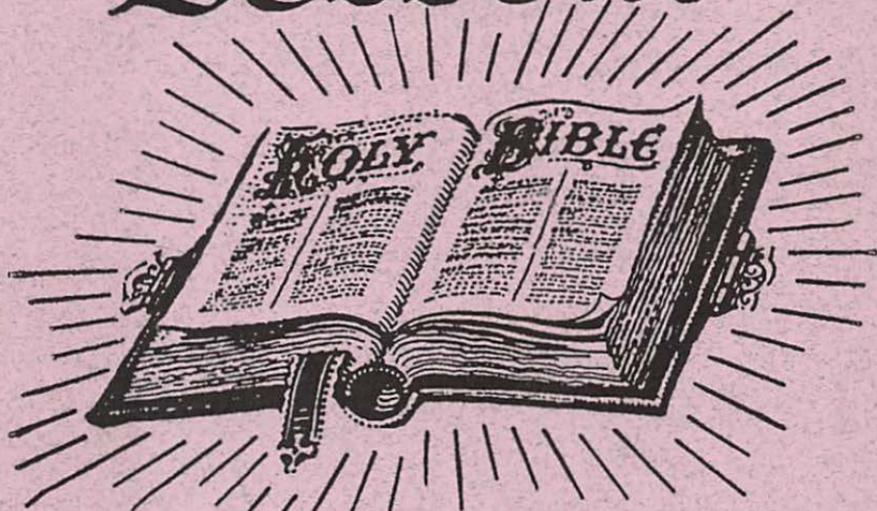


Bible Lessons



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

ADULTS -- YOUNG PEOPLE

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

We feel greatly inspired to set forth for this quarter a series of lessons from the book of Psalms. These are for the most part not particularly prophetic of Christ, but are full of encouraging truths of God's love and goodness that He wants to bestow even on us today. We trust the Lord will bless this series of lessons to one and all.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



OCTOBER 1, 2006

THE TRUE SACRIFICES ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

Psalm 50:1 The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me.

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.

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

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

16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and casteth my words behind thee.

21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

MEMORY VERSE: Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm 50:14-15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: If we will render unto the Almighty God the glory due to His name, obey His commandments and order our ways to please Him, then, when we call upon Him in the day of trouble, He will hear our prayers and deliver us.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 50:1), "*called the earth*": He has come near to address and speak to us.

(Verse 2), "*Zion*": Zion was the name of the hill in Jerusalem that David chose to be his homedwelling. II Samuel 5:7. It is from the Hebrew word "tsee-yone" with the emphasis on the last syllable and it means basically "to glitter or be conspicuous from afar." Somehow the term Zion, being the city of David, becomes in the Scriptures a reference to God's dwelling, the place where His glory shines out from, and this is carried over in the New Testament to refer to the Church of God which Christ purchased with His own blood. (Hebrews 12:22.) "*perfection of beauty*": We can take this to mean the true beauty of God's people, not the outward beauty of the flesh, but the inward beauty of the heart and the spirit of man.

(Verse 5), "*made a covenant with me by sacrifice*": Offering sacrifices to God has been a significant part of man's worship to God ever since man sinned and came short of the glory of God. Through the years it was with the sacrifices of animals that were killed and burned up before God that man approached God for favor and help. God is speaking to His people about this system of animal sacrifices.

(Verse 8), "*I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices*": God is saying that He is not seeking to justify or correct the people concerning their animal sacrifices. He is making it known that this kind of sacrifice is not really what He is looking for from man. He does not desire this animal sacrifice, although He tolerated and blessed the people for their efforts in a measure. But the

flesh of bulls and the blood of goats is not what He is after. He wants something from the heart of man, namely, honor, praise, thanksgiving, obedience, devotion and godly fear.

(Verse 14), "*pay thy vows*": Vows are generally meant to be promises. But here, in reference to what God desires from man, we must take in more than promises. We can apply this to mean all that we owe to God as being His creation and objects of His mercy and goodness. We owe Him our worship, devotion, honor, thanksgiving, praise and faithful obedience. This must come from our hearts sincerely and in truth. We must fulfill and satisfy the things that we owe to God.

(Verse 16), "*take my covenant in thy mouth*": This is "talk" service, speaking of God's covenant as if we are accepting it and, at the same time, disobeying it and living contrary to it.

(Verse 17), "*instruction*": Discipline and godly control.

(Verse 23), "*ordereth his conversation aright*": This means to set one's way to be in obedience to God's way, to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is one of the Psalms attributed to Asaph, who was one of the Levites, who in the days of David were appointed to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel. (I Chronicles 16:4.) This Psalm and Psalms 73 through 83 were written by him. He was evidently a godly man with whom the Holy Spirit communicated and blessed to write with inspiration.

This 50th Psalm has some vital truths set forth in it. It shows what God is pleased with and looking for in man. It agrees with David's words in Psalm 51:16-17 and Isaiah 1:10-11, where God voices His displeasure with mere animal sacrifices and outward show. He wants true honor, praise and faithful obedience from His creatures. Outward show and big talk means nothing with God. He wants to see a broken spirit and a contrite heart. He wants us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit by ceasing to do evil and learning to do well. He wants to see us rendering to Him what is due unto Him. He is not pleased with big talk and people who take hold of His covenant and at the same time hate instruction and cast His word behind them. We must be down to business and realistic about this thing if want to see and experience the salvation of God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was God not really pleased with animal sacrifices?
2. What is He really looking for from mankind?
3. How does God look on "big talk" with no real obedience?
4. What is God going to do with mankind when He comes?
5. What are some of the things that we owe to God to do and to be?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God is speaking to us today by one of His prophets. He is warning us of that awful day of reckoning He will have with us at the final Judgment. He is calling for true repentance and a straightening up of our lives. He will not hear our talk and promises void of fulfillment and obedience. He wants to see us down to business in living for Him. The system of animal sacrifices had become obnoxious and displeasing in His sight. It seemed as if the sacrifices that people were offering were for God's benefit, as if they were doing Him a great favor. But He makes it plain that such things were not availing with Him. What was God looking for from man? For the first part, it was a thankful heart. Gratitude expressed earnestly and sincerely from a fervent heart of love and appreciation goes far with God. This sense of gratefulness and loving appreciation for God's goodness is the spark that will cause us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. The scribe, who came to Jesus concerning the first commandment of all, saw that when he said, "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." Mark 12:33. And to this Jesus answered in verse 34: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Lord is looking for the hearts of His people to be centered on Him. The sacrifices that were offered by the children of Israel often became a routine and developed into just a form of religion. The Lord, however, is worthy of our whole being and He would like to give us a relationship with Him that is real and glowing with vibrancy.

An enthusiastic, personal relationship with the Savior has difficulty developing under the formal creeds of man. In reality, the babylonish systems of religion dampen and try to extinguish the soul that is on fire for God.

Salvation must start with the realization that our ways are not God's ways. We must ask the Lord to reveal His will for us and allow Him to teach us how to live. Notice the questions that some have asked when they were at the crossroads of eternal life. When Paul met the Lord on the road to Damascus he asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The prison keeper inquired of Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The people came to John the Baptist and implored of him, "What shall we do then?" The wealthy young man asked Jesus, "What lack I yet?" These people received instructions that did or could have changed their eternal destiny.

When we seek the Lord in all honesty and He reveals to us His will and we begin doing what He shows us, then our relationship with Him becomes more than a form. There will be joy in our salvation. Our experience will be a beacon that radiates the love of Jesus Christ to the world. The praise and worship that flows from our lips will be issuing directly from our hearts and will be pleasing in the sight of God. It may be that the world frowns on us and they may despise the changes that they see in our life, nevertheless, we will be satisfied with Jesus and He will be satisfied with us. —Bro. Willie E. Murphey



OCTOBER 8, 2006

LOVE FOR GOD'S HOUSE

Psalm 84:1 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

1 Timothy 3: 15 ...the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

MEMORY VERSE: For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Psalm 84:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There is peace, safety, protection and victory abiding in the house of God by being born and led of the Holy Spirit and living in obedience to His holy law.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 84:1.), "*amiable*": Loved, lovely, enjoyable and pleasant. "*Lord of hosts*": Jehovah of armies of saints and angels.

(Verse 2), "*fainteth for the courts of the Lord*": This means that he is at the end of his strength and every other source of help, but with confidence in the shelter of the walls of God's salvation he will find help and strength. "*my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God*": The Hebrew says, "my heart and my flesh shouts for joy to the living God."

(Verse 3), "*thine altars*": David had found a refuge in the worship of the LORD God at His tabernacle, even as a small sparrow and swallow found a place to build their nests. This scripture became very vivid to my heart one morning while in the camp meeting at Green Pastures, OK, years ago. I was sitting under the tabernacle communing with the Lord and I had this

very scripture before me. I looked up and there I saw, safely beneath the shelter of the tabernacle, a bird nest resting on a rafter. What goodness and mercy we can find in God's house forevermore!

(Verse 4), "*Selah*": A pause. This is a good place to pause and survey attentively what has been brought out in these verses.

(Verses 5 and 6), The Hebrew Interlinear renders this: "Blessed is the man, strength to him is in You; the highways are in their hearts. Passing through the valley of weeping, they will make it a fountain; the early rain covers even with blessings." I would like to quote now from the Septuagint Greek translation which really reveals the real message of the text: "Blessed is the man whose help is of thee, O Lord; in his heart he has purposed to go up the valley of weeping to the place he (God) has appointed, for there the law-giver will grant blessings."

(Verse 9), "*Behold, ... and look*": In verse 8 he says, "Hear, and give ear." These are the two main senses: seeing and hearing. These are both of great value to us as being of our God. He sees and He hears. Nothing escapes His all-seeing eye and all-hearing ear. Man can and does misapprehend, but God never does.

(Verse 10), "*better than a thousand*": One day in the courts of the Lord is of more worth, more pleasure and greater benefit than a thousand days spent outside of His fold. "*a doorkeeper*": The Hebrew meaning here is "to stand at the threshold." This means just inside the door, or we might put it, "the lowliest place." I would rather be just inside the house of God than in the dwelling of the ungodly.

(Verse 11), "*sun and shield, "grace and glory*": The LORD God is a shining light to illuminate us and at the same time He is a shield from the hurtful rays. He will give grace for the sorrows, needs, burdens and adversities of life, but He also promises glory and wonderful rewards to us if we will be faithful.

(I Tim. 3:15), "*pillar and ground*": support and foundation.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This 84th Psalm has been an inspiration to us through the years. Nothing is said as to who the author was but it is beyond doubt inspired of the Lord. It is a song that we can sing in our hearts concerning the Church of God that we are a member of in being saved by the grace of God in Christ. We have included what Paul said in I Timothy 3:15 concerning the House of God

which is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Any one who is truly born from above and in the kingdom of Christ and God can bear witness of the love and joy experienced in the soul by being in God's house. Everything that is spoken of the house of God in the Old Testament can be also true in a spiritual sense of the spiritual house we are in through the Holy Spirit living within us. The three "blessed" words mentioned in verses 4, 5, and 12 are from the Hebrew word which is an exclamation meaning "How happy!"

Verses 5 and 6 carry a precious truth. We have in our hearts a purpose and decision to follow the highway of holiness that leads to eternal glory. It often leads through the Valley of Baca (which means the Valley of Weeping), but we are purposed to go all the way up this valley until we reach the place that God is leading us to. Thus we can make it a fountain of blessing. Filling the lowliest place in God's house is better by far than what this world can offer. It is a blessed life to live and a profitable way to go. We can truly rejoice in being in the House of God all the days of our life.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is found in God's house that is so much better?
2. What profit is there to be seen and heard of the Lord?
3. How can we make the Valley of Weeping a fountain?
4. Why is it so blessed to be in God's House?
5. What is promised to those who walk uprightly?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The worship and services of the people of God to the true believer in Christ are very precious and enjoyable. There is something about the influence and blessing of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man that far exceeds all else. It is rich, beautiful, enjoyable and most beneficial to one's heart and life. How sweet to be in the service of God and to join in the singing of the hymns and spiritual songs! There is no greater and more beautiful music in the world! With the Spirit of the Lord flowing in the inner man there is no need for literal instrument's accompaniment. And it is a wonderful experience to kneel before the Lord our Maker with the congregation of saints and agree in prayer together. Then, when the Holy Spirit anoints one of His ministers to bring forth a message from the Word of God, what a spiritual blessing and benefit comes as the soul is fed and inspired!

But being in God's House is not confined to public worship alone. It covers every phase of life. Each member of the family of God is called upon to seek earnestly to be led by the Spirit of God in every day life. Family worship can be a wonderful experience. As we each one go forth to the labors of the day we can have the precious presence of the Lord accompanying us. We can live sweetly conscious of God's eye being upon us, assured that He is overshadowing us with His unfailing goodness. When we are called to go up the valley of weeping, we can know that He is bringing us to special blessings. Living in God's House is true joy and everlasting life.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It is so wonderful to see how the Scriptures in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the experience we have through Christ in Salvation!

Have you found this experience in your daily personal life? Did you know that you are the temple of the living God, (I Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:19-20), that He makes in you His abode, if you are obeying Him (John 14:23), and not walking in the flesh? (Romans 8:9, 14). You are the place of His rest; (Psalm 132:13-14 and Isaiah 66:1-2), you are a transparent stone, made like unto the corner-stone, which is Jesus. (I Peter 2:4-6 and Revelation 21:10-18). He is the Light within you, that shines out to all the world. (Revelation 21:23, Psalm 46:5, Zechariah 2:5, and Matthew 5:14-16). The house of God is wherever the presence of God dwells, and when you are born again and filled with His Spirit then you are, personally, His Zion, His house and His temple. You can have this experience in whatever geographical location you find yourself. This is a precious truth to the soul. Being able, in this life, to see this fulfilled as people of God come together to worship God in spirit and in truth is indeed a wonderful thing, like icing on a very good cake. Each little stone, made like the Corner-stone, is "fitly framed together" and "buildd together for an habitation of God through the spirit." (Ephesians 2:19-22.) Together, we are the city of God set on a hill, with the light of God in our midst. (Matthew 5:14-16 and Isaiah 4:5.) Again, in any geographical location, among any nationality or group of people, when the Bible conditions are met, there you have Zion, the Lord's House, the Church of God. When we have fellowship with the Father and His Spirit dwells in us then we have fellowship with each other. Praise the Lord!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

OCTOBER 15, 2006

A MORTAL'S PRAYER TO THE ALMIGHTY

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

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

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

MEMORY VERSE: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. James 4:14.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We are in this fleeting mortal life and it will soon come to an end. We are sentenced to die as a punishment for our sins. But we can apply our hearts unto godly fear and seek mercy and help from the Almighty God and He will let His beauty be upon us and save us from eternal death.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 90:1), "*dwelling place*": Habitation, home, shelter, resting place. "*in all "generations"*": To all humanity from the beginning of time to the end.

(Verse 2), "*from everlasting to everlasting*": From before time began unto the end of time. "*Thou art God*": He is the Eternal, Self-existent, Immortal, all wise and all-powerful God, the Creator, the Giver of Life, In Whom we live and move, and have our being.

(Verse 3), "*Thou turnest man to destruction*": The Hebrew says, "You turn man to dust." "*sayest, Return*": "...for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19.

(Verse 4), "*watch in the night*": This is a short period in the night; yes, one of responsibility about which we will give an account. It is very needful for us to be aware of how fleeting this mortal life really is.

(Verse 5), "*as with a flood*": As a gushing powerful stream of water sweeps away everything in its path.

(Verse 7), "*consumed*": Brought to an end. "*troubled*": Caused to tremble with fear and alarm.

(Verse 8), "*secret sins*": What is veiled or hidden from sight. The word "*sins*" is an added word, but that is what is included in the thought. Our iniquities and sins God is not overlooking. At one time God overlooked sin because of man's ignorance, but now hath He commanded all men everywhere to repent. (Acts 17:30.)

(Verse 9), "*spend our years as a tale that is told*": The Hebrew says, "We finish our years like a sigh."

(Verse 10), "*yet is their strength labour and sorrow*": The Hebrew says, "Yet their pride is labour and vanity."

(Verse 12), "*number our days*": To weigh out, account, or constitute officially. This means that we are to reckon our mortal life to be just as this Psalm describes it. "*apply our hearts unto wisdom*": The Hebrew says, "That we may bring a heart of wisdom." We are responsible to respond to God's Word and to

discipline our hearts and minds to reverence and godly fear that will cause us to realize that this life is short and uncertain.

(Verse 14), "*early*": The Hebrew says, "In the morning." This means the morning of our life. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...." Ecclesiastes 12:1. How vitally important it is for a young person to give up all to Jesus in the morning of their life! To spurn the convicting Spirit of the Lord and procrastinate their debt to their Maker is to invite trouble and disaster.

(Verse 15), "*days wherein Thou hast afflicted us*": The Hebrew says simply, "the days of our affliction." This can include misfortunes, hardship and adversity.

(Verse 16), "*Let thy work appear, and thy glory*": This is an expression of desire, and a willingness for God to work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We must let God work His work in us if we are to behold and enjoy His glory and majesty.

(Verse 17), "*beauty*": Delight; that which is suitable and beneficial; the image of His holiness. "*establish*": fix and render proper, sure, and unailing.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have before us for our lesson today a writing that was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. The heading entitles it as "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God." It could very well be his writing, perhaps written during the 40 years time that he was herding Jethro's sheep after having to flee from Egypt. Then Adam Clarke is of the opinion that it was written during Israel's captivity in Babylon. But wherever it was written, and whoever wrote it, the truth it speaks fits every generation of humanity on this earth. It has a message that we all with dire urgency need.

It is the sighing of the yearning heart for the LORD God Almighty's comfort and help. The different things that we meet on our pilgrimage road—adversity, affliction, iniquity, sin, peril of life and the ultimate doom of soon and sudden death—these all add up to make this earthly life toilsome and seemingly hopeless. He mentions God's anger and His wrath against us on account of our sins. That is a prime factor that we must be keenly aware of. Death is coming, we are captives of sin, we need HELP!

The Psalm ends with a fervent prayer for God's mercy and help. Oh, that *His* work will be brought forth and accomplished and that we might obtain the beauty of His holiness upon us! May the message of this Psalm move us to be closer to our Maker!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God command man to return to, and why?
2. What are some of the problems that we must face as mortals?
3. What is the span of years on this earth summed up to be?
4. What can we do to secure the help from God that we need here?
5. Why do we need His work and beauty and Him to establish our work?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our only hope for true life and happiness is in obtaining the favor and merciful help of the Almighty Being Who created us to start with. All of man's troubles and woes are because of our departure from His ways. We are slaves of sin and self. Life is full of disappointment and sorrow. Death reigns and soon we must succumb to his woeful blight. Let us face up to it. We are in trouble and we know it.

Let us from our innermost being seek the LORD while He may be found. Let us turn from our sinful ways and set ourselves to follow Him with all of our hearts! Let us seek Him early in our mortal life and become His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works that God originally planned for us. Let us follow peace with our fellow man and HOLINESS, without which no man shall see the Lord. Thus our mourning can be turned into gladness and rejoicing and we can live these few years on earth with hope and expectation of eternal life and glory with Him in a much better world than this! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow;..." Psalms 90:10. In a recent survey, the average life span for Americans was reported to be 76 years old. Obviously, the life span of today is not much different than that of old.

So then, if you take verse 12 of that reading, "So teach us to number our days,..." literally, then 80 years consists of about 29,000 days. When viewed from that standpoint, 29,000 is not a very large number. Twenty-nine thousand dollars will buy a

new car; pay on a house; or is an annual income. It seems so expendable in this day and time.

This brings to us a sobering thought. If I live to be 80 years old (by reason of strength), then how many days do I have left? How am I spending my days? Do I place as great of value on this gift as I do on other resources? Each day, while seemingly unimportant, brings us closer to our eternity. Let us be challenged to number our days so that we too can "apply our hearts unto wisdom."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



OCTOBER 22, 2006

THE TESTIMONY OF A FAITHFUL SOUL

Psalm 66: 1 Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands.

2 Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.

3 Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

5 Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.

6 He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him.

7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:

9 Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

11 Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.

12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,

14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

16 Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

19 But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

MEMORY VERSE: The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: I Peter 1:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God permits stressful and difficult things to come against us to reveal any foreign attitude or disposition in us. If we resist the temptation to have evil thoughts or desires in our hearts and overcome them, it will be proof that we are truly children of the most High God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 66:2), "*Sing forth*": Celebrate in song and music. "*make his praise glorious*": Put real heart splendor and beauty in our praise to Him.

(Verse 3), "*shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee*": Every person who refuses to submit themselves to God in this present life will ultimately do so at the final judgment. "...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." Romans 14:10-11.

(Verse 5), "*terrible*": The same as in verse 3; awesome and frightful.

(Verse 7), "*his eyes behold the nations*": He searches them out.

(Verse 8), "*make the voice of his praise to be heard*": Sound it out in an audible clear toned manner so that others can hear.

(Verse 9), "*holdeth our soul in life*": He keeps in rightful position and maintains our experience with Him over and above all other forces and influences around about.

(Verse 10), "*proved*": Put to the test. "*tried*": Refined and

purged of dross and foreign matter through heated trials of adversity.

(Verse 11), "*net*": Close and hard circumstances with no escape except in Him.

(Verse 12), "*caused men to ride over our heads*": The Hebrew says, "You have let men ride at our heads." God allows His saints to be contested and pressured by the worldly wise. Jesus foretold us being brought before kings and rulers for His name's sake. "And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Luke 21:13-15. "*a wealthy place*": Abundant peace and satisfaction to your soul.

(Verse 18), "*regard iniquity*": Look upon evil with favor or desire.

(Verse 19), "*verily*": Surely.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There is nothing said concerning who the author was who wrote this inspiring Psalm. But we know there have been many precious people of God down through the years who have been through the trying things mentioned who can testify just like this. In fact, we can look at the saints in history and behold how the LORD God stood by them and brought them through. Look at poor Abel being murdered by his own brother. Then there was Noah who withstood his generation and built the ark as the LORD directed him. Remember Abraham, how the LORD put him to the test in directing him to offer his beloved son as a sacrifice. There was David being hunted and hated by King Saul, and do not forget the three Hebrew children before the fiery furnace and good, old faithful Daniel before the lions' den. Call to remembrance the faithfulness and patience of Job. And then there is the greatest of them all: our Lord and Savior who was perfected by the things that He suffered and had to submit to in the will of God. This Psalm can fit them all. Reginald Heber, a young missionary to India many years ago, wrote:

"The Son of God goes forth to war, a kingly crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar: who follows in His train?
Who best can drink his cup of woe, triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below, He follows in His train.

A glorious band, the chosen few on whom the Spirit came,
Twelve valiant saints, their hope they knew, and mocked the
cross and flame:

They met the tyrant's brandished steel, the lion's gory mane;
They bowed their necks the death to feel: Who follows in
their train?" —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does God allow His children to go through sufferings in this life?
2. What is the result of patiently enduring faithfully all the way?
3. What is God faithful to do for us in the sufferings we go through?
4. What must we be careful to avoid in the times of temptation?
5. What will be the greatest reward to be given for being faithful?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our lesson today brings out the truth that God is going to have a tried and tested people. He is going to allow us to endure great and hard tests of our faith and devotion to Him. If we want to share in His eternal glory we must prove our worthiness and qualifications of such. This is to be accomplished right here in this mortal flesh. We will live within easy reach of things that are enmity against God. We will meet all kinds of opposition and wrong influences that will tend to lead us away from the real truth of God. We will deal with people who are selfish, mean, ugly and contrary to godliness. We will be mistreated, hated, spitefully used and persecuted because of our stand for holiness unto the Lord. We might try to avoid all of this, but such can never be. We must prove our worthiness by enduring faithfully and being true to the Lord regardless of the cost.

Let us remember that if we will be steadfast in our integrity with God, He will reward us with unnumbered blessings. But the ones who are in on the side of evil will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. God will stand by those who will be faithful to Him in the dark times of trial and adversity. Our Memory

Verse from I Peter 1:7 declares that the trial of our faith is more precious than gold that perisheth. And he said further in 4:12 and 13 "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." We, too, can have a testimony like the one in our lesson, which will be handed down to those who follow us. It will be worth it all when we meet our reward in eternal glory.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the righteous has been a stumbling block to many. According to Psalm 73, it happened to Asaph. "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." Asaph was speaking of his faith and experience with God. He began to lose his desire and will to serve God. He was losing faith and hope when he saw the ungodly prosper, in the world (verse 12) and compared it to his sufferings (verse 14). "For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." He was quickly coming to the conclusion that perhaps (verse 13) he had cleansed his heart in vain. All that he had done in his effort to please and serve the Lord seemed useless and to no avail. He was suffering and it seemed the Lord was not hearing his cry. Have you been there? It seemed like prayer was going nowhere, there was no change.

Verse 16, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me:..." His mind couldn't justify what looked so unfair. Here he was, living righteously for God and suffering and he compared that to those who were living sinful and seeing their prosperity.

The seemingly prosperity of false religion can have this same effect if we are not careful, when we look out and see the big movements that are in the world. A man once told me that he felt sorry for us. He would drive by and see the few cars in the parking lot. He went on to tell me of the large size of their congregation and the great works they were doing. Dear saints, we need to remember that we are living in a backslidden society. Our America has fallen from the godly principles that once blessed her.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

OCTOBER 29, 2006

UNWISE ENVY TOWARD THE WICKED

Psalm 73:1 Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.

3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

4 For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.

5 They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.

7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

12 Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

13 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;

17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

20 As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.

MEMORY VERSE: Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Psalm 73:24.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Just because a person is prospering in the flesh and worldly things is no sign that God is favoring him. God lets the wicked have their good times here but afterward it will be destruction for them. God allows His saints to suffer here but afterward it will be glory and eternal life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 73:3), "*envious at the foolish*": Jealous of the proud. "*prosperity*": Peace

(Verse 4), "*no bands in their death*": No pangs or pains to their death. "*their strength is firm*": Their body is fat (healthy).

(Verse 5), "*neither are they plagued*": They are not touched (bothered or hurt).

(Verse 12), "*who prosper in the world*": Who are always at ease.

(Verse 13), "*Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain*": Surely in vain I have cleansed my heart. This is how satan wants the child of God to look at things: "Here I am trying to please God and having so much trouble, while the ungodly are having things nice. What profit has it been for me to give up sin?"

(Verse 14), "*plagued*": Touched, bothered, hurt. The same as in verse 5.

(Verse 16), "*thought to know this*": Tried to figure this all out. "*too painful for me*": Painful in my eyes.

(Verse 18), "*slippery places*": Seemingly smooth but in reality treacherous. "*thou castedst them down to destruction*": You will make them fall into ruins.

(Verse 20), "*As a dream when one awaketh*": The Hebrew says, "Like a dream from dreaming in awaking." The pleasure and prosperity of the wicked is but a transient dream. One day they will awake to reality at the judgment to meet their ungodly deeds.

(Verse 25), The Hebrew renders this verse: "Whom is to me in Heaven? And besides You I do not desire on earth." Christ is our only real source for help. From His heavenly position at the right hand of God He can help us as no one else can.

(Verse 27), "*go a whoring from thee*": Seek love and friendship other than God.

(Verse 28), *"I have put my trust in the LORD God"*: I have set in the Lord Jehovah my refuge.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today speaks a truth that every saint of God should be fully aware of. The writer of this Psalm expresses his thoughts concerning the seeming prosperity of those around him who were not God-fearing and God-pleasing. And he beheld this state of the wicked in the face of the cup of suffering that had been wrung out to him as he was sincerely endeavoring to please the Almighty. It was the prosperity of the wicked versus the travail and misery of the godly, a conflict that he could not reconcile nor understand. It was just too painful for him and he grappled with it until he was at his wit's end.

But such it was until he went into the sanctuary of God. He went before the great LORD of all the earth in earnest prayer and supplication for His help in this matter. This is surely something that every child of God has a blessed privilege to do. "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. When we cannot put things together and understand, let us earnestly seek the Lord with all of our hearts and about it. And this man did that. He went into the sanctuary of God, and the LORD made him to know what the score was. And what was it? He saw that the prosperity and peace that the wicked were enjoying was a temporary thing soon to pass away. He also saw that his troubles and sorrows were temporary, too. They would pass away and, if he would cleave to the Lord and follow His counsel, he would afterward be received up into eternal glory.

It is vital to maintain a proper sense of values. Which would you rather have: pleasure and prosperity here with no godly fear and obedience to God to be followed with eternal destruction, or godly fear with trials of affliction, adversity and suffering to be followed with eternal life and peace? The Bible speaks much of the cross, self-denial, persecution and suffering as a part of the Christian life. Judgment begins for the child of God now in this life and it is shown in the sufferings we endure for Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was the writer's feet almost gone and his steps well nigh slipped?

2. Why did it seem to him that he had cleansed his heart in vain?
3. What did he do about it, and what was made known to him when he did?
4. What did he see was the real state of the ungodly?
5. What was his decision to do in his life concerning his sufferings?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Paul spoke in I Thessalonians 5:2 and 3 "that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." Notice the thought: "When they shall say, Peace and safety." This is a thought that is parallel with what is brought out in this lesson. The peace and prosperity of the wicked will be suddenly ended and changed to destruction. They may laugh at the godly and vaunt themselves in their luxury and ease. But it will soon be changed.

This life is short, fleeting and uncertain. These mortal bodies that people adorn and pamper and have so much to do about are corruptible and soon to perish. It is foolish and vain to sow to the flesh. You will reap corruption if you do, as Paul stated in Galatians 6:8 But, sad to say, that is all the majority of people in our society know. Satisfying the lusts and fancies of the physical is people's number one priority. Eating, drinking, traveling, sight-seeing, sports, styles, fashions, entertainment, oh, the list goes on and on. But Christ has brought to us the reality of the Holy Spirit. He did not live to the flesh, but sought to please God and obey His will above His own physical desires. He went to the cross and submitted to its shame and humiliation in obedience to His Father's will. He was rewarded for His obedience by being raised from the dead and given a seat at the right hand of God in the heavenly places. From there He pours out His Spirit upon all who obey Him. Hereby the soul of man finds true wealth and happiness and a hope of everlasting life with Jesus in the world to come. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

You may remember the dramatic change in the color of our surroundings that occurs when one puts on a pair of colored

glasses. If the glasses are red, then everything takes on a red tint. If the glasses are blue, then everything appears to be a shade of blue.

The enemy would like to put a pair of "earth" colored glasses on the people of God. He knows that this "shade" would effectively blind us to spiritual things. He also knows that if all we can see is what pertains to this world, our faith will be hindered, our prayers will not be answered, unbelief will grow in our hearts and our experience with God will be choked out. Our service to the Lord will seem unnecessary and the things we once held precious will seem common and ordinary. If these "glasses" stay on long enough our mind will soon adjust to the "earthly shade" and we will begin to think we are normal.

Ah, but let us go into the sanctuary and allow the Lord to take off our "earthly shades." Then we will be able to see clearly again. Our admiration for the things of this world will once again seem foolish. We will remember the destruction that will inevitably befall the wicked and how fleeting the pleasures of sin are. We will also be reminded that the joys of Heaven are forever and that our trials and afflictions will only last for a little while. We will feel the warmth of God's love for us and understand how it breaks his heart when we turn away from Him. We will recognize how deeply concerned He is for our well being and be made aware of the blessings He showers upon us every day of our lives. It is precious to be in the presence of God. Our soul can find sweet rest, our worries can all be laid at His feet and our strength can be renewed. Our trembling hand can feel His firm grip and our grieving heart can find solace and comfort in the shelter of His strong arms. Our spiritual sight is restored, our faith is renewed and our soul is at home when we have communion with our Maker.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



NOVEMBER 5, 2006

AN AGED MAN'S PRAYER

Psalm 71:1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

5 For thou art my hope, O Lord God: thou art my trust from my youth.

6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of thee.

8 Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.

9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers *thereof*.

16 I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.

18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not: until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

20 Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

MEMORY VERSE: Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Psalm 71:20.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The years of our earthly life go by so swiftly. It is so wise for us to turn to the Lord and His counsel in the days of our youth and hold fast to him always. Then, when old age comes on, we can have the assurance that He will never forsake us but will help us as our physical strength fails. And we will have a hope of being with Him in the great resurrection at the last day.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 71:1), "*confusion*": Shame and disappointment.

(Verse 3), "*continually resort*": To always come to. Just as we have our earthly dwellings to which we come back to from our goings forth, so we have our gracious and wonderful God to always come to and enjoy as a refuge from the turbulent world outside.

(Verse 5), "*hope*": What we are longing for with bright anticipation. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." I Corinthians 15:19. "For we are saved by hope:..." Romans 8:24. The overall scope of our New Testament salvation reaches beyond this fleeting mortal earth. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Hebrews 13:14. "*trust*": Refuge, security, assurance. "Blessed is the man that maketh the LORD his trust,..." Psalm 40:4. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God." Psalm 20:7. "...be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;" I Timothy 6:17.

(Verse 8), The Hebrew text is rather a statement than a prayer: "My mouth is filled with your praise all the day long with your glory." At least 4 times in this Psalm his praise to God is mentioned. How important and vital to spiritual health is the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name! Hebrews 13:15. But is not fervent praise most generally preceded by fervent petition and prayer? What is not asked nor sought for is not appreciated as much.

(Verse 16), "*in the strength of the Lord God*": "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength," and "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength,..." Isaiah 40:29, 31. It is a wonderful experience to be strengthened by the Spirit of God in the times of our weakness. Paul testified that he gladly would rather glory in his infirmities, for when he was weak, then was he strong. (II Corinthians 12:9-10.) "*make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only*": This means to mark or remember that only in God's righteousness can we prevail. Paul's desire was to "...be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:" Philipians 3:9. Self-righteousness or our own works will not avail.

LESSON BACKGROUND

There is no mention of who brought forth this beautiful and encouraging Psalm. But it glows with holy inspiration and comfort. It is shown to be the prayer of one who is aged and facing the decline of mortal years. And it gives clear testimony that such a one had been diligent to seek and to serve the Lord from their youth. Yes, even from birth, he or she knew that they had been marked out to be part of the plan of God. What is said here needs to be true with us all. Oh, how we would like to impress upon our young people the need of being attentive to the Lord's instruction and to make Him their hope and trust in the days of their youth! How many young people make the sad mistake of choosing the flesh and the world for their treasures and pleasures. Such attractions are so keen to the youthful appetites and vigor! But they are deceitful and destructive.

Oh, that people could be made aware of the just claim that God has upon their hearts and desires! Every one of us were formed in the womb under the jurisdiction of the eyes of the Almighty. We are His, and we are not our own. The sooner we can turn our life entirely into His hands to do His will and follow Him supremely, the better off we will be. If we will give all to Jesus in our youth and stay with Him all the way, we can have assurance that in the time of old age we will not have to fear. God will not forsake us in our declining years if we have given Him the strength of our youth.

We have chosen verse 20 as our memory verse because it points to that great and final day that is soon to come. On that day the Almighty God and Savior will call all of us mortals back from our beds in the dust to stand before Him in the judgment. Just how we have lived and kept our inner man during this fleeting life will determine what our state will be then.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What should be the Number One desire of our hearts in this life?
2. Why is it so necessary to make God our hope and trust in our youth?
3. Of what value and importance is prayer and praise to our souls?
4. Why should we be concerned about old age that is coming on?

5. What is the hope that we can have if we faithfully serve the Lord?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We know not the number of our days. We have today and we make plans for tomorrow. But to many, that tomorrow never comes. Life is solemn and weighty with responsibility, not only to others, but to God and to the welfare of our precious souls. Life, also, is very swift in its passing. This year will mark the 50th anniversary of our surrender to Jesus and our starting out for Him. I had graduated from high school on May 24, 1956, and I was faced with the solemn challenge of the future. The Spirit of the Lord visited my soul and invited me to give all to Jesus and let Him lead my life. I am so glad that I yielded to the call and was born again and made a new creature in Christ Jesus!

I did not realize then just how fast the years would go by. Bro. Fred Pruitt, in a letter to me, gave me this counsel. "Keep encouraged in the way, for the years soon fly by and you will be so glad that you have a life spent for God and will receive a crown of life that fadeth not away." He wrote that to me not long before he passed away. How I have treasured those words! Now I am faced with my declining days. Old age is just around the corner. How wonderful to have the assurance that the God of my youth will be the God of my old age!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I would like to share a precious testimony from the blind songwriter, Fanny Crosby, as she stood to witness one Sunday in October, 1910. She was then 90 years old, and here are some of the things she said about God's goodness to her through the years:

"These ninety years are rich with the wealth of goodness, sparkling with the best spirit of sweetness and overflowing with the true wine of joy and gladness. I come to you in the evening tide of life with a rod and a staff, and I am living in the sight of eternity's sunrise. Hope's star shines clearer on my pathway tonight than it did fifty years ago. It lights my morning hours, it brightens my noon-day activities, it glows in the evening shadows. I constantly am writing of the door of hope for downcast souls and I shall carry on the ministry of hope till I shall enter the Celestial City....

"During these ninety years I have been careful of cultivating a sunny disposition, for I have found in my experience so many who, when they grow old, become bitter and difficult to get along with. I made up my mind, years ago, that I would never become a disagreeable old woman, and that wherever I went I would take sunshine and good cheer....

"My simple trust in God's goodness has never failed me during these many years since I learned the lesson of 'trust and obey'....

"My love for the Holy Bible and its sacred truth is stronger and more precious to me at ninety than at nineteen. It is my bread of life, the anchor of my hope, the lantern that lights my pathway to my Paradise Home....

"Standing on the ninetieth golden step I look backward and see the pathway of struggle and victory. I take a glance forward, and lo, Heaven's sunrise breaks in splendor on my brow."

(Taken from Fanny Crosby's Story by S. Trevena Jackson, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI) —Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

NOVEMBER 12, 2006

THE PRAYER OF A PILGRIM AND STRANGER

Psalm 39:1 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good: and my sorrow was stirred.

3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,

4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

MEMORY VERSE: LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Psalm 39:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Rather than being a big talker we need to bridle our tongues, learn to be quiet and listen to the Spirit of God. It will help us to realize how small and insignificant we really are and how we are soon to go from hence and be no more.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 39:1), *"take heed to my ways"*: I will be careful to guard and keep my ways from sinning with my tongue. This is a wise resolve. "...every idle (empty, useless and non-constructive) word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Matthew 12:36. Better to keep silence and let men think I am a fool than to open my mouth and remove all doubt. "Thoughts unexpressed so often fall back dead, but God Himself can't kill them once they're said."

(Verse 2), *"I held my peace, even from good"*: Even if we think that what we ought to say would be for good, it would be wise to refrain, and wait on God. "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." Proverbs 29:11. *"my sorrow was stirred"*: My pain was agitated and disturbed. I was offended and hurt.

(Verse 3), *"My heart was hot within me"*: I was fervently desiring to speak. *"while I was musing the fire burned"*: As I meditated and waited on God in prayer, the fire of His love burned in my heart. *"then spake I with my tongue"*: When I did

speak, the Lord directed my words for my good and the good of others.

(Verse 4), "*mine end*": What I will be hereafter. "*the measure of my days*": How short is the limit or boundary of my earthly span. "*frail*": Vacant, empty and lacking.

(Verse 5), "*handbreadth*": This is the width of the palm of one's hand. As the measure of a handbreadth to space, so is our earthly existence compared to eternity. Here is how the Hebrew reads: "Behold, like a handbreadth You gave my days, and my life is as non-existence before You; surely all vanity is every man standing firm."

(Verse 6), "*vain shew*": A fleeting shadow. "*disquieted*": In an uproar. "*heapeth up*": Hoards up for his covetous self.

(Verse 7), "*what wait I for?*": While the world lays up treasures on earth, what am I waiting for?

(Verse 8), "*the reproach of the foolish*": "...he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool." Jeremiah 17:11.

(Verse 9), "*I was dumb*": I did not murmur when you allowed me to be afflicted.

(Verse 10), "*the blow of thine hand*": The disciplinary stroke of the Providence of God to humble and instruct us of His holiness.

(Verse 11), "*with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity*": "...despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:" Hebrews 12:5. "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." I Corinthians 11:32.

(Verse 12), "*stranger*": Alien or foreigner. "*sojourner*": Pilgrim or one who is passing through on the way to another home.

(Verse 13), The Hebrew says, "Look away from me, and I will be cheerful, before I go away and be no more."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is one of David's Psalms, the heading says "to Jeduthun" which means to worship or praise. It is a vital thought that we all should keep in mind concerning the frailty of our earthly state and our need for God to chasten us and keep us from going astray.

David begins with convictions of the need of carefulness of how we use our tongue. This is one of the greatest and most important lessons we need to learn in the Christian life. So much

is said in the scriptures about the tongue and its use and misuse. With sin and wickedness abounding everywhere, how careful we need to be with our words! When we can restrain our selves and be sparing with our words we can avoid many a pitfall. David held his peace even from good, even when he thought it would be good to speak. We need to weigh our words and think them over carefully before we let them loose.

When he did speak it was a prayer for the Lord to help him to realize how short his time was and how frail and needy he was. He was able to sense his mortal weakness and need for God's guidance and to lay hold on the hope that God was setting before him. May the Lord help each one of us to remember that we are not here for always, but will one day go hence and be no more.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it wise to keep silent and not be quick to speak?
2. What did David say when he finally did speak?
3. What did he say that every man at his best state is?
4. What does God at times do to correct man for iniquity?
5. What should be our prayer to God concerning our earthly life?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Proverbs 29:20 says, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Isaiah 28:16 declares that God was going to "...lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." There is an old saying, "Haste makes waste." It is surely true. We need to learn to wait on the Lord. We should weigh carefully our words and do not speak in hasty anger. Oh, our lesson sets a pattern that we would all do well to follow! Many people are so free with their tongue, and give little thought to what their words are going to do. God gave us the power of speech, but we need to use it wisely.

While he waited the fire burned. Oh, that we would let the fire of the Holy Spirit come into us and guide our conversation aright! When he did speak it was a prayer for the Lord to help him to realize how short and uncertain was his life and how frail and unable he was to handle it properly. Let us remember that we are going to meet the deeds we have done and the words we have

spoken. We have a Heavenly Father who is wise in His chastisements and dealings of severity. He wants us to qualify for a Heavenly Home, so He wisely applies the rod of correction upon us. We need to be attentive to His dealings and shape up as He wants us to. This life is a short probation that will decide on where our eternal dwelling will be. Oh, let us not be beguiled by the vanities of this present evil world! It is all going to pass away in a moment of time. Let us set our hearts on things eternal and so live that we can live again in His eternal glory.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

A tombstone engraved with sentiments dear
Inscribing a person's past.
A date of birth and a date of death
But in between—Just a dash.

The pace of life from beginning to end
So fleeting and so fast.
How sobering then to see in the end
That it all sums up—To a dash.

"Life is a vapour," the brother once said,
"Twill end in death at the last.
Eternity's fate determined too late
What did you do—With your dash?"

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



NOVEMBER 19, 2006

A PRAYER WITH HOPE IN TIME OF TROUBLE

Psalm 102:1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

11 My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.

13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.

14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

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

18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from the heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem:

22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.

26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

27 But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

MEMORY VERSE: When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. Psalm 102:16-17.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has looked down from Heaven upon afflicted and troubled humanity who are appointed to death in the prison house of sin. He sent Jesus to atone for those sins and has declared His name in His Church—His people. While the earth perishes, Christ and all who serve and follow Him will endure for ever.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 102:13), "*favour*": Pity and fulfill her need. Israel, as a nation, was in Babylonian captivity while Zion and Jerusalem were in ruins. But those in captivity nourished a hope that their nation would be restored and Jerusalem would be rebuilt. This is the hope that is being expressed here and is a prophecy of what Christ would accomplish. "*set time*": God's appointed time.

(Verse 14), "*in her stones...the dust thereof*": Though the Holy City and the sacred Temple were in ruins, the people of God had not given up hope that all would be restored. Thus they cherished the stones and dust thereof because of what it had meant to them and for the hope that it would be built again.

(Verse 15), "*the heathen*": The Gentiles, the nations. These three terms all mean and point to the same thing, and that is all the people of the world other than the Jews. "*shall fear the name of the LORD*": It was the burden and desire of God's people that God would once again restore Zion to power and glory so that all the nations of the world would fear the name of Jehovah.

(Verse 16), "*build up Zion*": Restore Zion to be a praise in the earth once more. This was the hope and desire of the prophet and it was to be fulfilled in Christ. However, it would be fulfilled in a different way than what the blinded, material-minded Jews thought. It would be a spiritual city of men and women born again by the Spirit of God, and not the literal city.

(Verse 17), "*prayer of the destitute*": the earnest supplication, plea and cry of the poor and needy.

(Verse 18), "*generation to come*": This would be fulfilled in those who experience Christ's redemptive work, both Jews and Gentiles, a spiritual people, as I Peter 2:9 says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar (purchased) people:..."

(Verse 19), "*height of his sanctuary*": The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity looks down from His holy Heaven and beholds the need of His lost creation.

(Verse 20), "*groaning*": Sighing and crying out. "*prisoner*": Those in the prison house of sin, as Isaiah 42:6 and 7 says about Christ who would be given "...for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." "*appointed to death*": under the sentence of death and eternal damnation.

(Verse 21), "declare": preach, proclaim and publish. "in Zion,...in Jerusalem": This would be fulfilled in the Church of God, the New Jerusalem which Christ built on Himself, the Solid Rock. Matthew 16:18.

(Verse 22), "When the people are gathered together...to serve the LORD": This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the followers of Christ and the gospel of the kingdom of God was preached to the great multitude that had gathered there to worship God.

(Verse 27), "thou art the same": As Hebrews 13:8 declares: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

(Verse 28), "continue...and be established": The Church that God would bring forth in Christ would never be brought to desolation or come to an end. It will stand and endure throughout all the generations of time and will be standing when Jesus comes again.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is, as the title says, "A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD." Adam Clarke comments that "there seems to be little doubt that this is the prayer of the captives in Babylon, when, towards the end of the captivity, they were almost worn out with oppression, cruelty and distress. The Psalm has been attributed to Daniel, to Jeremiah, to Nehemiah, or to some of the other prophets who flourished during the time of the captivity." He also says concerning verse 15, "So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD," that "after the edict of Cyrus to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, which was 490 years before Christ, the name of the true God was more generally known among the heathen; and the translating the Sacred Writings into Greek, by the command of the king of Egypt, about 285 years before the Christian era, spread a measure of the light of God in the Gentile world which they had not before seen." We can see that God was working to prepare the world for the Savior that He had promised.

The language of this Psalm is so precious and clearly prophetic of God working to bring salvation to humanity. God is described as looking down upon earth with a desire to loose the prisoners of sin and death and declare His name among the peoples of earth. And it would be accomplished when the people were gathered together to serve the Lord. This was truly fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

Verses 25 to 27 are quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12 and applied with other Old Testament scriptures directly to our Lord Jesus Christ.
—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the LORD look down from Heaven to hear and to do?
2. In what Zion and Jerusalem did He want to declare His name?
3. What kind of prisoners did God desire to set free?
4. How are we appointed to death and how did Christ loose us?
5. Who is it that is said to be the same forever?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It surely pays to hold on to God in faithful prayer and petition. He has often allowed His beloved saints to suffer lengthy trials of adversity and sorrow, but it is to make the fulfillment of His promises sweeter and more precious to us. At the set time, the time that He appoints, our reward will come and will not tarry. This is true with temporal needs and burdens as well as with the eternal blessings that we are looking forward to. Let us be patient and strong in courage. God is over all and He will work for those who trust fully and steadfastly in Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Psalms are filled with thanksgiving and praise for God's goodness and unfailing help. A classic example is found in Psalms 34:6, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*, and saved him out of all his troubles." The Psalms encourage our faith and strengthen our hope in God, because it gives us many pictures of the suffering of humanity, but also God's love and mercy. It could be financial trouble, health problems, reproach from the ungodly, it matters not. God cares and is concerned. The trial of our faith has a purpose of perfecting us and helping us to grow in Christ. It is good for us to get good out of these difficult places we pass through. We do well to learn the lessons they bring us. It would be nice if all of growing simply took place by the reading of God's Word. But it doesn't work that way.

We once bought a house that had an old neglected apple tree in the backyard. I pruned it up and awaited the fruit. It seemed so nice to be able to get apples in our own backyard instead of the store. When it started producing I had a difficult time determining when the green apples were ripe. But as the season progressed and I waited, I found it was worth the wait—the seasoned apples had a much richer flavor. I am reminded that God is interested in seasoning us. He wants there to be a sweetness to come out of our lives that glorifies Him.

We thank Him today for His consideration of the poor, distressed, afflicted and tempest tossed. Let us recognize our great dependency on His love and mercy. Hold fast our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

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NOVEMBER 26, 2006

SONG OF TRIUMPHANT PRAISE

Psalm 92:1 It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

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

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

7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:

8 But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore.

9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish: all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn:
I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

11 Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and
mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against
me.

12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall
grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall
flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be
fat and flourishing;

15 To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and
there is no unrighteousness in him.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart
greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. Psalm 28:7.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Through the strength and power of
the grace of God in His Son Jesus Christ we can triumph over the
devil and all of his works. Through the fresh anointing of His Holy
Spirit we can flourish and bring forth fruit even though the
outward man is perishing.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 92:1), "*most High*": Above all.

(Verse 4), "*thy work*": The work of His grace in His Son Jesus.
"Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which
God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "*I will
triumph*": I will shout.

(Verse 5), "*thy thoughts are very deep*": Thy designs are very
wisely planned with profound wisdom and good will. "O the
depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding
out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been
his counsellor?" Romans 11:33-34.

(Verse 6), "*brutish man*": A man who lives no higher in mind
and disposition than the beast of the field.

(Verse 7), "*flourish*": Blossom out like a flower. "Woe to the
crown of pride,...whose glorious beauty is a fading flower,..."
Isaiah 28:1. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man
as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof

falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." I Peter 1:24-25 as quoted from Isaiah 40:6-8.

(Verse 10), "*horn*": This means overcoming strength and power. In the Christian it is the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that enables us to overcome the devil and this wicked world. "*unicorn*": This is referring to a wild ox with terrible horns. There are several animals that would come up to this description, including the gigantic long-horns from the wild west and the terrific rhinoceros of Africa. "*fresh oil*": New, verdant, beautiful, delightful, fragrant, and prosperous. This is fulfilled in the fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit that is given to those who are obedient to Christ and are willing to be led by Him. As Bro. C. W. Naylor's song "Spirit Holy" says, "Oh, how sweet is Thy abiding! Oh, how tender is the love Thou dost shed abroad within me from the Father-heart above!"

(Verse 11), "*my desire*": This is mentioned two times in this verse. It is really an addition by the translators. The writer is speaking about the triumph he will have over the powers of evil that work against him.

(Verse 12), "*palm tree and cedar in Lebanon*": While the wicked perish like grass, the righteous will flourish as these noble and beautiful trees. The wood from the cedar and the fruit from the palm tree are remarkable in their worth and benefit to man.

(Verse 14), "*fruit in old age*": "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." II Corinthians 4:16. "*fat*": Rich and fertile. "*flourishing*": From the same word as "fresh" in verse 10.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The title for this 92nd Psalm says: "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day." The author is unknown. But it is a worthy expression of praise and thanksgiving that can spring from the heart of the child of God who has experienced the transforming power of the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. Through the work of God that He accomplished in the sacrifice of His Son on Calvary and His glorious resurrection from the dead we can be glad and triumph over sin, in this present evil world, death, and the grave. We can see how God planned and purposed this great salvation from the very beginning, even before the world was created. By being born from above of the Holy Spirit and then, going on to perfection and being filled with the Holy Spirit and

sanctified, we are enlightened to understand God's working and His plan of the ages. But the carnal man who is taken up with the flesh and the world and all of its lusts is unaware of these spiritual treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "But the natural (animal) man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness (of no value) unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." I Corinthians 2:14. Such will one day perish, for there is nothing within to quicken him to immortality. This is where the righteous will flourish and triumph, bringing forth fruit in old age, and rising up to immortality in the morning! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the victory we have in Christ and what all does it cover?
2. What are some of the thoughts and designs that God has for us?
3. Why does God hide these things from the natural man?
4. Why is being anointed with fresh oil so important to us?
5. How can we keep bearing fruit for Jesus even when our flesh fails?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In Christ Jesus we can have the victory every day and over all the powers of sin and darkness that we meet in the world. As Paul said in II Corinthians 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,..." We can flourish and blossom for the Lord regardless of what others may do. We cannot force people to be saved, but we can save our own soul, and be victorious over all adversity and sorrow. If we will be faithful unto death, we will share in Christ's resurrection on that last great day. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 15:55-57. Jesus said in John 16:33, "...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And John echoes that in I John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Many walked in Paul's day, as he mentioned in Philippians 3:18-19, ("...the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.") But the righteous shall

flourish and their corruptible bodies will be changed to immortality by Christ who will subdue all things to Himself.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are many songs in the world today. The radio waves are full of music and songs. It is not uncommon to drive down the road and see someone bouncing in their seat to the beat of "their songs." Sometimes you can hear their subwoofers thumping from a great distance away and it is not surprising to see the occupants of the vehicle bobbing their heads with a corresponding rhythm. The question could be asked, "Are 'their songs' songs of praise and thanksgiving to God or are they glorifying the passions and impulses of the flesh?" One can fairly accurately assess another person's spiritual condition by the songs they are singing.

The psalmist recognized that it is pleasing to God for man to give thanks and to sing praise to His worthy name. The foolish person fails to notice the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God even though it could be observed every morning and evening. God has been so good to each one of us and His handiwork touches every living soul. God notices us. He pays attention to our works. Shouldn't we have a greater awareness of His works?

If we begin paying closer attention to the works of God and singing praise for His goodness, then we will begin noticing that He enjoys doing things for us that are more personal and special. As a result, our faith in Him will be strengthened and our hearts will be drawn to Him in love and gratitude. We will soon find ourselves singing songs of victory because He has delight in us and has given us those victories. The same gladness that blessed the heart of the psalmist will thrill our soul, for we are praising the same God today and His righteous nature has not changed over the intervening years.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



DECEMBER 3, 2006

THE REWARD OF WAITING ON THE LORD

Psalm 37:1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

MEMORY VERSE: Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*. Psalm 37:34.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Delight yourself in the LORD, keep His way of holiness and purity, be patient and wait on Him, and He will fulfill all the precious promises He has given us.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 37:1), "*Fret not thyself*": This phrase is repeated in verses 7 and 8. It means to not allow yourself to be inflamed with anger and indignation.

(Verse 3), "*verily thou shalt be fed*": The Hebrew expression is: "Thou shalt feed on faithfulness." This means that by being faithful to God you will be assured of fulfillment and happiness in body and soul.

(Verse 5), The Hebrew says, "Roll on Jehovah your way, and trust in Him, and He will work."

(Verse 7), "*Rest in the LORD*": The Hebrew says, "Be silent in Jehovah." In other words, pray more and talk less. Silence all thoughts of self efforts and ideas of your own, and be still and know that He is God. (Psalm 46:10.) If it is His will He will bring it to pass, and, if it is not His will, you do not want it anyway. So just leave everything to Him, and trust His wisdom to bring to pass what is for the best.

(Verse 11), "*inherit the earth*": This verse along with verses 3, 9, 22, 29, and 34 speak about inheriting or dwelling in the earth or the land. Both words, "earth" and "land" are translations from the same Greek word. We must realize that it is referring to the spiritual land first. There is a spiritual land of holiness and victory that we must possess, and we possess it here in this life. Then the final inheritance will be in the world to come and the resurrection unto eternal life.

(Verse 23), "*he delighteth in his way*": There are two ways that we can apply this verse. First we must delight in God's way and be willing for Him to truly direct our steps. When we allow Him to do this and obediently follow His directions, then it can be truly said that He delights in our way.

(Verse 24), "*Though he fall*": We are human and it is possible for us to miscalculate and err in our judgment and ways. But if it is a human error and not a deliberate sin, then the mercy of God will uphold us, and through His discipline help us to overcome. We will not be utterly cast down and rejected.

(Verse 31), "*in his heart*": The LORD prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34 that the covenant in Christ would be of His law being written in our hearts and minds. "*his steps shall not slide*": With God's law in our hearts to guide us, our ways will not waver nor go astray unto sin.

(Verse 34), "*keep his way*": Obey His Word and follow Christ's example.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This 37th Psalm is said at the heading to be of David. And it surely fits his life as we consider the adversities he suffered being hunted and hated by King Saul who was crazed with jealousy against David. David had to leave his home and society and live out in the wilds for a good while until after the death of King Saul. But this Psalm is good for all of us in life. For there are going to be times when we will be oppressed and mistreated and have to suffer hardships and adversities even as David did. Such trials of our faith will at times lengthen out into very long and weary years. This Psalm has been a blessing to many struggling pilgrims passing through this troubled world.

Let us notice the various injunctions of sound wisdom contained herein. "Trust in the LORD." Rest assured of His love and faithfulness to you. His eyes are always on you and He hears your prayers. "Delight thyself in the LORD." Find the joy and happiness in His holy way. Therein is true pleasure that far exceeds the world's vain glory. "Commit thy way unto the LORD." Let Him direct your journey and chart your course. Live from day to day with confidence that God's way is best. Whatever is His will and good pleasure He will bring to pass. If it is not His will, you don't want it, regardless of how desirable it may seem to the flesh. "Rest in the LORD." Relax and quit your pushing and shoving and big talk. Learn to be silent, hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. "Wait on the LORD." The longer you have to wait, the sweeter will be the fulfillment. And if you restrain your selfish desires and let Him have full control, it will be glory and praise to your soul when He works it all out. Think of Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David in their times of waiting and endurance. Do you want to join their ranks in glory? Then bear with patience the present delays and denials. It will pay off at the last.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it foolish to fret one's self to anger and to do evil?
2. What is the "land" that the LORD wants us to inherit?
3. How do we "commit" things to the LORD?
4. What is the simple recipe to follow to dwell forevermore?
5. Why is it wise to mark the perfect man and behold the upright?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the greatest tests of the Christian life is that of patiently waiting on God. I recall how, as a young man, I was

praying and earnestly seeking the Lord to know His will concerning what step to take in obtaining a wife. One day as I was alone seeking the Lord, He spoke to my heart that a certain young lady was to be my wife, but, He wanted me to wait until He gave me clearness to proceed before I told her of my love. I thought at the time that it would be perhaps just a few weeks. But, no, it turned out to be nearly two years before He gave me the word to go ahead. It was hard, but I have thanked Him and rejoiced many times through the years that I obeyed and waited on Him. That is the way with God. He blesses, gives His promise, and makes known His will. Then we must wait until He clears the way and brings it to pass. As Hebrews 6:12 says to be, "...followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It was a pleasant September afternoon, and our thoughts were filled with the fun we would have with our little ones at the zoo. As we came to the entrance, my husband and my friend's husband left my friend and I and the babies at the gate and went to park the car.

"Wait," my husband said as he walked away, "and I will be here at the gate to go with you." Ah, famous last words! Just moments after he was gone, I got the bright idea that we would just walk a "few" feet away and look at some animals that were close by, then we would be able to spot our husbands coming in the gate, and join them.

We walked—and walked—looking back over our shoulders. Surely, any moment they would appear, with the stroller for the baby, and the fun would begin. Somewhere in the confusion, we decided to just keep going, hoping we would meet in the middle of the middle.

Somewhere in the busy zoo, two daddies walked with an empty stroller, looking for the mommies and babies who needed them, who were supposed to have waited at the gate for them. Where were those women? Curious glances were cast in their direction—two men and a stroller made an interesting sight.

Finally, a crying baby, tired three year old, and frustrated mom ready to cry, met up with dad, who was ready to call it a day. We all decided that we should make the best of things, go home and enjoy supper together. After awhile, we were ready to laugh at ourselves. What a day!

That night, the Lord visited me. "Angela," He said. "That is what your whole life will be like if you don't wait for me. I will go with you every footstep of the journey, but you must wait for my Spirit. The disciples were told to 'tarry' in Jerusalem until the Spirit filled them with power. You must also wait upon me every day, for direction and power."

It is a lesson I have never forgotten.—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



DECEMBER 10, 2006

THE GREAT GOODNESS OF GOD

Psalm 145:1 I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

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

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

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, ..in truth.

19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. Psalm 145:9.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The LORD JEHOVAH is a loving, compassionate, just, wise and merciful God who watches over His creation and the people that He has put here. He wills to do them good and with rich blessings, but expects us to worship, respect and obey Him in all things.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 145:1), "*extol*": Exalt or lift up in honor and praise.
"*bless*": Adore, worship, give honor, bow down before in reverence.

(Verse 2), "*praise*": Make or render clear and bright so that it shines out its worthiness.

(Verse 3), "*unsearchable*": Cannot be measured.

(Verse 6), "*terrible*": Awesome and fearful.

(Verse 7), "*abundantly utter*": Clearly and accurately express.

(Verse 8), "*gracious*": Kind, helpful, and with great favour.

(Verse 15), "*wait upon*": Look to with hope and expectancy.

"*meat*": Food and sustenance.

(Verse 17), "*holy*": Righteous but with great kindness.

(Verse 20), "*preserveth*": Watches over and guards from harm and danger.

LESSON BACKGROUND

This beautiful Psalm of praise to Jehovah is without dispute believed to be the work of David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel. It is a wonderful rendering of praise and gratitude to the Almighty God and Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and all the

creatures thereon. Adam Clarke states that the Jewish teachers of the law held this Psalm in such high estimation that they asserted if a man with sincerity of heart would repeat it three times a day he would without fail enjoy the blessings of the world to come. Every verse is an ardent expression of adoration and gratitude to our beneficent Maker. It appears that any open-minded and honest soul who would read and ponder the things brought forth in this Psalm could not help but conceive a fervent desire to worship and serve such a wonderful God described herein. We have observed that this spirit and attitude of praise and worship to God was one of the things that the LORD Jehovah appreciated in David, the son of Jesse. And it is surely something that every one of us should cultivate in our own hearts and minds. After all, what can we render to God that would mean any more to Him than worship, admiration and devotion?

What are the things that are mentioned in this Psalm as being worthy of our wonder and esteem? They are His Name, His greatness, His majesty, His terrible acts, His great goodness, His righteousness, His great mercy, His works, His kingdom, His power, His dominion and His ways. These things are spoken of and declared from one generation to the next, all down through the years clear until the end of time. It shows His loving esteem for His saints and those who love Him and seek after His righteousness, and, also His purpose to destroy the wicked and those who refuse to obey Him. It shows His goodness to the poor and needy and those who are cast down. He is concerned about their needs and sorrows and will take heed to their cry. As you look on these loving attributes, does it not cause a desire to spring up in your heart to obtain fellowship and communion with such a gracious One? —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the things about God that are so wonderful?
2. What does He do about the needs His creatures have?
3. What kind of kingdom is He the King of?
4. Can we bring Jesus Christ into the center of this Psalm?
5. What do we owe to this gracious God for all of this?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

O the great mercy of the LORD and goodness of our God!
How loving and kind He is to us poor and needy creatures of

earth! Although we are wisely counseled to serve Him with reverence and godly fear for He is a consuming fire, yet we need not be afraid to approach Him and to entreat Him for mercy, favour and help. We can come to Him with full confidence that He wants to help us and is interested in our state. Let us hear the report that has come from those who have received His help and benefits. It pays to put forth earnest effort to obtain His favor and good will.

David is one prime example. Think about how God helped him to protect his sheep from the lion and the bear. Then there was the time that he met up with the giant Goliath and was confident that God would do him as he did to those vicious animals. Think about Hannah in her agony of spirit about having a child, and how God answered the cry of her soul. Once the father of a family, years ago, decided that their practice of having prayer each night before bedtime was worthless, so he dismissed his boys to go on up stairs to bed without having the usual prayer. The next morning when the one son went to the barn to get the horses ready for the day, he found one of the horses dead. The next morning he found another dead horse. The father and mother held counsel and decided they had better resume their evening prayer time. The next morning there was no dead horse.

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him....” II Chronicles 16:9. Let us remember the good will of our God and not be afraid to set our hearts upon serving Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Can you recall the last time you did something special for someone and was never acknowledged or thanked? And yet, our LORD does so many things each day for the sinner and saint alike and is never given the thanksgiving properly due Him. Without His goodness there would be no mercy; no salvation; no justice. Physically, we would be consumed as there would be no air to breathe, no sun to shine, no rain to fall. We simply could not survive.

On my first job as a secretary, I was given an “Office Policy Manual” describing all of the “do’s and don’t’s” within the office system. One rule was “Always say ‘Thank You.’ You can never

say thank you enough." Kind of unusual, but a very good practice indeed. How much more then can we apply this rule in regard to our praise and thankfulness to the LORD. The LORD is worthy of our constant praise and thanksgiving.

There are many beautiful and lovely things created by our LORD that reflect His goodness. But these creations cannot audibly express praise. The only entity that can actually praise and thank the LORD is the tongue of man. "If I had ten thousand lives in which to praise Him, I could not enough my blessed LORD adore."
—Sis. LaDawna Adams



DECEMBER 17, 2006

A SONG OF DEVOTION TO GOD

Psalm 116:1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

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

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

11 I said in my haste, All men are liars.

12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

MEMORY VERSE: Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. Psalm 116:7-8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because of the LORD GOD and His goodness to us in hearing our prayers and supplications for the saving of our eternity bound souls, we owe Him our lives and ought to make Him our trust and support, calling upon Him as long as we live in this world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 116:1) "*love*": Have deep and ardent affection for. This is the kind of love that God desires from the souls He has created. "*supplications*": Earnest prayer and entreaties for help.

(Verse 3), "*sorrows*": The binding cords. "*pains of hell*": The straits of Sheol. This Hebrews word "Sheol" corresponds to the Greek word "Hades" in the New Testament that is also translated as "hell" as it does here. It means the world of the dead, the realm of departed spirits. "*gat hold upon me*": Found or took me over.

(Verse 6), "*simple*": Lowly; lacking self protection. "*low*": Oppressed and feeble.

(Verse 7), "*Return unto thy rest*": Come back home to the place of your rest. This rest surely corresponds with the rest Christ offered when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28. "*dealt bountifully*": Benefited and treated well.

(Verse 9), "*land of the living*": The country and possession of those who have been quickened and made alive spiritually in Christ.

(Verse 10), "*believed*": The Hebrew word is "aman," which is the root word for the following: faithfulness, true, truly, truth, stability, trustworthiness, fidelity, sure, security, and Amen. The meaning of this word "aman" is: to build up or support; to render firm or faithful; to trust or believe; to be permanent or

quiet; to be true or certain. The English word "believe" is from the combination of two words: "be" and "love," and means to take or accept as true, to have confidence and be assured of. Its meaning has a bearing of warmth and affection. It is a loving confidence. "I believed." Paul quoted this scripture in II Corinthians 4:13-14 when he said, "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."

(Verse 11), "*haste*": Alarm. This is something we should take heed about. Many times in our alarm we speak words that are not founded in truth. David told about something else he said in his haste in Psalm 31:22, "For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee." God was good to forbear with the words David spoke in haste, but it is still wise to restrain from speaking in haste.

(Verse 17), "*sacrifice of thanksgiving*": "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Hebrews 13:15.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Psalm of our lesson today is a most affectionate song of love and devotion to God. Let us allow it to be a reality in our hearts today! There is no word about the author, but it can be a personal psalm to all of us. It is a blessed experience for us to have the great LORD Jehovah to answer our cries and prayers to Him for salvation and help for our souls! Talk about love? When God looks down upon our yearning hearts and grants His gracious help, saving us from sin and eternal death, and gives us assurance of life eternal hereafter, it will incite fervent love and devotion to Him to spring up within.

What a terrible condition we are in when we are compassed with the sorrows of death and under the doom of eternal separation from God! We need to call upon the LORD while He may be found. This Psalm mentions the thought of calling upon the LORD four times. The prophet declared in Joel 2:32, and it is quoted more than once in the New Testament, that "...whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered:..." God will answer the cries of the poor and needy and will give them His salvation. He will deliver us from sin and death and make precious our passage from this fleeting mortal life. We need to

take advantage of this great offer of help from the Lord, and enter into the rest of faith and victory in Him. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What effect does God's gracious help have upon the heart of man?
2. Why did the writer exhort his soul to return to his rest?
3. What does it mean to really believe from the heart?
4. How can we take the cup of salvation?
5. Why is the death of His saints precious in the sight of the LORD?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I Peter 1:8, speaking of the trial of our faith being found unto praise, honor and glory at Christ's appearing, says, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" This loving and believing in One whom we have never seen is brought about by the salvation we obtain by turning from our sins and calling upon the name of Jesus. When a person calls upon the name of the Lord in their sore need of forgiveness, deliverance, and hope, there is a joy and fulfillment in the inner man that causes one to love and worship God and His Son supremely. It is a real experience that brings rest to the soul and hope so bright for the future.

Oh, what a great salvation that the Lord Jesus has worked out for us to have! We are not afraid to die, and we do not try to avoid it. But we rather look at it as Paul did, when he labeled it as "gain." (Philippians 1:21.) The death of a saint of God is precious in the sight of the LORD and it is precious in our sight, also. We are not afraid to die, for that is what we are living for. If we seek to save our life we are bound to lose it. But if we face death with faith and submission to the will of God, we will triumph over it. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Without question, the Lord deserves our songs of devotion. I believe it blesses Him when we express our love and thankfulness to Him. When Jesus healed the ten lepers, there was only one that was thankful enough to return and give thanks. Jesus asked, "...Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" Luke 17:17.

It is easy for us to allow the enemy to devalue what God does for us. He can whisper, "It was not a big deal, it just worked out that way." We can also take the blessings of life and salvation for granted. We can also, simply fail to remember what the Lord has done. A song says, "Roll back the curtain of memory now and then; show me where you brought me from and where I could have been. Remember, I'm human and humans forget, so remind me, remind me, dear Lord."

Allowing our mind to dwell on the negative can also keep us from singing our songs of devotion. Look back, dear weary soul. Recount your blessings and God's dealings with you and return unto your rest. —Bro. Bob Wilson



DECEMBER 24, 2006

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Micah 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

MEMORYVERSE: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus, the Anointed of God and our Saviour, was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. Though His baby crib was a manger, all Heaven rejoiced at His birth. It was announced by the angels to lowly shepherds in the fields, who were delighted when they found Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Isaiah 7:14), "*Immanuel*": Matthew 1:23 defines this as: "God with us."

(Micah 5:2), "*Ephratah*": A name always associated with Bethlehem. I Chronicles 4:4 states that Ephratah was the father of Bethlehem, after whom the city of Bethlehem was named. The name Ephratah is similar to the name "Ephraim," (one of Joseph's sons), and means basically the same: fruitfulness. The name Bethlehem is from Beth-lechem, meaning "house of bread."

(Matthew 1:18), "*on this wise*": Happened like this. "*espoused*": Betrothed or engaged to be married.

(Luke 2:7), "*swaddling clothes*": Strips of cloth. "*manger*": Animal feed crib.

(Verse 14), "*good will*": Satisfaction, happiness, delight, kindness, and well-wishing. "*toward men*": The Greek says, "in men." God wants good will and happiness to be in the inner man that will radiate out to others.

(Verse 19), "*pondered*": Weighed, considered and meditated much on.

(Isaiah 9:6), "*government*": Power, authority, and rulership. "*upon his shoulder*": His burden and weight of responsibility.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is always an inspiring and interesting study. For our lesson we have Luke's account of that wonderful happening preceded by what the prophets Isaiah and Micah foretold about it and what the gospel of Matthew said concerning Mary and Joseph. Luke told in scriptures before about the angel Gabriel visiting Mary, a young virgin engaged to be married to Joseph, and announcing to her that she was to be the mother of the promised Savior. Matthew tells further about the problem that Joseph faced when he found out that the young virgin he was to marry was already with child. But the angel of the Lord visited Joseph and explained that Mary was with child of the Holy Spirit, and that she was to bring forth the Savior who would save His people from their sins. And Matthew explained that it was the fulfilling of Isaiah's prophecy of a virgin bringing forth a son whose name would be called Emmanuel, which being interpreted meant "God with us." Luke explained why Mary and Joseph of Nazareth were in Bethlehem, a number of miles to the south, when she gave birth to the child Jesus. A taxation was being taken by the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus and every man had to go to his native city. Joseph had to go to Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David.

So it was while they were in Bethlehem that the fullness of time came for Christ to be born. And, because the inn was full, the only place they could find was the lowly stable and our Savior was born there and laid in a manger. But the good news of His wonderful birth was heralded to the lowly shepherds out in the fields that night. The angel of the Lord made known to them what was taking place and how they could find the newborn Savior. And there they found Him and broadcast all around about it. Mary pondered all of these things in her heart. What a wonderful blessing and experience it all was to her! It is wonderful to know

that this story is true and that the little Babe of Bethlehem grew up to become the conquering Savior who would save us from sin and bring us the blessed hope of eternal life. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What made the birth of Jesus so unusually different and special?
2. What was God's purpose in Jesus being born?
3. Why was Christ born like He was and laid in a manger?
4. Why were the lowly shepherds the ones to get the good news of His birth?
5. Why was Mary so affected and pondering these things so much?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Think of the meaning of the name Immanuel: "God with us." The Almighty God, Jehovah, the Self-existent One, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the Giver of life and breath coming down to tabernacle with us! He must come down to human level. Though He was in the likeness and on the level with God, Jesus counted not equality with God to be held on to. Instead, He emptied Himself, gave up His position being with God, and took upon Himself the bearing of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. That was a great condescension to leave the Father and the glories of Heaven to come down to the level of humanity.

But after being found in fashion as a man and experiencing the straits of human adversity and poverty, He was called upon by His Heavenly Father to make another condescension. He came into the world to die. He was the only One in Heaven and earth who was worthy to pay the ransom price for the salvation of the souls of men from sin and death. And, in obedience to the will of Almighty God, Christ humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the humiliating death of the cruel cross. He rejected all efforts to save Himself and went through it. The birth of Jesus was painful and attended with humiliation and adversity. But the death He suffered went beyond it all. But the crown and glory He attained to far outweighed the shame and reproach He endured. He now sits at the right hand of God looking forward to the day when He will take His beloved Bride to be with Him forevermore. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

While kneeling in prayer to God about what should be written about this blessed story of our Savior's birth that is so well known by nearly every reader, four things were impressed upon my heart.

"This story is just as important today as it was when He came." The problem of sin has plagued man since Adam and Eve committed their first transgression. The God given solution for this problem is found in Jesus Christ. If we believe Acts 4:12 then we know that the birth of Jesus was extremely important and that importance has not diminished. Notice these verses, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" I Timothy 2:5.

"There are still people in bondage who need to be delivered from their sins." The world has more people in it today than it ever has had before. At the time of Jesus' birth it was estimated that the world population was about 231 million people. (Worldmapper.org) Today there are more than 28 times that many people. The US Census Bureau estimates there are 6,544 million people now living in the world at the time of this printing, (9-2006). They indicate another 22 million will be living by the date of this lesson. Are we doing our part to share this wonderful story with the world?

"The message of the angels still applies to us today." "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Luke 2:10. God intended for this great joy to be extended to "all people." By sharing these good tidings with the world we are bringing glory to God and we are also sharing the blessed news of salvation and redemption with fallen man. Heaven will be populated with those who have heard this wonderful message. If they did not hear the angels proclaim it, how will they hear it unless someone tells them?

"If ye hear His voice, harden not your hearts." God sending His Son to mankind was an act of love that demands a response from those who hear the tidings of salvation. Our eternal happiness depends upon us opening our hearts to the Savior of

the world. We must believe the story, turn from our sins and make Him Lord of our life. Sadly, there are many that hear the story of Jesus' birth and of His sacrificial death and are still unwilling to turn from their sins. Their hearts have become hardened to the gospel and they will be lost because their sin remaineth. Psalm 95:7-11 tells how the children of Israel hardened their hearts and the sin of unbelief kept them from entering into the rest the Lord designed for them. Hebrews chapters three and four warn us against making this same fatal mistake.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



DECEMBER 31, 2006

CHRIST SITTING ON DAVID'S THRONE

Psalm 132:11 The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

II Samuel 7:16 And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.

Psalm 132:12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

Psalm 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Luke 1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

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

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

Acts 2:30 ...knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him (David), that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Hebrews 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Hebrews 10:12 But this man (Jesus Christ), after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

MEMORY VERSE: To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Revelation 3:21.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because Jesus Christ, our Savior, obeyed the Father and willingly suffered shame and death on the cross to atone for the sins of mankind, God raised Him from the dead and placed Him at His own right hand in the heavenly realm to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords forever. In this position of power He rules over all the powers of men and satan and will bring everlasting judgment in righteousness at the last day. This is the fulfilling of the throne of His father David.

WORD DEFINITIONS

(Psalm 132:11), "*I will set upon thy throne*": The Hebrew says, "I will set on the throne for you." This refers to Christ Jesus who would take over David's throne in the complete power and authority that would be given to Him as the Redeemer. This expression is repeated in verse 12 concerning David's children, that is, the generations following. This means that, in the final

windup, all who are in Christ will sit upon this throne. The word "throne" means the seat or position of a King or Monarch, one who holds absolute power and authority.

(II Samuel 7:16), "*established for ever before thee*": Both the Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint translation says, "before Me," which refers to the LORD Jehovah. This shows that such a throne of power and glory was before God and according to His good pleasure, and not just before David, or the one being placed on the throne.

(Psalm 110:1), "*The LORD*": This is referring to Jehovah, the Eternal Self-existent One, the Creator, the Heavenly Father. "*my Lord*": This is referring to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is how the New Testament writers apply this prophecy. The LORD Jehovah said unto my Lord Jesus Christ. "*sit thou*": You sit. And this word "sit" means to sit down permanently in judgment. "*until*": As long as it takes or is needed. "*I make thine enemies thy footstool*": This refers to the end of the world. The New Testament shows that this was fulfilled when Christ, after He had died and rose from the dead, ascended up from this earthly realm to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. This means that He was to remain in that position until the time of the end when all things would be placed under His feet. This is the throne of David, an intercessory throne of grace, from which Christ will minister to the souls of humanity who come to God in prayer through Him.

(Psalm 110:3), "*be willing*": Will be freewill offerings. "*beauties of holiness*": The Hebrew says, "the majestic glories of Your Holy Place." The Greek says, "The splendors of Thy saints." "*the womb of the morning*": This means the preparation God has accomplished for the dawn of the Gospel Day. "*Thou hast the dew of thy youth*": This is referring to the freshness and everlasting youth of the Risen Christ to those who will become new creatures in Him and be kept in eternal youth through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

(Acts 2:31), "*not left in hell*": Hell here in the Greek is "hades," which is the world of the dead, the disembodied spirits of those who had died. There are two compartments in hades, the one is Paradise where Jesus said that He and the thief on the cross would be. The other is torment where the rich man in Luke 16:23 found himself. Jesus would not be left in Paradise but would be resurrected back to His body.

(Hebrews 10:13), "*henceforth expecting*": From then on anticipating. When Jesus ascended up on high He did so with a joyous hope of the day when He will be united with His Bride in that blessed eternal world of eternal life.

(Revelation 3:21), "*overcometh*": To win the victory, conquer and triumph over.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the prophecies in the Old Testament of the fruit of David's body sitting on his throne. And we have the New Testament Scriptures that show that this was to be Jesus Christ, the offspring of the virgin womb of Mary who so conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. Psalm 132 shows how David sought to find a home for the ark of God that had been for 20 years in Kirjathjearim, kept there after being retrieved from the Philistines who had taken it from Israel in battle. But in his desire to return the ark to Jerusalem, David was given assurance from God by an oath that the fruit of his body would sit upon his throne. Peter, in his message on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:30, declares that this was Jesus Christ who had risen from the dead and had ascended to the right hand of God. We include the vivid prophecy of Christ sitting at the right hand of God in Psalm 110 and the prophecy of Christ's throne and kingdom quoted in Hebrews 1:8 from Psalm 45:6. We also have what the angel said to Mary about her son JESUS being given the throne of His father David. II Samuel 7:16 is part of God's message to David concerning his son to succeed him, which is applied to Christ. Then from Hebrews we have Christ mentioned again sitting at the right hand of God in anticipation of having His enemies to be made His footstool. Our Memory Verse is part of what Christ said to John in His Revelation to him. Together all of these scriptures present the glorious truth of the triumph of Christ to the right hand of God.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Who did God swear would sit upon David's throne?
2. What did the LORD Jehovah say to our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Where is this throne of David that Christ is sitting on?
4. Until when will Christ sit on this throne?
5. When will Christ's enemies be made His footstool?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

According to the Scriptures, Jesus Christ is sitting now on David's throne, which is at the right hand of God, interceding for us who are still in this world of sorrow. Christ conquered death and sin and was given this seat of power in Heaven to have until He comes to raise the dead and bring all of the world to eternal Judgment.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In today's religious world, you are not very popular if you don't embrace some kind of "end-time prophecy" teaching from some kind of dynamic teacher. There are many different theories to choose from—and as many "prophecy" teachers. If you studied them all, it would be quite confusing.

I haven't studied them in depth. I haven't bought the tapes, DVDs, workbooks, study guides and other media there are to teach me "prophecy." I've seen their covers—brilliant, glossy, artists' renderings of elaborate temples, dreamy landscapes with people of all nationalities playing together with lions, alligators and grizzly bears.

It's nothing new. There were "prophets" in the apostles' day, who promoted the ideas that Jesus would return to an earthly kingdom. There were last-day teachings in the previous centuries that spawned major religious movements still existing today.

You can find the simple truth of Jesus' reign on the throne of David in the Scriptures in the lesson today, and in many more. Jesus' own words about His kingdom, Peter's declaration in Acts, the Hebrew writer's detailed analysis, the revelation of church history to John, the dream Daniel interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel's vision—they all fit together like a puzzle if you remember that Jesus' kingdom is "within you," "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," "not of this world," "an everlasting kingdom," given "to the saints of the most high...."

Don't be deceived by the hopes and dreams of false prophets. Jesus is on David's throne—right now, and the good news is, we can reign with Him, today.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

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