements. Humanity was sold under sin, held captive by the power of the devil with a price required for release. This price was the death and spilling of the lifeblood of an innocent victim. There was but one who could come up with that price, and that was Jesus.

(Hebrews 7:25), *"to the uttermost"*: To perfection.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today let us look into some of the teachings of Jesus concerning the work that He came into the world to accomplish. His work was of the highest order and worth, far above any other endeavor or enterprise. It was the work of

rescuing men and women, boys and girls, from the power and dominion of sin and transgression against God. It was a work that could only be accomplished by Himself in co-operation with the work of Almighty God, His true Father. Jesus was more than just a mortal man. He was a God-man. He was the fruit of the womb of a virgin who had conceived through the power and quickening energy of the Holy Spirit of God. He was without sin or its principle, yet He was human with the potential to sin. This potential to sin, based in his bodily appetites and senses, He had to overcome and conquer. And this He did by resisting the temptations of the devil and faithfully obeying the prescribed will of His Father.

From the gospel of John we draw that major part of our lesson text. Jesus spoke of the quickening power that He and His Father both possessed, clearly expressed as what would accomplish a spiritual resurrection in the heart of man, and a general bodily resurrection in eternity. From Matthew we have expressed what Christ would be as a ransom for the redemption of man. And from Luke, after the account of His obtaining the faith and love of Zacchaeus, we see portrayed His mission to seek and to save that which was lost. For our Memory Verse we have chosen that wonderful statement of the power of Christ in His intercessory role at the right hand of God to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of power did Christ and His Father both possess?
2. What kind of resurrection did Christ have the power to bring about?
3. What kind of resurrection will Christ accomplish in the future?
4. Why did Christ take the title of "the Bread of Life"?
5. How did Jesus fulfill being a "ransom for many"?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus spoke of two resurrections that He was given by His Father the power to accomplish. The first resurrection is from the dead state of sin in a person. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." I Timothy 5:6. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1. This

resurrection takes place when a person hears the Word of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, understands it, receives it, and in an honest and good heart, keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience. It brings about a transformation in the heart and life. This is the first resurrection. Of this it is said in Revelation 20:6, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." This is being born from above of the Word and the Spirit, being made a new creature in Christ Jesus, old things passing away and all things becoming new. Through the power of this risen life of Christ the heart of man is elevated above the fleeting things of earth into eternal things above. The second resurrection is that final call of Christ and the trump of God at His Second Coming when all that are in the graves shall come forth to stand before the final judgment. Those who have lived by the faith of Christ and His holiness will be raised incorruptible to live forever. But those who have been contentious to their own perverted ways of pride and worldly vanity will be brought forth in a body fit for damnation and outer darkness. The choice is ours of which resurrection we will share. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I can find no better words to describe this great transformation than has already been written in song by Bro. Ulysses Phillips:

A resurrection I confess,
Has taken place within my breast
I've been awakened from the dead
And now I live with Christ instead
And when I lay this body down
To mold and crumble in the ground
My ransomed soul shall fly away
To one long bright, eternal day
Oh, praise the Lord for victory!
From death to life, he lifted me!
By his great love and power divine,
Eternal life is truly mine!

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

JULY 23, 2006

A LESSON ON STEWARDSHIP

Luke 16:1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

9 And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

12 And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

1 Corinthians 4:1 Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

MEMORY VERSE: As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. I Peter 4:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We are responsible before God to use the gifts and blessings He gives us for the good and benefit of others to glorify Him. This goes for both spiritual and earthly things that God has blessed us with. We will one day give an account of our stewardship and receive for the things we have done in this mortal body.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 16:2), "*stewardship*": The Greek word is "oikonomia" from which comes our English word "economy." It means the administration or management of a household or estate. It is one's management or use of that which belongs to someone else. "*steward*": This means a house-distributor, manager or overseer; a financial agent or treasurer. "*thou mayest be no longer steward*": You can no longer be steward. In other words, "I'm going to have to lay you off, or dismiss you, from your position as my steward."

(Verse 4), "*I am resolved*": I know what to do. "*receive me into their houses*": Take me in; give me a place to live.

(Verse 5), "*debtors*": Those who owe or are in debt.

(Verse 6), "*bill*": The statement that states what is owed.

(Verse 8), The Greek says, "For the sons of this age are more prudent in their generation than the sons of light." People in their pursuit of earthly wealth and gain are, for the most part, more diligent and crafty in their endeavors than the children of God are in the economy of grace. Earthly wealth is so attractive to the mortal aspirations and sense of values that it takes an ardent possession of the human mind. To strive and reach for eternal values, one must go "against the grain" and be on guard against the encroachment of the fleshly temptations. There is always that peril that we must watch out for while we are here in the flesh. Dealing and working with unseen treasure takes a strong and active faith that very few people are able to obtain and develop.

(Verse 9), "*make to your selves*": Endeavor to procure or provide for yourselves. "*of the mammon of unrighteousness*": By

or with the money and earthly wealth that is in your control. The worldly system of money, mediums of exchange and the inclination of man to heap riches to his own selfish gratification sums up the expression: the mammon of unrighteousness. Take a bill out of your billfold or purse, any denomination, whether \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, or whatever. Look at it. It is printed on paper. It used to be backed up by real valuable stuff, silver, gold, or whatever. Man has had various commodities in times past. At one time even tobacco was used as a medium of exchange. But look at that bill. You are looking at unrighteous mammon. It is necessary for you to have use of it, but woe be to you or any one else who allows their heart and affection to be placed upon it. We should use that unrighteous mammon to make friends who will take us in when this earthly wealth and our earthly life fails and passes away. Giving, sharing, helping and being merciful to the less fortunate, along with investing in the work of the Lord are ways that we can make friends and lay up treasures in Heaven.

(Verse 10), "*that which is least or much*": The earthly wealth or spiritual riches.

(Verse 11), "*unrighteous mammon or true riches*": Money or spiritual values.

(Verse 12), "*another man's or your own*": Money or heavenly treasures.

(Verse 13), "*mammon*": Money; earthly wealth or riches.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have in our lesson today a vital truth on a subject that is very serious and of great importance to us. Luke introduced this account of the rich man and his unfaithful steward by saying, "And he (Jesus) said also unto his disciples." The word "also" gives indication that he spoke this on the same occasion as he spoke the account of the prodigal son in the previous chapter. There could be some connection between the two sayings, in terms of *responsibility*. Both the prodigal son and his older brother were responsible persons to their father and his enterprise. The younger thought to use what he felt was his in the indulgence of the flesh, a choice that brought him much trouble. The older brother sought to maintain his responsibility, but failed to maintain the right attitude.

In our lesson today we can see the course that a man took in the face of losing his position of responsibility. He had wasted and misused his lord's goods. Now, in the face of being put out,

he made use of his power before he lost it to procure provision for his future. There was a short space of time before he was to be put out, and he took advantage of that and used the authority he still had. He cut the bills down of each of his lord's debtors in a gesture of goodness to win their favor. He was going to be put out, but he used what he had to provide a place for him to have when he did get put out. Jesus is applying that to us and our eternal future. May we get the lesson He is giving us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What serious matter do we have to consider about our future?
2. What can we do with the unrighteous mammon that will help us?
3. What is the future of people who lavish their money on themselves?
4. Who are those who will receive us into everlasting habitations?
5. What is this unrighteous mammon we can use for this purpose?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus turns this lesson right to us as a real profitable offer. We are going to be put out. Yes, we are going to be ejected from our mortal state to go out into the great beyond, eternity, if you please. We should each one come to grips with this thought. This world is not our home. We are here but for a season, temporally. We are but stewards of our earthly state. But we can use what we have of our temporal possessions to win the favor and good will of friends who can receive us into everlasting habitations. This we can and must do. Jesus said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Paul in I Corinthians 4:7 asked, "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?" As Christians we have

nothing to glory in of ourselves because everything we possess, we have received. God has blessed us with the temporal and the spiritual.

We can understand the spiritual by seeing and understanding the temporal. Jesus used many examples from the normal, natural, everyday life to convey spiritual truth. In I John 4:20, it says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" The spiritual side is being manifested thru the management of the temporal. Men often try to departmentalize their life into categories that are separate and distinct from one another. However, spirituality doesn't work that way. What we are on Sunday is what we are on all other days of the week. Once, on disclosing information that I felt affected the price I owed, a woman clerk told me, "that may be good for Sunday and church, but that doesn't work out here." Sadly, many people often have that mindset.

As Christians, a great charge has been committed to our trust in the gospel. Our life has an emanating influence, more than what we can comprehend or understand, for good or bad, positive or negative. People are very observant to notice self-righteousness, pride, lack of love and concern, selfishness and many other poor qualities that would mar the image of Christ. Lord, help us to be faithful and true to you in all the seemingly small, unnoticed events of life. May we remember that as stewards we will have to give account of our time, assets, abilities, words and attitudes of our heart.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



JULY 30, 2006

THE POOR RICH MAN AND THE RICH POOR MAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Luke 12:4 I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is better to be a child of God and suffer in this life than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season and be lost forever in the end, cast out into outer darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 16:19), Quoting from the Greek Interlinear: "And a certain man was rich and customarily donned a purple robe and fine linen, having been merry day by day in luxury."

(Verse 20), *"laid at his gate"*: Placed at his porch. *"full of sores"*: Plagued by sores.

(Verse 22), *"Abraham's bosom"*: Here is the precious father of all who possess faith in God. God promised Abraham that he would be a father of many nations. And now we see him welcoming the pure and gentle spirit of Lazarus into the paradise of heaven. Life had been hard and bitter for Lazarus, but now is his turn for the eternal—sweet and enjoyable. *"buried"*: The Greek word indicates a celebration of funeral rites. Perhaps the rich man was buried in a fine casket and saluted by many mourners. Perhaps some flowery speeches were given in his memory. For Lazarus there was probably no funeral oration or service, just a sanitary disposal of the pitiful creature. On the surface it did not look well for the poor beggar, but beyond human sight he found himself borne by angels and welcomed to love, comfort and eternal peace and rest.

(Verse 23), *"in hell"*: The Greek expression is *"in hades,"* which means *"the unseen."* For the former rich man on earth it was a place of torment, torture and sorrow. Here he lifted up his eyes. He could see. He could feel the torment of the flame upon him. He could hear, he could remember, he could recognize. He even knew who Abraham was. He could think. He had an idea of a chance of some relief. This was the lower compartment of hades. The upper compartment was what he saw at a distance wherein was that one that had laid at his gate full of sores.

(Verse 24), *"the tip of his finger in water"*: Who is asking for the crumbs now? On earth Lazarus asked for the crumbs. Now it is the rich man, not wanting a bucket, but just a drop of water.

(Verse 25), *"Son"*: The Greek word here means *"child."* *"receivedst"*: Fully received.

(Verse 26), *"gulf"*: A wide chasm; an opening with no crossover. *"fixed"*: Steadfastly set. *"hence"*: Here. *"thence"*: There.

(Verse 29), *"hear Moses and the prophets"*: Pay attention and give heed to the holy scriptures.

(Verse 30), *"repent"*: Change their life. This poor lost soul knew that he should have repented and purged his life from sin, just as he knew that his brothers needed to.

(Verse 31), *"be persuaded"*: Be convicted or convinced. Abraham spoke of the step that should precede repentance, and that is conviction. Without heart felt conviction there will be no repentance or change of life.

LESSON BACKGROUND

I have heard that our lesson today is one that is discredited by some. It is questioned because they see no relation in it to the rest of the chapter. But there is a vivid relation to this account of the rich man and Lazarus to the lesson in the first part of the chapter on stewardship and the unjust steward.

Being a good steward with what God gives us in material and spiritual blessings has a great and important bearing upon our future abode in eternity. Remember what Jesus said, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Luke 16:9. Then I remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 5:2-3 concerning our earthly abode relative to our future eternal abode: "For in this (mortal body) we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so that being clothed we shall not be found naked." If we are to receive a new and glorified body to inhabit in eternity, we must prepare for it and qualify for it right here in this present corruptible body. If we do not properly prepare and qualify for the glorified body, it is sure that we will come up wanting and be found naked, that is, with no body fit to live in glory. This is exactly what happened to the rich man. He was taken up with the cares and riches of this present life, (his good things, as Abraham put it) and failed to provide himself for everlasting habitations.

Let us not doubt or discredit this story of the rich man and Lazarus. It is very graphic and expressive, and affords us an excellent picture of the future world. On the one hand is Lazarus in perfect rest and comfort, and on the other hand we see the poor rich man in flame of torments and calling for a drop of the water of life. This life is short and uncertain. If we lavish all of our affections on its fleeting pleasures and treasures, we are going to miss the eternal pleasures and treasures.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What caused the rich man to end up in the flames of hell?
2. Why are earthly riches and ease such a perilous enterprise?
3. What did Abraham have to say about the rich man's plight?
4. Why was the rich man's plea for his five brethren denied?
5. What message should we hear and give heed to while in this life?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The angels carried Lazarus to Abraham's bosom. Here he was welcomed into everlasting habitations. Jesus counseled us about this. It is so vital for us in this life to let the Lord guide us in every decision and move that we make. It is written in Proverbs 28:6 that "Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse (corrupt) in his ways, though he be rich." Paul stated in I Timothy 6:9 that "they that will be rich (purpose and work toward that end) fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Then He modified it thus: "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:23, 24. We can also affirm that it is hard to have riches and **not** to trust in them. Much is said in the scriptures about the danger of earthly riches. Let us take heed.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In Matthew 6:21 there is a verse that identifies the root of the problem that humanity faces with regard to wealth and our relationship with God. It says, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Our heart is what determines where our allegiance will be and the location of our treasure is the outward indication of that allegiance. When one has their focus on earthly things it becomes obvious that their heart has that same focus. When a real change takes place in the heart, it becomes clear by one's actions that a transformation has occurred and that individual's mind, thoughts and energies are directed toward heavenly things.

There is a deceptive quality with wealth that causes a person to feel secure and self-sufficient. Likewise there is a feeling of insecurity that accompanies poverty. It may be that this feeling of insecurity will cause one to feel more dependent on God and therefore motivate them to develop a relationship with Him that works to the saving of their souls. However, simply because a person is in poverty does not mean that this relationship with God exists. It is quite evident there are some poor, wicked people in this world. If only one would realize their lost condition, that would be a first step to finding the mercy of the Lord.

With those who have the riches of this world in their hands and enjoy the accompanying sense of well being, it is hard for them to realize their need of God and even take the first step toward Him. Sometimes the Lord in His mercy causes people in this condition to suffer health problems during their life so His Spirit has opportunity to deal with their soul. It is God's mercy that allows this to happen and if only they will meet the conditions of salvation, their whole life will be transformed in a wonderful way.

When the priority of our heart is centered on our heavenly Father, eternal values are demonstrated in our life and all that we possess becomes secondary to obtaining that "one pearl of great price." Whether it means using our wealth to help the poor or helping spread the gospel of Christ, let us find a way of laying up treasure in Heaven, "...where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:"

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



AUGUST 6, 2006

JESUS FORETELLS THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Matthew 11:20 Then began he (Jesus) to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:

21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.

24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Matthew 12:41 The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.

Luke 11:31 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Matthew 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

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

MEMORY VERSE: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. II Corinthians 5:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: This present world will soon pass away, but God will bring every person who has ever lived to be judged in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to receive just recompence for the things done in this life, both evil and good.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 11:20), "*upbraid*": Shame, defame and reproof.

(Verse 21), "*woe*": A pronouncement of grief and damnation.

(Verse 23), "*exalted to heaven*": This was spoken of Capernaum because that was where Jesus dwelt and did many of His mighty works.

(Matthew 12:41), "*rise*": Stand up.

(Luke 11:31), "*rise up*": This word in the Greek means to awaken and come forth. "*condemn*": Pass judgment or sentence against.

(Matthew 12:36), "*idle word*": Words spoken that are inactive, useless, of no value or benefit.

(Matthew 25:34), "*King*": Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we want to examine what our blessed Lord and Savior spoke concerning the last great day of judgment that we all will meet. In our scriptures from the gospels of Matthew and Luke we find Jesus making serious statements about the judgment that He Himself would preside over. He said in John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:" Paul declared in Acts 17:31 that God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." So it is very clear that Christ will be our final Judge. Paul said again in Romans 14:10-12, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Solomon summed up the book of Ecclesiastes in 12:13-14 like this: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Then we have the solemn scene unveiled in Revelations 20:11-15. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were

in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Seeing that God has brought to us His kingdom, which cannot be moved, "...let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28-29.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who will be the great Judge in the last great Judgment?
2. Why are some people going to be more responsible than others?
3. Why is the Judgment going to be so particular concerning idle words?
4. What two kinds of people are going to be at the last Judgment?
5. How should we serve God with respect to the final Judgment?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In Psalm 9:7-8 it says, "But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in uprightness. he shall minister judgment to the people in righteousness." Daniel spoke of the great judgment day. In Daniel 7:25 he speaks of one who would rise and "speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out (afflict and persecute) the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws." Then in verse 26 he says, "But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." This is referring to the Roman Catholic Church in her ungodly influence over humanity and her deceptive powers. The judgment will recompense this evil power. And then in verse 27 he says, "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." In verse 22 of this same chapter he speaks of the Ancient of days (He who is from eternity) coming, and judgment being given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

In I Corinthians 6:1-3 Paul gave this reproof to the people at Corinth: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" Saints of God who are saved, sanctified, and living a holy, godly, righteous life are going to possess the kingdom of God and will reign over this wicked world in the end. May we all seek earnestly to be in that number. As Jesus said in Luke 21:36, speaking of His coming and that last great day, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The last question given forth in our lesson today is, "How should we serve God with respect to the final judgment?"

There is one successful way, and it is laid forth in I Peter 4:17. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:..." Also, Paul says in I Timothy 5:24, "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after."

When we give ourselves to the Lord, we open up and confess our sins, ask Him to judge our lives, forgive our sins and cover them by His blood. He sends our sins on "to judgment," and will remember them against us no more. As we walk with God, we continually ask Him to judge us. We invite Him to chasten us and refine us and purify our thoughts, words and actions. We *live* in the judgment of God. We *live* "before the throne." (Revelation 7:15.) We *live* "in the fear of the Lord, all the day long." (Proverbs 23:17.) We "fall on" Him now, in brokenness and realization of our need, so that in the final Day of Judgment, He will not "grind" us "to powder." (Matthew 21:44.) We realize that, when we are enduring the chastisement of the Lord, we are being judged now, so that we will not be "condemned with the world." (I Corinthians 11:32.) We count our afflictions and persecutions as "manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" that we "may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God." (I Thessalonians 1:4-5.)

To the saint, the judgment fires of God—welcome, not dreadful—are already burning the dross out of our lives. The heat

is pressing out every wrinkle, and we look forward to being presented to Him as a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" (Ephesians 5:27.)

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



AUGUST 13, 2006

HUMBLE THYSELF TO WALK WITH GOD

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew 18:1 The disciples came to Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

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

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

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

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

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

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

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

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

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth 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 walk with God and be a member of His kingdom we must cast out pride and conformity to this present evil world and seek to be humble, meek, and of a lowly mind and heart.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 18:9), "*trusted in themselves*": Relying upon themselves. "*despised*": Look down on with contempt; lightly esteemed; count as worthless.

(Verse 10), "*Pharisees*": Adam Clarke states that these were of "a very numerous sect among the Jews, who, in their beginning, were, very probably, a pure and holy people. The meaning of the name Pharisees was "Separatists" from their separating themselves from the pollution of the Jewish national worship, as holy persons who stand apart, or by themselves: but, in the process of time, like all religious sects and parties, they degenerated: they lost the spirit of their institution, they ceased to retain their first principles, and had only a form of godliness." "*publican*": Tax collector. These men were detestable and hated among the Jews because of their greedy and covetous manners.

(Verse 11), "*extortioners*": People who seized and took by force and plundered.

(Matthew 18:3), "*ye be converted*": You convert, or turn yourselves around. This means to repent, reform, change your attitude and the direction you are going. It is from the same root word used in Acts 3:19 where Peter told the people to "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,..."

This is a responsibility that every man must obey if they are to enter the kingdom of Heaven. We must change our attitudes, our direction, and how we are living if we would enter the kingdom of God. This idea of merely believing in Christ with a head knowledge with no change of heart and ways is a vain misconception of God's way.

(Luke 14:7), "*bidden*": Invited. "*chief rooms*": Seats of honor and preeminence.

(Luke 14:10), "*shalt thou have worship*": Will be to you glory and honor.

(Micah 6:8), "*walk humbly with thy God*": Humble thyself to walk with God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the teachings of Jesus concerning a vital element of character. It is close to being the most important aspect of godliness and the salvation of the soul of man. It is a departure and a renouncing of the greatest affront and displeasure to God. What is that thing that has brought God's sore displeasure upon humanity? It is pride. It is one of the elements that took hold of human nature in the fall of Adam. All along the way God has had to deal with this tendency in man to be proud and self-sufficient. It showed up in Cain, and with the world that Noah had to stand out against. It caused God to be sorry that He ever made man, and prompted Him to purpose to destroy humanity from the face of the earth. It has followed the history of peoples down through the years and is still the downfall of many a soul.

Jesus pointed us in His teachings to go against this spirit of pride and self-exaltation. The Pharisee showed in the manner and spirit of his prayer this element of pride. This same pride caused those people to seek the chief rooms and upper seats in the feasts. This inclination to pride and the desire to be lifted up was what prompted Christ's disciples to ask the question concerning who was the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. It was pride that caused the mother of James and John (along with her sons) to request to be placed on the right and left hand of Him in His kingdom. It was pride that gave the blinded Jews the hope and dream of their nation being a great nation again, and caused them to reject the meek and lowly man from Galilee as the Christ. Pride is a deep-rooted spirit and principle of the fallen nature of

man. But it is in our power and the realm of our choice to turn and humble ourselves and go against this spirit of pride. We can do it, and we must do it if we would enter the kingdom of God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is God so displeased with pride in the heart of man?
2. What does Jesus tell us to do to go against pride?
3. Why did Jesus point to a little child as a standard for us?
4. What will be the result of a person exalting himself?
5. What will be our reward for humbling ourselves before God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." Psalm 10:4. That last phrase from the Hebrew Interlinear reads: "There is no God in all of his schemes." "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom." Proverbs 11:2. Pride blinds a man to the reality of life, and moves him to activities that end in shame and dishonor. But to the man who humbles himself and feels his need of God's help will come guidance for appropriate action. "Only by pride cometh contention (quarrel, debate, and strife): but with the well advised is wisdom." Proverbs 13:10. Hasty moves motivated by self and pride have great potential for disaster, but to humble one's self before God and wait on Him for counsel and guidance is the best thing to do. "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them." Proverbs 14:3. Our capacity for communication with our fellow man is something we should use with humility and prayer, as Proverbs 21:23 states: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles." "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Proverbs 16:18-19. "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." Proverbs 29:23.

The Lord God said in Isaiah 66:2, "... but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." And Isaiah stated also in 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." Over and over again in the scriptures the true and living God expresses His displeasure with man in his pride and self exaltation. Let us take heed and humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord under the mighty hand of God and He will lift us up and exalt us in due time. James 4:10 and I Peter 5:6. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Imagine the surprise of the disciples when they asked Jesus who would be greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, and He set before them a little child! Not a young and energetic teenager, not a strong and ambitious adult, not an old and wise sage; but a young child. It is easy to imagine the sweet and charming beauty of this child. The small round face with eager and intelligent eyes, wondering at all of the attention lavished by the adults standing around him. And yet, what a perfect example.

Just consider the attributes of young children:

Children are innocent. They have no deceit nor do they ponder ways of manipulation. They are completely without guile.

Young children are easily taught. Their young minds are so very impressionable and uncluttered by the cares and burdens of life.

Children do not seek for wealth. They are not interested in "climbing the corporate ladder" or competing for worldly prowess. They delight in the smallest of pleasures; chasing butterflies, playing in mud puddles, tasting a snowflake.

Children really do know how to appreciate God's creations. They enjoy living and have a zest for life.

Little children are wholly dependent on their caregivers. They are not worried over the next meal or place to sleep.

Children have confidence that their parents will take good care of them. Their trust is pure. Even when children have been mistreated, they are quick to forgive and hold no grudges.

Young children view each other as equals; there are no prejudices.

Now we understand why our Lord placed such great importance on becoming as little children to enter into His kingdom. It really was the perfect example of humility.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

AUGUST 20, 2006

BEARING THE CROSS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Matthew 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

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

Luke 9:26 For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. Galatians 6:14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ faced the death of the cross in His mission to offer the one sacrifice for the sins of mankind, but He also gives to us who follow Him the charge for each one to take up his own personal cross and bear it faithfully every day as they follow Him through life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 14:26), "*hate*": To love less.

(Verse 27), "*his cross*": One's own personal cross. The cross refers to what one must suffer and endure in this earthly life because of their convictions of faith in God and in His Son, Jesus the Christ. It takes in persecutions, losses, mistreatment, abuse, sufferings, scorn, ridicule, pain and ultimately, death. It is fellowship with Jesus in what He suffered in being rejected and humiliated by the world in His sojourn on this earth. Jesus gave up equality with God to come down like a servant to be made in the likeness of men, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philipians 2:8.

(Verse 29), "*not able to finish*": Not having strength or resources.

(Verse 31), "*consulteth*": Takes counsel.

(Verse 32), "*ambassage*": A delegation of ambassadors to negotiate terms.

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

(Luke 9:23), "*daily*": Every day; day by day; one day at a time. Paul said in I Corinthians 15:31, "I die daily," which meant that every day he experienced sufferings and the self-crucifixion of the cross of Christ in his life. We must not relax our faith and perseverance in following the Lord and His good pleasure, regardless of how much it goes against the flesh. Every one of us has a cross to bear if we want to be accounted worthy of that crown.

(Matthew 16:26), "*lose his own soul*": Fail to save your life from eternal destruction. What a fool one must be to lavish all of his affection on things below that are soon to perish, and in the end miss the goal and end up losing his soul in torment forever!

(Matthew 10:37), "*worthy*": Deserving, suitable, entitled, or fit. Jesus in Revelation 3:4 spoke of those which had not defiled their garments; and "they," He said, "shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." Then in Revelation 16:6 it spoke of the wrath of God being poured upon those who shed the blood of saints and prophets, saying, "Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy."

(Galatians 6:14), "*glory*": Boast. "*save*": Except.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus came into the world to suffer and die as a ransom price and atonement for the sins of mankind. This suffering and death took place when Jesus was sentenced to be crucified on a Roman cross. He was rejected and sentenced thus to die by the Jewish rulers, leaders of what was thought to be the chosen nation of God. All the humiliation, vile treatment, and awful death is included in the term: "the cross." But we see in our scripture text that all of those who believe in and follow Him are to each have their own personal "cross."

We see in Luke 14:25 that there were great multitudes going with Him. No doubt they were fascinated by His mighty works and healings. It was wonderful to be with Him. There is an attraction to the Lord and being one of His. But Jesus wanted to warn them of the truth that following Him is not all that nice and enjoyable. There is a cross to bear and it is a self-denying route. We must love Him above everything and everyone else. There is a reproach to following Jesus, and He is despised and rejected of men, a Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offense. His ways are above our ways, and His thoughts are above our thoughts. There is a price that we must pay, and to gain eternal life will be costly in the terms of what we must suffer and give up in answer to His call and leadings.

He spoke about one sitting down and doing some serious figuring about the cost of building and finishing the tower that he is intending to build. And then He spoke about the risk the king with ten thousand men was taking in going to meet in battle the king who had twice as many men. Both of these comparisons fit very well with this matter of answering the call of the gospel to leave all the world to follow Jesus. We are going to meet Jesus who is coming with ten thousands of His saints. We will be completely outnumbered and overwhelmed in that day. We need to reckon with this, ponder it over carefully and come to a

definite conclusion. We are not able to meet Him and overcome in ourselves. Then let us send an ambassage of humility, repentance, prayer and surrender to Him "while He is yet a great way off" and make peace with Him.

Yes, as the other Scriptures declare, there is a cross for every one of us to bear. Let us accept it and set our faces like a flint to endure the cross like Jesus did and pay the price that we might win the prize and reward that He is promising to us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Will all who bear the cross be in the majority or the minority?
2. What does it mean to "hate" others and our own life also?
3. What does the "cross" stand for in one's life?
4. What is the profit to gain the whole world and then lose one's soul?
5. Why did Paul determine to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me." Song by Thomas Shephard. 1665-1739. Be assured that there is a cross for you to bear. You are going to have to bear and endure things that are going to go against your likes and dislikes. You will suffer and experience hard trials. "Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee: naked, poor, despised, forsaken; Thou from hence my all shall be. Perish every fond ambition; all I've sought or hoped or known; yet how rich is my condition, God and Heaven are still my own!" Song by Henry Francis Lyte. 1793-1847. Another song says, "Look away from the cross to the glittering crown!" Yes, there is a cross, but if we will willingly and faithfully bear each day that cross that is given to us, the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give us a crown in that wonderful day, yes, to all who love His appearing.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Once, I was asking the Lord how a certain truth fit in the world. Seeing the direction of the Word and the direction of the world, I began trying to reconcile the two. The Lord spoke clearly

to my heart, "It doesn't fit." I immediately quit trying to interpret in a way to fit in with the world and purposed in my heart to be willing to be different. God doesn't ask us to be different for the sake of difference. He didn't purpose to make the Christian life hard, so we could in some sense 'earn it'. A cross is where two ways intersect, that is, God's way and the world's way or the way of the flesh.

Contrary to popular opinion, the three Hebrew children looked rather odd in keeping God's commandment, not to have any other gods before Him. Everyone else bowed when the music played. We often hear that argument, "everyone else is doing it." Just because everyone else seems to be doing something doesn't necessarily make it right. The scripture doesn't give all that was said in the furnace, but you know there had to be some rejoicing when they found Jesus in there with them. They were so glad that they held true and firm to God's Word.

The world at times tries to make us feel queer or odd, but really we don't have anything to be ashamed about if we are living for God and keeping his Word to the best of our understanding. Be not conformed (pressed into its mold) to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind... Let us not allow the enemy of our souls to intimidate us. God has provided the very best.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

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AUGUST 27, 2006

JESUS SOWS THE GOSPEL SEED

Matthew 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much

earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

18 Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.

19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh (immediately) the wicked one (Satan,) (the devil,) and catcheth away that which was sown in the heart, (lest they should believe and be saved.) This is he which received seed by the way side. With additional text from Mark 4:15 and Luke 8:12.

20 But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;

21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended, (and in the time of temptation falleth away.) With additional text from Luke 8:13.

22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, (and pleasures of this life,) (and the lusts of other things entering in,) choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. With additional text from Mark 4:19 and Luke 8:14.

23 But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word (in an honest and good heart,) and understandeth it; and (keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience,) some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. With additional text from Luke 8:15.

Mark 4:24 And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given.

25 For he that hath, to him shall be given, (and he shall have more abundance:) and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. With additional text from Matthew 13:12.

MEMORY VERSE: Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have. Luke 8:18.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Not every one who hears with their physical ears the Word of God will be blessed and benefited in their soul. There are hindrances and barriers that will keep the Word from being effectual. Let us seek earnestly to hear the Word, understand it, obey it, keep it and bring forth righteous fruit in abundance.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Matthew 13:3), "*parable*": A similitude; a narrative of common life conveying a moral or principle of truth.

(Matthew 13:20), "*anon*": Immediately or without delay.

(Matthew 13:21), "*by and by*": This is from the same Greek word as "*anon*" in the previous verse. It means immediately or very soon.

(Matthew 13:22), "*choke*": Strangle, drown, or crowd out.

(Mark 4:24), "*Take heed what ye hear*": This means to listen carefully and attentively so that what you hear will be the exact message that is actually being spoken. It is so easy to misunderstand or fail to get the real point that is put forth. Too many times people think they heard, but failed to hear it properly. Jesus said in the course of bringing out this parable (in all three gospels): "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "*with what measure ye mete*": In other words, with what degree of earnestness, desire, honest and sincere effort you put forth to give attendance to the message of the Word of God, it will be measured to you with the same degree.

(Mark 4:25), "*he that hath*": This is referring to the one who will receive, take fast hold of, retain, possess and remember the Word of God. "*he that hath not*": The one who fails to have a hearing ear and a seeing eye, who does not hold fast in sound remembrance. He will not only fail to get the message, but will lose what he already has.

(Luke 8:18), "*Take heed therefore how ye hear*": Be careful in what way or manner you hear. Our parallel text in Mark 4:24 says, "Take heed what ye hear." Now He says, "Take heed *how* ye hear." Both of these points are very vital. We must be careful *what* we hear, and *how* we hear. To fail to hear it properly or to fail to have the right attitude of heart in hearing are both a liability to misunderstanding and error. "*that which he seemeth to have*": Or that which he thinks he has. It is possible for us to

think we have heard the truth and in reality have not heard it properly. It would be wise for us to search the Scriptures and seek to know and understand the teachings of Jesus and continue in them, and, as He said in John 8:31-32, "...then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today from the teachings of Jesus we will study His wonderful and important parable of the Sower and the seed. "The seed is the word of God." Luke 8:11. The Sower is Jesus or any of His ministers. We have four different kinds of ground which stand for four different kinds of hearts of people. This parable is brought out by Matthew, Mark and Luke, which are the first three of the New Testament Gospels. In our lesson we are basically using Matthew's rendition, but are blending in various expressions from the other two gospels to help with the application and meaning.

The Sower broadcasts the seed of the Word of God. It is pictured (and is certainly true to life) as falling into four different kinds of ground. They are: 1. The wayside that is trodden down, hardened by the passage of people; 2. Stony ground where there is not much depth of soil or earth; 3. Among thorns; and 4. Good ground. Christ pictures these four types of ground as representing four different types of human hearts. Let us consider these four different kinds of hearts of men as described in our lesson.

1. The wayside: Here the seed of the Word of God is sown in the hearing of those who do not understand what is spoken or brought out, and it does not penetrate into their interests and concerns.

2. Stony ground: This kind of ground the seed is able to penetrate somewhat. It represents hearts that have a certain amount of desire and interest, but does not go very deep.

3. Among thorns: The thorns are the cares, riches and pleasures of this short, earthly life. They choke and hinder the truth of the gospel from having any good effect in the heart and life.

4. Good ground: This represents those who, in an honest and good heart, hear and understand the Word, obey it, keep it and follow it through all the way.

We have concluded our lesson with what Jesus said about how we hear and what we hear of the Word of God, and how important it is to retain and hold fast to the message of the gospel of our salvation.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What happens to the seed sown in the heart by the wayside?
2. Why is the heart, represented by the stony ground, kept from producing fruit?
3. What are the things that choke the Word in the heart among thorns?
4. What are the qualities that make up the "good ground" heart?
5. Why should we be careful *what* we hear and *how* we hear?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We are all responsible people before our Maker. We are not here to play, to dream or to drift. Life, our future life, and where we will spend eternity is in our hands. It is up to us which direction we will go, and where we will end up. The God who formed us and gave us life has made our eternal happiness available and within our grasp. He sent His Son and spoke to us through His Son. Whether we are benefited and profited by that message that He sent to us by Jesus Christ is, to a great extent, in our hands. It hinges upon our hearing and the attention we extend toward His Word. The world around us is beckoning us to its involvements and attractions. The pretty things of the flesh flash and glitter all around us. The gospel is heard. Jesus has told us of the four kinds of ground of human hearts. Which will we be? Oh, that more would be awakened in their minds and hearts to the call of the Gospel of Christ and what it offers to them! Our life is in our hands. We can take it or leave it. Christ will not force or push Himself on anyone. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Lord had more in mind for the people who were gathered about Him that day than a lesson on agriculture. When He finished the first part of the parable He told them, "Who hath

ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 13:9. Jesus also knew that His audience was not physically challenged in their hearing. However, some of them were severely handicapped spiritually and He was doing His best to place a seed of truth in their hearts that would one day germinate, begin growing and bring forth fruit in abundance.

The seed of the gospel Jesus was speaking of is all good seed but it falls onto or into different types of soil which represent the condition of the hearts of the people. What happens to that seed is totally in the hands of the recipient. Those who "grasp" the kernel of truth given to them and allow it to begin growing in their heart still have some difficulties to overcome—the opposition of evil forces, temptations, trials, tests, persecutions, cares and responsibilities of life, dealing with our temporal possessions and allurements of earthly things. If these things are not controlled in the right way they will cause our spiritual life to die out or our growth to be stunted and turn into a profession that doesn't produce fruit

It would be nice if we could simply give our heart an application of "weed and feed" to control the weeds and fertilize the growth of our spiritual life. While a product of that type may not be available spiritually there are things that we can do to accomplish the same thing. By controlling what is allowed to enter and dwell in our mind, the vestibule of our heart, we can eliminate many "noxious weeds" that would choke our spiritual life. By exercising temperance in things that may not be wrong we can protect our heart from becoming "overcharged" with the necessary things of this world. By yielding ourselves fully into the hands of God and feeding on His Word we provide essential nourishment to our soul and gain the protection of the Holy Spirit. By adding patience and perseverance we can be assured that our life will produce spiritual fruit that will be a blessing to others and a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



SEPTEMBER 3, 2006

CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

53 ...Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

MEMORY VERSE: As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. John 6:57.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, through His Word and Holy Spirit, becomes a Food for the souls of men to take into their hearts and absorb into their lives. It is not a literal eating, but

rather a spiritual eating of loving, following, obeying and keeping the teachings and example of holiness, humility and faithfulness to God portrayed in Jesus.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 6:27), "*meat*": Food. "*him hath God the Father sealed*": This One, Jesus Christ, has God stamped with a seal of approval for security and preservation. This the Almighty did when He foretold of Christ through the ancient prophecies and brought it to fulfillment when He raised Him from the dead and set Him in the heavenly places. Christ is the everlasting foundation for us to build on, and stands sure and unmovable for time and eternity.

(Verse 32), "*Moses gave you not that bread from heaven*": Under the leadership of Moses from Egypt to the Promised Land the Almighty ministered food to the people with bread that appeared on the ground in the morning after the hoar frost and dew had gone up. It helped to sustain them through their years in the wilderness. The people here mentioned this to Jesus, referring to it as bread from heaven as it is expressed in Psalm 78:24-25. But Jesus here said that this was not the bread from Heaven. He is pointing them to a more substantial and beneficial Bread.

(Verse 44), "*draw*": Attract, invite, allure and cause to desire.

(Verse 45), "*they shall be all taught of God*": This was a quotation from Isaiah 54:13, which chapter was a prophecy to be fulfilled in the New Testament Church. Paul quoted the first verse of this chapter in Galatians 4:27, applying it to the spiritual Jerusalem which is the Mother of all who are born from above, which is the Church of God, the Bride of Christ. And here Christ quotes the statement: "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD." All who come to Christ in truth are influenced to do so by the knowledge and fear of God. Without this being taught of God there is nothing to attract one to Jesus. If a person does not have convictions of God, His holiness, and the awfulness of sin, Christ will have no value or purpose to him.

(Verse 49), "*manna*": The bread given under Moses, so called because of what the people said when they came out to gather it: "Manna, manna!" which means "What is it?"

(Verse 51), "*my flesh given for the life of the world*": Christ's physical body offered as a sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the world.

(Verse 54), "*eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood*": This is spiritual language here that the people could not understand. It is not literally eating Christ's flesh and blood that He is speaking of, but rather a receiving of the sacrifice of Christ's flesh and blood for the salvation of their eternal souls.

(Verse 57), "*eateth me*": Receive me into your very heart and life, absorb my teaching, obey my doctrines, follow my example, worship and love me with all of your heart. That is how we "eat" Jesus.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In this 6th chapter of John we find some events that lead us up to our lesson. The multitudes had been following Jesus because they saw His miracles on the diseased. Jesus was sitting with his disciples on the side of a mountain when He saw a great company of people coming unto Him. Jesus conversed with His followers and, with five loaves and two small fishes from a lad's lunch, He fed the whole multitude in number of about five thousand. The people were so filled with wonder at this miracle that they wanted to come and take Him by force and make Him king. To thwart their attempt Jesus departed from them into a mountain alone. His disciples got into a boat to go over the sea toward Capernaum. That night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea in the midst of a great storm. They received Him into the ship and came to land. The people crossed over, too, and came looking for Jesus and found Him. It was then that His discourse in our lesson began.

The people had been filled with wonder and admiration because of Christ's miraculous feeding of them the day before. Jesus began by cautioning them about being so concerned with the literal food. As we think about the people back then, their poverty and their need for earthly bread, we can understand why they were so anxious to follow Jesus and even to make Him king. If He could feed them in such a wonderful manner, what a blessing He would be to them! But Jesus, as we see in our lesson, points them to a greater need that they had, a need that we as human beings still have, and that is the need for spiritual food.

We live in an eating and drinking society. People are eating and drinking themselves to the grave. There needs to be more

stress put on spiritual food and eating of the Bread of Life. This is our lesson today, what Jesus taught of the need for spiritual food over and above the fleshly appetite for the literal food.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of food does Jesus have for the souls of men today?
2. How do we partake of this wonderful Bread of Life?
3. Who is it that the Father draws to Christ and how does He draw them?
4. What does eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood mean?
5. What will eating the Bread of Life do for us?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God made man with the capacity and function to eat. The human body has a built-in system of taking in food, digesting it and dispensing its nutrients into the blood stream for the body's needs. It is a marvelous wonder how it all works. Sad to say, however, this activity of eating and taking in food has become a lust and a domineering passion in our society. It even is injurious and detrimental to both the body and the spirit. Obesity and bad health because of overeating and abuse of this bodily function is a paramount problem of our time. All the while, the most important need is neglected. Man needs the spiritual food of the Bread of Life, the Word and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Man feeds his spirit on selfish pleasures and pursuits of wealth and physical benefits. Jesus has what we need in the way of spiritual nourishment and good health. His Word, His Spirit, and the wonderful grace He has made available can be ours if we will give heed to Him, and be willing and obedient. The good of the land we can enjoy through the blessed Gospel!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The key to understanding the words that Jesus spoke here—the same words that caused so many to murmur, dispute and turn away from Him—is found in our memory verse today, John 6:57. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Do we realize the significance of Philippians 2:6-7, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" What this is saying is that when Jesus took on human form, He did not come in all the celestial glory that He had with the Father before the world began. He "emptied Himself" and showed to mankind that the life-giving, miracle-working power was indeed, His Father's power. His own testimony was, "I can of mine own self do nothing;" (John 5:30.) What was it he told the devil? "It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." Luke 4:4. He recognized, having spent forty days in communion with His Father, without literal food; that His *very life* depended, not on having literal food to eat, but on oneness with His Father. As His Father worked, as He spoke, so Jesus worked and spoke.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



SEPTEMBER 10, 2006

JESUS OFFERS FREEDOM FROM SIN

John 8:21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

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

30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. Romans 6:22.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: By believing in Christ from the heart and steadfastly holding to and following His Word we will gain the knowledge of the truth and find full and free deliverance from the bondage of sin.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(John 8:21), "*ye shall seek me*": He is referring to His leaving this world and going to the Father, and they will not know what happened to Him. This is a sad thing, that Jesus was in their midst, and they knew Him not nor recognized Who or What He was; and then He would be gone and they would wonder where He went to. Failing to properly believe in Him and accept Him, they would remain in their sinful condition and die without hope, not being accounted worthy to go where He had gone. This can be our fate, too, unless we take heed and seek to really know Him now as our Redeemer.

(Verse 28), "*When ye have lifted up the Son of man*": He is speaking of His coming death on the cross, and His miraculous resurrection. This will be the real proof of His Sonship with the Almighty as the Christ, the Savior of the world.

(Verse 30), "*many believed on him*": They were so impressed with His words that they were compelled to acknowledge Him as being the Christ of God. However, as we shall see later, many recanted their belief and were ready to throw stones at him. Verse 59.

(Verse 31), "*continue in my word*": Stay, remain, abide and endure to follow and obey His teachings, not taking offence or questioning, but holding fast their confidence in Him. This is

something that we must all do. There will be many occasion presented to draw back, give up, become discouraged, doubt, or be offended. He is a Stone of stumbling and Rock of Offence, as Isaiah 8: 14 prophesied. But we must press over every thing and maintain our confidence that we have been inspired with.

(Verse 35), *"the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever"*: Christ is stating the comparison of the servant and the Son. The servant, or slave, is not the heir of the household he is serving in. So his position is temporary, not permanent. He can lose it and be put out at anytime. But the Son is the heir and will come into possession of the property. In verse 34, to answer their question concerning what He meant about them being made free, He told them what their servitude was: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." They were servants of sinful bondage. So because of this they would not abide forever. But He, the Son, was not a servant to sin, but was rightful heir of God's world.

(Verse 36), *"free indeed"*: Really free. He, the Son of the living God, came into the world to set people free from the bondage of sin. If we will hear and believe in Him and steadfastly follow His teachings we can experience what real freedom is.

(Rom. 6:22), *"free from sin, and become servants to God"*: Paul spoke in verse 20 that when they were the servants of sin, they were free from righteousness. No man can serve two masters, as Jesus said in Matthew 6:24. We are going to serve one or the other. If we are servants of sin we are free from righteousness. But if we are willing to change, we can be servants to God and His righteousness and be set free from the bondage of sin.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is taken from a conversation Jesus had with the people including some scribes and Pharisees one morning in the temple. They had brought a woman to Jesus, asking what He said should be done with her, as she had been taken in the act of adultery. Jesus, through His keen sense of wisdom, had rescued the woman from being stoned. All of her accusers had left. But there were still a number of people, including some of the Pharisees. Finally at one point many believed on Him. So He told them how they would be blessed if they would continue in His Word and thus we have the discourse about the bondage of sin. It was a bondage that the people were

seemingly not aware of. And it is true yet today. Many people are not aware of what a woeful bondage they are in. Bondage to Satan and sinful lusts is still the pit and snare that holds captive the human race. God gave the law by Moses for the purpose of making man aware of his sinful condition. But so many have not become wise to this. But for this cause Jesus came into the world, to save people from sin and death. Blessed is the man who is made aware of his sinful condition and finds in Christ salvation and deliverance from it. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What will be our fate if we die in our sins?
2. In what way can the truth make us free?
3. How did Jesus say that we can know the truth?
4. What is the bondage that people need to be set free from?
5. Why is Jesus, as the Son, able to make us free from the bondage of sin?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus Christ had authority on earth to forgive sins. A man sick of palsy was brought to him carried by four men who uncovered the roof and let him down where Jesus was. Jesus' first words to him were, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." In answer to the scribes displeasure, Jesus asked them which would be easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or "Arise, take up thy bed and walk." And then to show that He did have the power to forgive sins, He healed the man, who took up his bed and went forth.

On another occasion a poor penitent woman came into a Pharisee's house where Jesus was and, weeping, began to kiss his feet, wash his feet with her tears and anointed them with ointment. The Pharisee remonstrated against Jesus for allowing such a thing, but Jesus saw in the woman's heart a real godly sorrow and desire for forgiveness and deliverance. He showed that the woman's actions indicated a deep sense of her need of forgiveness, which actions the self-righteous Pharisee was void of. Jesus said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." And then He said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Luke 7:36-50.

Jesus Christ is still able to save the guilty sinner who comes in godly sorrow with a broken heart to Him for forgiveness and saving grace. Sad to say, too many are unaware of their sinful plight and woeful bondage. They are enjoying the pleasures of the flesh and the world, unmindful that the old account of sins are yet unforgiven. But Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. There have been many down through the years who have washed and made themselves white in the blood of the Lamb! Jesus Christ, through the offering of Himself to God, made one sacrifice for sins forever. "The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, can still purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God!" Hebrews 9:14.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Imagine yourself living in a small box. It is dark, hot, stuffy and cramped. Then imagine that you have been released out of that box and you have freedom. Freedom to stretch your legs, run around, swing your arms and take in the fresh air and sunshine. What a glorious feeling!

Thank the Lord that He has done just that for us. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Not just free—but free **indeed**. Such a small word but with grand implications. We can be free from sin in reality, in truth and in fact. Indeed!

Shall I claim this freedom and crawl right back into that stuffy, hot, cramped up box? God forbid. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid." Romans 6:15.

We can have the confidence that just as Christ already did His part in making us free, then our part is claiming this freedom in Him. We can be free indeed!

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



SEPTEMBER 17, 2006

THE BLESSING OF GIVING

Acts 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the

words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 12:33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

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

Mark 12:41 And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

43 And he called unto *him* his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

44 For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

II Corinthians 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

MEMORY VERSE: Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. II Corinthians 9:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus taught us to give to help others in their need, assuring us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The greater sacrifice we make in giving, the greater will be the reward from our Heavenly Father.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Luke 6:38), *"pressed down and shaken together"*: Packed to the fullest amount, making a good supply in every way. *"unto your bosom"*: For your enjoyment and benefit. *"mete"*: give out to others.

(Luke 12:33), *"alms"*: Gifts of compassion to those less fortunate.

(Mark 12:41), *"over against"*: Opposite or across from.

(Verse 42), *"mites"*: The smallest of all the coins in use.

(II Corinthians 9:6), *"sparingly"*: Stingily or with great reluctance and restraint. *"bountifully"*: With an effort to bless.

(Verse 7), *"purposeth"*: Decides or makes choice. *"grudgingly"*: Grievously.

(Verse 8), *"sufficiency"*: Contentment and self-satisfaction.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider first a statement made by the apostle Paul to the saints and elders from Ephesus whom he called to meet him at Melitus as he was on his way to Jerusalem. His discourse to them was very loving and filled with Christian beauty. He ended it with a quotation from the teachings of Jesus that is not found in any of the gospels, although the essence of it is surely brought out. It surely blends with all of Christ's teachings that it is more blessed to give than to receive. So we have also included the various places where Jesus mentions the need for us to be charitable and willing to give to help others. We have the scene of the poor widow that Jesus observed putting in the meager living that she had, contrasting it with the greater gifts given by the rich from their abundance. Then we have the blessed teachings of Paul to the Corinthians on the blessedness of giving. Paul quotes from Psalm 112:9 which is a vivid description of the man who fears the Lord and delights greatly in His commandments. And it is included in this writing how the godly man disperses and gives to the poor, his righteousness enduring forever.

We want to also refer to what Paul said in I Timothy 6:17-19. This is a beautiful entreaty for the praise of giving to help others: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate (generous); laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Let us take particular notice of that last phrase about laying up a good foundation, etc. We can be assured that what we give to help others in their times of need will have a bearing on our future, especially that last and final day of all days. If we have been charitable, helpful and generous to help others and not been covetous and lovers of self and pleasure, it is like sowing seed that will bring a rich harvest at the judgment. Remember our lesson about stewardship and "making friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when we leave this world, they will receive us into everlasting habitations." It works that way. I know that sometimes people take advantage of our generosity and it can be a real trying thing. But look to the Lord and beware of covetousness and stinginess. Let us keep our hearts on things above and the treasures that are everlasting. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How can it be more blessed to give than to receive?
2. Why does a person lose when they withhold giving to help others?
3. How did the poor widow give more than the rich in their abundance?
4. Why does giving grudgingly not please the Lord?
5. What did Paul say we can expect if we give cheerfully?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I heard a story once about a rich man who had abundance of this world's wealth, but was stingy, tight-fisted and very miserable in his life. One day it got so bad with him that he decided to go and jump into the river and end it all. As he thought things over, he decided that he would take some of the money he had with him and just give it away to whoever he would meet on his way to the river. So he started out, and began to hand out

money to every one he met up with. Doing this had such an effect upon him that when he got to the river he was feeling so good inside that he lost his miserable and wretched feeling and did not want to end his life at all. He had found out that giving to others was the answer to his unhappy existence.

I read an account one time about a rich man who had been very charitable and kind to the poor and others of his fellow men. He had been a friend to people in need and did not draw back from giving to help others. It told about how as he lay on his death-bed he brightened up and began to smile. Those with him asked him what it was that he was seeing, and he told them that there was a line of people passing by his bed, and he recognized them as the various poor and needy people that he had helped along life's way. They were passing by his bed, smiling. Those around could not see them, but he could see them and knew that they were the ones that he had sought to help in his lifetime.

It is a vital lesson to learn in life. The selfish and greedy people who fail to learn the lesson of giving are destroying their own souls. I do not know of anything that the Bible speaks any more about. Covetousness and the love of money is the curse of society. Ease and prosperity are sought after much to people's eternal loss. Every child of God must learn the blessing of giving and be attentive to exercise themselves therein. It will pay off in the end, for God will bless and reward us for every sacrifice that we make to help our brother along life's narrow pathway.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There is a good illustration on the effect of giving and not giving in Malachi the 3rd chapter. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."

God blesses those that give cheerfully and willingly to His cause of publishing the gospel and helping the poor. Proverbs 11:24 mentions, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." The new testament doesn't specifically bring out a 10% tithe as the old testament, but we should probably consider that at least the minimum of our giving. This is one way we demonstrate our love to God and our fellow man. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thine barns be filled with plenty..."

Paul mentioned that if a man would not provide for his own house he had denied the faith. God doesn't expect us to give indiscriminately. There are many today that stand on the street corners with signs that could work if they so chose. However; there are many needs all around us, that we could honor God in, by helping.

—Bro. Bob Wilson



SEPTEMBER 24, 2006

STRENGTH MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS

II Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

II Corinthians 13:3 Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? *It is Christ* that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord

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: Jesus Christ, though being mighty and rich, on account of our need, He assumed poverty and weakness to Himself. If we would walk in His steps and share in His power and eternal glory, then we must be poor and weak that His power might rest upon us.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(II Corinthians 12:7), "*exalted above measure*": Not be haughty. "*thorn in the flesh*": A bodily annoyance or disability. "*buffet*": Beat around and give trouble and discomfort.

(Verse 8), "*besought*": Implored, beseeched, and prayed. "*thrice*": Three times.

(Verse 9), "*sufficient*": The meaning in the Greek is to ward off or raise a barrier, indicating availing protection satisfactory and enough as the need is. "*made perfect*": Completed and fully accomplished. Christ's power is best exhibited through the

vessel that is void and empty of self and fleshly energy. *"infirmities"*: Weaknesses and inabilities.

(Verse 10), *"reproaches"*: Insults and injuries inflicted by others. *"necessities"*: Restrictions and dire needs, stressful limitations and constraints. *"distresses"*: The Greek word means "narrowness of room." This can be calamities and hard straits and times of sighings and groanings. The groanings that Paul speaks of in Romans 8:22, 23 and 26 as part of our lot in this mortal body comes from this same word.

(II Corinthians 13:4), *"crucified through weakness"*: Jesus had power to resist and stop the ordeal of suffering He faced in going to the cross, but He refused, choosing rather to be weak and helpless in obedience to His Father's will. He gave up all rights to justice, and willingly allowed Himself to be humiliated and His judgment taken away. This put Him in line to be quickened back to life in the resurrection by the power of God. *"we are weak in Him"*: We must also, as Christ did, assume the attitude of non-resistance and a willingness to be weak and helpless in the flesh. Thus can God be glorified to quicken and help us by His power.

(Rom. 8:32), *"with Him"*: God let Jesus be slain, but brought Him back from the grave and set Him on high "with Him" as our mediator and High Priest. And "with Him" God will pour out upon us the fullness of His Spirit, power and grace for our every need.

(Verse 33), *"Who will lay any thing to the charge of God's elect"*: Who will incriminate or condemn those who are chosen and blest of the Almighty God? The Jews accused Christ and condemned Him to the death of the cross, but look what God did to vindicate and justify Him! Yes, they killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Let the insults and accusations and condemnation come. They will come to nothing if we will keep in line with the Lord.

(Verse 37), *"we are more than conquerors"*: We conquer and vanquish over and beyond all the opposition and adversity this world can throw against us.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our lesson today we will consider another of Christ's sayings spoken after He had ascended up to the right hand of

God. He spoke this to His called apostle Paul in answer to Paul's earnest entreaty to be relieved of the "thorn in the flesh" that was piercing and weighing him down. When Paul turned to Christ he renounced all of his past convictions that carried him high in the Jewish esteem and honor. This made the Jewish leaders so angry that they held murder in their hearts for Paul. From the very start of his profession in Christ they set out to kill him, and he had to be let down by night from a window in the city wall of Damascus in a basket so that he could escape their hands. From from then on it was a continual conflict and threat. He lived constantly in peril of his life.

There may have been other weighty difficulties in Paul's life. It has been wondered just what the "thorn in the flesh was," but he pretty well sums it up by telling of the things he was learning to take pleasure in, for they were helping him to be weak so that the power of Christ could rest upon him. It no doubt helped Paul greatly to remember that His Savior had suffered and was weak in the flesh. And then the bright prospect of his hope and future glory was the anchor that held him through all the stormy blast that he weathered in his life.

We include with our lesson the final part of Romans 8 in which Paul expressed his great victory over all the sufferings he went through. We today can share in this same triumph and be more than conquerors through Christ who loved even us. We can triumph in physical weakness and sufferings that are so paramount to the saints of our day. Trusting in God completely for the healing of our bodies so often brings us through perils and piercing trials. But we can let it work for our good and overcome all we suffer.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Lord allow Paul to suffer the "thorn in the flesh?"
2. What did Paul express that this thorn in the flesh consisted of?
3. How did Jesus respond to Paul's request that it depart from him?
4. How can we compare what Paul suffered with what Jesus suffered?
5. What can we do through Christ in all the things we suffer in life?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD...." Jeremiah 9:23-24. We have three things mentioned here: wisdom, might and riches. Paul said in I Corinthians 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;...and the weak things to confound the things which are mighty." God is able to use and work through the things that are opposite of the spirit of the world. Worldly wisdom, worldly strength and worldly riches are contrary forces to faith and godliness. We must learn to deny these agents and be willing to be counted as fools, to be weak and helpless and to be poor in spirit. God knows how to work these things in our lives. He uses the "base things of the world, and things which are despised...yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." I Corinthians 1:28-29. God purposed that Jesus was to be crucified through weakness. Jesus obeyed and allowed Himself to be weak and defenseless, willingly bearing the death of the cross. May the Lord help His children to meet the challenge presented here as Paul did. He prayed for it to be taken away, but was submissive to God in taking pleasure in those things that he suffered. He followed Christ and set an example for us to follow also.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There was a story we read, some years ago, about a neighborhood bully that caused all the children in the neighborhood trouble. One day he had his face in the face of another smaller boy and was yelling insults at him. With their faces that close together the smaller boy couldn't resist—he clamped his teeth on the nose of the trouble maker and bit with all of his might. Once the smaller boy made the "initial contact" some of the other boys joined in with whatever they could get their hands on and according to the story, when the bigger boy got loose and could make his escape, he left in a hurry.

It never fails that those who trust in their own strength will one day lose, yet it is a great temptation for men to do that. When they are young it is not uncommon for them to lift weights and "work out" to develop their body to its maximum potential. Sis. Gladys Cashio made a comment one time that left an impression on my mind. She said that when she saw young men arm wrestling and trying to prove their strength it caused her to think that in the day of their death they won't be able to lift one finger. This observation should be sobering to each of us for the Scriptures say, "...it is appointed unto men once to die...." That means the physical strength that we have trusted in is one day going to fail us—it will vanish away. What will we trust in then?

This world is placing too much confidence in their physical might—from the armies of the world and the war games that they play to the athletic events that draw huge crowds of cheering fans to the business man who uses his superior position to take advantage of his customers. These influences are of the world and they will all pass away and yet they are affecting you and I. The spirit of Christ is totally opposite to the spirit of the world. Christ set an example of One who trusted in the power of God and was willing to be despised and suffer abuse rather than defend Himself in His own strength. Some might say Jesus was an extremist, He even let the cruel mob put Him to a torturous death. Was Jesus mistaken in trusting God that far? The resurrection that occurred after His death says, "No!" Will we be mistaken if we place our trust in God and allow the world to run over us and take advantage of us? Is it too much to "...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"? Jesus said to do this "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:..."

May God help us to understand that when we place our trust in Him, we will have found the most sure, eternal source of power in the universe. Our confidence in Him will never be betrayed. Not even death will separate us from "...the King of kings, and Lord of lords;" If we are suffering things that are hard to bear because we are striving to follow the example of our Savior, then may He open our vision to the glorious kinship we have with the Father and rejoice that we are His children.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

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