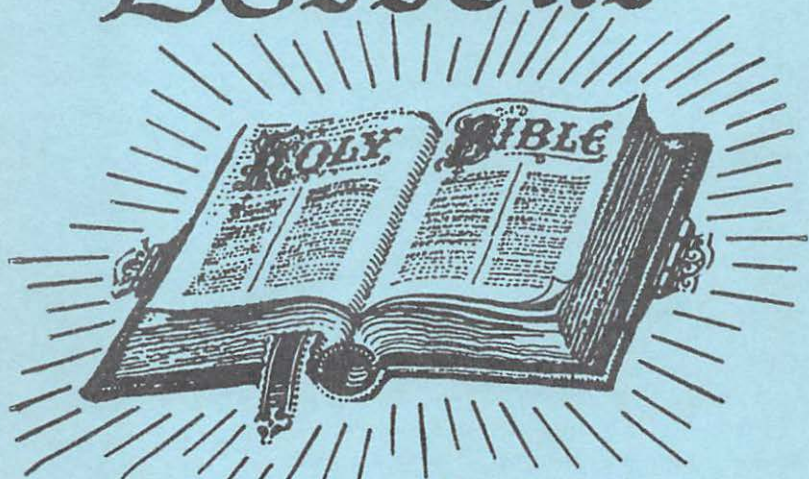


Bible Lessons



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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BIBLE LESSONS FIRST QUARTER, 2008

THEME FOR FIRST QUARTER

In this series of Bible Lessons we have before us the history of the world from the beginning of the creation of man and woman unto the final day of the judgment. We will study how man was created, how sin found an entrance into the world and what it brought upon him, how man's ways became contrary to God's ways, how man became filled with covetousness, and how sin defiled the marriage relation between men and women. Then we will study how God worked to bring about His plan of salvation for the hope of mankind. We will study the prophecies of the coming of the Holy Spirit, how God worked to build up faith and confidence in man, the need for man being poor and humble in spirit, the triumph of truth over falsehood and the need for man to have a wholesome desire for God. Then we will have a lesson concerning the victory Christ accomplished over sin, death and the grave. And our final lesson will be about the final judgment at the end of time. We send these lessons forth with an earnest prayer to God that they will be a blessing and inspiration to every one.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee



JANUARY 6, 2008

HUMANITY, PLANNED AND CREATED BY GOD

Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

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

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

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

Psalm 139:13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Psalm 104:33-34.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Almighty God created the heavens and the earth. He also created mankind to have the oversight of the earth and all things therein. He wants man to seek His guidance and help for the responsibility entrusted to him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 1:26, "*in our image*": To resemble or be conformed in nature and principle of God. "*have dominion*": Bring under foot and control.

Verse 28, "*replenish*": This word in English means to make full or complete again. But the Hebrew word simply means "to fill." "*subdue*": Conquer and bring in subjection.

Genesis 2:7, "*breath of life*": The Spirit of God. "*living soul*": Brought into being by the Spirit of God, the first man Adam was spiritually alive and in harmony and fellowship with his Creator. His soul was spiritually alive.

Psalms 139:13, "*reins*": All the inward vital organs of the human body, including the mind and the spirit.

Verse 14, "*fearfully and wonderfully made*": The human body has many remarkable and delicate functions. There is also the spiritual part of man that can communicate and have fellowship with God. And, with the mental faculties and the power of speech that is superior to the brute beasts and other creatures, man surely is fearfully and wonderfully made.

Verse 15, "*substance*": The bone structure. "*curiously wrought*": Fabricated, woven, and shaped.

Verse 16, "*substance*": This word refers to the babe in the womb in its stage of development. "*in thy book all my members were written*": This means that God knew all about us before we were conceived and shaped in the womb. "*in continuance were fashioned*": During the days while being progressively formed and shaped, little by little.

Acts 17:26, "*determined the times before appointed*": God ordained and planned the seasons of earth. "*bounds of their habitation*": The boundaries of limits of where man can conveniently and safely dwell.

Verse 27, "*if haply*": If perhaps, which means that man will have a chance to seek after and find God if he decides to do so. "*feel after*": To search and seek for earnestly.

Verse 28, "*have our being*": We exist as real live beings. "*his offspring*": We are His kindred and are generated from Him.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first scriptures in our lesson are from the Genesis account of God's creation of mankind and the world. By the Word of God were the heavens and the earth created and brought into being. The final part of His creative work was man. He formed and shaped the body of man from the dust of the ground. But God gave the dust feeling, essence of life and vitality. And His Spirit was breathed into the body made from

dust, and man became alive and conscious and in touch with His Maker.

It is very vital for every one of us to be persuaded that we are all individually the creation of God, just as Adam, the first man, was. David, in our scripture text from Psalm 139, shows this to be true. He was fully aware and persuaded that God had made him. According to what David expresses in this scripture, God had a vital and active part in the formation and bringing forth of every one of us. We are fearfully made. We are delicate and complicated in composition. We are fragile and very weak. Every part of us is subject to weakness and failure. We need to realize how frail we really are. But, then, we are wonderful! It is marvelous how we can live and move and think and act and talk and reason! God knew all about us before we ever got our start.

Then we have a part of the wonderful message Paul gave to the people at Athens. He declares that God created all things, including humanity on the earth, for us to choose to seek Him and feel after Him and find Him! We will not find God unless we seek for Him with all of our hearts. We must feel after Him ardently and earnestly. He will not impose Himself upon us. He will only be known to those who really desire to make contact with Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What did God have in mind for man when He created him?
2. In what way does God want man to control the earth?
3. What part does God have in everyone's conception and birth?
4. What does God desire for every man to do in his life?
5. How can a man truly find and know the Almighty God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The Lord God created the sun, moon and stars and the earth in the beginning. After He had everything else finished, then He created man. He made them man and woman, male and female. He wanted to commune with them and be real to them in their life. It is very important that we be persuaded that God created each one of us individually. We are the offspring of God. We do not exist of ourselves. But we exist because He made us and gave us our being. He is a God of love

and goodness. It is sweet and pleasant and enjoyable to communicate and have fellowship with Him! There is no greater joy or richer pleasure than to have His Spirit dwelling within our hearts and minds. Oh, how we need to bring ourselves to the conviction of our need to seek after Him! If we just live to the flesh, our selfish desires, and the pleasures of this vain world, we will not be very apt to want to seek after our Maker. But if we can be awakened in our hearts to the emptiness of everything of this earth and realize that we need to seek after the One Who created it all, it will stir us to search and endeavor to find Him and know Him and obtain His loving favor. This is what we are created for. Everything else falls short of satisfying the craving that is deep in the heart of everyone of us. Money, pleasure, popularity, excitement, honor and selfish pride are vain and will all prove to be disappointment and failure.

Many try to comfort their minds with vain thoughts that maybe there is no God, and everything just "happened." But we ought to have better sense than that. God is the reason for that beautiful sun, lovely moon, dazzling stars and every other wonderful blessing in the world around us. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Out of the Vast

There's a part of the sun in the apple,
There's a part of the moon in a rose;
There's a part of the flaming Pleiades
In every leaf that grows.

Out of the vast comes nearness;
For the God Whose love we sing
Lends a little of His Heaven
To every living thing.

—August Wright Bamberger

The verses included in our lesson from Psalm 139, that describe how God knew the composition of our substance before we came into existence, should cause a thrill of joy to resound in our soul. God knows us. The intricate weave of molecules that form these mortal bodies are recorded in His book. With the knowledge of the data on record in His book, He has the ability to, and does, control what touches our life.

Therefore, the children of God can be confident that all things will work together for their good.

In the creation of man, there were two components that were brought together—the formation of man from the dust of the ground and the breath of life that was breathed into his nostrils. With this breath of life, man became a spiritual, eternal being with the ability to think and choose right from wrong.

Too many people are making a mistake by devoting the greatest percentage of their energies and attention to this formation of dust and are neglecting the spiritual, eternal side of their creation. May we realize that God not only knows about the physical part of our being, He also knows the origin and present constitution of our spiritual part. While God originally created Adam and Eve pure and holy, the spirit of evil influenced this holy creation and through disobedience was able to defile it. These evil influences have had a detrimental impact on every one of us, requiring us to have need of a savior.

In the personage of Jesus Christ, we now have a Savior. "...Dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." II Corinthians 7:1. If we will follow the admonition of this scripture, we can be in perfect harmony with our Creator, and live in balance with His marvelous creation—for then we are totally His creation.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



JANUARY 13, 2008

SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD

Romans 5:12 ...By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Psalm 14:2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

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

Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

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

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and partook of the forbidden fruit, sin made its entrance into the lives of men. It passed upon all men and women, bringing death and separation from God. We are all born with the seed of sin in our hearts and are guilty of transgressing His holy law.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 5:12, "*sin*": To miss the mark; to err. "*death by sin*": Sin brought spiritual death to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God and partook of the forbidden fruit. They were spiritually dead, separated from the favor and life of their Creator. And sin also brought the sentence of physical death, which came later. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19. "*death passed upon all men*": Because the power of sin was conveyed to all of Adam's offspring it brought the sentence of death, spiritual and physical, upon all men.

Genesis 3:1, "*subtil*": Cunning and crafty in an evil sense. "*of every tree*": The Hebrew says, "from any tree?"

Psalms 14:3, "*together*": This means that all are guilty; no one excluded. "*become filthy*": Turned in their hearts to impurity and corruption.

Psalms 51:15, "*shapen*": Formed and brought forth.

Isaiah 59:2, "*iniquities*": Perverse and crooked ways. "*sins*": Offences contrary to God's holiness.

Verse 3, "*blood*": Murder; taking another's life. "*muttered*": Murmured and complained against; pondered and thought within the heart. "*perverseness*": Moral evil and rebellion against what is right and well pleasing with God.

Verse 12, "*testify against us*": Bears undeniable witness to condemn us before God. "*transgressions*": Thoughts of the heart and ways that go directly contrary to what pleases God. "*are with us*": We cannot get rid of them. "*oppression*": Injury and distress. "*revolt*": Turning against the authority of God to please one's own self.

Romans 3:23, "*come short of the glory of God*": Fallen below the standard of God's will and good pleasure.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our previous lesson we studied about the creation of man. Today's lesson will be about the sad decision Eve made, along with Adam, to partake of the forbidden fruit. In our Scripture lesson we see how the adversary beguiled our foreparents in the garden, and caused them to look at the forbidden fruit as profitable and desirable. This brought on their disobedience, which brought sin into their lives, and consequently caused sin and death to pass upon all men. SIN

CAME INTO THE WORLD. It came into the hearts of men and women. We have the account from Genesis of Eve yielding to the tempter and getting Adam to go along with her in it.

The apostle Paul in Romans 5:12 declares that through one man sin entered into the world and with sin came death. There was spiritual death and separation from fellowship with God, and physical death, death to the outer man. This dominion of sin and death passed upon all men. Our scripture from Psalm 14 declares that all had gone aside and become filthy. In Psalm 51:5 David speaks about himself being shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. It was true about him, and it is true about every one of us. Sin takes hold and gains possession of us before we realize it, it is in our hearts and in our nature.

Then we have Isaiah 59, which is a great exposition of the terrible disease of sin upon the human race. It has brought a separation between us and our Creator. Many people today, sad to say, cannot, do not and will not face up to this horrible reality of the power and dominion of sin in their lives. But if we are open minded to the truth, through the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the teachings of the Holy Scriptures we can be persuaded of the reality of sin, and God will help us to see what we can do about it.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How did sin find its entrance into this world?
2. What did sin bring upon all mankind?
3. What two kinds of death did it bring upon us?
4. What has sin brought into the hearts and lives of men?
5. Why is it important for us to recognize and acknowledge our sin?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In our lesson today we can see how sin entered into the world. Adam and Eve hearkened unto the voice of satan who spoke to them through the serpent. Satan twisted their minds and thoughts to look at the forbidden fruit as desirable in three ways. First, they saw that what God had forbidden was good for food. They seemed not to realize that it was a test tree. Second, it was pleasant to the eyes. It looked good and was attractive. And third, satan presented it as being a tree to make one wise. This all changed the bearing of what was

forbidden of God to what seemed to be profitable and to their advantage. These three principles satan used on Jesus in the wilderness of temptation. They were: The appetite for food, the outward appearance, and the offer of possessing the kingdoms of this world and their glory. These three correspond with the three things that I John 2:16 speaks of as being "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," that which "is not of the Father, but is of the world." Every one of us face the influence, attraction and allurements of these things. We have to make our decision of what we are going to follow after. We are caught up, more or less, in these things in our growing up years, but there comes a time when we will be faced with a decision to make. Sad to say, many make their decision for the flesh and the world, and sin takes over and rules their hearts and lives. Sin is in the world. It is all around us, everywhere. Jesus faced it and conquered by submitting to the Father's will in everything. We can face it and conquer, too, if we will follow Christ's example and leave all the world to follow Him. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If you just picked up the dictionary and went from A-Z, how many words are there because of SIN that entered the world? I began with the category of *emotion* words. *Anger, agony, anxiety, bitterness, depression, fear, grief, hatred, hurt, jealousy, loneliness and sadness.* Can you add some to the list? Then there are *behavior* words: *abuse, adultery, arrogance, dishonesty, gossip, homosexuality, murder, profanity, selfishness and violence.* How many more can you think of?

There is also a list of words about the natural world. *Disaster, earthquake, famine, flood, hurricane, storm, tornado and tsunami* are among many.

I also came up with some medical terms we know because of sin. *Abortion, AIDS, alcoholism, cancer, death, disease, drug, hospital, infection, medicine, pain, suicide.* These are just a few. I'm sure you can remember more.

How many inventions do we know of because man chose to know *evil* as well as *good*? I thought of *atomic bomb, alcohol, guns and other weapons*, as well as other things we know of simply because sin is in the world: *dead-boltlock, government, military, money, police, prison, surveillance*—we could go on and on!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

JANUARY 20, 2008

MAN UNDER THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

Job 14:1 Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.

2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

10 Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up:

12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

Psalms 39:4 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 hand breadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether 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.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

5 ...Because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.

7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

MEMORY VERSE: ...It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment. Hebrews 9:27.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because of his sinning against God, man has had to live his life on earth knowing that he will one day die and his body will go back to the dust from whence it came. It is wise to prepare for this with the conviction that after death, we will stand before God and be judged for the way we have lived our life on earth.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Job 14:1, "*trouble*": Commotion, restlessness, disturbance, and unquietness.

Verse 2, "*cut down*": Withers and dies. "*fleeth as a shadow*": suddenly disappears and bolts away in fear and gloom. "*continueth not*": Does not stand or remain.

Verse 10, "*wasteth away*": Is cut off. "*giveth up the ghost*": Expires and breathes out his spirit.

Verse 11, "*waters fail*": Evaporate. "*flood decayeth*": Rivers waste away and dry up.

Psalms 39:4, "*know mine end*": Be aware of how short is my life and how quickly I can be taken away. "*measure*": Limit. "*frail*": Lacking, vacant, destitute.

Verse 5, "*as a handbreadth*": As the width of my hand compared to space is my life span compared to eternity. "*nothing*": Non-existent. "*at his best state*": The Hebrew renders this whole phrase: "Surely every man standing firm is all emptiness."

Ecclesiastes 12:1, "*the years draw nigh*": The time for death comes suddenly. "*no pleasure*": Physical joys decay and wither away.

Verse 5, "*his long home*": The Hebrew renders this: "the house of his eternity."

Verse 13, "*this is the whole duty of man*": The Hebrew says, "this applies to every man."

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is the stark reality that faces every human being in the world—we must die one day. Sooner or later we will come to the end of our mortal existence. This world is not our final home. This sentence of death came as a direct consequence of man's sinning against his Creator. God put this punishment upon mankind.

The 14th chapter of Job speaks extensively of this matter. We have a few scriptures from this that deal specifically with the death of man. He is like a flower that blooms for a little while, then withers away. The Scriptures speak often of this. Psalm 90 re-echoes the thought. Verse 3 speaks of how God turns man to destruction. This means He turns man back to the dust. Also verses 5 and 6 speak of man being like grass that flourishes in the morning and then in the evening it is cut down. Verse 7 states that it is by God's anger and wrath that we are consumed and troubled. Job states that man lieth down (in death) and will rise not nor awake from this sleep until the heavens be no more. The reality of this truth can be seen by a visit to the local cemetery or graveyard.

We have David in the 39th Psalm also speaking of this truth. In the first part of the Psalm, he speaks how he would take heed to his ways and sin not with his tongue. He was dumb with silence and held his peace, even from good. This was good for him, and it would be good for all to refrain from so much talking, and keep silence before God. After this period of keeping silent and refraining from talk, when he did speak, it was a prayer that God would make him to know his end and the measure of his days, that he would know how frail and close to death he really was. Then he concludes with a prayer that God would have mercy on him, a pilgrim and stranger and sojourner on this earth.

Then we have the solemn words from Ecclesiastes about the ending of this mortal life. We are going to the house of our eternity. Our spirit is going to return to God to give an account of our existence here on earth. We will meet God in the final judgment. Surely we should live our mortal days in fear, reverence, and respect to God and His Word.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What should the sentence of death cause us to seek to be?
2. Why is it good for us to be aware of how frail we really are?
3. When is the best time for a person to seek the favor of God?
4. What, besides death, are we going to face?
5. What should be our prayer to God concerning this matter of death?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is a wise thing for every person to "come to grips" with this matter of coming death. It is the tenor of the Scriptures to warn us of the brevity of life and the certainty of death. None of us have any assurance or knowledge of how long our mortal days will be. They will soon be over. Psalm 90: 10 declares that even if our days by reason of strength be fourscore, or 80 years, "...yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." For this reason the writer exhorts us to pray: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We need to reckon our days on earth as such, being few, uncertain, attended with evil and then realize the unmistakable mercy and goodness of God to give us a chance to prepare for death and the judgment that will surely follow.

We should not take it for granted and just assume that all will be well with us when death comes. Many are sadly miscalculating this eternal matter. We need to be very serious about it. We need to let godly fear and reverence guide and control our ways and actions in this world. We should pray much and study the Scriptures to gain knowledge and understanding of our responsibilities before God in preparation for the hour of our departure from this life. We should be very careful of our talk and what we allow to come from our lips, tongue and voice. We live in a talking society. People are talking and speaking their own selfish words of worldly wisdom, fleshly ideas and desires and covetous practices. People are dying all around us. The newspaper Obituary column daily gives the report of those who have passed away. Funeral homes are doing big business.

Let us be assured that there is something after death. We can put it from us and not allow ourselves to think about it. But that is the practice of foolish people. We need to be awakened to the reality of the truth of the matter—we are going to die and face God in judgment. We are going to have to give an account to Him of the way we have lived in this life and how we have responded to the call of His grace. This life is short and soon to end. Life goes by so swiftly. The years come and go with rapid pace. Let us be wise and fear God and make our calling and election sure with Him.

—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; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Psalms 90:10. Divide an eighty-year life span into four parts and you can compare this to the seasons of our lives.

From birth to about twenty years of age, we experience the springtime of our lives. Life is fresh and new. It is a time of learning and training while we have the energy and desire to do so.

From twenty years to forty years, we are in the summer season of our lives. We have entered into adulthood. It is a time of marriage, building a career, and rearing children. We are caught up in the general busyness of life's many responsibilities.

The autumn season of our lives is the forty year to sixty year range. It is the reaping and harvest time in our lives. We reap the rewards of grandchildren, paid bills and are looking forward to days of retirement. Energy starts lagging and we begin to experience the aches and pains of aging bodies.

Sixty years to eighty years old is the winter season of our lives. Youth is just a memory of the past. Summer and autumn times are over. This season is a time of reflection. A time to prepare for leaving this old world. After all, the aches and pains turn into afflictions that remind us that these old bodies were not made to live forever.

I would venture that the first twenty years seems to be the slowest years while every year after twenty speeds on by—each superceding the other in rapidity. And yet, our lives are just a fragile thread that can be severed in any season. It then behooves us to consider these seasons and use each one to glorify God. Give Him your springtime, your summer time, your autumn and your winter. He wants to guide you each step of the way.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



JANUARY 27, 2008

MAN'S WAY CONTRARY TO GOD'S WAY

Proverbs 13:15 Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard.

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

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

Proverbs 21:2 Every way of man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lamentations 3:40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: By mankind falling into the bondage of sin, it brought about the disposition in the heart of man to go his own way and do however he is so inclined and

tempted by the world around him. Such ways and mannerisms promoted by the ungodly lusts of this world are contrary to God and His holiness. For there to be any reconciliation between God and man, there must be a forsaking on the part of man of all such ways and thoughts.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 13:15, "*way*": A course of life, action, or manner. "*way of transgressors is hard*": The Hebrew says, "The way of deceitful men is difficult to correct or change."

Proverbs 15:24, "*above*": Upward, away from this evil world toward Heaven. "*hell beneath*": Downward to eternal destruction.

Proverbs 21:2, "*pondereth the hearts*": Weighs, examines, and searches the inward part of man.

Isaiah 55:7, "*forsake*": Desert, give up, cease from. "*unrighteous man*": Man of vanity. "*thoughts*": Intentions, plans, ideas, plots, imaginations and purposes formulated in one's own fleshly mind.

Matthew 7:13, "*broad*": Roomy, spacious, easy, without restraint or discipline.

Verse 14, "*narrow*": Difficult, tight, strict, very disciplinary.

Psalms 139:23, "*thoughts*": Serious ponderings and meditations.

Verse 24, "*wicked way*": Way fashioned by selfish intentions of idolatrous notions. "*way everlasting*": The way to eternal life that God ordained from eternity.

Isaiah 35:8, "*highway*": A special way for travel for a special people. "*holiness*": Sacred, holy, consecrated to God; pure and undefiled by sin. "*it shall be for those: the wayfaring men*": This highway of holiness shall be for those who are willing and obedient to walk in the holiness of the LORD. "*though fools, shall not err*": Though one is a fool in the sight of the world, he need not go astray in this holy way.

Verse 9, "*lion or ravenous beast*": This is not referring to a literal beast, but rather the covetous and lustful person who lives solely to the gratification of the flesh. "*the redeemed*": Those who are forgiven of their sins and who are purchased of Christ to walk in purity and holiness before God.

Jeremiah 6:16, "*ask for the old paths*": Inquire and seek to know and follow the eternal ways of God that He ordained from eternity.

Lamentations 3:40, The Hebrew says, "Let us search our ways and examine them, and return to Jehovah."

Isaiah 53:6, "*laid on him the iniquity of us all*": To Christ Jesus our sins are brought to be forgiven and atoned for.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The decisions one makes and choices of how, where, when and what things he will go after and work at make up the ways of a man. The state and condition of the thoughts and attitudes of the heart determine largely what his ways will be and where they will lead him. We are all creatures of choice, free moral agents with the power to choose whatever way we want to go. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God in the beginning. This brought upon mankind a tendency and weakness to choose the way of the flesh rather than the way of the Spirit of God.

In our lesson today we have drawn from the Scriptures a word picture of man, which shows his ways are often contrary to the will of God. We can see from them all that there is a weakness in man to want to go his own way. But then we see our gracious and kind Heavenly Father holding out the offer for man to forsake his ways and come and go the good way, the way of holiness and what is pleasing to Him. As our memory verse declares, from the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah about our Savior Jesus Christ, we have all erred in the judgments of our minds and hearts, and gone astray, turning to our own ways. The sooner we come to realize what a mess we are making by taking our own ways, the better off we will be. Man has departed from the way of obedience, humility, holiness, purity, righteousness, godly fear and faith in God and has gone the way of selfishness, pride, fleshly lusts, strife, hatred, envy, jealousy, dishonesty and every other vain and evil pursuit. We have the two ways pictured before us in our lesson: The broad and easy way that leads to destruction and the strait and narrow way that leads to life. And notice what Jesus said concerning the narrow way, "Few there be that find it."

Our text in Isaiah 55:6-9 clearly shows what we must do. We must seek the Lord and call upon Him, and be willing to give up our own ways and thoughts. This means we must be willing to be taught God's way. His way is so different than our fleshly inclinations that we are going to have to be diligent and sincere if we want to take His way. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the two ways that are set before us to choose from?
2. What are man's ways mainly going after?
3. How can a man be persuaded that his ways are not for the best?
4. Why is God's way the best way for us to take?
5. What are some of the things that make up God's way?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God's way is a lowly and humble way, contrary to man's way of pride and self-exaltation. His way is a way of trust and contentment, while man's way is covetousness, with the desire for earthly gain. God's way is a way of faith and hope, of setting one's affections on things above that we will enjoy after this life. Man's way is to pursue pleasure and possessions in a fleshly and material way. God's way is meekness, not returning evil for evil, but rather doing good for evil. Man's way is to get even and do to others as they do unto you. God's way is quietness and confidence in His Providence and protection. Man's way is to strive for and seek for carnal safety. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, showed us God's way when He went to the cross and gave His life willingly for the sins of the world. He made it plain and we do not need to be in question about it. We just need to humble ourselves and be willing to give up our way and follow Him.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There can be no reconciliation between man and God unless we are willing to forsake our sinful ways. The Scriptures are very clear on this point. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:..." Again, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness...." "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." There are many more scriptures that support this truth.

Yet the present day world is telling us that we can do both, take both ways. We can follow the way of the world and follow Christ also. That we can participate in willful sin and still have the peace of God in our hearts and a hope of Heaven. "But

fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient...For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man...hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

There are so many that recognize their need of God, that have felt the conviction of the spirit of God, that hope to be saved someday before they leave this life. Yet, when it actually comes down to forsaking worldly music, fleshly entertainment found in books, videos, television and ungodly relationships, many are unwillingly to let go. Those things would not be so hard to let go of if people had a true picture and vision of what it was going to cost them. "...but the way of transgressors *is* hard." The way of the Lord is the only true way to enjoy this life with a hope of Heaven afterward. —Bro. Bob Wilson



FEBRUARY 3, 2008

LOVE OF MATERIAL WEALTH TAKES HOLD ON MAN

Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Psalms 119:36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

Proverbs 21:25 The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.

26 He coveteth greedily all the day long: but the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Proverbs 28:16 The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

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

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

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.

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

8 And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

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

10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Ephesians 5:3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

MEMORY VERSE: ...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Luke 12:15.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: One of the great pits that the souls of sinful man has fallen into is that of covetousness, the love of earthly wealth. It is spiritual idolatry, worshipping and serving the god of money and financial gain. Whosoever would gain entrance into the kingdom of Christ and God, and share in their eternal glory, must renounce the love of worldly gain and seek treasures which are above.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 20:17, "covet": To strongly desire to obtain.

Psalms 119:36, "covetousness": Gain sought after and obtained for selfish reasons.

Proverbs 21:25, "*desire of the slothful killeth him*": His lustful spirit brings upon himself spiritual death.

Verse 26, "*coveteth greedily*": Wishes for longingly. "*spareth not*": Does not withhold giving help to others in times of need.

Proverbs 28:16, "*wanteth*": Lacketh. "*also a great oppressor*": Adds oppression to his rule. This kind of oppression is generally some kind of financial pressure the ruler puts on his subjects because of a covetous spirit. "*hateth covetousness*": Counts the love of money as an enemy.

Luke 12:33, "*alms*": Gifts of compassion to the poor. "*bags*": Pouches or purses.

1 Timothy 6:6, "*godliness*": Fervent and diligent fear and respect for God "*with contentment*": Accompanied with supreme happiness and satisfaction. "*great gain*": The true riches that far outweigh the fleeting treasures of earth.

Verse 8, "*raiment*": Clothing.

Ephesians 5:3, "*becometh*": Is fitting.

Verse 4, "*not convenient*": Not proper.

Verse 5, "*whoremonger*": The Greek word means one who commits fornication. "*unclean person*": Unholy and impure person. "*idolater*": One who worships another god other than the true God. In this thought of a covetous man being an idolater, the god that he worships is wealth and worldly riches. Paul speaks again in Colossians 3:5 that covetousness is idolatry.

Luke 12:15, "*Take heed and beware of covetousness*": Beware and guard against the love of money.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we want to bring out one of the main errors that man fell into after his fall from the favor of God into the dominion of sin. This is the sin of covetousness, the love of material and earthly wealth. We did not include this in our Scripture text, but the older son of Adam and Eve, Cain, manifested this covetous spirit. The Bible does not bring this out clearly, but we wish to quote from the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian. In chapter 2, parts 1 and 2, we will notice the following: "Cain was not only very wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground. God was more delighted with Abel's sacrifice than with what was the invention of a covetous man (Cain), and gotten by forcing the ground." Farther on Josephus notes: "Cain did not accept of his punishment in order to amendment (or to correct himself), but to increase his wickedness; for he only aimed to procure every thing that was for his own bodily pleasure, though it obliged him to be

injurious to his neighbors. He increased his household substance with much wealth, by mistreatment and violence, to procure pleasures and spoils by robbery. He also introduced a change in that way of simplicity wherein men lived before; and was the author of weights and measures. He changed the world into cunning craftiness. He set boundaries about lands and built a city and fortified it with walls." This was speaking of Cain.

Then we have Baalam, who, for the reward they offered him, showed Balak how to trip up the Israelites. We have Lot who pitched his tent toward Sodom. We have Ahab who coveted the vineyard of Naboth. And there was Gehazi who coveted the reward that Elisha refused to take from Naaman. There were others, but then the outstanding victim of covetousness was Judas Iscariot, who sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Our scripture text reveals the evil and snare that the love of money brings upon the soul of man. It is carried over into the New Testament and comes down to us today. It is a wise admonition and warning: "Beware of covetousness!"

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What makes it clear that covetousness is a sin against God?
2. What does coveting material wealth show about a person?
3. What is there about money and riches that are attractive to a person?
4. What attitude should we take toward this awful curse and sin?
5. Why is a covetous man labeled as an idolater?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Riches and earthly wealth are deceitful. Jesus, in His parable about the sower and the various grounds that the seed fell on, brings out how the deceitfulness of riches will choke the Word of God in a person's life and make it unfruitful. Riches are deceitful because they seem to give security and ease. It is like the man, in the parable of the rich man, who decided to tear down his barns and build greater so that he could store all his fruits and goods and take his ease, eat, drink and be merry. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and

is not rich toward God." Luke 12:21. Covetousness is a disease of the mind and affections. We need to be warned about it and be on our guard. Jesus said in Mark 10:23-24 two things. First, He said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Then at the disciples' astonishment, He said, "How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" And we might add to this, "How hard it is for them that have riches to not trust in them!" God help us today to beware and escape the awful trap satan will set for our feet in the love of earthly riches. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Shortly before closing time on February 20, 2006, a car came to a stop near the supermarket. A man opened the passenger door and went into the store. Daniel nervously waited at the wheel of the gray, 1984 Mercury sedan. "If we can pull this off, we'll be on easy-street," he thought. "I wonder what is taking him so long," he fretted, as the passing minutes seemed like hours. Then he jumped when he heard the sound of a gunshot. "Oh, no, what was that for? That could mean big trouble," he thought as his already rapidly beating heart began to pound. Moments later a figure came racing around the corner of the store, flung open the car door and panted, "Let's get out of here!" as he scrambled into the passenger seat. As they sped into the darkness, Daniel asked? "Hey, what was the shot I heard?" "Oh, that," his buddy responded with a laugh, "I just slipped and fell as I was running out of the door and my gun went off." "Whew," Daniel responded with a sigh of relief, "you really had me scared there for a minute."

How could it be that 18-year-old Daniel could have been the one sitting in the driver's seat this February evening? Daniel was brought up in a caring family that taught him Christian values of right and wrong. The family attended the same homeschool functions with my own children. He was a good-looking young man, and we would have never dreamed he would have become involved in a crime like this. However, this incident was a repeat of another robbery that occurred earlier the same day. Sometimes euphoria comes over people that become involved in crime and they think they are smart enough to get away with it—they feel invincible. But oh, what a trap of the enemy.

No, Daniel did not get away with his crime. There was an Eye watching him and he could not escape His scrutiny. The following evening, shortly before midnight, Daniel was pulled over for speeding down a fog-shrouded highway. During the stop, a canine unit indicated the presence of narcotics and a vehicle search was initiated. In the car, officers found bank bags from the supermarket that had been robbed the previous evening and Daniel was implicated in the crime.

Daniel confessed to his role in the robberies. He was given 5 years for knowingly concealing stolen property and was sentenced to 15 years for his part in each of the crimes. One of the 15-year sentences was suspended, and the other two were ordered by the judge to run consecutively. In October 2007, Daniel was recommended for parole on the 5-year sentence and was to begin serving the longer sentence.

The sin of covetousness has destroyed a number of years of this young man's life. Today he sits on the edge of his bunk and waits for another opportunity to be free.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



FEBRUARY 10, 2008

SIN DEFILES THE MAN AND WIFE RELATION

Genesis 6:1 And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them,

2 That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

3 And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

24 To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman.

25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

27 Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

28 Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?

29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.

30 Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.

I Corinthians 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch an woman.

2 Nevertheless, *to avoid* fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

39 The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord..

I Thessalonians 4:3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.

MEMORY VERSE: Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Hebrews 13:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God instituted the marriage relation of man and wife in purity and holiness in the beginning. But in the fall of man into sin, this physical relation of male and female has become stained by the lack of holiness, temperance and reverence for God, thus bringing ruin and destruction to mankind.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 6:2, "*the sons of God*": This is generally believed and very evident to refer to the lineage of Adam through Seth and his descendants. They were the lineage of Adam that sought to follow after God. The descendants of Adam through Cain were corrupt and wicked. In time, however, the sons of God became mixed with the descendants of Cain and the world became wicked and ripe for destruction. "*saw the daughters of men that they were fair*": The feminine beauty attracted the eyes of men and they went after the women, choosing them for

wives because of their outward beauty. This helped to turn loose the tide of lust and fleshly passion that brought the world into the detestable state of wickedness that so grieved the heart of God.

Verse 3, *"My spirit shall not always strive with man"*: The Hebrew text adds to this "in their erring," which was their sin against God. When God saw how men were going after the women in such an evil lustful manner, He was grieved and it repented Him that He had made man. *"for that he also is flesh"*: God recognized that the fleshly appetites of man had taken him over.

Verse 24, *"flattery"*: Smooth and enticing words. *"strange"*: Foreign.

Verse 25, *"take thee"*: Ensnare or captivate your emotions and feelings. *"eyelids"*: Pretty flashing looks.

Verse 30, *"lacketh understanding"*: Without principle or steadfastness of heart for righteousness. *"des troyeth his own soul"*: Forfeits his chance of obtaining eternal life.

I Corinthians 7:1, *"not to touch a woman"*: Not to become attached to a woman in a lustful and improper manner.

Verse 2, *"to avoid fornication"*: The Greek says, "because of fornication." Obtaining a wife lawfully and in the order of God is one of life's most serious steps for a man to take. Without His guidance and help, one's relationship with a woman can be that of impurity and unlawful lust. *"have"*: Be lawfully joined with and possess in God's order.

Verse 3, *"due benevolence"*: The love, affection, tenderness, care, kindness and protection that a wife deserves, that God is pleased to have bestowed upon her.

I Thessalonians 4:3, *"sanctification"*: Holiness. These two words both come from the same Greek word. It means sacredness, consecrated to God and pure in heart. *"abstain from"*: Avoid, keep pure from, be not guilty of.

Verse 4, *"know how to possess his vessel"*: This is speaking of one's married companion. Oh, how important and vital it is for everyone to be sanctified and holy in mind, heart, attitude, disposition and purpose, (wholly sanctified) and be taught of the Holy Spirit how to conduct one's self and treat one's husband and wife! God can and will help us if we will seek Him earnestly and be submissive to the leadings of His Spirit.

Verse 5, *"lust of concupiscence"*: The passions of evil fleshly desires.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today concerns God's wonderful plan for man to have a helper that would fulfill and meet his needs and desires in his life. God said that it was not good for man to be alone, so He made him a woman from the rib He took from his side and brought her to him. Adam was pleased and the decree was made: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24. What a blessing God had in mind for His creation! But, when sin came into the world, it had a sad effect on this relationship between man and woman. It instituted corruption and sorrow where God had planned for it to bring happiness and joy.

We have in our lesson what was said about the sons of God looking on the beauty of women and going about to get wives of all which *they* chose. Probably the greatest drawing for their choices were those with the greatest outward beauty, just as we have in the world today. We have from Proverbs the dire warning of this danger and snare that satan has set for people even today. The poor man who wrote these things fell a victim to this awful evil and had seven hundred wives and three hundred other women at his pleasure. Corruption in marriage has been a tale that has often been told.

The apostle Paul gives us some wise counsel that we have included in our lesson. The warning is to flee from and avoid fornication. This sin of adultery and illicit relationships is flooding our world and society today. Every young person needs to pray and seek God with all their heart for His guidance and will to be done concerning this matter of seeking a life time companion. Just look around you and you will see what satan has succeeded in doing to so many. Let us be wise and let God lead in this serious matter. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What was God's original plan for man and his wife?
2. Where does folly and evil find a place to work in this matter?
3. How does an ungodly woman go about ensnaring a man?
4. What should a person do about seeking a companion?
5. How would you describe the ideal situation of a man and wife?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God's plan for the happiness of man was a gracious and blessed provision. But for it to be all that He wants it to be, His will and good pleasure must be sought and allowed to work from beginning to the end. Sad to say, too many marriages and affairs between men and women are nothing but the work of the flesh and the fulfillment of outward beauty and effort. Our society is stained and corrupted with unholy relationships between men and women. A happy, holy, blessed marriage between man and woman is a rare thing. God must have His way about it. Young people need to consecrate their lives to God and His perfect will. Their desires must be put on the altar for God to guide and fulfill. Look not on the opposite sex with concern and desire for outward beauty. It is so deceitful and vain. The beauties of the inward man are so much more satisfying and enjoyable. Put God's will first and keep it that way all along the journey of life. God can help you to know what His will is if you really want to know it with all your heart. There is no greater treasure for a man to have in this life (other than the treasure of the kingdom of God) than a godly, holy, righteous, loving, dutiful, neat, clean, responsible, hard working, careful, gracious, prayerful and Holy Spirit filled and led wife! To obtain a companion like this, a man must develop those same attributes and be faithful to God in every way. It is worth everything you can put into it. May the Lord help each one.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

God made a special plan, when He first created man,
He said it wasn't good that man should be alone.
So He made a special helper just suited for his life,
And joined them together, the man and his wife,
And said that the two would be one.
But satan divided what God had united,
He filled their lives with sin and disgrace;
He turned into misery what God designed to be
A family—a heavenly place.

But Jesus came to show what God could bestow,
When He gave His life to purchase a bride.
He showed how a man could give himself completely for his wife,
And how in true submission she gives him back her life.
United, they stand side by side.
Now, as heirs together, in every kind of weather,
God fills them with love and with grace;
They enjoy happily what God designed to be—
A family—a heavenly place.

Is Jesus the head of your home?
As a man and a wife, do you honor and serve Him alone?
Are you doing the will of the Father in your family?
Is your home here on earth a heavenly place to be?
—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



FEBRUARY 17, 2008

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Isaiah 32:15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.

16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;

19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.

20 Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

16 This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

MEMORY VERSE: Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. John 16:13.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the prophecies of God's prophets, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is found the wonderful clear promise of the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon the souls of men, to establish them in righteousness and peace, with lives abounding in the fruits of divine love and holiness of heart.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 32:15, "*wilderness*": The barren hearts of men. "*counted for a forest*": Reckoned and described as thick and luxuriant as a forest of trees. The fruit of the Holy Spirit will be abounding in the lives of the true saints of the most High God.

Verse 16, "*remain*": Be permanently situated and prosper.

Verse 17, "*the work of righteousness shall be peace*": The work of righteousness in men shall not be carried out with carnal weapons and brutal force, but with love and peace and good will. "*effect of righteousness*": The service and administration of true righteousness brings quietness and assurance in the soul. This is the work of the indwelling Spirit of God

that Jesus made available for us. *"assurance"*: Trust, confidence and steadfast hope.

Verse 18, *"peaceable habitation"*: Home of peace. *"sure dwellings"*: Safe places to victoriously live and serve God. These are spiritual dwellings that we can inhabit in our hearts regardless of what our earthly lot may be. *"quiet"*: Secure and protected.

Verse 19, The Septuagint Greek Version renders this verse: "Those who dwell in the forests shall be in confidence as those in the plains."

Verse 20, *"sow beside all waters"*: Preach the truth of the gospel to all nations. *"send forth the feet of the ox and the ass"*: The ox and the ass (donkey or burro) are descriptive terms referring to the ministers of the gospel. Moses, in Deuteronomy 25:4 said, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn." In I Corinthians 9:9 and I Timothy 5:18, Paul quoted this scripture and applied it both times to the ministers of the gospel. The donkey as a beast of burden is also a good illustration of those who carry the burden of the Word of the Lord in ministering it to others.

Acts 2:4, *"tongues"*: Languages.

John 6:13, *"whatsoever he shall hear"*: What the Heavenly Father speaks through the Holy Spirit.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is concerning the most wonderful experience that man can have, and that is to have the Spirit of the living God and Creator to actually live and move and communicate with man in his innermost being. The Scriptures we have in our lesson text were inspired in our hearts for this lesson. There are many other writings in the Bible about this. We have Isaiah's prophecy about the coming of the Holy Spirit, "poured out upon us from on high," and parts of Peter's message to the people on the day of Pentecost after the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the one hundred and twenty souls who had been in continual supplication and prayer for this blessed event to take place. And the text from the Old Testament that Peter used in his message is the wonderful prophecy of the prophet Joel of the pouring out of the Spirit of God and the wonderful things that would follow.

Genesis 1:2 says that in the beginning, before anything was created, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the

waters." The Hebrew word "moved" here means "was brooding." This gives the impression that the Spirit of God was planning and designing with great and wonderful thoughts and feelings about His work of creating the heavens, the earth and the inhabitants therein. Also we notice that when God created man from the dust of the earth He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The Spirit of God is the Breath of God. So man was given life and being by the Spirit of God. Man's transgression and sin against God disrupted all of this wonderful relationship, but God made known, through His prophets, that He was going to pour out His Spirit upon man again when the fullness of the time had come. And that is what our lesson text shows, how that the Spirit would be poured out upon man and many blessings would follow it up.

For our Memory Verse we have part of our Savior's discourse to His disciples in John 14-17, given just before He was arrested and put to death. One of the main things He stressed in this discourse was the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus informed them that He must return to Heaven to be with the Father, and He would send the Holy Spirit to take His place. The Holy Spirit living in each individual child of God could and would accomplish much, much more than what Christ could do. But it would really be as if Christ *was* there with each one as much and even more than when He was with them in the flesh. Let us thank and praise our God for His unspeakable Gift of the Holy Spirit, and not fail to be a partaker of this wonderful experience! —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the fruitful field that the Holy Spirit brings forth?
2. What effect will the Spirit of righteousness have upon man?
3. What did Joel say God's Spirit will cause men and women to do?
4. What did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would do when He came?
5. How did the Holy Spirit manifest Himself on the day of Pentecost?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Just think of the sad condition man brought upon himself and his descendants because he chose to disobey God and

serve satan, self and sin! Death, sickness, trouble, pain, sorrow, tears, pain, misery and many other things were the result of his fatal choice to listen to the wrong voice. But the Almighty God is so gracious and good to bring about a plan of redemption and salvation for lost mankind. And part of that wonderful plan was to give men and women, boys and girls a chance to experience the sweetest and most enjoyable blessing that anyone could have—the wonderful Spirit of God to come down from Heaven and take up His sweet abode in the very innermost part of man, in his heart, soul and mind!

The living presence of the Spirit of God brings quietness and soul rest. Peace, joy, success, happiness, victory, power, strength, guidance and light for the soul are all bound up in that wonderful Guest! If people could just understand what it brings to have the Holy Spirit living within! But satan is doing all he can to keep it from them. The world is full of error, wrong ideas and misconceptions, which keep people in the dark about what God is wanting them to have. But the door is open, through the gospel and the Word of God, and people can look and behold if they have a mind to. Jesus paid the price to make available to us this blessed experience of being the temple of God. And it is worth all the effort and consecration and faith that one can muster to be able to partake of this glorious treasure!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Consider for a minute just how important and precious the Holy Spirit is to us on our journey to Heaven. How thankful we should be for this vehicle that brings to us hope, cheer and guidance through this world. Jesus was moved with great compassion for the multitudes that came to seek His help and attention. And yet, there was only one of Him to perform these duties for the people. Now we have the Holy Spirit who can minister to each one of us individually. I do not have to worry that because Jesus is in another location, I will have to wait my turn or go to that location to see Him. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. I can have Christ here and now through the Holy Spirit.

Just think of the power behind a gospel message that is filled with the Holy Spirit. It brings glad tidings to every listening soul and meets every spiritual need. And we do not have to worry that the Holy Spirit cannot minister to us today

because He is in California or Oklahoma or someplace else. He permits us to have God with us anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Aren't we glad that we have the Holy Spirit leading our worship services! It makes the service just right for the spiritual needs of the hour—from the songs selected to the message preached to the prayer of dismissal. (If you do not think this is important, try going to a church where the Holy Spirit is not present and you will feel smothered.)

It is through the Holy Spirit that we are able to live free from sin. He is our guide and we can feel His check upon our lives. The Holy Spirit is that voice that is behind us saying, "...This is the way, walk ye in it..." Isaiah 30:21. In our prayer life, we need the Holy Spirit. It is the vehicle that gets our prayers through to Heaven. The Holy Spirit can even interpret our sighs and groaning and convey correctly to the Father and the Son the urgency in our soul.

Is it any wonder then, that there is not forgiveness for blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because you have just destroyed your vehicle of communication with the Lord, thereby making it impossible to serve Him. Value the Holy Spirit. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Ask for more of the Holy Spirit.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams



FEBRUARY 24, 2008

THE ESTABLISHING OF THE WORKINGS OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

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

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

MEMORY VERSE: Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Hebrews 10:38.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Through the active and living faith possessed by various people throughout the course of time, God established the pattern and example of the faith and confidence He wants all of us to have in Him and His Word.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 11:1, "*faith*": Persuasion, conviction, believing, confidence, assurance. "*substance*": Basis, support, what it is built upon. "*evidence*": Proof or conviction.

Verse 2, "*elders*": People of old and ancient time. "*obtained a good report*": Were made a witness and testified.

Verse 3, "*understand*": To observe and be persuaded of. "*framed*": planned and thoroughly designed. The Greek

expresses this verse: "By faith we are persuaded that the heavens and the earth were planned and designed by God's command so that the things which are seen did not come into being by anything that appeared to be."

Verse 4, "*more excellent*": Greater in quantity and quality. "*obtained witness*": Had a testimony from God about himself. "*God testifying of his gifts*": God making known His good pleasure over Abel's offerings. "*being dead, yet speaketh*": The blood of Abel cried unto God from the ground that opened her mouth to receive it from the hand of Cain. Genesis 4:10-11.

Verse 5, "*translated*": Transferred from the earthly realm to the heavenly. "*was not found*": Disappeared from view, and though they looked for him, they never could find him. This is similar to the men who asked Elisha permission to go and look for the body of Elijah. At first he refused to permit them, but he finally let them go. Fifty men searched for three days for Elijah's body but they never found him. II Kings 2:16-18 "*had this testimony*": His life gave a testimony of being well pleasing to God.

Verse 6, "*must believe that he is*": The one who is in the right when approaching God is one who sincerely believes that God really exists. "*rewarder*": One who justly repays. "*diligently seek him*": With craving desire searches out, investigates, and ardently longs to worship God.

Verse 7, "*became heir*": Gained a part of the great number who really believe in God.

Verse 9, "*as in a strange country*": As a foreigner. "*tabernacles*": tents or temporary dwellings. "*with Isaac and Jacob*": They dwelled in tents also.

Verse 17, "*tried*": Put to the test.

Verse 19, "*Accounting*": Reckoning and deeming. "*from whence also he received him in a figure*": When Abraham was stopped by God from slaying his son at the last moment, it was as if Isaac had been raised from the dead. In his heart, Abraham had surrendered Isaac up to God to die, and the joyous outcome of the whole affair was as real as if he had actually carried it out. It was because he believed that, if he killed Isaac and burned him to ashes, God would bring his son right back to him. Oh, the depths of that sacrifice that the faith of Abraham inspired and strengthened him to make! What a grand example he, as our father of faithfulness, became to all of us!

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we will study the examples of those who manifested faith in the living God in their earthly lives. The writer in Hebrews had brought out in the preceding 10th chapter how Christ had come and offered His body as a sacrifice for sins forever and had sat down on the right hand of God and would be there until the end of time when God would bring all things under His feet. He exhorts us to hold fast the profession of our faith and not allow sin to take over us again. Our Memory Verse, verse 38 of this chapter, is a quote from the Septuagint version of Habakkuk 2:4 that states that the just shall live by faith. We must not draw back in unbelief and be lost, but rather continue to believe in God and Christ for the salvation of our souls.

In the 11th chapter we have a list of several of the people in history who had faith and what blessings it brought them. First, the principle of faith is illustrated in the work of creation, how that things seen sprang from the invisible, the Word of God. Then, each one of the people mentioned manifested their positive faith and confidence in God. Abel excelled over his brother by offering the acceptable sacrifice and paid for it with his life. Enoch walked with God in well pleasing for three hundred years and was rewarded by being translated and not having to experience death. Then the writer declares that we cannot please God without faith, and we must believe that He will reward those who please Him in this manner. Then there was Noah and the great work he accomplished of building the ark in preparation for what God had foretold, unseen as yet. Abraham enters the picture, who, along with his wife Sara, obtained success and God's favor by counting Him faithful and being obedient to Him. Our final entry is that of Abraham's willingness to be obedient to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. He willingly went as far as to take the knife to kill his son, because he believed that God would raise him from the dead. This kind of faith pleased God supremely. In the rest of the chapter he mentioned a number of other souls who triumphed in their lives through faith and firmly trusting in God. These all, as Hebrews 12:1 says, are a great cloud (or multitude) of witnesses to help encourage and guide us in accomplishing the same triumph of faith in our lives today. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the definition of faith?
2. How was faith illustrated in the work of creation?
3. How did faith work in each person mentioned in our lesson?
4. Why was Abraham willing to be a stranger in the land of promise?
5. How was Abraham so obedient to God in offering up his son, Isaac?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is so good and edifying for us to observe and study the individual members of that great cloud of witnesses that are mentioned in this 11th chapter of Hebrews. They show and exemplify the workings of faith and confidence in God that He is pleased with. Each one of these precious people of God had works that perfected their faith. Faith is more than talk. It is doing and accomplishing what the Lord enjoins us to do. Abel obeyed God and offered the proper sacrifice with the proper attitude of heart. Enoch pleased God with his life despite the wickedness of the world around him. And consider Noah! Look what he accomplished, with the help of his family, entirely on the strength of what God had spoken to him. He built that massive ark, obeying in every detail what God had directed him to do. Let us look and take heed to the faith that Abraham had—the father of the great multitude of faithful souls down through the ages. His obedience in leaving his native land, not knowing where he was going, and offering his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice, was a prime example of faithful and obedient trust. Yes, an example that we need to follow in our mortal lives today. We can do it if we will: God will surely help us.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Scriptural admonition we have to “...resist the devil and he will flee from you” means also to resist doubting because it is an effectual tool of satan. Doubting robs the child of God from many rightful benefits that were purchased for him at Calvary. Namely rest, peace, faith, assurance, hope, calmness and quietness. If we seem to be short in any of these, we need to first examine ourselves to make sure we have not

been negligent. Then let us remember: the life of faith is not to be lived in the emotions. Our human feelings vary from day to day, but God abides faithful. Our feelings will often lie to us and deceive us if we are not careful.

By examining the examples of faith given in the lesson; we can recognize that inevitably there was an obstacle or difficulty that stood between them and the realization of the fulfilled promise. Do you think it will be any different for us?

Keeping our spiritual eyes on Jesus, in prayer and in the Word, will help to keep our faith strong. Do not focus on the giants, storms or even yourself, all three can bring discouragement. "...This is the victory that overcomes the world, *even our faith.*" In other words, this is the victory that will overcome any enemy.

—Bro. Bob Wilson

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MARCH 2, 2008

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

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

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

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

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

Zephaniah 3: 11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

Psalm 72:1 Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

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

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

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

Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

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

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

II Corinthians 6:10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

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

Additional Scripture references: Revelation 2:8-10; Isaiah 41:17-20; Matthew 11:4-6.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: It is better to be aware of how poor and needy we really are and possess the eternal riches of faith and the blessings of God than to be proud and lifted up with earthly riches and know nothing of the real treasure of the kingdom of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 66:1, "Where is the house that ye build unto me?" The Hebrew says, "Where then is the house that ye build unto me?" The LORD Jehovah is saying, "Since Heaven is my throne

and the earth is my footstool, how can you think about building a house for me made with hands?"

Verse 2, "*will I look*": Regard with pleasure, favor and care. "*poor*": Depressed, afflicted, humble, lowly and needy. "*contrite*": Smitten, dejected, wounded and broken. "*trembleth*": Holds in reverence and godly fear.

Isaiah 29:18, "*hear the words of the book*": This is referring to the Word of God that is brought to us in the gospel of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Verse 19, "*meek*": The Hebrew word here means nearly the same as "*poor*" in Isaiah 66:2: depressed, gentle and needy. To be meek also means to be defenseless, mild and without retaliation or anger. "*poor*": beggarly, destitute.

Zephaniah 3:11, "*not be ashamed for all thy doings*": This means that we will be set free and be forgiven of all of our sins. "*no more be haughty because of my holy mountain*": This means that we will not be highminded and lifted up with pride in the hill of God's holiness. We will be exalted and lifted up in the grace and love of God and not in ourselves.

Verse 12, "*afflicted and poor people*": People who are weak in themselves and aware of their needy condition before God.

Psalms 72:1, "*the king and the king's son*": This is a Psalm written by King David for his son, Solomon. But the real application of this is a prophecy of Jesus Christ, and His everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace.

Verse 4, "*judge the poor*": Christ brings judgment for the welfare and salvation of the souls of the poor and needy. His judgment does not condemn, but it rather saves and delivers us. "*oppressor*": One who deceives, abuses and does evil. This is really referring to Satan who deceives people and brings them into the captivity of sin.

Verse 14, "*precious shall their blood be*": The salvation of our souls and deliverance from sin and death is Christ's greatest joy.

Luke 4:18, "*poor*": Having little or no means, beggarly and very needy.

Matthew 5:3, "*poor in spirit*": Having an humble spirit, being aware of one's true helpless and destitute condition.

II Corinthians 6:10, "*having nothing*": Being short and sometimes destitute of worldly goods. "*possessing all things*": Holding fast to spiritual eternal treasures.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today brings out the certain truth that it takes an humble attitude and a deep sense of our poverty and need of God's help to be able to lay hold of the blessings He wants us to have. People who do not realize the need they have before Him will make no move or effort to seek His help and grace. The prophet Isaiah declares that it is the poor man that God looks upon with favor. He is to be poor in esteem of himself and his worth. The self-sufficient and self-confident man will not be inclined to seek help from God. In Isaiah 29 the prophet spoke of everyone's vision being as the words of a book that is sealed. Seeing it was sealed, the learned man felt no ability to read it. And when presented to an unlearned man, he felt unable because he was unlearned. But the prophet finally declared, as it is brought out, that the deaf and the blind, the meek and the poor would be able to read the book and take hold of its wonderful message. Zephaniah echoes the same truth about the ones who will remain in the mountain of God's holiness as the afflicted and poor people who will trust in the name of the LORD. And the fact that the ministration of Jesus, the King of kings, would be to the poor and needy is fully declared in our scriptures from Psalm 72.

Then we have the scripture from Luke 4:18 that Jesus stood up to read at Nazareth. It is from Isaiah 61, and brings out that God had anointed Him to preach the gospel to the poor. The first sentence that Jesus uttered in His sermon on the Mount, as Matthew 5:3 shows, was the declaration that the kingdom of Heaven belonged to the poor in spirit. It is brought out again by James and Paul. Our final scripture from Psalm 34:6 re-echoes what the other writers have spoken. So we see a trail of evidence, clear and distinct, that the blessings of the Lord are especially directed to those who are poor and deeply sense their need of Him. Let us have one more witness of this from what Mary, the mother of Jesus, said in Luke 1:52-53, "He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why should we deeply feel poor and needy in ourselves?
2. Why is God so favorably inclined to help the poor and needy?

3. What kind of people will inhabit God's holy mountain?
4. Why is the gospel of Christ purposely preached to the poor?
5. How can we have nothing, and yet possess all things?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One quality of meekness and poverty of spirit is that of not taking offence toward others. We have a wonderful example of this in the Caananite woman who came to Jesus for healing of her daughter who was grievously vexed with a devil. (Matthew 15:21-28.) At her first approach to Him, Jesus answered her not a word. His disciples came and asked that she be sent away, for she was crying after them. Then Jesus said that He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The woman took no offence, but rather prostrated herself before Jesus, saying, "Lord, help me." Then Jesus gave her the final test, saying, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Instead of being hurt at being termed a dog, this woman said, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Meekness is not a quality the world is promoting. Look at the terms utilized by the clothing advertisement flyers—smart, bold, daring, sassy. If the words are not there, simply look at the pose of the models and you will see these terms personified. Actually, people usually respect and enjoy associating with a meek person, but for themselves they reject that attitude and gravitate to the more "forward" look promoted by the stars of the entertainment industry.

Every person who possesses the beautiful quality of meekness will have to cultivate and choose to be this way. Since meekness is not a natural inclination of the flesh, what would attract a person to develop this submissive, humble manner of character? It is not the standard method of reaching the top in the eyes of the world. Ah, but the eyes of the world are not what motivates the heart of a child of God. It is their desire to possess those attributes of character that will bring pleasure to the heart of the Lord.

This lesson is filled with optimism and hope. The words "I will" and "He shall" are used, or implied, many times in these verses. Let us look at a few of the positive benefits bestowed upon the meek—To this man will I look; they shall hear the words of the book; they shall see out of obscurity; they shall increase their joy in the Lord; they shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel; they shall trust in the name of the Lord; He shall save the children of the needy and break their oppressor; He shall deliver the needy; He shall redeem their soul; their blood shall be precious; He shall preach unto them the gospel; heal; preach deliverance; recover their sight; set at liberty; theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; they shall be rich in faith; heirs of the Kingdom; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things; the Lord will hear him and save him. What an impressive list of benefits to be showered upon the meek by the blessing of God!

Those who are focusing on the smart, bold, daring and sassy impressions the world is trying to make, ought to take a look at these promises and ask themselves some serious questions about true satisfaction. Will the short burst of applause from the world bring the same fulfillment that gratifies the soul of the meek? Not according to my estimation, especially in view of these promises. May the Lord help us to choose our course wisely.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey



MARCH 9, 2008

TRUTH VERSUS FALSEHOOD

Proverbs 12:17 He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness; but a false witness deceit.

19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Proverbs 23:23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

Psalms 51:6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Psalms 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

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

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

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

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

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

44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

John 18:37 ...To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.

II Thessalonians 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

MEMORY VERSE: For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. II Corinthians 13:8.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We must be honest, with a truthful heart before God if we would know and understand the

truth that makes one free from error and sin. But if we love iniquity and have pleasure in unrighteousness and sin, we are in danger of believing a lie, thereby bringing eternal damnation upon ourselves.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 12:17, The Hebrew says, "He who breathes faithfulness reveals righteousness, but a witness of falsehoods deceit."

Verse 19, "*lip of truth*": The doctrine or teachings of the truth of God. "*for a moment*": The Hebrew says, "while I wink," meaning that spoken lies are absolutely of no real value or duration.

Proverbs 23:23, "*Buy the truth*": Take hold of, obtain, procure, own and hold fast to the truth of God for your own benefit. "*sell it not*": Do not surrender it nor let it get away from you.

Psalms 51:6, "*inward parts*": In one's inner most being; upon the tables of the heart.

Psalms 119:142, "*everlasting righteousness*": Righteousness and verity forever, never to change or pass away.

John 8:34, "*verily*": The Greek word is the same as the Hebrew "*amen*," which means firm, trustworthy and surely.

Verse 36, "*free indeed*": Really and truly free.

Verse 44, "*murderer*": Promoter of falsehood that brings death to the souls of men. "*of his own*": Out of his own evil nature. "*father of it*": The one who instigates and produces deception and falsehood, even as he did to Adam and Eve in the beginning.

John 18:37, "*of the truth*": Speaks the truth in his heart and is honest before God.

II. Thessalonians 2:7, "*mystery of iniquity*": The hidden deceitful works of disobedience and violation of God's holiness and holy laws. It has appearance of wisdom and benefit but is in direct contradiction of God's will and holy purpose. It has a religious bearing and tone, but it allows things that are offensive to God. "*letteth*": Permits. God allows the mystery of iniquity to work for a time to refine and give proof of the faithful and to show up those who are not all out for Him.

Verse 8, "*that Wicked*": The lawless one who has worked under cover in deceiving mankind. "*brightness of his coming*": The glorious appearing of Christ at the end of time.

Verse 9, "*after the working of Satan*": Christ will come after satan has had his time of the deception of humanity. "*lytng wonders*": Wonderful sights that fascinate the eye, but are foreign to the Spirit of god.

Verse 10, "*deceivableness*": Powers and ability to deceive. "*received not the love of the truth*": Did not allow the truth to persuade them of their error and need.

Verse 11, "*delusion*": A working of deceptive error.

Verse 12, "*damned*": Condemned to everlasting fire and destruction by the judgment of Almighty God. "*had pleasure in unrighteousness*": Enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season instead of taking a stand against it as they should have.

II Corinthians 13:8, "*we can do nothing against the truth*"; We have no power against the truth. As William Cullen Bryant expressed in his poem "The Battlefield": "Truth crushed to earth will rise again: the eternal years of God are hers; but Error, wounded, writhes in pain, and dies among his worshippers."

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we are inspired to study several Scriptures that deal with the subject of truth. And, in dealing with truth, we have to also consider the enemy of the truth, and his works of falsehood and error. Jesus in John 8:44 of our lesson, stated that satan from the beginning did not abide in the truth and was the father of all lies and falsehood. And we see that his work upon humanity has been to convince and persuade people to believe lies instead of the truth. We have first several scriptures from Proverbs and Psalms about the value and importance of truth. There is much serious importance in the admonition "Buy the truth and sell it not." You do not buy truth with money, but you buy it with reverence, submission and fervent prayer to God. You buy it with belief in Christ, (as He is the way, the truth and the life), and continuing in His Word. You buy it by renouncing the world and its ways and departing from iniquity. You buy it by being honest and truthful in your heart and attitudes. You receive a love for the truth when you humble yourself, confess the truth about yourself and experience the light and help that the truth offers you in Christ. The people believed in Jesus, but He warned them to continue in His Word that they would be His disciples indeed, and then they would know the truth, and the

truth would make them free. And He also cautioned them about the devil, whom He referred to as their father, and how from the beginning he abode not in the truth. Jesus Christ was the Truth of God manifested in the flesh. In rejecting Him, they were rejecting the truth and throwing their hearts wide open to deception and falsehood.

Paul's counsel in II Thessalonians 2 is surely worthy of our consideration. He is saying that the ability of unrighteousness to deceive is due to those who do not receive a love for the truth. They do not renounce their ungodly, sinful practices and ways, and this gives satan the chance to deceive their souls and bring them to eternal destruction. Because of this, God sends them strong delusion and they believe a lie and are damned.

Truth cannot be destroyed or prevailed against. It is truth, and it will stand though the entire world tramples on it. We cannot do anything against the truth. We might try, but the truth will prevail in the long run. Let us "buy the truth, and sell it not!"

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. How can we "buy the truth"? How can we "sell it"?
2. What did Jesus tell the people to do to be able to know the truth?
3. Who did Jesus say was the father of lies?
4. How can we safeguard our souls from believing lies?
5. Why can we really do nothing against the truth?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. Psalm 15:1-2.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If it was falsehood that deceived man and caused him to sin, thus separating him from God, then it's going to be truth that brings him back into fellowship again with the Father, and frees him from sin. Godly sorrow and repentance requires first an acknowledging of the truth: "I am a lost sinner. I have committed grievous sins against the Father. I have taken my

own selfish way. I have loved darkness rather than light. There is no good thing in me, and I am not worthy to be a son of God." Saving faith also requires an acknowledging of the truth, this time a blessed, saving refuge of truth: "You are the Heavenly Father, and You gave Your Only Son to save me. I believe that You save me now. I believe that Jesus is my Savior, even though I am not worthy, and have done nothing to deserve His grace. I believe that You hear my cry, and I give my life to you forever. I forsake every sin, and my own way. You are the way! You are the truth! You are my life!"

Keeping saved requires basic honesty, clear to the end of the journey. Humility—and we must have it to daily obtain God's grace—depends upon an honest assessment of one's self; a clear-eyed, frank, owning up to needs and faults.

Maintaining "truth in the inward parts" will be the task of a lifetime, but, praise God, it will constantly set us free and keep us free indeed.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck



MARCH 16, 2008

HAVING A WHOLESOME DESIRE FOR GOD

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

Proverbs 3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Proverbs 11:23 The desire of the righteous is only good: but the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

Proverbs 18:1 Through desire a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom.

Isaiah 26:8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.

9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Psalms 73:25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee*? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

Colossians 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

MEMORY VERSE: Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Psalm 37:4.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God is so good and wonderful that to know Him and have communion with Him is greatly to be desired by us poor and lowly creatures of earth. It is better to have favor with Him than anything else in this world. It is worth all the effort we can put forth to please Him and experience His blessings.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalms 27:4, "*desired*": Earnestly requested with true purpose of heart. "*seek after*": Search out and strive to obtain. "*dwell in the house of the LORD*": Remain there and make it my permanent home. "*behold the beauty of the LORD*": See and understand the delight and enjoyment of fellowship with Him. "*enquire in his temple*": To inspect and look upon with joyous admiration in an effort to gain knowledge from being in His majestic temple and participating in the worship of Him.

Verse 5, "*pavilion*": The shelter of His protective care. "*secret of his tabernacle*": The hiding place of His presence.

Verse 6, "*mine head be lifted up*": I will face satan with triumphant confidence of being victorious over him.

Proverbs 3:15, "*not to be compared*": The benefits of the fear of God far outweigh what the world might offer.

Proverbs 11:23, "*expectation*": Hope, what to look forward to. "*wrath*": The righteous anger and indignation of a righteous God Whom the wicked has offended.

Proverbs 18:1, "*separated himself*": Withdraws from other attractions to devote himself to seeking and studying for knowledge and understanding. How many things in the realm of inventions and famous discoveries were the result of someone who literally gave his or her life to seeking for solutions and answers! Why, then, can we not give ourselves to seeking the wisdom and mind of God?

Isaiah 26:8, "*desire of our soul*": Knowing that the world was surely the work of a Supreme Being, our soul is thirsting to learn about Him and His holy way. "*the remembrance of thee*": We do not want to ever forget that Thou art God and worthy of our supreme love and devotion. Various things God instituted to help His people to remember. There was the rainbow in Noah's day. There was the Passover and other services that God wanted Israel to keep in remembrance of Him. And there is the Lord's supper of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine that Jesus left with us to keep. "*with my spirit within me*": I will seek thee not from a fleshly standpoint, but with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to my heart and mind. "*early*": Diligently. "*when thy judgments are in the earth*": When God's word and the truth of the gospel of Christ are published and made available for men to read, believe, and live, they will have no excuse or cause for ignorance.

Psalms 73:25, "*beside thee*": Or equal to thee.

Colossians 3:1, "*seek those things which are above*": Be interested and concerned with those eternal things that Christ has to share with you.

Verse 2, "*Set your affection*": Interest yourself with and set your mind.

Verse 3, "*ye are dead*": Your bonds of love and interest are severed from the fleeting vanities of earth. "*your life is hid with Christ in God*": You are to live a spiritual life of communion and fellowship with Christ, which the world is not able to discern.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is concerning a most important factor in the relationship between God and man. With God there is no question or doubts to be raised concerning His love, interest and gracious attitude toward humanity. But it is very evident that there is a great danger of man being drawn to entertain desires and longings that are foreign and displeasing to God. In fact, one of the tactics of satan in beguiling Adam and Eve in the beginning was to make the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil to appear to be desirable, a tree to make one wise. (Genesis 3:6.) And when they yielded to that desire, it brought a weakness and inclination in humanity to be affected by the attractions of earthly desires. These desires were from man's fleshly appetites and the earthly influences that began to gather around him.

We have this thought of wholesome desires for God illustrated and brought out in the various Scriptures. We can see them very clearly brought out, such as God's house and the wonderful blessings therein of the beauty of the Lord and the benefits of His fellowship. There is His protection and the enjoyment of His presence. There is wisdom and understanding that enables us to have God and His image clearly in focus. God's presence, inward comfort, peace and the hope He offers to us is greatly to be desired. No man ever prospers with His Maker without a fervent mind and desire toward Him. There are always the fleshly allurements and the attraction of earthly values to present themselves to a person. It starts in childhood, and increases as young adulthood advances. This world is full of temptations to allure the desires of a person. It is a decision that every one has to make. The worldly desires have great power over the heart of a person. Sports, male and female relationships, money, pleasure, praise of men and many other things converge upon the mind. Then, on the other hand, is the call of the fear of God and eternity and the gospel of the goodness and grace of God in His Son, Jesus.

Every individual must make a decision of what desires he or she are going to allow to rule their destiny. Oh, that everyone would have a desire for the blessings of the Lord like David and Isaiah and other saints of old had! We need to open our eyes and weigh up the attractions and be wise. Choose that better part of wisdom and the blessings of fellowship with the LORD God of Heaven!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the things of God that make Him desirable?
2. What influences compete with these things?
3. Who is responsible for the decision a person makes?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith. 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. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud! He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. (From Proverbs.) —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Desire is a very powerful word. It denotes a strong appetite, a hunger or a want. You have heard it generally said, "People do what they want to do." Desire is a powerful force. And whatever you have a desire to do, you will do—whether it is as harmless as a hobby or as dreadful as carnality. You will do what you want to do.

So it is spiritually. In observing many people and their various walks with the Lord, I have found that those who succeed are those who truly desired to serve the Lord, no matter what comes their way. I have also observed that a person who does not have a fervent desire to serve the Lord will eventually give up and go their own way. In fact, you cannot make a person desire to serve the Lord.

In our journey to Heaven, we are each one tempted by different things. I have found it very successful when I asked the Lord to take away my desire for the temptation. It is a guaranteed victory. You just no longer have the desire for whatever temptation you face. Do you want to quit smoking by your own sheer will power? Or would you rather ask the Lord to take away your desire to smoke? Do you want to quit drinking? Why not ask the Lord to take away your desire to drink? Do you want to truly follow the Lord and daily read His Word? If you have a desire, you will do it. —Sis. LaDawna Adams

MARCH 23, 2008

VICTORY OVER SIN, DEATH AND THE GRAVE

Isaiah 25:1 O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: ...Our Saviour Jesus Christ...hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. II Timothy 1:10.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God promised in prophecy, and fulfilled it in our Lord Jesus Christ that He would deliver us from the dominion of sin, and also give us victory over death and the grave through being raised from the dead by the power of Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Isaiah 25:4, "*blast of the terrible ones*": Breathings of threats. "*storm against the wall*": The wall of God's salvation keeps the onslaughts of satan and his hosts from harming the saints of God.

Verse 6, "*this mountain*": This is spiritual Mount Zion, the Church of God elevated in holiness above this sin-cursed world. "*feast of fat things*": A bountiful bestowal of rich and beneficial blessings and help. "*wines of the lees*": Wines and the settlings; the full strength of the fruit of the vine. This represents the fullness of the Holy Spirit. "*fat things full of marrow*": These are rich blessings with the oil of the Holy Spirit. "*well refined*": Fully cleansed from any defilement of the flesh or man's wisdom.

Verse 7, "*destroy*": From the same as "swallow up" in verse 8. It means to do away with and remove forever. "*the covering and the vail*": This is the carnal mind, the curtain over the heart and mind of humanity that keeps them from seeing, knowing and understanding God's word. Paul spoke of this in II Corinthians 3:14-18 about Israel having their minds blinded with the vail upon their heart, which is taken away in Christ.

Hosea 13:14, "*ransom*": Sever or release. "*redeem*": To be as their near kinsman to rescue them from death and separation from God. "*I will be thy plagues*": The Hebrew says, "Where is your power to destroy?" In Christ death has lost its power to destroy life. "*O grave, I will be thy destruction*": The Hebrew says, "Where is your ruin (your ruin over mankind)? *repentance shall be hid from mine eyes*": This means that death and

the grave will be completely destroyed for those who follow Christ all the way.

Verse 51, "*changed*": Transformed and made incorruptible and eternal.

Verse 52, "*in the twinkling of an eye*": In an instant.

Verse 55, "*sting*": Hurt or disastrous effect. "*The sting of death is sin*": Death brings damnation if sin is not cleansed before God. "*the strength of sin is the law*": The holy law of God gives light and force to God's judgment against sin and transgression, bringing condemnation and the cutting off of hope.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In our lesson today we have the wonderful prophecies and their New Testament fulfillment concerning the victory our Lord Jesus Christ has wrought for us over sin, death and the grave. Jesus gave His life's blood to atone for our sinful condition before God. The power and chain that captivated the soul in the bondage of impurity and defilement before God has been severed. Jesus also broke the power of death. By His obedience to God, Christ was resurrected from the dead unto eternal life. This He did on our behalf, and it means that death has no terror for us. We will share in Christ's resurrection if we will hold fast our confidence unto the end. And then, Christ has gotten the victory over the grave. It has no more ruin and destruction to plague us with. We will be resurrected and changed to immortality at His second coming.

We have Isaiah's wonderful prophecy of death being swallowed up in victory. Paul quotes from this in our text in I Corinthians 15. Our scripture in Hosea 13:14 is also quoted by Paul and is applied to the blessed hope of sharing in Christ's resurrection and overcoming the sting of death and the victory of the grave.

How wonderful that we no longer need to be afraid to die! Death has lost its dreaded power and sting. In fact, the true Christian looks forward to passing from this life because of the bright future the grace of Jesus has given us. We can live in this world with victory over sin; we can face the shadow of death unafraid and with no dread, and we have the blessed assurance that we will rise up from the grave on the glorious resurrection morning to ever be with the Lord.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Without Christ, what does death and the grave hold for us?
2. What did Jesus do in order to afford us with victory over it all?
3. What must we do to be accounted worthy of being immortal?
4. When will this change to immortality take place?
5. Where now is death's sting and the grave's victory?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When Adam and Eve sinned against God and partook of the forbidden fruit, they opened the door for sin to come into the world. And with sin came the sentence of death. Man was made from the dust of the ground, and because of sin he would have to return to that dust. It was a sad Adam and Eve that had to leave their beautiful garden home to go out to make their living by tilling the ground. But the saddest part of all was the woeful future that would be theirs if they failed to seek the Lord and let Him work His will in their lives. And so we have the history of men and women, some who have been stubborn and self willed and sinned against God and were taken out of this life in their sins. But, thank God for those who really sought to please God, and reaped the fruits of His goodness and salvation. They are all going to be in the great judgment day to reap the fruits of their lives. And so are we. It will pay us to take advantage of this great offer of salvation and hope, and serve the Lord all of our days. —Bro. Leslie Busbee

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The same trump that brings the resurrection, calling the Saints home will be the one that means eternal separation for the lost. While we have a hope and anticipation, let us not forget to warn the wicked, carry a concern and pray. Our precious Jesus shed His blood for all! —Bro. Bob Wilson

To My Friend

I spoke to you about your soul today.
Perhaps you wished that I would go away
And say no more and let you be.

But, oh, My cherished friend, if you could only know
The longing in my heart for you, the dread
Of looking forward, after you are dead,
Unto that certain day when you must stand
Before the throne of Christ!
Works of your hand. Fruits of your heart,
Will not avail, for He will ask you,
“What did you do with Me?”

Dear friend of mine, there is no other way
Except through Him, Whom you deny today.
How could I bear it, if in your despair
And bitter grief, you cried, “Did she not care
Enough for me to speak? to point the way?
To save me from this anguish and dismay?”
My heart is bleeding, thinking of your woe,
Your tenor, and your helplessness
And so I spoke to you about your soul today.
I could not leave you, could not go away.

—Martha Snell Nicholson



MARCH 30, 2008

THE FINAL JUDGMENT DAY

Jude 14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Revelations 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

I Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

II Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

Revelations 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The end of this world will be when Jesus Christ comes with power and great glory to raise the dead and bring all men to His judgment seat. The earth and heavens will be destroyed, and the ungodly will be cast into the lake of fire while the righteous will ever be with the Lord in eternal life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Thessalonians 4:16, "*with a shout*": With a mighty word of command. *The trump of God*: The mighty, overwhelming, quickening, penetrating, fearful and irresistible voice of Almighty God.

II Peter 3:10, "*a great noise*": A rushing, crashing sound. "*elements*": All the things that earth is composed of. "*melt*": Be loosened. Scientists have discovered in studying the elements that there is a mysterious power that holds the atoms together. Many of the various kinds of atoms that make up substances of earth have particles that repel each other, but are held together regardless. This mysterious power is the power of the Word of God. Man has also discovered that, by bombarding the atoms and splitting them, a great terrific heat is released. They call that atomic energy. Think what a terrific and destructive heat will be released when God's word orders the atoms to fall apart and be loosened from their created composition! "*burned up*": Entirely consumed.

Verse 11, "*dissolved*": Loosened; the same as "melt" in verse 10. "*conversation*": Behavior.

Verse 12, "*looking for*": Anticipating hopefully. "*hasting*": Urging to come, speeding it up, awaiting it eagerly.

Verse 12, "*books were opened*": Scrolls containing records of people's lives. "*written in the books, according to their works*": These are the records of the works and ways of each man's mortal life.

Verse 13, "*hell*": This is hades, the realm of the disembodied spirits of the dead.

II Corinthians 5:10, "*must all appear*": It is binding and necessary, as God's decree for all men, to meet God in the final judgment. "*receive*": Obtain what our works have wrought while in our mortal bodies.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For our final lesson in this series of studies from the Holy Scriptures we have the various truths concerning the last great day, the final judgment that every person will have to meet. We see from our scriptures that this great event will take place when the Lord Jesus will descend from Heaven to destroy the creation and bring all the dead back to conscious

life to meet and receive due retribution or reward for what they accomplished in their earthly life. This entire heaven and earth will fade away to nothing, and a new heaven and a new earth will be brought into being for those who have been faithful to the Lord. But the lake of fire will be the fate of the ungodly. From the various writers of the New Testament we have very certain witness that this great event will one day take place. It is true wisdom to take this into our hearts and be very diligent to make the proper preparation to meet the last judgment and receive the reward of the righteous.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

QUESTIONS:

1. Why has God decreed that there will be a day of judgment?
2. What two kinds of people will be there at the judgment?
3. What must we do to make sure of our acceptance in that day?
4. What is going to be opened up and brought out at the judgment?
5. Why did Peter tell us to look for and hasten unto the coming of the Lord?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Hebrews 9:27-28. "...Now God commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Romans 14:10-12.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Recently I saw an advertisement for a singles dating service on an atheist oriented website that said, "Freethinkers need love too!" This sparked a number of thoughts in my mind, but it also caused me to realize how blessed we are to know the love of God. The magnitude of His love is so great that our comprehension is unable to grasp the full measure of His grace. How rich and full our lives have been because of our knowledge of His Divine love. We know that He loved us so much that God gave His only begotten Son to die a horrible death to purchase our redemption and prepare us for the day we will be judged for the deeds done in this body.

Mankind, under the evil influence of satan, has done wicked things that they know have separated them from the fellowship of God. But through the sacrifice of Jesus, their sins can be purged from the record book of God and will be held against them no more. All are given the opportunity of this wonderful blessing of salvation.

We are told to "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:15-16. Let everyone hear the good news of the redemptive provision Jesus extends to the sinner. Jesus loves you and wants you to be numbered with His Saints. But to be counted as one of His you must fall on Him and be broken. Repent of those wicked things you are so ashamed of and determine never to do them again and you too will rejoice in God's marvelous love.

But let there be no mistake, God is going to take vengeance on His enemies. The awful day may not be far away. While we have difficulty comprehending His love, we likewise have difficulty understanding the passion of His terrible anger toward sin. Those who carry their sin with them to the judgment will experience the pronouncement of damnation on their souls. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...." Matthew 25:41. The finality of this command should strike terror in the hearts of the wicked. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Matthew 25:46.

—Bro. Willie E. Murphey

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