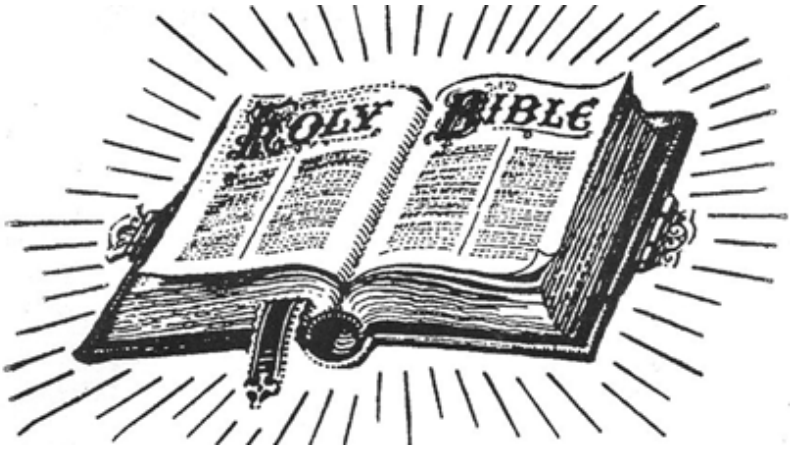


Bible Lessons



**“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;
and what doth the Lord require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk
humbly with thy God.”**

Micah 6:8

**Volume 48, No 1
January • February • March
2016**

Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 48

January • February • March

No 1

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Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of
Jesus Christ and His Church
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God's Recipe for Living

Our God has showed us what is good, and what of us He does require:
His Word, His Spirit rightly should be followed with sincere desire.

Do justly! Follow what is shown to be well-pleasing in His sight.
In righteousness He makes it known: the Holy Bible is the Light!

Love mercy! Praise God, 'tis from Him; His goodness we can well re-
ceive.

But then show mercy never dim, and help your fellowman believe.

And then, walk humbly with thy God: forsake all pride and vanity.
No longer walk with selfish rod, but kind and gentle strive to be.

God showed His goodness through his Son, Who came our sins to
well- atone;

And paid the debt, the victory won; no longer need we walk alone.

Oh, what a bright life we can live if we fulfill this recipe;
To God obedience to give; to mankind, merciful to be!

So here it is, set down before; well-proven through all time to be;
The recipe for boundless store of God's sweet love and victory!

Take hold, O man, of all this good; reap the reward it has for thee;
Do what with joy you really should, and love and happiness you'll
see!

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

BIBLE LESSONS FIRST QUARTER, 2016

Theme for the First Quarter **“WHAT DOES THE LORD REQUIRE?”**

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

We often come before the Lord seeking answers for everyday living. How should we address this problem? What should we do about this situation? What are the boundaries, ranges and guidelines for this issue?

In seeking the Lord for His direction for the next series of lessons, an in-depth study addressing this question, “What does the Lord require?” was impressed upon my heart. It is my prayer that the studies will bring lasting good and profitable instruction to all who partake of them.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

JANUARY 3, 2016

HE HATH SHEWED THEE, O MAN ***Part One***

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

By the Creation:

Romans 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

Psalms 19:3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

By Conscience:

Romans 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law,

are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

By Dreams:

Job 33:14 For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.

15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;

16 Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealetH their instruction.

By Mercy and Grace:

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;

Ephesians 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. —John 1:9

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God begins to introduce and reveal Himself to mankind through the wonders of creation, man's conscience, visions and dreams, and favors of mercy and grace. If people would diligently consider the daily messages given them, and seek to find out more, God would visit them and lead them to repentance and faith in Him.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 1:19, "manifest": apparent, clear, visible.

Romans 1:20, "Godhead": Divinity; Divine nature.

Romans 2:15, "conscience": innate discernment; self-judging consciousness; a God-given capacity to know right from wrong.

Job 33:16, "he openeth the ears of men, and sealetH their instruction": "Literally, 'sealetH (their ears) to Himself by warnings,'

that is, with the sureness and secrecy of a seal He reveals His warnings [Umbreit]. To seal up securely (Job 37:7).”—*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*. “He opens the internal ears, sends home the instruction, and imprints it upon the mind.”

Titus 2:11, “grace”: a word that contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved; graciousness of manner or act; especially the Divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life. “The merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of the Christian virtues.”

Titus 2:12 “soberly”: with sound mind; in moderation; prudently.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Around 750 years before Christ, and during the nearly sixty years’ combined reign of kings Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the prophet Micah preached and exhorted to Judah and Samaria, foretelling the captivity, then return, of the ten tribes. He was contemporary with Isaiah; several of their messages are very similar.

Later, when Jeremiah was arrested by the priests and prophets after warning them of the coming destruction and captivity, and nearly put to death, the elders of the land reminded them of Micah’s similar prophesy during the reign of Hezekiah. That king, they pointed out, had humbled himself, and God had not brought upon him the great evil in his day. Micah’s prophecy essentially saved Jeremiah from certain death (Jeremiah 26).

Micah also prophesied of the birth and accurate birthplace of Jesus Christ and the establishing of His church.

Chapter 6, where the verse beginning our study is found, seems to be a dialogue between God and His people. God sends judgment and conviction of sin; the people answer, seeking to appease God’s judgments. God’s reply in verse 8 spells out the way to meet His requirements, after which He continues to cry out against the wickedness of the people and plead with them to return to God.

Our study today focuses on the first four of seven different ways by which God has shown Himself and what He requires of mankind. In the Old Testament, David speaks of the gospel message revealed

in creation and Paul alluded to this in his letter to the Romans. In the book of Job, Elihu explains how God deals with man through visions and dreams. Paul writes to the Ephesians and to Titus about how God's merciful kindness and grace has "appeared" and been shown to man, even while he is lost in sin.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *The character of God:* Share what may be learned about Him by observing His creation.
2. *The nature of man:* Explain how God uses a person's conscience to deal with him and bring him to repentance and faith.
3. *The amazing grace:* Give examples of the mercy and kindness God shows to people every day.
4. *The purpose of dreams and visions:* How has God used them to deal with you or someone you know?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God protested to His people, "I have shown you!" Yet even His chosen ones, and humans in general, tried to excuse their sin and folly by saying, "Well, we didn't know." Certainly Israel had no excuse. They had God's written law, priests who were supposed to teach and interpret it, and prophets who would give them current messages from God, meaningful to their peculiar situations.

But what about the millions of people who had no written law, priest or prophet? God still showed His light to them—to "every man that cometh into the world," John said. Peter later reminded us that God will accept ANYONE from ANY nation who meets two requirements: Fears Him and works righteousness (Acts 10:35).

If a man, woman or child, looking up at the stars or out at the great ocean, or seeing a newborn, or observing the flowers, would begin to wonder and seek for understanding of these things, God would begin a work in that person.

If an individual begins to feel condemnation about certain evil acts in his or her life, or feels a sense of peace and approbation about doing a kindness or abstaining from a dishonest act, and seeks

to know more, God will begin to lead that person on a journey toward truth.

Dreams aren't very often reliable sources of action. But there are many testimonies of people who began to seek after God because of a divinely-sent dream.

Then there are the small—and not so small—everyday miracles, instances of divine protection, “coincidences.” Even the strokes of grief, sorrow, or pain are mercies in disguise, sent from God as He knocks on man's heart's door.

God introduces: man responds. God continues: man seeks further. God presents a mystery: man searches for the answer. God reveals: man obeys. And on and on, until, as many stories down through the ages spell out, God leads a human from darkness into marvelous light.

Therefore, as Paul pointed out to the Romans, mankind is without excuse.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

God has special ways to show us things. “For God speaketh once, yea twice. . . .” (Job 33:14-17). “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa 30:21).

God's voice is special. He speaks to us in various ways, but it is always still and soft. Many times it is through a song in the night or just Scripture “out of the blue”; a dream or a vision, an impression, an idea or a deep conviction. When guiding us in major decisions He confirms His voice and often speaks twice.

Before we moved to Springfield, Missouri in 1981 to pastor the church there, we were needing God to direct us and show us clearly what to do before we left our secure job, family, new home, and friends. We wanted to do His will. The need was there. We visited the congregation frequently for a year. Bro. Murphy Allen, the former pastor there, and our pastor, Brother Richard Madden, were also praying for us to hear His voice clearly even though we had said nothing to them. After many weeks of praying and one day that we set aside to fast, pray and listen all day, we saw God directing us in

Scripture and song.

When the Word and the Spirit come together and reaffirm our convictions He will also give us the grace and the desire to do His will. His leadings don't often come alone. He confirms His leadings in different ways and also helps our authorities to know what God is showing us. We can always tell if the Spirit leading us is of God or not because we can go to the Word and check for the blending of the Spirit. "If ye be willing and obedient. . . " When God's Word is in agreement with His Spirit there is nothing confusing about it. His person, His character, His Spirit, His Word, His people, His cause, and His glory will blend with what he is showing you.

—Bro. James Bell

JANUARY 10, 2016

HE HATH SHEWED THEE, O MAN

Part Two

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

By the Written Word and Preached Gospel:

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

II Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

By Divine Revelation:

Matthew 16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

I Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit.

Hebrews 8:10a For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts.

By Living Examples of Christ and His People:

John 14:9b He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

II Corinthians 3:2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.

3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

II Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

MEMORY VERSE: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.—Hebrews 8:11

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The requirements of God's law were made known to His people, exemplified by Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit unto the disciples, preached to the entire world, divinely inscribed upon the hearts of believers, and finally, lived out in their everyday lives in holiness and godliness.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 1:17, "faith": Assurance; belief; fidelity. Faith also refers to a *warranty* or *guarantee*. From a Greek root word *peitho*, meaning "to be persuaded" hence, *divine persuasion*, or *the persuasion of His will; credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation*. —*Strong's Concordance*.

II Timothy 3:16, "given by inspiration of God": breathed out by God. "doctrine": instruction; teaching; properly, *applied teaching*.

“reproof”: proof; conviction; evidence. “correction”: setting right or straight again; reformation. “instruction in righteousness”: education or training; discipline; chastisement. “Instruction which aims at the increase of virtue.” —*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*

Matthew 16:17 “Simon Bar-jona”: Simon, son of Jonas; a surname of Peter. “Revealed”: uncover; revealing what is hidden (veiled, obstructed), especially its inner make-up; (figuratively) to make plain (manifest), particularly what is immaterial (invisible).—*HELPS word studies*.

II Corinthians 3:2-3 “epistle; epistle of Christ”: letter; message; hence, *message of Christ*. “fleshy”: human; physical; by analogy, *soft*. This word is lacking the derogatory sense of “carnal” (which means *under the control of the animal appetites; governed by mere human nature, and not the Spirit of God*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is set against the backdrop of the entire history of the human race, and how God has made clear Who He is and what He requires.

His law was first passed down by word of mouth from father to son. Basically, it contained the simple elements of right and wrong behavior and the importance of faith. Later God wrote with His own finger unto Moses ten vital commandments which were not done away at the coming of Christ, but were fulfilled and applied more deeply into the heart. The civil and ceremonial law, written by Moses, while now replaced with the “better” covenant, revealed the character of God, the judgment He places on wrong, and the need man has for atonement for his sins.

The gospel set forth by Jesus expanded upon the old law. It was revealed unto the disciples by the Holy Spirit, and as they preached and wrote, it spread throughout the whole earth. As it spread, it “turned the world upside down.”

Now He seeks to write His law into the very mind and heart of man, causing him to walk in His way and present to the world a LIVING edition of His Divine Law.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *The power of the Scriptures:* How has God's written Word changed the lives of mankind in history?
2. *The work of the Holy Spirit:* What are some of the spiritual truths that are only revealed by the Spirit of God?
3. *The influence of example:* How have godly men and women helped you to more clearly see what God requires?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The history of God's revealed will to man is an exciting study! We are limited in this booklet by time and space, but it is worth some real digging into—read and meditate upon the “wheels” of God as He has rolled out His plan throughout history. D. S. Warner was thrilled in his heart with the vision as he wrote the words to the song, “Louder, Louder” (Number 60 in *Evening Light Songs*).

All has been fulfilled—the Word made flesh, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the preaching, the writing—now what is left to do is *live* it before the world. Even more than that, we must SHOW that it is the most attractive, logical, practical, and beneficial plan of life available. People must SEE in our lives what God requires and what He can do!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Oh Precious Bible, bread of life for my soul! One dear and godly woman struggling with cancer wrote these beautiful words about the Word of God: *“Words I had long ago stored in my heart and mind went to battle for me. Those words sang when I thought despairing thoughts and reminded me I was not alone. When my mind said, ‘God, I think you dropped me along the way somewhere. You’ve left me behind. Have you forgotten about me?’ The words that sang were ‘I am with you always.’ ‘Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ.’ When my mind said, ‘I can’t do this. This is too much for me,’ the words that answered were, ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me....come unto me, all ye that labor, and I*

will give you rest.’ Scripture after scripture rose up to combat negative thoughts. They will sing when you are afraid, they will fiercely battle the hard thoughts, they will gently blow away the haunting doubts, they will guard you from despair, and rise up even when you don’t have the ability to call them up yourselves.”

Do you have precious and special places where God has extraordinarily met and divinely spoken to you? While our Christian walk is not marked by day-in-and-day-out startling revelations from God, we do have them on occasion and value them. Greater still, however, is the voice behind us saying, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” Yet a third confirmation of the voice of God in our lives is through other people. Many, many times, others have been God’s hand extended to bring comfort and hope into my own life. C.H. Spurgeon stated, “A man’s life is always more forcible than his speech. If his life and his doctrine disagree, the mass of lookers-on accept his practice and reject his preaching.” Oh, that we would live so close to the Lord and let Him reveal himself to us in such a way that the influence we have on other people would reflect Christ and His message.

--Sis. Julie Elwell

JANUARY 17, 2016

WHAT IS GOOD

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

Deuteronomy 6:18 And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers,

Psalms 37:3 Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

37:27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

Amos 5:14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

15 Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in

the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

Romans 12:9b Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

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

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

MEMORY VERSE: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.
—Matthew 5:16

CENTRAL THOUGHT: From the beginning, the Lord has shown and required those who know Him to pursue what is *good*, with the promise of blessing to follow. Good works are the fruit of being a new creature in Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Deuteronomy 6:18 “right”: straight, level, upright. “good”: beautiful, pleasant, agreeable, beneficial.

Amos 5:15 “establish judgment in the gate”: execute justice in the courts, or tribunals, or places where causes are tried. This used to be at the city gate. “The remnant of Joseph”: the few of them that would be saved after this chastisement (Amos 5:6). Though they were usually referred to as “Ephraim”, he now reminded them of their forefather Joseph, who had received Israel’s patriarchal blessing. In times of apostasy, God has always had a remnant—those who had been faithful to seek Him and obey Him and receive His favor and blessing.

Romans 12:9 “abhor”: to detest utterly; have a horror of.
“cleave”: to glue; unite; bond.

Ephesians 2:10 “created in Christ Jesus unto good works”: this speaks of the new creature who is birthed in Christ. The new creation is not because of good works; the good works are because

of the new creation.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the beginning God made man upright and everything in man's environment was declared *good*; however, He did give man a choice in the form of a forbidden tree in the middle of the garden. This tree was made to look *desirable* to Eve by the tempter. The tragedy is that from then on, man has known the depths of evil intermingled with the good that God had made for him to experience. A Savior was promised to bring man back into the fellowship with the holy, good God from Whom he was now separated because of sin.

You can see that God intended for mankind to pursue what is good, even when given a choice. Every one of God's dealings have been to that end: choose the good and abhor the evil.

The tempter's wiles haven't really changed through the years. He is still getting men and women, boys and girls to think that the knowledge of evil is something to be desired. He has always attempted to blur the lines between the two and get man to call **evil good**.

Throughout the law, in the Psalms, and by the prophets, God has shown man what is good. He has made it clear through His Word and through His Spirit's dealings with man. He provided a Savior to redeem and restore man back to the state of purity and holiness. God will be fair and just in His final judgments to mankind because His basis for judging will be *according to what one **knows** to be **good***. No person on earth will be able to provide an excuse.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *God's purpose and desire*: What is in God's heart for mankind when He commands us to do what is good?
2. *Pursuing the good*: Name the various commands in our lesson concerning the word *good*, starting with *do good* in Psalm 37.
3. *The order of things*: What must come first? Do good works make one good? Explain the difference.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There is a drive in the religious world today to downplay the importance of right living. As a reaction to the rigid legalism of some, the tendency is for the pendulum to swing too far the opposite way, toward an “anything goes” mentality.

Careful and prayerful study of God’s Word, as illumined by His Spirit, will keep us on a safe path. Today’s lesson shows God’s heart in the matter. While in the new covenant we change from “this do and live” to “the just shall live by faith,” the New Testament writers carefully balance faith with works and consistently show the importance of continuing in obedience. While it is true that “there is none good but God,” in salvation—the new creation—He imparts His goodness to us by His grace and calls us to walk in that goodness.

Shining His light through good works is more important than ever in the wicked environment in which we live. By His grace, we can truly overcome evil with good.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

James said, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” James 3:13. Paul wrote to Titus: “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. ... And let our’s also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful” Titus 3:8, 14. To the Ephesians he wrote, “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” Eph. 5:9. (See also Gal. 5:22.)

While good works can never acquire salvation for anyone, good works become not only the natural fruit, but also the duty, of all who partake of the goodness of God through His saving grace in Christ. “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” Gal. 6:10. The Hebrew writer, after exhorting to various duties in chapter 13, concludes his exhortation thus: “Now the God of peace ... Make you

perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. . ." (see verses 20, 21). "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" 1 Cor. 15:58. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" Heb. 6:10. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren," says Jesus, "ye have done it unto me" Matt. 25: 40.

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

JANUARY 24, 2016

WHAT DOTHTHE LORD REQUIRE OF THEE

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

God's Requirements Not Grievous

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

30:11 For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

I John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

Man's Requirements Grievous

Mark 7:9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

Matthew 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.

9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (from Isaiah 29:13)

Matthew 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Romans 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

MEMORY VERSE: But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. —James 1:25

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God's requirements, given for the purpose of man's well-being and fulfilled by love, are not difficult nor grievous, but liberating. Contrarily, the traditions, precepts and commandments of men are often motivated by greed and love of power, bringing bondage and burden.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Deuteronomy 30:11 "It is not hidden from thee": it is not extraordinary, surpassing, or too difficult. "far off": beyond reach.

I John 5:3 "Grievous": heavy; burdensome.

Mark 7:9 "Full well": well-perceived or viewed as good.

"Tradition": handed down from one generation to the next.

Matthew 15:9 "In vain": to no purpose; in an unreal way; pointless. "Doctrines": instruction—the function or the information.

"Commandments": injunction; ordinance; religious precept.

Matthew 23:4 "Grievous to be borne": difficult to carry; oppressive; problematic.

Romans 10:3 "Righteousness": a judicial verdict, especially divine approval, or what is deemed right by the Lord.

Galatians 5:13 "Liberty": freedom, especially freedom from slavery. "Occasion to the flesh": affording an opportunity to do what is apart from faith, or carnal.

Galatians 5:14 "Fulfilled in one word": Completed in one commandment. (This is more fully developed in Romans 13:8-10.)

James 1:25 “perfect law of liberty”: That which has reached the full end or purpose (perfect) of that which assigned (law), which is freedom from slavery (liberty).

LESSON BACKGROUND

In God’s dealings with His people, He had not only revealed to man what was good, but He revealed His wrath against evil and wrong behavior. By the time of the prophets, the Israelites had experienced first-hand the resulting curse brought upon them by choosing evil. Most of them had totally missed the point of God’s law, which was that it was to be not just a code of conduct, not just ritual, but a revelation of who God was, a way into a deep relationship with Him. Many drifted far away from God altogether, but some became very zealous and loyal to the law, supposing that the more rigidly they bound themselves into their religion, the better they would preserve it.

By the time Jesus was born, these legalists—the Pharisees and Scribes—were the religious rulers in Jerusalem. To see this group of cold-hearted, holier-than-thou Pharisees turning what He had meant to be a blessing into an oppressive, unbending yoke of bondage filled Him with both sorrow and indignation. He dealt with them sternly. He cut to their heart issues with a swift and sure sword. “An axe to the root of the tree,” John the Baptist called it.

Looking back through the history of God’s people, we can see how God’s heart toward them was not just to provide them with a handbook of rules, but to walk with them in close fellowship. He yearned for them to have a dear son’s heart toward Him that just wanted to serve and please Him.

His heart was—“The evil things will hurt you! I want what will bless you, what will bless your marriage, your children, your family, your nation!” So when we see His heart toward us and respond, “Lord, write Your law in my heart and mind,” any hardship of obeying His requirements is taken away. We walk in liberty because we delight to do His will.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *God's desire*: What verses show the heart and purpose of God in giving His people His law?
2. *Our response*: What kind of action on our part fulfills this purpose and what does it bring to our lives?
3. *What frustrates*: Describe the futility and frustration of trying to live according to rules established by man, instead of doing the will of God from the heart.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our Scriptures today show the blessed truth that when God's law is imprinted on our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit, His law is not too difficult, beyond our reach, or oppressive. There will be a harmonious compatibility with the law of God written in creation, the principles of justice laid down in Moses' law, the voice of conscience, and the teaching and example given us by Jesus' life.

On the other hand, replacing God's perfect law with man's tradition brings a backlash of unbelief and rebellion, because when people try to please man and not God they feel frustrated, confused and bound. The next step for them is to give up trying to do right. If emphasis is placed on an outward show of religion while inner graces are lacking, many individuals become sickened toward religion as a whole. Thus, the effect of the Pharisee spirit has always been that precious souls have been turned away from the kingdom.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Years ago, we lived in a small town that was also the home of a man who was the pastor of a nearby religious cult. It was not uncommon to hear of this man entering into a parishioner's home and taking whatever item he wanted, especially if that particular item was nicer than his own—washer, dryer, etc. When the offering was given on a Sunday morning, if the pastor did not think it was sufficient, he would "pass the plate" again. The spiritual starvation of that congregation was heart rending. They were ruled by fear and

oppression.

This situation reminds me of an excerpt from Phillip Keller's *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*:

"The tenant sheepman on the farm next to my first ranch was the most indifferent manager I had ever met. He was not concerned about the condition of his sheep. His land was neglected. He gave little or no time to his flock, letting them pretty well forage for themselves as best they could, both summer and winter. They fell prey to dogs, cougars, and rustlers.

"Every year these poor creatures were forced to gnaw away at bare brown fields and impoverished pastures. Every winter there was a shortage of nourishing hay and wholesome grain to feed the hungry ewes. Shelter to safeguard and protect the suffering sheep from storms and blizzards was scanty and inadequate.

"They had only polluted, muddy water to drink. There had been a lack of salt and other trace minerals needed to offset their sickly pastures. In their thin, weak, and diseased condition these poor sheep were a pathetic sight.

"In my mind's eye I can still see them standing at the fence, huddled sadly in little knots, staring wistfully through the wires at the rich pastures on the other side.

"To all their distress, the heartless, selfish owner seemed utterly callous and indifferent. He simply did not care. What if his sheep did want green grass, fresh water, shade, safety or shelter from the storms? What if they did want relief from wounds, bruises, disease and parasites? He ignored their needs—he couldn't care less. Why should he—they were just sheep—fit only for the slaughterhouse."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

JANUARY 31, 2016

DO JUSTLY
Part One

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

Proverbs 21:3 To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

I Samuel 15:22 And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

23a For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

Psalms 51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

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

Habakkuk 2:4 Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

MEMORY VERSE: Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth. —Psalms 96:8, 9

CENTRAL THOUGHT: A just person is one who renders to all that which is due. To God is due reverence and worship, humility and obedience. This pleases Him far more than offerings and sacrifices.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 21:3 “Justice”: righteousness; honesty.

I Samuel 15:22 “Obey”: to hear intelligently; to give attention.

“Hearken”: to incline or “prick up” the ears; attend to; mark well.

Psalms 51:16 “Sacrifice”: the slaughter of an animal. “Burnt offerings”: the ascent of smoke from an animal burnt on the altar, expressing the ascent of a soul in worship.

17 “Broken spirit; broken and contrite heart”: humbled under a sense of sin and truly repentant; smitten and wounded; tender and pliable to God’s Word.

I Samuel 15:23 “Rebellion”: from a word meaning *bitter*.

“Witchcraft”: divination, which was condemned by God in whatever

form it was practiced in the heathen nations. “Stubbornness”: to be insubordinate; to push, press or urge. “Iniquity”: trouble; sorrow; wickedness. “Idolatry”: from the word *teraphim*, or a household idol.

Habakkuk 2:4 “Just”: righteous; lawful. “His soul that is lifted up”: the incredulous, proud, presumptuous, unbelieving scorner. From a root meaning *a mound, fortress or tower*. “He whose soul is not right in him places himself in a fortress or tower, to set himself on high there from the enemy, and does not return to God nor seek deliverance of him; but, the righteous has no need to place himself on high in a fortress, for he shall live by his faith.” —*R. Moses Kimchi*. “Faith”: faithfulness; firmness; steadfastness; fidelity.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God’s answer to the people’s questions, “How shall I come before God? Shall I come with burnt offerings? Will He be pleased with—? Shall I give—?” was to remind them that righteousness and justice, mercy and humility were more important to Him than all the sacrifices in the world. They had even offered to sacrifice their own children, perhaps thinking of their father Abraham who had proved his love to God by being willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice; but, their hearts stopped short of being willing to OBEY Him.

Saul stubbornly persisted in *making adjustments to God’s commands* to slay everything pertaining to the enemy Amalekites, and then attempted to smooth it all over by saying, “But I used the animals for giving God a sacrifice.” God, speaking through Samuel, reproved him for thinking he could gain God’s favor in this way instead of being humbly obedient.

David recognized this after his sins of adultery, deception and murder: God wanted a truly tender, repentant HEART. Sacrifices of contrition and offerings of pure worship and praise are His delight.

Habakkuk’s history is largely unknown. He appears to have prophesied before the Jewish captivity. He too is giving the people an answer from God. “You shall live,” He says, “if you are faithful to humbly hearken and believe, but if you are puffed up and rebellious, you shall not have rest.”

Solomon, at the end of his life, concluded that reverence and obedience to God was of utmost importance.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *What pleases God:* What qualities and/or actions in our lives demonstrate living *justly* before God?
2. *Deeper than the surface:* Explain how rebellion and stubbornness reveal a more serious sinful disposition of heart.
3. *Pride vs. faith:* How are the two opposite from each other?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

How often people today attempt to do the same things that Saul and other Israelites have done! In human relationships they will go to great lengths to smooth things over. They will say, “I’m sorry” and try a “quick fix”—send flowers, pay money, do a sacrificial good deed—but to quit doing the thing that offends and begin doing the thing they had stubbornly refused to do is not in their hearts. They try the same mechanisms in their relationship with God.

We have studied what God’s heart is toward us when He shows us what He requires; we have seen clearly what kind of heart He wants in us in response to His goodwill toward us. As today’s lesson shows, it all comes down to humbling our hearts to Him, believing in Him, truly worshiping and glorifying Him and obeying Him. This is what it means to *do justly* to our God.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

I am reminded of a message I heard many years ago. In essence, the message presented the thought that serving God was not too hard. The minister stated how man had done many great, difficult feats: going to the moon, climbing Mount Everest, fighting great battles, making great sacrifices. He went on to bring the thought that many people are not serving God not because it is too hard; the real reason is that it is too humble.

We get a good illustration of this with Naaman, when he came to be healed of his leprosy. It is apparent that the Jordan River was not as attractive as the rivers of Damascus. Naaman came so close to missing the blessing. However, he took the counsel of his servant

and humbled his heart into willing obedience and found the healing he was longing for.

God's ways are contrary to the flesh and self life. Let us not focus on the so-called great things we can do for God, and miss the little, seemingly insignificant opportunities He gives us every day!

—Bro. Bob Wilson

FEBRUARY 7, 2016

DO JUSTLY

Part Two

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

II Samuel 23:3 The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. (See also Deut. 16:18-20; Titus 1:8).

Leviticus 19:15 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.

Proverbs 10:31a The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom.

Psalms 82:3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Romans 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

Proverbs 3:27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

28 Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

Colossians 4:1 Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.

Jeremiah 22:13 Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.

Luke 16:10 He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

Proverbs 20:7 The just man walketh in his integrity: his children

are blessed after him.

MEMORY VERSE: The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. —Isaiah 26:7

CENTRAL THOUGHT: To do justly is to render “to all their dues.” To all of mankind is due courteous, honest and fair treatment without bribery or partiality. To those who are in authority, honor is due. To the poor is due kindness and liberality. Those who do work are due just wages. Whether in small or great matters, God’s blessing is upon the one who deals justly.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Leviticus 19:15 “Do no unrighteousness in judgment”: do no injustice. *Do not pervert justice* (NIV). “Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty”: Do not show partiality to the poor nor favoritism to the rich.

Psalms 82:3 “Defend the poor”: vindicate; judge or govern; provide justice. “Do justice to the afflicted and destitute”: uphold or maintain the rights of the oppressed and destitute. Do righteously toward them.

Romans 13:7 “Tribute”: tax. “Custom”: a purpose; toll. “Fear”: reverence or respect for authority, rank and dignity. “Honour”: perceived value; what has worth.

Colossians 4:1 “Equal”: fair.

Proverbs 20:7 “Integrity”: completeness; moral innocence.

Isaiah 26:7 “Uprightness”: straight; level; smooth.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God’s law to the children of Israel contained many commands regarding fairness: fairness in business dealings, fairness to the poor, fairness in judicial matters, and fair treatment of servants and employees. In Solomon’s proverbs and all through the messages of the prophets, we also find a recurring theme: God was displeased because of the unfair and unmerciful treatment of servants and the poor, and greed and corruption in business and judicial matters. To

return to His favor required not only turning away from idols and worshipping the true God but also amending these unrighteous and unfair ways of dealing with their fellow humans.

Jesus' commandments followed this same pattern: love and worship God; be honest and merciful to people. His stern rebukes to the Pharisees pertained to these issues as well. The apostle Paul's writings outlined justice in the home, church and community.

God's requirements have never changed. No matter where you live, how religious you are, nor to what social or economic standing you belong, "Do justly—righteously" is the non-negotiable bottom line.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *He that ruleth*: What are specific positions people hold which might be included in this description? In the home? In business? In the church? In the community?

2. *At home*: What does *just* and *righteous* behavior look like when dealing with family members?

3. *The poor and afflicted*: Who of our acquaintance might be in this condition? What do we owe them?

4. *Integrity in business*: How does this (or the lack of it) affect the influence of the gospel in the community?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is appalling today to find dishonesty and corruption on every level in the business world. From the corporate level down to temporary help, the concept of integrity and giving what is due and fair is almost unheard of, even ridiculed. Saints of God ought to have such a high standard for business dealings that no evil thing can be said about them. The truly poor or the extremely wealthy person should feel justly treated by the Christian who does business with him. Am I a landlord, a business owner, a contractor? My contracts should be honest; motivated not by a drive to come out ahead, but by the inward conviction to always give my fellow human the justice and personal honor that is due him. Am I an employee or sub-contractor? Do I give a fair day's work for a day's wage, or do I "milk"

the job and waste time using my phone or doing other unnecessary things?

What is due my parents, my spouse, my children? Do I live life always with a personal agenda to see that my needs are attended to first, or is my life given—poured out—in honor and service to those in my household?

It's the little things. That is where we show our true selves. That is where we will be judged in the end.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Doing justly is being Godlike. It is acting like God would act. It is doing what is honest and treating people like you would want to be treated. In verse 13 of the 7th chapter, Micah says the “land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.” When a nation leaves God's ways, the fabric holding things together rapidly falls apart.

In Proverbs 14:34 it says, “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” This Scripture teaches us that righteousness lifts a nation up. Value is placed on human life. Standards of decency and right and wrong are in place and are maintaining a healthy balance. Lines separating good and evil are clearly marked. Limits on human behavior are kept in check by God's principles. A nation that is keeping God's ways will be exalted in the earth. People will flourish when under His control.

This presents a clear understanding of how important it is to have Godly leaders in our nation. Again, the Scripture says in Proverbs 29:2, “When the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.” it doesn't take but a few apostate years for a generation of people to lose their way. The influence that Kings Omri and Ahab and Ahab's household (Jezebel) had on the nation of Israel was devastating. They were plunged into darkness and were facing an indictment from God. God's simple solution for them was to “Return unto Me and do justly.” What a blessing it is when we follow His ways.

—Bro. James Bell

FEBRUARY 14, 2016

LOVE MERCY (Part One)

Recognition and Appreciation of God's Mercy Toward Us

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

Abraham

Genesis 18:25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Jacob

Genesis 32:10a I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant;

Ezra

Ezra 9:13a And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.

David

Psalms 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

Daniel

Daniel 9:18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

Jonah

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

4:1 But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

2 And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

The Slothful Servant

Matthew 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

MEMORY VERSE: It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. —Lamentations 3:22-23

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In order to properly show mercy, we must love and appreciate the mercy God shows to us and others. Not understanding or even resenting God's mercy causes us to be disappointed, angry, and harsh with others and ourselves.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 32:10 "the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth": the favor, especially kindness to the needy, lowly and miserable; and the faithfulness and reliableness, of God.

Psalms 51:1 "lovingkindness": favor, specifically lovingkindness in redemption from sin.

Jonah 3:10 "God repented of the evil": to be sorry; rue; to be moved to pity and change mind.

Matthew 25:24 "hard man": rough; stern; austere; violent; unyieldingly harsh.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Can you see a pattern in Bible history of individuals whose recognition and grateful estimation of Divine mercy influenced the way they looked at themselves, at life's events, and at others? Abraham, interceding for Sodom; Jacob, begging help for his rendezvous with Esau; David, repenting for his great sins and seeking forgiveness; Ezra, pleading for the Israelites recovering from captivity; Jeremiah, recognizing God's compassion in that they were not consumed by His judgments; and Daniel, entreating God to

remember His promise to the chastened exiles—these all acknowledged and appreciated God *going beyond justice* and having abundant mercy on them, unworthy as they were.

Contrast them with foolish Jonah and the slothful servant. Jonah tried to run from God’s command, and he revealed his reason. While he acknowledged God’s mercy to Nineveh (Jonah 4:2), he was blatantly angry about it! He had no love or appreciation for mercy. The whole point of God’s preparing the vine which shaded him, the worm that destroyed it and the sultry blast that caused him to faint was to teach him a lesson about God’s mercy to Nineveh, which was home to over 120,000 innocents and many animals.

Jesus’ parable about the wicked servant also taught about God’s mercy. This man didn’t comprehend about mercy, therefore he couldn’t love or appreciate mercy. He only perceived a harsh, judgmental master and drew his tragic conclusions from that wrong perspective.

Loving mercy brings hope and comfort. The opposite perspective breeds anger, resentment, and discouragement.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *Perspective:* Explain how our view of God’s mercy influences our view of life as a whole.

2. *Prayer:* Why can’t we carry a proper burden for the lost if our idea of mercy is skewed? How can we pray with perseverance, faith and hope?

3. *Practice:* What will change in our own experience and the way we deal with others when we begin to love and value mercy?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The picture of Abraham drawing near to God to talk with Him about Sodom is so touching. It speaks of the close relationship the two had. They KNEW each other. They had confidence in each other. And because Abraham knew and valued God’s mercy, he pleaded with Him to preserve Sodom if possible.

The ideas Jonah and the slothful servant had about God are

astounding; I find it more unbelievable that there are people today who feel the same way. Some, feeling that God is too harsh, don't even try to please Him. Some carry such an arrogant attitude toward "bad" people that they seem to have pleasure when bad things happen to them. Both of them are missing a very vital point. God is a God of great compassion. He does not give requirements without giving grace. He is a God who can be pleased. He has no delight in the death of the wicked.

The two false ideas are connected. We cannot have mercy when we don't comprehend mercy. When we perceive God to be harsh, we are also harsh—on ourselves and on others.

Our lesson today teaches us to LOVE mercy. Value it. Don't presume upon it nor tread it underfoot; yet don't underestimate it and become discouraged and hopeless. Thank God for it. Trust in it. Beg for it for others.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Jesus and Mercy

I heard a loving angel's voice, She bade me make her now my choice;
I did, and, oh! I do rejoice, To know that I've found Mercy.
Yes, Mercy is my only plea, I know that Jesus died for me;
He shed His blood on Calvary, Through which I have found Mercy.

This voice came crying at the door, It made me feel so sick and sore;
'Twas Mercy came and called once more, And pointed me to Jesus.
He soothed my heart by sin oppressed, She gave me peace and
perfect rest,
And now I am so fully blest! All glory be to Jesus.

While bowing at the cross in prayer, I seemed to sink into despair,
But Mercy came and kneeling there, She pointed me to Jesus.
He took my heart pressed down with guilt, And oh, His pard'ning
love I felt,
My soul with peace and joy did melt, To know that I'd found Mercy.

The bliss I feel no tongue can tell, Because my soul is saved from hell,
‘Twas at the cross my burden fell, Where Mercy sought and found
me.

She healed my wounds and gave relief unto my heart sore pained
with grief,

And now in God is my belief, O Mercy! Loving Mercy!

By B. E. Warren, Song #66 in Echoes From Glory, Gospel Trumpet Company, 1893

—Words submitted by Bro. Harlan Sorrell

FEBRUARY 21, 2016

LOVE MERCY (Part Two)

Old Testament Teachings About Mercy

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

Mercy to Enemies

Exodus 23:4 If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going
astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

Proverbs 24:17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let
not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth.

Proverbs 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;
and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord
shall reward thee.

Mercy to Strangers, Fatherless and Widows

Exodus 23:9 Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know
the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 27:19a Cursed be he that perverteth the
judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the
oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Mercy to Neighbors and Brethren

Deuteronomy 15:7 If there be among you a poor man of one of
thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the Lord thy
God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine
hand from thy poor brother:

Leviticus 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Mercy to the Poor

Psalms 41:1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

Proverbs 14:31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

Mercy to Animals

Proverbs 12:10 A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

MEMORY VERSE: And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought. —Isaiah 58:10-11a

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Because they had been shown so much mercy, God's people were to be a people of mercy. His promise of blessing was always given to the compassionate and merciful, while judgment was pronounced upon the harsh and cruel.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 25:22 “Thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head”: A Jewish figure of speech. “In the Bible lands almost everything is carried on the head—water jars, baskets of fruit, vegetables, fish or any other article. Those carrying the burden rarely touch it with the hands, and they walk through crowded streets and lanes with perfect ease. In many homes the only fire they have is kept in a brazier, which they use for simple cooking as well as for warmth. They plan to always keep it burning. If it should go out, some member of the family will take the brazier to a neighbor's house to borrow fire. Then she will lift the brazier to her head and start for home. If her neighbor is a generous woman, she will heap the brazier full of coals. To feed an enemy and give him drink was like heaping the empty brazier with live coals—which meant food, warmth and almost life itself to the person or home needing it, and was the

symbol of finest generosity. — *B.M. Bowen, Strange Scriptures that Perplex the Western Mind.*

Exodus 23:9 “Stranger”: foreigner; sojourner; alien.

LESSON BACKGROUND

A recurring theme, *mercy*, runs throughout the Law of Moses. We have listed a few verses in our lesson today, but there are many more. There were commands for how they were to reap their grain fields and vineyards; there were laws about borrowing and lending—and again the theme of mercy runs throughout, God making sure His people never took advantage of one another. There were other laws having to do with merciful treatment of parents, spouses, children, the elderly and the handicapped. Our lesson lists those to whom mercy is to be shown: to enemies, neighbors and brethren, the poor, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Mercy was even to be shown to animals.

In the Psalms, Proverbs and the books of the prophets, we again see principles of mercy laid out. We also see God’s judgments poured out upon the Israelites, not only for their idolatry, but for forsaking these commands of mercy. Even the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar was warned to cut off his sins *by shewing mercy to the poor*. Nebuchadnezzar didn’t heed this warning, and seven years of judgment came upon him.

We can see how important this quality of mercy is to the heart of God and how generations have reaped either good or evil because of the practice or abuse of it in their lives.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *Finding someone at a disadvantage:* What should rule our thoughts and behavior when we have the opportunity in our control?
2. *Remembering:* What should always be in our mind when we meet someone different; someone unused to our ways of doing things; someone new?
3. *Awareness:* Who are the fatherless and widows in our

society? How might we show them mercy?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Do justly, love mercy. We have studied justice, righteous behavior and fairness to all. I believe at the heart of these ethics is this quality of loving mercy. We should embrace it, pursue it, and value it. Mercy goes a step beyond doing what is *just*. If I'm doing right—jaw firmly set, doing it 'cause I've got to—only because it is right, I have the motive all wrong and I am missing the point. But when the *love of mercy* is in my heart—I'm seeking to love you, to take care of you, to make it as easy as I can for you, to see you prosper and grow and better your situation—my whole outlook changes. I become aware of your needs. I *think* about them. I want for you the comfort and the consideration I desire for myself.

Knowing how to apply mercy in every situation will take thought and prayer. Again, we are going to have to comprehend and appreciate God's mercy and learn to treat others as He has treated us.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

In the book of Luke, Jesus recounts the story of a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. While in this life, the rich man had plenty of this world's goods as well as plenty of food to eat. Lazarus, the beggar, was desirous of the crumbs from the rich man's table and was afflicted with sores on his body that the dogs came and licked. Jesus does not describe the rich man as being mean or evil-minded, but this man's lack of concern for the needs at his very door cost him something. There is graphic detail given of the end of these two men: Lazarus was found in the bosom of Abraham enjoying the blessings of paradise while the rich man lifted up his eyes in the torments of a flame.

We all have a responsibility for the concern and well-being of others who touch our lives. While it is impossible for one person to solve world hunger and poverty, are we concerned with the needs at our door? We most certainly cannot tend to all of the fatherless;

but, what about those in our neighborhood or in our congregations? Do we concern ourselves with those around us who are lonely or grieving? Are we willing to put effort into nurturing those who are without? It is easy to fall into the same complacency of the rich man. But beware, it will cost us in the end.

Who is the Lazarus at your door?

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

FEBRUARY 28, 2015

LOVE MERCY (Part Three)
New Testament Teachings on Mercy

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

Mercy to Enemies

Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Romans 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Mercy to Strangers, Fatherless and Widows

Hebrews 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Matthew 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in.

James 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Mercy to neighbors and brethren

Luke 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

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

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye

which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

I Corinthians 8:13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

Mercy to the Poor

I John 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

MEMORY VERSE: Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. —Romans 13:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The spirit of mercy is at the very heart of pure religion. The principles of mercy in the law were re-echoed in the teachings of Jesus, preached by his disciples, and practiced by the early morning church.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 13:2 “Entertain strangers”: to show warmth, friendliness and hospitality to strangers.

Matthew 25:35 “Hungred”: hungry. “Ye took me in”: bring together; receive with hospitality.

James 1:27 “Visit”: to look upon in order to help or to benefit; to have a care for; provide for. “Affliction”: distress; tribulation; internal pressure, especially when feeling “there is no way out”.

Luke 10:37 “Mercy”: kindness or good will toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them.

Galatians 6:1 “Meekness”: mildness; gentleness; kindness; temperate; displaying the right blend of force and reserve, avoiding unnecessary harshness, yet without compromise. —*HELPS Word Studies*

I Corinthians 8:13 “Offend”: to set a snare; to cause to stumble; to hinder right conduct or thought.

I John 3:17 “Shutteth up his bowels of compassion”: closes his

heart and turns away from him.

Romans 13:10 “No ill”: no inner malice or evil.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Consider these descriptions of the early Christians:

“It is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, how they love one another. . . See, they say about us, how they are ready even to die for one another. . .
—*Tertullian*

“We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.” —*Justin Martyr*

“He impoverishes himself out of love, so that he is certain he may never overlook a brother in need, especially if he knows he can bear poverty better than his brother. He likewise considers the pain of another as his own pain. And if he suffers any hardship because of having given out of his own poverty, he does not complain.”—*Clement*

Surely the Spirit of Christ shown in the manner of the early Christians is what we should earnestly seek for today.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *Motivation*: What prompts true kindness and hospitality?
2. *As unto Him*: When we show mercy and kindness, to Whom are we really giving it? When we withhold it, Who are we really cheating?
3. *Restoring the fallen*: What should we remember and consider as we deal with those who have erred?
4. *Bounds of liberty*: If our “liberty” causes us to do things that cause offense, is this showing true Christian mercy?
5. *Reality check*: If we neglect showing love “in deed and in truth”, can we expect Christ’s “Well done”?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Today's lesson *brings it home*. In every aspect of life, we are to love mercy. From deep inside, our very heart-beat should be that of compassion. For the lost, for the unfortunate, for the struggling brother or sister, for the injured or wounded.

I think the story Jesus told about the merciful Samaritan sums it up. Here a man used to feeling shut out and put down by "God's people" became first responder to one of them who lay dying, when the religious leaders of that dying man wouldn't lay a finger to help him. What a lesson is in that story! How many of us have felt so jaded by the disappointments in life that we decided we would close our hearts and walk on by that suffering brother or sister? How many times have we *justified* our stand-offish behavior and ignored the heart-cry from that one who is strange, smells badly, or is difficult?

The true neighbor is the one who shows mercy. It's going to take getting down on our knees and calling on God to reveal just what kind of mercy His holy standard is requiring of us.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

A few weeks ago I was privileged to be in New York City. Not far from the Twin Tower Memorials was a very old church built out of stone with a graveyard in the front lawn and tombstones that had weathered many, many years. It was said that our first President, George Washington, went to this church to pray after he was inaugurated as president.

In this church hung a banner that touched my heart. It read: "To New York City and all the Rescuers: Keep your Spirits Up....OKLAHOMA LOVES YOU!!" The banner had many signatures all over it. The church building was used as a sanctuary for food and rest to the weary after 9/11. There, high on the balcony, still stood the banner offering hope and support in a very dark and dreary time.

Not far from all of this stands the Statue of Liberty with her arm uplifted with the message:

"Give me your tired, your poor,

*Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

—Bro. Bob Wilson

MARCH 6, 2016

WALK HUMBLY (Part One)
Recognizing Our Need and Seeking After God

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

I Kings 3:7b I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in.

Jeremiah 10:23 O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

II Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.

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

8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.

Revelation 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Psalms 10:4a The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God.

MEMORY VERSE: Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. —John 15:4-5

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The first step to walking humbly with God

is to recognize that without Him, we are nothing and can do nothing, and to seek His presence, enlightenment and direction.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Kings 3:7 “Go out or to come in”: behavior; conduct; the outward life of man.

II Corinthians 3:5 “Sufficient”: fit; worthy; adequate; from a word meaning “to arrive, to come to, to attain.” Sufficiency”: ability; power; competence.

I Corinthians 4:7 “Glory”: boast; exult proudly; from a root meaning *to hold the head up high*.

Revelation 3:17 “Wretched”: distressed; miserable. “Miserable”: the one especially to be pitied. “Poor”: beggarly; one who crouches and cowers. “Naked”: stripped of moral clothing; destitute of the righteousness of Christ.

John 15:4 “Abide”: not to depart; not to leave; to continue to be present.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The background of I Kings 3:7 is the beginning of King Solomon’s reign, when, at about age 20, he was visited by God in a dream and asked what he desired from God. His response was that since he was an ignorant and inexperienced young child, he needed most of all Divine wisdom that he might be able to govern. This so pleased God that He granted Solomon—not only that wisdom but also great wealth and supremacy over his enemies.

Jeremiah’s heart cry comes out of the desperate condition of Israel, as the awful report of Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion came true. He knew God was orchestrating the events, even ordering the path of this wicked king and using him as an instrument to chastise His people. Not a man, not a king, not a nation is able to direct its own path.

Paul’s experience as a former Pharisee gave him a burden for those who were being lifted up in themselves or were unwisely lifting up others beyond what was proper.

The church at Laodicea was in a dangerous, lukewarm spiritual

condition, boasting that it “had need of nothing.” Jesus’ rebuke called for fervent repentance and seeking for the true riches, the white robe of God’s righteousness, and spiritual eyesight.

The whole 10th chapter of Psalms reveals the motives and secrets of the heart of a proud, self-sufficient, boastful person who does not feel the need of seeking after God.

Our memory verse expresses a universal truth: Without Christ, we can do nothing. Jesus used the illustration of a vine with branches. Only when the branches are *connected* to the vine can they bear fruit. As Hosea the prophet had already told Israel, “From me is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *What pleases God:* According to the story of Solomon, what quality brought God’s blessing in His life, and what happened when he walked away from that? What other Bible characters illustrate this truth?

2. *Acknowledging our need:* How can we avoid the pitfall of feeling like we are sufficient; for example, thinking we have lived for God a long time, or had experience in many spiritual battles, etc.?

3. *Common dangers:* Can wealth, power, and/or leadership positions (among other things) cause a person to become proud? How can we avoid pride and instead manifest the humility with which God is pleased?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In what ways do we demonstrate that we feel self-sufficient? One of the most common human demonstrations of pride is prayerlessness. We reason that we didn’t pray because we were too busy, when in reality, down deep inside we felt that we could make it okay on our own. Pride and lack of trust and dependence on God are co-related. Without humbling ourselves to seek Him diligently, we cannot please Him. We cannot walk with Him.

Another demonstration of self-interest is a hunger for the praise of men. Jesus chided the unbelieving Pharisees, “How can ye believe

which receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" This hunger can manifest itself in a desire to be beautiful and fashionable, or to always be the authority or have the last word. Again, unbelief and pride go hand in hand. We are not content with the quiet commendation from God and go seeking approval from man. Without that restful, childlike trust in the Heavenly Father, we simply cannot walk with Him.

Yet another indication that we are not humble is when we are impatient. Instead of waiting patiently on God, we run ahead of Him and try to work things out ourselves. We try to control or manipulate situations and people. We lack humble trust in His time and His way. And we find ourselves walking alone, away from Him.

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Amos asked the question (Amos 3:3). Jesus was meek and lowly in heart; we cannot walk with Him without humbling ourselves as well.

Humbly acknowledging *in our hearts* that we can do *absolutely nothing* without Him is the answer for all self-centered, fruitless endeavors, restless impatience, and epidemic prayerlessness.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Have you ever wondered why being humble is highlighted so many times in the Bible as being a characteristic which God highly values? Is God just trying to be domineering to get us to subserviently bow at His knees?

As mentioned in the lesson, King Solomon prayed to God in his younger years acknowledging that he was but a little child and did not know not how to go out or come in. Yet, we find Solomon later in life having violated the first commandment of God which was "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." He turned his heart toward the gods of his wives and as far as we know lost his soul. When we blindly and wretchedly ascend the mountain of pride, failing to recognize our absolute frailty, we leave behind the lowly path of humility, which is where Jesus walks. The echoes of our communion with Him will become more and more distant. Like Solomon, we will be at risk of losing our soul when we, in pride, put other gods before the one true God.

No. God is not trying to control us by requiring humility to “get us where He wants us.” Men do that sometimes, but not God. He loves us compassionately, mercifully, fully, and deeply. When we take the “low road,” and stay hidden behind the cross of Christ, dying to our selfish attitudes and behaviors—this choice of humility will pay dividends beyond our wildest imaginations. God loves to answer our prayers, to help us in our times of trouble, to be a succor and support to us. He WANTS to be our God! He only requires humility to assure the salvation of our eternal souls. Humility also yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness in our homes, in the congregation, and in our personal relationships in this life. Humility is the key to the door of entrance into grace and everlasting bliss.

—Sis. Julie Elwell

MARCH 13, 2016

WALK HUMBLY, (Part Two)

Seeking the Lowest Place

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

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

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

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

10 But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. (See also Proverbs 25:6-7).

11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (See also I Peter 5:6).

I Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the

elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. (See also James 4:6).

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: An important part of walking humbly with God is this lesson Jesus taught, by parable and by example, that when we humble ourselves to the lowest place, God will honor and exalt us in His own way and time. If we exalt ourselves, God sets Himself against us and brings us down.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 14:7 “Chief rooms”: the place of honor at a banquet or table.

Luke 14:9 “Lowest room”: the last place; the end.

Luke 14:10 “Worship”: approval; honor; glory

Luke 14:11 “Exalteth”: elevate; lift on high; raise up. “Abased” and “Humbleth”: to make low; humiliate.

I Peter 5:5 “Submit”: to place under; to be subject to; properly, under God's arrangement; to His plan. “Be clothed with humility”: “In Scripture, 5012 /tapeinophrosýnē (*lowliness, humility*) is an inside-out virtue produced by comparing ourselves to the Lord (rather than to others). This brings behavior into alignment with this inner revelation to keep one from being self-exalting (self-determining, self-inflated). For the believer, 5012 /tapeinophrosýnē (*humility*) means living in complete dependence on the Lord, with no reliance on self (the flesh).” —*HELPS Word studies*. “Resisteth”: opposed to in principle and in practice; *I set myself against*—a very old military term used for placing a soldier in a specific platoon with a specific function—a definite order to attack or resist.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Imagine Jesus seated in an obscure place at a grand feast, quietly observing the guests. In swaggers a man, blindly self-important,

demanding a place at the head of the table. In just a few minutes Jesus notices that the guest of honor, a distinguished but humble man noted for his wisdom and compassion for people of all walks of life, has just been discovered by the host of the feast, mingling with the more common villagers at the back of the room. The host tactfully avoids making a scene as he transitions the now-deflated wanna-be to a seat near the servant's galley; and the honored man—genuinely sympathetic for the embarrassment of the other—to the place of honor.

The scene must have been one that had been played out in Solomon's time as well, as he gave the same wise admonition as our Savior. The truth is, people are people, in any age of time. Most of us have, at some time in our lives, overestimated our own importance and had to be brought down a notch or two.

Jesus, in dealing with His disciples and training them for service in His kingdom, knew this principle must be foremost in their minds if they were ever to spread the gospel.

The apostles, James and Peter, were still echoing His message some years after the Holy Spirit had been given. Missionaries were going to all parts of the world and congregations were multiplying everywhere. The disciples had encountered Simon the sorcerer, who gave out that he "was some great one." The church to which John wrote had to deal with Diotrophes, who loved "to have the preeminence among them." Paul had colleagues who preached while filled with envy, strife and contention. He sent letters of admonishment to those who lifted up this disciple above that one, and reproved those who unwisely compared themselves to another.

To each, Christ's message—"Seek the lowest place; humble yourself; deny yourself; the greatest of all is the servant of all"—was the answer.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *Christ the example:* Explain how Jesus demonstrated humility in His own life.
2. *Our response:* What are practical applications of this principle of seeking the lowest place in our daily living?

3. *For the Gospel's Sake*: What is the importance of this lesson for ministers and gospel workers?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In seeking the Lord for insight into *how* we might humble ourselves to walk with God, “Seek the lowest place” is the teaching which came forcibly to my mind.

Walking with God will many times put us into a very obscure place. We will not be seen nor heard. Our tasks may seem thankless, our sacrifices unnoticed. *This is the way of Christ*. In fact, we should earnestly, genuinely seek for this kind of life. We should put down every fleshly tendency to be self-promoting, to be in the “know”, to be thought of as “one of the main ones.”

Can we see how the gospel message has been hindered by people who insisted on being preeminent? There have always been strong personalities who attracted devoted followers. The teachings they gave out may have been good, but the core motive by which they worked was tainted with self-interest. In time, the small kingdom they built crumbled, sometimes as others with ambition sought to climb to the top and sometimes when the oppressed souls became disillusioned and quit, or discovered the truth which freed them.

This universal truth has been proven, time and time again: The only way to truly lead is to serve. The way to be honored is to be humble. The way UP is DOWN. Those who are first in their own estimation will most assuredly become last.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

In meditating on this lesson I became impressed with the thought of how charity (the divine love of God) and humility go hand in hand. Paul says, “charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ... seeketh not her own” 1 Cor. 13: 4, 5. Love seeks the lowest place. Love and meekness are kindred aspects of the Spirit’s fruit (see Gal. 5:22-23). “... The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” Rom. 5:5. “Let love be without

dissimulation. ... Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” Rom. 12: 9,10. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ...” Phil. 2: 3-5.

All who learn the wondrous secret of living and walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), who sheds God’s love abroad in our hearts, will acquire the priceless grace of humility. I remember reading in R. L. Berry’s book, *Adventures In the Land of Canaan*, that the Valley of Humility is the best inheritance in Canaan (the sanctified life). May we all seek to inherit our portion of this rich, fertile, and fruitful valley!

“Humility, in Christ complete, I seek thy pleasant ways;
For lowly place at Jesus’ feet My heart with longing prays.

“O sink my heart to nothingness, Down, down to lowly planes;
Then up, far up in joyfulness, My soul in glory reigns.

“Come softly from thy throne above, O grace so sweet and fair;
Come, touch my heart in gentle love, And scatter meekness there.”

—By C. E. Orr (Excerpted from song #113 in *Echoes From Heaven*)

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

MARCH 20, 2016

WALK HUMBLY (PART THREE)

Seeking Another’s Wealth

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

I Corinthians 10:24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth.

Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

7 Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

Galatians 6:2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

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

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.

MEMORY VERSE: Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. —I Corinthians 13:4-5

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Humbling ourselves to walk with God involves being truly humble toward others—loving them as we love ourselves, seeking always to build them up, sacrificing our lives for them, preferring them, and valuing them.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Corinthians 10:24 "another's wealth": *wealth* is an added word. Some translations render it, "Seek another's *good*" or "another's *welfare*."

Romans 15:1 "infirmities": without strength; weakness; hesitation; doubt.

Romans 15:2 "edification": a building; to build up; advance

spiritually.

Romans 15:3 “The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me”: from Psalms 69:7-9, a prophecy of Jesus. “Reproaches”: revilings; insults.

Romans 15:7 “Receive”: *I take to myself*; welcome.

Philippians 2:3 “Strife”: ambition or rivalry. “Vainglory”: empty pride.

Romans 12:10 “Kindly affectioned”: tenderly loving; devoted love; that special love shared between members of God’s family. This is the only occurrence of this word in Scripture. “In honour preferring one another”: in showing honor, outdoing one another; *to go before*; set an example to one another, not waiting until respect is shown on one side to return it again.

I Corinthians 13:4 “Suffereth long”: to persevere; to be patient; to be long-tempered and forbearing. “Kind”: to show oneself mild; to act benevolently; to be useful and full of service to others.

“Envieth”: to be heated; to boil; to be moved with envy, hatred or anger. “Vaunteth not itself”: does not boast or brag. “Is not puffed up”: is not inflated, egotistical, or arrogant.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The previous lessons dealt with our attitudes toward God and about ourselves. Today we read New Testament truths concerning our attitudes toward others.

The early Church of God was organized far differently than any other kingdom, government or body of people. Jesus taught His disciples, “Exercising lordship is the way the leaders of this world do; you are to be humble servants to one another.” He taught them that they were to follow His example and wash one another’s feet, and that they were to love one another “as I have loved you.”

After Pentecost, the believers shared a common fellowship; their attitude was, “nothing I have is my own.” Later as they scattered over the earth, the circumstances of the common community changed, but the Spirit of Jesus in them did not change. Through the years of severe persecution, it was the Christians who cared for those sick and dying from the plague. In the dark middle ages, the true Christians were still a community in spirit, caring for

one another and protecting each other.

In the times of revival and reformation, this tender love and fellowship would be refueled; in apostasy and lukewarmness it would wane. Today, love and humility between saints of God is still the hallmark of true religion.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *Motive:* As Christians, what attitude should be the basis for all of our dealings with each other?

2. *Example:* How did Jesus demonstrate humility in an object lesson?

3. *Action:* Share different ways of showing honor, bearing burdens, doing humble acts of service, and esteeming each other better than ourselves.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

As we consider the model set before us by the early morning church, I believe we can admit there is room for improvement. If love and humility is the hallmark, may God open our hearts and eyes to a deeper experience and a more fervent demonstration of it!

It is so easy for us—professors of holiness—to begin to *despise* others who are different than we are. What this says is that we think we are better, which is totally against the scriptural standard. Some people may not worship in exactly the same way; they may not look the same; they may not have the same housing or economic status; they might have a personality lacking in social graces. Is not the gentle love of Christ able to trump all of these differences? Must we esteem our opinions and ways so highly that all others are “wrong” to us, when in reality, being different is not always being wrong? Must we feel it is our calling to set others straight, to be a policeman over their lives, to alarm and alert the other saints about someone’s “problem”?

These are real issues. When we are mired down in these wrong attitudes, the work of God in the earth is suffering. Let us seek earnestly to know how we should love each other, *as Christ loved us*.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

"In a world where the corporate gold goes mainly to those who fight, claw, scratch, gouge, lie, cheat, and/or steal their way to the top, and the Olympic gold goes only to the best physical specimens, the Special Olympic type events demonstrate a fantastic alternative success model. Everybody should attend one at least once in their life. It would do them a world of good. First of all, accolades are given for effort. And while you may not go home with a gold medal, you will go home rewarded for your effort. You will go home with the understanding that you were a winner anytime you gave it your all.

"At these Olympic events it is not unusual to see a runner fall. It happens all the time. But it is also not unusual to see the entire pack of runners go back to help that person to their feet, and encourage them to go on. Wouldn't it be great if life could be like that? Not to encourage failure, but rather to encourage success. At these Olympic events, success is in the person—not the achievement! Wouldn't the world be a finer place to live if we were more concerned with people than we were with things?

"We all win, when one wins. I'm looking to connect my life with people who want to strap themselves to each other and climb the mountains that cannot be climbed on their own. Therein lies the greatest of all victories! This is the greatest success. The sum is greater than the parts. Together we can see our potential multiplied rather than simply added."

—From *Has Anybody Seen My Shoes?* by Danny Frasier

—Submitted by LaDawna Adams

MARCH 27, 2016

CONCLUSION

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

II Chronicles 7:14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their

sin, and will heal their land.

Isaiah 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.

Acts 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

MEMORY VERSE: Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. —Hebrews 13:20-21

CENTRAL THOUGHT: We have been clearly shown what God requires. Now it is up to us to respond with humility, repentance, obedience, reformation and amending of our ways before Him and before our fellowman. This alone will truly bring revival, renewal and healing.

WORD DEFINITIONS

II Chronicles 7:14 “I will heal their land”: heal the hurts of a nation; involving restored favour and often forgiveness.

Isaiah 1:18 “Though your sins be as scarlet”: “Though our sins

have been as scarlet and crimson, a deep dye, a double dye, first in the wool of original corruption, and afterwards in the many threads of actual transgression; though we have often dipped into sin, by many backslidings; yet pardoning mercy will take out the stain.” — *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*

Isaiah 1:19 “The good of the land”: To Old Testament Israel, the produce of the land of Canaan; to New Testament saints, the victory and blessing of the Spirit-filled life; the fruit of the Spirit.

Philippians 1:10 “Approve things that are excellent”: distinguishing what is different or superior. “Sincere”: pure; uncontaminated; judged by the rays of light. “Without offence”: blameless; not causing offence. “The day of Christ”: the end; the day Christ comes.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have studied about the condition of Israel during Micah’s prophecy, the atmosphere of Jewish legalism into which Christ came, and the warnings and admonitions God sent to His people through the prophets and by His Son, Jesus Christ.

We have seen the model set forth to us by the disciples in the early church. We have evidenced the decay in our time when modern professing Christians forsake these vital principles.

Even as these lessons end, keep studying into the history of the Church of God. Study God’s heart and character as He reveals it in the Law and the Prophets. Study the life of Jesus Christ and the lives of Spirit-filled Christians through the ages. As you study, become aware of this common thread weaving itself through all the doctrines, people and events. Against the dark backdrop of worldly strife, carnal division among religious people, legalism, loose living, pride, self-interest, and greed, God’s standard of righteous and just living, loving-kindness and mercy to all, and humility still shines like a beacon.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. *Response to God’s dealings:* Now that we have clearly seen

God's requirements, what steps should we as individuals and congregations take to meet God's standard?

2. *Promises to the repentant*: What has God promised to do when we repent and amend our ways?

3. *Making it our life*: Share ways we can live lives that are sincere, without offense, fruitful in righteousness, and well-pleasing in God's sight.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I must share what these lessons have meant to me personally. They have put within me a keener vision and a deeper burden for God's people. Many times I have wept as I have prayed over these lessons and began writing the Scriptures given to me during prayer. Sometimes as I have studied the concordance and discovered the meanings to the words, I have literally lifted my hands in jubilation and praise at the wonder and the power of these Scriptures.

I really believe these truths will be transforming. All it takes is one individual in a whole group of people who will truly take God's way, truly walk humbly with God, truly show mercy and justice in all of life's dealings and to all people along life's way—just one individual can change the attitudes, atmosphere, and direction. What would happen if we *all* began to weep and pray together that God would make us KNOW and LIVE these principles in a greater way than ever before?

I sincerely pray these studies have been a blessing to you.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

"Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly..." We recognize through the Scriptures that the Lord has a great heart of love for widows, children and the unsaved; for the weary, hurting, weak, wounded, struggling, and poor. He gave the illustration of the shepherd leaving the ninety and nine that were safe, in search of the one that had gone astray. He also brought the lesson of the man that fell among thieves, the priest and Levite that walked by on the other side, and the good Samaritan who stopped to render aid. He then told us to go

and do likewise. Lord, help us to be involved when it comes to rendering aid. Wounds and problems can be intimidating, challenging, messy, demanding, and difficult, and there is a temptation to not notice and avoid them.

Lord, help us not to be too busy with our own things, agenda, or plans that we fail to hear the cry of the hurting. Jesus wept over Jerusalem; He saw the wounds and hurts of His people and endeavored to gather them. One of the greatest compliments came from those who were skeptics: “He is a friend to sinners.”

God showed His love through His Son; He also wants to show His love through us. Let this be our heart, mind, spirit, and life!

—Bro. Bob Wilson

*“How far you go in life depends on your
being tender with the young,
compassionate with the aged,
sympathetic with the striving,
and tolerant of the weak and strong.
Because someday in your life
you will have been all of these.”*

—George Washington Carver

