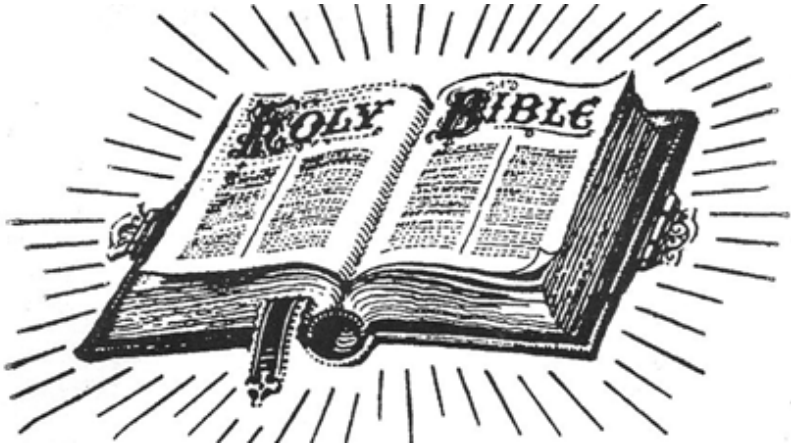


Bible Lessons



**“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,
an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth
the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into
his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people,
but are now the people of God.”**

I Peter 2:9-10

**Volume 51, No 3
July • August • September
2019**

Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 51

July • August • September

No 3

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Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church

Bible Lessons written by Angela Gellenbeck

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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR 3RD QUARTER 2019

The Holy People

The inspiration for this quarter's lessons comes from I Peter 2:9-10, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Thank the Lord, all through the ages of time, God has had a people. He called them out of sin and darkness into holiness and light. Our study will focus in on the qualities outlined in the scriptures that are outstanding in the lives of the holy people of God, in every era and in every part of the globe.

For the Reflection articles in this booklet, we will be sharing true stories of real people—saints who have lived faithfully and died victoriously. I trust you will enjoy these special biographies!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

JULY 7, 2019

THE HOLY PEOPLE

A Peculiar Treasure, a Kingdom of Priests, a Holy Nation

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6a And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

A Holy People, a Peculiar People

Deuteronomy 14:2 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto

himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. (Also Deuteronomy 29:13.)

Deuteronomy 26:18 And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments;

19 And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

A People Set Apart for Him

Psalm 4:3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. (Also Psalm 135:4.)

A People Near Unto Him

Psalm 148:14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

A People Who Have His Law in Their Hearts

Isaiah 51:7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.

The Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord, Sought Out, a City not Forsaken

Isaiah 62:12 And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

A People for His Name

Acts 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

Called to be Saints

Romans 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Also I Corinthians 1:2, 6:1, II Corinthians 1:1, 9:1; Ephesians 1:1, 5:3; Philippians 1:1, 4:22; Colossians 1:2, 4, 12, 26; I Thessalonians 3:13; II Thessalonians 1:10; Philemon 1:5, 7, and Hebrews 13:24.)

MEMORY VERSE: But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew

forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. —I Peter 2:9-10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God’s desire was for a people to be His own. He chose, called, and sought them out, redeemed them, led them, set them apart for Himself as a special, guarded treasure, made them holy, put His law in their hearts, called them by His own name to be a people for His name, made them a people near unto Him, whom He would never forsake, and called them to be saints—His holy people.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 19:5 “Peculiar treasure”: from a word meaning “shut up”; closely guarded treasured possession; valued property. Occurring eight times in the Old Testament; in Malachi 3:17 it translates as “jewels.”

Exodus 19:6 “A kingdom of priests”: then referring to the Aaronic priesthood which was the central part of the nation of Israel; now referring to spiritual Israel—all who are believers in Jesus Christ. “All of them both ‘kings and priests unto God’—kings as lords over themselves, equals one to another, owing allegiance to God only—priests, as entitled to draw near to God in prayer without an intermediary, to bring Him their offerings, pay Him their vows, and hold communion with Him in heart and soul. The same privileges are declared by St. Peter (I Peter 2:9) and St. John (Revelation 1:6) to belong to all Christians, who in this respect, as in so many others, are now ‘the Israel of God’” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*).

Deuteronomy 26:18 “Avouched”: openly declared.

Acts 15:14 “Simeon”: Simon, or Peter.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Exodus 19. The place is the foot of Mt. Sinai. The Israelites had been gloriously delivered from Egypt and miraculously led across the Red Sea, where God destroyed the Egyptian army which had pursued

them. They had murmured at Marah because of the bitter water and God had revealed Himself to them as Jehovah Rapha, the LORD “that healeth thee.” They murmured again as they came into the wilderness, and God gave them quail to eat and began the daily supply of manna. They murmured again at Rephidim, where God brought water out of the rock; He also revealed Himself to them in their battle with Amalek as Jehovah Nissi, “the LORD our victory.” Here in the wilderness camp, Moses’ father-in-law paid him a visit and wisely counseled Moses how to develop a system of legal jurisdiction over the people. Now God is visiting Moses on Mount Sinai and is preparing him and the people for the giving of His law.

He begins by introducing the concept of this people being the holy people, His chosen, guarded, valuable treasure, and describes the whole process of His deliverance as His bearing them up on “eagles’ wings.” This truly is the underlying motivation for all of God’s dealings with His people, as we can see time after time in Israel’s history. It is the reason for all of His commands to them.

The concept is reiterated in the later messages God gave to his people in the Deuteronomy passages in our lesson. David recognized it as he wrote about the godly being set apart unto God and God’s chosen heritage being a people privileged to be near to Him.

The prophet Isaiah spoke both literally of the people of Israel being delivered from their Babylonian captivity and from the sins which caused the captivity, and prophetically of spiritual Israel, the people of Christ’s kingdom, who were called out from sin and darkness to holiness and light. He spoke of them knowing righteousness and having His law written in their hearts; that truly was His desire for His people. The law written in stone could never be sufficient or powerful enough to cause people to do His will. There must be a HEART-knowing of the source of righteousness and a HEART imprinted with the very will and mind of God.

In the New Testament, Luke, the historian who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, recorded the meeting Paul and Barnabas had with the church at Jerusalem after they had been at Antioch disputing with the Judaizers who wanted to compel the new Gentile Christians to be circumcised. Gathered together with the apostles and elders, they rehearsed all that had happened on their missionary journey, declaring the wonderful conversion of the Gentiles. As in Antioch, certain Pharisees who had believed on Jesus now began to urge the

disciples in Jerusalem to circumcise the believing Gentiles. Peter disagreed, reminding them of the Gentiles in Cornelius' household who believed and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then Paul and Barnabas told of the miracles and wonders done by God among the Gentiles. James spoke of Israel's history, using scriptures from Isaiah which prophesied of the bringing in of the Gentiles. He advised that the abstention from four things—idols, fornication, and the eating of blood and strangled animals—be preached to the Gentiles, but not any commandment to be circumcised. James mentioned this distinction about the Gentiles, that God had visited them, to take from among them “a people for his name.”

As time went on and titles were given to the groups of believers and epistles from the apostles were addressed to them, their enemies called them Christians, but the apostles used the name “saints,” meaning holy people, the very name God had started with at the beginning.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Name the three terms God used to describe His people in Exodus 19.
2. What imagery did God use in describing His dealings with the children of Israel?
3. Name the two terms God used to describe His people in Deuteronomy.
4. In what three ways was God going to set His people on high?
5. What did the Psalmist say God would do for the godly person?
6. How did the Psalmist describe Israel?
7. Name five ways Isaiah described God's people.
8. Name the terms used in the New Testament for God's people.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I hope we can each personalize the very precious concept presented in these scriptures and, as each of the lessons in this series goes forth, begin to form a vision in our minds that is more than a creed or a set of written commands.

We have been called out, sought out, and set apart—by Him, unto Him, and for Him. As costly and rare jewels, closely guarded and treasured, God’s people are a delight to Him.

We have been redeemed, chosen and purchased; this introduces the thought that a price had to be paid for our redemption. We who were not of Jewish descent but are Gentiles, who had not been God’s people, are now called to be saints; who had not obtained mercy, have now obtained mercy—and by what means? The death of our Lord Jesus Christ. To what purpose has Christ obtained this? So He can draw us, who were far from him, near unto Him. So He can write His law, not on tables of stone anymore, but in our hearts. So we can show forth His praises and be a people for the glory of His Name.

What a special privilege it is to be a saint of God!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

C. M. Varghese – A Saint of God who Lived in India
December 10, 1907 — October 19, 1968

C.M. Varghese was born on December 10, 1907, at Kottarakara, the oldest son of Mr. Mathai and Mrs. Mariyamma. As his father was an evangelist, he was raised as a God-fearing child. He learned the Bible through attending Sunday school classes and got saved in his childhood. He got a good education and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from college. His plan was to get a degree in law and become a lawyer or advocate and judge; but, his father, being an evangelist, did not have any interest in it and stopped him from going to law college. He asked him to do the Lord’s work to win souls to Christ. Varghese prayed about it and got the call from God to do the Lord’s work. He started to preach Christ and salvation through Christ in the streets and conducted open air meetings in the highways and hedges to win souls for Christ. His father baptized him, and God used him as a sharp weapon in His hands. One missionary whose name was Walker came to visit Kottarakara, and Varghese joined with him to do the Lord’s work for a short time. After that everybody called him “Little Walker.”

On August 28, 1930, Varghese married a godly woman, Chinnamma, who was also a spiritual partner, to help his ministry. Eight children were born to them. All are God-fearing and born again; they are Mathew, Jacob, Mary, Susamma, Samuel, John, Philip and

Molly. Two of them have died, but the other six are still living.

Seeing his spiritual enthusiasm and fervency in the Lord's work, the Bishop of Marthoma Church (an Episcopal church) advised and compelled him to join with Marthoma Church to work for the Lord. Varghese accepted that request and decided to work in that church in 1950. The bishop anointed him and appointed him as a priest and adorned him with priestly dress. He worked as a priest in the Marthoma Church in different parts of Kerala State for ten years. Finally, God called him to come out of that Babylon. As David put off the armor of King Saul (1 Samuel 17:39), Varghese put off the priestly dress and came out of the Marthoma Church in 1960. He was so happy to be free to preach the gospel of truth everywhere.

In 1960 he started a congregation in his home with the name, "Church of God," and several people in the locality started to assemble in that church. Somehow Varghese got a copy of the *Faith and Victory* paper from America, and his eyes were illuminated to see the truths as he read it. He communicated with Bro. Lawrence Pruitt, who was in charge of the Faith Publishing House in Guthrie, Oklahoma, in the USA. In 1964, Bro. C.C. Carver, a missionary of the Evening Light Church of God in America, visited India and stayed one month with Bro. Varghese and traveled around in different parts of South India, starting congregations of the Evening Light Church of God in different areas. The first chapel was built at Karickom in 1965.

Unfortunately, on October 19, 1968, Bro. Varghese passed away at the age of 61, due to a sudden heart attack. He did not trust in doctors and medicines. He trusted in the Lord and believed in divine healing until his death. His last words were, "I lean on the breast of my Lord." He said it twice and closed his eyes, smiling. At the time of his death, he was reading and meditating, his Malayalam Bible in his left hand and the English Bible in his right hand. It was a shock to the church and to the family, but God called his son John Varghese to take charge of the ministry of God which Bro. Varghese started. Bro. John Varghese obeyed that call and has been the overseer of Evening Light Church of God for the last 50 years. Praise the Lord for His wonderful dealings with His people.

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Hebrews 13:7).

—Bro. John Varghese

JULY 14, 2019

STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

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

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

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Hebrews 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to

come.

Philippians 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

—1 Peter 2:11

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Abraham and the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets, and true saints through the ages have had this distinction, that they were strangers and pilgrims in this world. They did not belong or feel at home here, but their true citizenship was a heavenly one.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 11:9 “Sojourned”: to dwell in as a stranger; reside as a foreigner. “As in a strange country”: as in an alien land; one belonging to others. “Tabernacles”: tents.

Hebrews 11:10 “Foundations”: something put down; a foundation stone. “Builder”: architect. “Maker”: maker, creator; someone working on behalf of a group of people.

Hebrews 11:13 “Strangers”: a guest. “Pilgrims”: resident foreigner.

Hebrews 13:13 “Without the camp”: outside, literally or figuratively. To “...go forth from the ceremonial law, from sin, from the world, and from ourselves. Living by faith in Christ, set apart to God through his blood, let us willingly separate from this evil world” (*Matthew Henry Commentary*). “A man may be said to ‘go forth’ from hence, when he professes not to belong to the world; when his affections are weaned from it; when the allurements of it do not draw him aside; when he forsakes, and suffers the loss of all, for Christ” (*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*).

Hebrews 13:14 “Continuing”: standing; lasting; remaining; enduring.

Philippians 3:20 “Conversation”: citizenship; the commonwealth of which we are citizens; so it is said of Christians.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews, commonly called “the faith chapter,” is an essay on the lives of Old Testament notables. Each character demonstrated qualities that put them in a certain category. “These all,” it says, were people who lived their lives convinced of a reality that they didn’t get to see with their physical eyes. What was it? A city—a promised city that was enduring, and a citizenship to a commonwealth that wasn’t earthly. Moses forsook the treasures of Egypt for what he saw with his spiritual eyes. The passage lists other saints who endured conflicts and tortures because they had this vision.

In the thirteenth chapter, the thought is referenced again, this time using Christ as the example of one going “outside” the literal city of Jerusalem to be crucified. Spiritually, He and we as His followers go “outside” that which is earthly and human and bear a reproach for doing so.

In his epistle to the saints at Philippi, Paul contrasts those who “mind earthly things” with true saints whose citizenship is in heaven, and who continue to “look for the Savior” and the glory that shall be revealed at His coming.

Our memory verse states Peter’s admonition that as we are members of this group, “strangers and pilgrims,” we are to abstain from fleshly lusts, or strong desires, that war against the soul.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. How may we apply the examples in our lesson (Abraham, Moses, Jesus) to ourselves?
2. Why is there a reproach put upon those who have this mindset, and how is it often manifested?
3. Can one be a true “holy person” without having this mindset? Why or why not?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The recognition a true saint of God has deep in his spirit that he or she does not belong to this world, but is actually a citizen of an eternal country, lays the groundwork for many of the lines of separation from the world that are established throughout the Christian journey. Without this settled view the soul loses its moorings. The worldly lusts that are catered to etch away the attachment to Christ.

For it is Christ who is *all*. His kingdom was the promise for which Abraham and the Old Testament saints were seeking. His church was the “city which hath foundations.” He was “the invisible” One Moses saw. The only way the saints in the early church could endure the persecution from both the Jews and the pagans was that they “looked for the Savior.” The key words are in Hebrews 13:13. “Unto Him.” There is no separation from the world worth anything except it be “*unto Him.*”

Let us not make the mistake in thinking we must withdraw from people to have the proper mindset of a pilgrim and a stranger; that we should be monks or hermits living in celibacy, poverty, away from society. Jesus set that straight with, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15). Paul’s admonition that “they that use this world, as not abusing it (*using it to the full*)” (I Corinthians 7:31) gives us balance, and John’s “love not the world” (I John 2:15) goes along with “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2), Paul’s instructions to the Colossians and Laodiceans.

We can be single or married, have many children or few, live in a hovel or a mansion, in a city or a remote mountain cabin. In every situation, we can still be separate from, nor have a mind for, earthly or carnal things. We can live only unto the Lord, keep our citizenship to that heavenly kingdom current, and keep our white robes—the righteousness Christ gives us—unspotted from the world.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

David Brainerd
April 20, 1718 – October 9, 1747

David, the sixth of nine children, was orphaned at the age of fourteen, his father dying when he was nine and his mother passing on five years later. He went to live with one of his older sisters until adulthood. During this time he struggled with his Christianity, but wrote in his journal of truly being converted in the summer of 1739. He entered Yale later that year, but his tenure there was interrupted due to an illness he had contracted, later determined to be “consumption,” known as tuberculosis today. After returning to Yale, he was expelled for speaking unkindly about a faculty member as part of a student uprising that questioned the spirituality of the Yale faculty at large. He sought reinstatement many times, but it was not to be. After spending a year preaching from place to place without a license(!), he came to realize that God had a different calling for him, and at the age of 25, he began his ministry working among the various native Indian tribes throughout New England. He labored for nearly four years as a missionary, travelling over 3,000 miles on horseback, often alone.

In the fall of 1746 his body broke down from his debilitating illness, and he was taken into the home of Jonathan Edwards, a New England pastor and one of the early influencers of the Great Awakening. Upon David’s death in 1747 at the age of 29, Jonathan Edwards took his journal and published it, along with notes about his work among the Delaware Indians. Other notable American missionaries, among them William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and Jim Elliot, have expressed that this journal had an extremely impactful influence on their calls to the mission field. Brainerd truly lived as a stranger and pilgrim on this earth.

Quotes Pertaining to His Life’s Work:

“Worldly pleasures, such as flow from greatness, riches, honours, and sensual gratifications, are infinitely worse than none.”

“If you hope for happiness in the world, hope for it from God, and not from the world.”

“I have a secret thought from some things I have observed, that God may perhaps design you for some singular service in the world.”

“Oh, that I may never loiter on my heavenly journey.”

—Bro. Fari Matthews

JULY 21, 2019

PEOPLE OF FAITH

Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

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

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

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

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

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

II Corinthians 5:7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

II Corinthians 4:13 We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

MEMORY VERSE: Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and has professed a good profession before many witnesses. —**I Timothy 6:12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: From the beginning, God's people have been people of faith—faith in an unseen God and what He could do

for them. They are justified and sanctified through faith in Jesus' blood; they walk by faith, fight a fight of faith, are joined to one another by the same spirit of faith, and endure unto the end by a strong faith that works by love, is anchored by hope, sees the eternal, and grasps the promises.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hebrews 10:38 "The just shall live by faith": a quotation from Habakkuk 2:4 which states, "The just shall live by his faith [faithfulness]."

Hebrews 10:39 "We are not of them who draw back": shrink back; slink away and hide through fear. "We are not the cowards but the courageous" (*Clarke's Commentary*). "Perdition": eternal destruction; ruin; loss.

Hebrews 11:1 "Substance": a setting under; literally, a substructure; foundation; something concrete and substantial. Figuratively, confidence; assurance. "Evidence": persuasion; proof. "That by which a thing is proved and tested" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*).

II Corinthians 5:7 "Sight": visible form, shape or appearance.

II Corinthians 4:13 "The same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed...": a quotation from Psalm 116:10

II Corinthians 4:16 "Faint": lose heart; be weak and weary.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Both the fourth chapter of Romans and the third chapter of Galatians speak of the faith of Abraham, calling him the "father" of those who now believe in Christ, and us his "seed," or children. In an interesting connecting thought especially for women, the chaste, godly, believing woman is said to be a "daughter" of Sarah, Abraham's wife (I Peter 3:1-8). The ancient holy women who trusted in God, it says, adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit, being in subjection to their own husbands. This was a vital part of their faith! In the context, the list of related characteristics includes modesty, reverence, benevolence, courage, compassion, brotherly love, pity on the needy and humility.

The tenth chapter of Hebrews speaks of the blessedness of God putting His laws within the hearts and minds of His people and includes a stern warning not to forsake assembling with the saints, sin wilfully, or be spiteful to the Spirit of grace. Rather, he says, they were to remember their beginning persecutions and sufferings and not cast away their confidence or draw back in unbelief.

In the next chapter he describes the ingredient that was of utmost importance—faith. This is what we see time and time again—they were convinced of the reality and existence of God, and when they called diligently on Him, He would answer and deliver. They backed up their profession of faith by trustful obedience.

In II Corinthians we see the theme of faith again. This “spirit of faith” that the saints of old possessed caused them to endure because they “saw” something and made a courageous confession. We also “see” the invisible, and that vision gives us the strength and courage to go through our trials.

Consider how this quality of faith that believes and endures through the strength of the unseen is directly connected with the pilgrim-and-stranger mindset. A person who very much belongs to this world is unable to see the eternal realities or be a true person of faith.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Which two passages explain how believers in Christ are Abraham’s children?
2. When the Hebrews writer says, “The just shall live by faith,” where is the source of his quote?
3. What does “draw back” mean?
4. Explain how being a pilgrim and a stranger is linked to being a person of faith.
5. How may saints today have the same “spirit of faith” as those in Bible times?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I love the composite picture of a faith-filled saint that comes to light through the different scriptures in our lesson. It is truly the first

mark of a true saint of God that he or she is a person who has faith in the shed blood of Christ alone for salvation, and not in religious rituals, creeds or good works. We see how the pilgrim of Jesus who does not fit in with the world is the visionary who sees eternal things. We see how the patient sufferer, who for the inheritance he receives by faith, endures affliction without fainting, seeks God diligently and does not shrink through fear nor lag behind through slothfulness.

Let us be encouraged to be that son of Abraham, who is strong in faith and does not stagger at the promises of God. Let us be that daughter of Sarah, who through faith is meekly quiet and submissive to her husband, not adorning herself with worldly adornments but is chaste, reverent and courageous.

Let us live and walk by faith in God alone for our salvation, our sanctification, our healing, and our daily strength. May we ever fight the good fight of faith when we are in persecution, affliction or temptation.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Mary Lounds
August 4, 1924 — October 8 1982

When Mary Lounds was a child, as she was playing, she was accidentally hit on the side of the head with a ball. That area grew extensively over the next forty-plus years into a growth comparable in size to that of her head. Although she was afflicted her entire adult life, she possessed a sweet and caring disposition, a mild manner, and a strong faith in God.

As a child and young adult, I traveled with her to various camp meetings and marveled at her faith, tenacity, and cheerfulness. I don't ever remember her complaining about her lot in life or feeling sorry for herself; rather, she was quite productive and always helping others. Aunt Mary (my father's sister) had many talents but two stood out to me: singing and sewing. Considering that she had no musical training and was deaf in one ear, she had a beautiful voice that she used to honor and glorify God. She led congregational singing and often sang solos. When I visited her home she was either singing or listening to gospel hymns. Her other unique talent was being a master seamstress. She was well known for her talent of

fitting garments and excellent detail work. Her skills were in much demand by family, saints and friends.

Since Aunt Mary's affliction was with her 24/7, it affected all facets of her life. Every time she ventured out of the house, she received stares from both children and adults alike. At night she was only able to rest in one position, and during the day she suffered undue pressure on her neck and back, especially while sewing. However, the unwanted attention, the constant strain on the neck and back, the deafness in one ear, and other limitations never diminished Aunt Mary's love and faith in God.

She believed in God's love, promises, faithfulness, and the power of prayer. As a result God's mercy sustained her until she was able to claim the promise given in Revelation 2:10, "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Aunt Mary kept the faith and got the crown.

—Sis. Gertrude Lounds

JULY 28, 2019

PEOPLE OF PRAYER

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.

Psalm 32:6a For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.

Isaiah 56:7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Zechariah 13:9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.

Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

MEMORY VERSE: Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. —**James 5:16**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: A distinguishing difference between God's people and the people of the world is that God's people are a people of fervent prayer: they love to pray, they know the worth of prayer, they pray with faith and confidence, they pray with pure hearts, and God recognizes, listens to and answers the prayers of His people.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Ephesians 6:18 "Supplication": to be in need; want; lack; a felt need that is personal and urgent (*Strong's Concordance* and *HELPS Word Studies*). "Watching thereunto": "[Watching] towards spirituality, against formality, as also against forgetfulness and neglect of prayer" (*Pulpit Commentary*). "Perseverance": persistence; steadfastness.

Revelation 5:8 "Harps": representing praise. "Vials full of odours": bowls of incense, as were offered in the tabernacle, representing prayers.

James 5:16 "Effectual, fervent": energize; to put forth power; to work; to do. "Availeth": to be strong; to be able; to engage the resistance; to be combative; to prevail.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the Old Testament we chose a few verses which clearly show the important place prayer had even in the lives of God's people of that time. His house, or tabernacle, or temple, was to be a house of prayer. Ancient examples include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Samuel, David, Elijah and Elisha, who built altars and called on God in times of decision, need, or celebration. These godly people were characterized by prayer. Powerful promises were given to God's people, telling what God would do when they prayed and accompanied their prayers with humility, diligent seeking, fasting and turning away from wickedness.

The passage in II Chronicles was given by God to Solomon when He appeared to him in the night after Solomon had finished and dedicated the house of the Lord. This place, God said, was the place He had chosen for a house of sacrifice, and if there was famine or pestilence in their land, He would be attentive to the prayer that was made in that place. This perpetual covenant is now carried on in a spiritual way to His spiritual house of prayer, in the hearts of His people, the church.

Psalms 32 was written by David, describing first the blessedness of one whose transgression is forgiven and then speaking of the deliverance God will give the godly who pray unto Him.

Isaiah prophesied of the universal kingdom, where "strangers" (Gentiles) would join themselves to the Lord, take hold of His covenant and be brought to His house of prayer. Jesus quoted this passage when He purged the temple in Jerusalem of the merchandise and worldly business that had polluted it. This scripture also clearly points to the spiritual house made up of holy people (I Peter 2:5). The Sabbath, burnt offerings and sacrifices are clearly spiritual in Christ's kingdom, to which also the passages from Revelation refer: prayers and praises mingled with, and made acceptable to God by, the intercession of Jesus Christ for His people.

Zechariah also points forward to the remnant of God's true people and the spiritual refining they would go through. A precious scene is portrayed here: that as His people go through their trials they would call on God and He would hear them and lovingly recognize them—"It is my people."

The epistle from Paul to the Ephesians describes in the sixth

chapter the spiritual armor of the Christian soldier. He ends his description with this admonition: to pray always, for all saints, and for him, that he would be able to boldly preach the gospel.

James wrote to the saints concerning what to do in times of sickness and affliction. There were temples in the land which were dedicated to the healing god, Asclepius. The early church refused to take their sick there, but being instructed by the apostles they resorted to prayer and anointing with oil. The essential elements of the prayer of faith are outlined here: confession of faults and the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. What four things are important in the prayer God's people were to pray in famine or pestilence? What three things did God promise to do?
2. A particular "time" was mentioned by the psalmist, in which the godly would pray. What is that?
3. What was God's house to be called? Who quoted this in the New Testament?
4. What components to prayer are listed in Ephesians 6:18?
5. Prayer is compared to what things in the verses from Revelation?
6. James instructed the saints to do what in times of sickness and affliction?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We have shown by the scriptures how God's people are a chosen, special treasure; set apart and kept near unto Him and called out of sin to be a holy nation. We saw how these special people, in both the Old and New Testaments, recognize they are not "of" the world, nor do they fit in, neither are they even citizens, but their belonging is to a higher, spiritual kingdom and to that they do allegiance, even though they are persecuted and tortured. Because they see a heavenly vision that to the world is unseen, they endure with fortitude and great faith. They don't stagger or draw back at impossible obstacles, but fight a good fight and lay hold of eternal life.

In today's lesson, the holy people who keep themselves from this world and believe God to the saving of the soul demonstrate their faith by diligently seeking God in earnest prayer.

Do you see how it all fits together? See the spiritual house, the spiritual sacrifices, and the spiritual incense; the precious scene of God, listening to HIS PEOPLE pray and His loving response; the wondrous effects the fervent prayers have on the success of not only Paul's ministry but the whole work of preaching of the gospel worldwide? This is so much greater than we have imagined or comprehended!

The vials full of odors. Think how odors, or fragrances, are composed of millions of tiny molecules. So little, so insignificant; yet, joined together and compounded, ascending up to the God of heaven, they avail much. Your prayer! My prayer!

Oh, may we be a people of fervent prayer!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

John Wesley Trimble
November 6, 1886 — January 24, 1969

“Bro. John Trimble was a terrible drunkard and sinner turned wonderful saint and true prayer warrior. He was also the most humble man I ever knew. Prayer was the theme of his life. In his old age he was crippled and his feet “flopped” when he walked. He was a man of great faith when he prayed. He never missed prayer meeting. Never. And every prayer meeting he would share how God had answered his prayers during the week! His regular routine was to rise around 4 a.m. each morning to pray at his bedside, even in the biting cold of winter with no heat in the house. These were no short prayers and then back to bed! He said he was often tempted to stay under the warm covers, but he would never do so! His exhortation to us always was to pray without ceasing and with faith, believing God would answer our prayers as he had promised. I know he prayed for everyone of us in our little congregation. He was, without question, the “go to” person whenever any of us had a burden or affliction or trial. We knew Bro. Trimble could get his prayers through for us. That was a given.

“During the day and evening he would pray in an old dilapidated

unused barn not far from his old farm house. He said he often had to brush away the cobwebs and spiders to pray there. I knew well his spot of prayer in that old barn. Several of us young men would go there often late at night to pray; he told us we were always welcome to do so. I remember feeling my way along the walls when it was pitch dark, looking for the little bench where he prayed. I would make sure I got my knees right down into the two deep indentations that were there. It always made me feel a little closer to God, knowing I was praying where Bro. Trimble prayed.

“I know of no other man that lived closer to God. He prayed for years for his cantankerous wife who persecuted him regularly for his faith. Once his neighbor, out of spite, cut the roots of several huge eucalyptus trees with his plow so they fell across the long dirt driveway that led to Bro Trimble’s house. Even in his old age and crippled condition, he loaded up his chainsaw, cut the trees into firewood, loaded it into his old battered pickup, and delivered the load to his neighbor as a gift. That was Bro. Trimble...”

What a heritage of faith and prayer!

—As told by Bro. Cliff Smith to Bro. Jeremy Booher

AUGUST 4, 2019

PEOPLE OF SELF-DENIAL

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

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

Luke 9:23 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Also Matthew 16:24 and Mark 8:34.)

24 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so

born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Luke 14:26 If any come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

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

Luke 18:28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake,

30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

MEMORY VERSE: Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. —**Philippians 3:8**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Not only have saints through the ages been people of faith and adopted the mindset of a pilgrim and stranger, but they have proven their consecration by living lives of self-denial when they had to choose between obeying Christ or following their own self-interests, comforts or desires.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 19:12 "Eunuch": one who voluntarily abstains from marriage.

Luke 14:26 "Hate": "properly, to detest (on a comparative basis); hence, denounce; to love someone or something less than someone (something) else, i.e. to renounce one choice in favor of another" (*HELPS Word Studies*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The first verse in our lesson comes from the message Christ gave to the twelve disciples as He gave them power against unclean spirits and all manner of sickness and disease and sent them forth to preach the kingdom of heaven. He gave them specific instructions as to how they should conduct themselves in their travels, in persecution and in conflict. Drawing to a close, He reminded them that God claims first place, introduced the idea of bearing a cross and went on to establish the important concept that if we seek to “find” ourselves in this life, we will really lose our life, but when we “lose” ourselves in Him, we will indeed “find” the life for which we long.

Next we go to Luke’s gospel, which parallels with Matthew 16 and Mark 8. Here Jesus has just come from miraculously feeding the multitude and has a private conversation with His disciples about their view of His identity. Then He initiates an ongoing series of conversations about His coming suffering, death and resurrection. Peter rebukes Him, and Jesus reproves Peter; after which He lays out the conditions of discipleship, again referring to the finding/losing concept and the “daily” bearing of a personal cross. In each reading, we are faced with the important comparison of the cost of a man “losing” his own soul against the “gain” of the whole world. “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” is the famous question.

Included in Christ’s teachings about self-denial is the closing statement He gave when He was asked about divorce and remarriage. He put in a disclaimer: not everyone could receive what He was saying, only those who were “able.” The thought we take away is this: because He has just established that remarriage after divorce constitutes adultery, there will be some relationships into which you will not be able to enter if you seek to please God. For the kingdom of heaven’s sake you would have to become as a eunuch; that is, voluntarily deny yourself of the comforts of marriage. There were those who, like the apostle Paul, for the kingdom of heaven’s sake, chose not to marry at all, even if it was not an adulterous union; however, neither Jesus nor Paul put forth the idea that celibacy was the *rule* for all disciples.

Paul gave the admonition that a believing spouse should stay with the unbelieving spouse if he or she is pleased to live with the believer. Who knows, he asks, if the unbelieving wife or husband

might be won to Christ by the godly actions of his spouse? And if the unbeliever leaves, the believer is to remain unmarried for that purpose—so the unbeliever has an opportunity to be won to the Lord and has a place to which he or she may return (1 Corinthians 7:10-16).

Luke 14 gives us the thought of a comparison. On one hand are your dearest loved ones; on the other is Christ. Ideally, all in your household will choose to follow Christ. But what if you choose Christ and your wife does not? Because you love your wife, will you leave Christ to please her?

Jesus promises houses, lands, and loved ones in return for those you leave behind when you choose Him first. It is not consistent with the rest of His teachings to suppose that if your unsaved companion will not follow Christ with you that God will give you another saved one; however, His promise is *more*. “Manifold more.” A blessing and a soul-satisfying portion that gives more comfort, more joy, and more peace than remaining in sin with your loved one. Do you leave a house behind? Christ promises “more.” With God’s people and their hospitality, you will have “many” houses. Did you leave family? God’s family will become your family.

Paul’s testimony is that he left all for Christ and suffered the loss of “all things.” In comparison to gaining Christ, the things he left behind were considered as “garbage.” In all of these comparisons—gaining the world/losing your soul; saving your life but losing it in the end/losing your life for Christ and saving it in the end; leaving all/receiving eternal life; and suffering loss/gaining Christ—can you not clearly see the very best way? When you count the cost objectively and honestly, there is but one way to choose, and that is Christ.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. List the comparisons given in the group of scriptures in this lesson.
2. How often are we to “take up the cross” in following Jesus?
3. What is worth far more than this whole world?
4. What did Christ promise to those who left all for Him?
5. What is included in the idea of being a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In our lesson we learn of Christ's clear, unmistakable standard and call to self-denial. There is no doubt but that many saints through the ages have had to do just what Jesus asked His disciples to do. Ties have been severed. Homes have been lost. Possessions have been left behind. Dreams have crumbled. Saints have faced these scenarios in varying degrees of severity.

In spirit, we all face it. We come to Christ and lay our dreams and plans at His feet. We may have harbored hopes of financial security in this world. The cause of Christ and His gospel work beckoned, and we laid it down. We might have been popular as entertainers or sports stars, but Jesus said, "Come unto me." A woman may have had aspirations to a high corporate position but traded it in to be an humble wife and mother, raising children to be soul-winners and missionaries. A man may feel the pressure of popular culture to lead a me-first, selfish lifestyle, but he embraces the cross to be a holy man of God. Just the everyday life of a godly husband and father or wife and mother calls for much self-denial and a daily bearing the cross of Christ. Each of us, for Christ and for each other, lay down "self" to be willing servants.

This is the practical life of the pilgrim-stranger, the visionary saint of faith and prayer. Eternal aspirations and the love and approval of Christ become more real and desirable than the uncertain riches and volatile popularity of this world. Reproach and persecution are favored above the treasures of Egypt.

When we lose ourselves in Christ, we truly find real life in Him.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Annie Bell Allen

November 3, 1923 — December 2, 1989

Had she chosen the way of the world she could have been a woman of renown. But she chose the way of God, and her contribution to the world around her continues to have an impact three decades beyond her death.

Her life was not without tragedy. She was married in her late teens and had a child who died shortly after his birth. Compounding the grief, her husband left her to marry someone she had once

considered her best friend. With no hope of reconciliation, she chose the companionship of God and devoted her life wholly to Him. God's work became the heartbeat of her life. She cared for the sick, ministered to the poor and had a special place in her heart for those who were less fortunate.

Sis. Annie Bell founded a school for the deaf and those with special needs and would often bring them to church and interpret the services in sign language. She wanted to make the gospel accessible to all.

As a community organizer, she petitioned local, state, and federal politicians; raising funds and gaining their support in promoting and sustaining the school and various other projects.

She had a desire to see the gospel seed planted in the tender hearts of children. As a result, she created, printed and distributed various curricula for Vacation Bible School that lasted from the 1960's well into the 1990's. She would coordinate the VBS at the Monark Springs Campmeeting and in various congregations and community centers around the Midwest. She took the church outside the walls and in so doing, exposed the gospel to thousands of children.

Her active ministry also included preaching the gospel. She was the founding pastor of the congregation in Dallas, Texas, and assisted in various works around the country.

Sis. Annie Bell's life was spent for others. It was a life of self-denial. What she set in motion continues to bear fruit today. Her legacy of faithfulness continues to inspire and influence.

May those who come behind us find us equally as faithful.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

AUGUST 11, 2019

PEOPLE ZEALOUS FOR SOULS

1 Thessalonians 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

MEMORY VERSE: For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

—Isaiah 62:1

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The servant of Christ not only seeks to please and glorify Christ but also has a self-sacrificing love and zeal for souls and their eternal welfare.

WORD DEFINITIONS

I Thessalonians 2:2 “Shamefully entreated”: In Philippi, Paul and Silas had been beaten with many stripes, shut up in the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. “With much contention”: The

words “not only signify with intense labor and earnestness, but may here mean exposed to the greatest danger; at the peril of our lives” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

I Thessalonians 2:5 “A cloak of covetousness”: “A cloak over covetousness” (*MacKnight*). “Flattery and covetousness were vices to which the teachers of philosophy, in ancient times, were remarkably addicted. And they are vices which, more or less, enter into the character of all impostors” (*Benson Commentary*).

I Thessalonians 2:7 “Nurse”: a nursing mother. “Cherisheth”: from a word meaning “to warm,” referring to the way birds warm and nourish their young.

I Thessalonians 2:8 “So being affectionately desirous...”: “We cared so deeply that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our own lives as well. That is how beloved you have become to us” (*Berean Study Bible*).

I Thessalonians 2:9 “We would not be chargeable”: we would not be a burden. At the time he was writing this Epistle he was working for his support at Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:12; 2 Corinthians 11:9).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul, with Silas and Timothy, visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. There he found a Jewish synagogue, where he preached for three Sabbaths in a row (some scholars think he probably stayed much longer than three weeks) of Jesus’ sufferings, death and resurrection, proving that He was truly the Messiah (Acts 17:1-15). Some of the Jews believed, along with a great multitude of Greeks (Gentiles) and many notable women of the area. Among the converts were Secundus and Aristarchus; the latter became one of Paul’s most constant companions.

A Jewish mob, envious at the large following Paul had gathered, made an assault on the home of Jason, where Paul and his company were staying. Not finding them there, they took Jason and other brethren to the city rulers, accusing them of harboring those who had “turned the world upside down” and who taught against Caesar by preaching another king, Jesus. The authorities secured Jason’s safety, and the brethren sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. The

Bereans, more “noble” than the Thessalonians, received the Word readily and searched out its verity with the ancient scriptures. However, the Thessalonian Jews heard about it and came to make trouble again. Immediately Paul was sent away, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

Paul most certainly made more visits to the city, which became one of the important strongholds of Christianity for centuries, winning the title, “The Orthodox City.”

The tender, zealous tone of Paul’s writings to the church there provides a prime example of how the early saints dealt with converts. The apostle used, as metaphors for his affections for the souls, two of the most emotionally-charged word pictures—that of a nursing mother with her baby and a father teaching his children. Remember? A similar tender relationship was also referred to by Jesus when He charged Peter to “feed my lambs.” A mother ewe with a lamb. A nursing mother with an infant. This mothering, nurturing aspect of the church—the people of God—was no doubt an important part of the publishing of the gospel and the successful planting of the church all over the world.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. “Shamefully entreated.” Describe how and where Paul and his company had suffered.
2. Paul’s exhortations to the Thessalonians was not of _____, _____, or _____.
3. They were not _____ men, nor did they use _____, nor a _____ of _____, nor did they seek _____ of men.
4. They were _____ as a nursing _____ who _____ her children.
5. They behaved themselves _____, _____, and _____.
6. They were willing to impart, not only the _____ but their own _____.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). The good works of which the apostle wrote to Titus were the self-denying acts of compassion and service that made the early disciples famous among the heathen. They literally gave themselves to the ministry of the gospel throughout the world. In the beginning, when thousands of them were all together in Jerusalem, their spirit and attitude toward their new faith was this: that none of them considered the things he possessed as his own; it was shared by all. If you had two goats and I had none, you gave one of your goats to me. In return, I had extra clothes on hand that you needed, so I gave you half of my closet. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the household of Stephanus, who were the first converts in Achaia, that they had “addicted” themselves to the ministry of the saints. Later, as persecution scattered the saints all over the world, the necessity of the literal community may have changed but the giving spirit of the true saints stayed the same.

From sharing their homes and lands to feeding the fatherless and widows to staying with the sick and dying when most people fled from the fatal plague that ravaged the cities, the saints were known by their zealous love. For the pilgrim saint who leaves all, bears the rigors of the cross, lives in the spirit of prayer, and believes and trusts in God to supply all his needs, this is but the outpouring of the life of Jesus Christ within him—untiring preaching of the gospel, unceasing toil and burden for souls, and unmeasured giving of time, resources and love to the needy.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Faith Stewart

November 4, 1889 — January 8, 1986

A memory I have as a young child during the late fifties is of Sis. Faith Stewart coming to our church one Sunday morning and preaching. There was something about her that got my attention. Later when my mother would read her books to us for worship, I was captivated by her zealous passion for souls that took her to India

where she rescued many young girls from becoming slaves to debauchery. She was so brave going into the “haunts of sin” and snatching up trapped young girls to rescue them. After years of labor there, her work for the Lord was terminated, and she was compelled to leave. With a very heavy heart she came back to the United States. Her labors there were finished, but her zealous heart for souls could not be stopped by the man-made organization that ordered her to come home. Yes, it was true that she was ill and weary in body, but her mind couldn’t stop thinking of the children who needed to be taught the gospel.

She walked one day by the ocean with a heavy heart praying, “Lord what do I do now?” Where do you want me to go? Just then the Lord gave her a vision of many little brown faces on the horizon with little arms reaching out to her, and His still voice seemed to say, “Cuba.” This was another leap of faith for her; she had very limited funds and no big committee to help her. She left the United States on a boat to start a home for children in Cuba. She was a single woman, financially broke, a foreigner who didn’t speak Spanish, on a one-way mission trip, heading south for the benefit of boys and girls she had never met. When she arrived she began sharing her burden with people in the area, and soon one small door was opened and then another and another. Soon the children began arriving, and an orphanage was opened where many fatherless children were raised to serve the Lord in Cuba. Souls led to the Lord through her ministry late in her life are still ministering in active congregations in Cuba and surrounding countries today.

—Bro. James Bell

AUGUST 18, 2019

LOVING, PEACEABLE PEOPLE

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

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

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

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

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

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

Romans 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

Philippians 2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

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

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

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

James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

MEMORY VERSE: Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. —**Matthew 5:9**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: From the beginning of His teachings, Jesus emphasized that His followers should be people who loved one another, made peace and spread goodwill wherever they lived.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:9 “Without dissimulation”: without hypocrisy;

unfeigned; sincere; genuine; without hidden selfish agendas.

Romans 12:10 “Kindly affectioned”: lover of family; tenderly loving. This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament.

Romans 12:19 “Rather give place unto wrath”: “The wrath spoken of, as the following words show, is that of God; to give place to God’s wrath means to leave room for it, not to take God’s proper work out of His hands” (*Expositor’s New Testament*).

Romans 12:20 “Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head”: from Proverbs 25:21-22. “In the Bible lands...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*).

Philippians 2:1 “Bowels”: The inward parts (heart, lungs, liver); figuratively, the emotions; the heart; affections; seat of the feelings. “Mercies”: pity; compassion.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the commands given by Jesus and the apostles, it is easy to compile a clear outline of the behavior, speech and attitudes of a follower of the Lord. Clearly at the top are the instructions for being a peacemaker and a person of tender love for everyone.

Jesus offered His own life as a paradigm. “As I have loved you” is to me a most challenging scripture! How did He love? He “loved them unto the end.” He “laid down His life” for them. He loved us “while we were yet sinners.”

In Romans 12, Paul gives a practical to-do list to the Gentile Christians. He emphasized genuine love between believers; a love typically found within a close family circle—tender, sympathetic, compassionate. He used the word picture of sharing the family coals of fire to light another needy person’s hearth as an example of

loving, peaceful deeds lighting the fires of comfort, hope and well-being in the lives of people around us, even those who are hostile and undeserving. In chapter 14 he was dealing with the differences that came up between Jewish Christians and newly converted Gentiles who had grown up worshipping idols and attending their feasts. The way to bridge the gap between varying religious convictions was to seek to make peace and build up, rather than to tear down and promote divisions.

We again find Christ's love used for an example in Paul's epistle to the Philippians. "Do you find receptive fellowship, comfort, and consolation in Jesus?" He asks. "Then go and copy that in your own lives. Have the same attitude toward each other."

That is the way of the wisdom from above, we are reminded by James; instead of being haughty or demeaning toward others, true wisdom has pure motives, peaceable ways and a gentle tone. A person who has true wisdom is not hard to approach; to him or her there is no such thing as a "dumb question." All people are treated equally and with genuine respect. This verse (James 3:18) states an important truth: you can't reap beautiful fruit without sowing beautiful seed, and it can only be sown or grow to maturity in an atmosphere of peace.

Our memory verse repeats the theme: to be like God, to be His son or daughter, to follow Jesus' example, a person must be a peacemaker.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. What was the standard of loving one another given by Jesus in John's gospel?
2. Discuss the qualities of the love mentioned in Romans 12.
3. What commands were given referring to living peaceably in Romans 12 and 14?
4. Give the word picture used to show how to treat an enemy.
5. In Philippians, what are the qualities found in Christ that we are to show to each other?
6. What are the qualities of the wisdom from above listed in James?
7. What quality makes us known as children of God?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

From the days of trouble and hardship within King David's reign comes a story that teaches a great lesson about the value and wisdom of being peaceable. There had been strife and bloodshed in David's family after his sin with Bathsheba. A man had risen up against David and David's military captain, Joab, pursued after him until he reached the town which harbored the fugitive. Joab and his posse of men, vengeful past the point of reason, began to attack the town. A woman called to them from within the wall. She identified herself as "one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel" and a "mother in Israel." Through her wise counsel and courageous intervention, the entire city was spared and only the traitor was executed.

Far from being weak-spined or cowardly, the peaceable, loving saint of God uses divine wisdom that has pure, unselfish motives and gentle tones to diffuse anger, strife and bloodshed. This has been the case in the history of the church. When the professing church apostatized and became militant, fighting crusades with carnal weapons and shedding the blood of her enemies, true saints of God quietly, in the background, espoused methods of nonresistance and peace.

Following this example, what can we learn in 2019? Should we support causes that are violent? Riot or demonstrate in the streets? Enter into strife, debate or lawsuits? Must we resort to force or carnal means to promote the gospel of Christ? Measuring our words and actions up against the standard of love and peace of Christ will be a safe and sure guide every time.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Stanley E. Dickson
July 2, 1945 — May 22, 2009

"And the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . ." Isaiah 11:6. The wolf and the leopard in the natural sense would kill and feed off of the lamb rather than lie down together. This properly depicts our unholy nature before salvation: vicious and devouring. These characteristics are changed

after salvation. We become as meek and gentle as a lamb or kid. What was once a malicious and carnal creature becomes a peaceable, loving child of God.

Bro. Stanley Dickson had such a transformation when he repented of his sins and gave his heart to the Lord. The Lord truly made in him a new creature. Bro. Stanley enjoyed his salvation and loved serving the Lord. He was as the man putting his hand to the plow and he never looked back.

Bro. Stanley would say that before salvation he thought he loved his wife and family. After salvation he found a deeper meaning to the love that he had for his wife and family. In fact, Bro. Stanley loved everybody. His exuberant personality and joyful spirit were a magnetic force to all who knew him. His wise counsel and unflinching love sustained many through difficult times. Bro. Stanley was very personable and we shared many good conversations. We prayed together and enjoyed sweet fellowship with one another.

Bro. Stanley left behind a wonderful example that zealously affects us even now. We are spurred onward to gain the same prize that he now enjoys. We are honored and grateful to be encompassed by so great a cloud of witnesses. God is faithful through His precious word, His Holy Spirit and His loving, peaceable people.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

AUGUST 25, 2019

A GENEROUS PEOPLE

Leviticus 25:35 And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

36 Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee.

37 Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase.

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:

8 But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shall surely

lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

9 Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

10 Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

11 For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

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

Psalm 112:5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

II Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: An important part of the law of God to His people was the command to be merciful to the poor and needy brother or stranger. Both in the Old and New Testaments, God's true people were characterized by their generosity to those in need or to the work of God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Leviticus 25:36 "Usury" or "Increase": interest on a loan.

Deuteronomy 15:9 “Wicked”: worthless; same as the name *Belial*. “The seventh year, the year of release is at hand”: The seventh year was when God commanded the Israelites to release all debts. A covetous thought would have been, “The year of release is next year! I will have to release my brother from paying back what I have loaned him. I’ll never get it back. I’ll hold off loaning to him until after the sabbath release; that way he’ll have six years to work and I’ll be sure to get my money back.” “Thine eye be evil”: “An evil eye signifies a covetous disposition. See the same form of expression used by our Lord in the same sense (Matthew 6:23): If thine eye be evil—If thou be a covetous person. Evil eye is by our Lord opposed to single eye, i. e., a person of a liberal, benevolent mind. Covetousness darkens the soul; liberality and benevolence enlighten it” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Psalm 41:1 “Considereth”: “It is not a sudden impression at the sight of a person in distress, which obliges a man to give something for the relief of the sufferer, that constitutes the merciful character. It is he who considers the poor; who endeavors to find them out; who looks into their circumstances; who is in the habit of doing so; and actually, according to his power and means, goes about to do good; that is the merciful man, of whom God speaks with such high approbation, and to whom he promises a rich reward” (*Clarke’s Commentary*)

II Corinthians 8:1 “We do you to wit”: we make known to you; we want you to know; we inform you.

LESSON BACKGROUND

You will notice that in the civil law to God’s people, underlying it all was this dual command: love the LORD your God and love your neighbor as yourself. There were many specific commands concerning the treatment of others—brothers, neighbors, servants, strangers, and the poor, including the command to let the poor glean the corners of the fields or any dropped grain, and leaving the sabbath year’s harvest for the poor (Leviticus 19). God’s people were ever a generous, hospitable people when their hearts were turned fully toward the Lord and He was the object of their worship and love. When the tabernacle was being built in the wilderness, the

willing-hearted, both men and women, gave liberally of their gold and jewels. At the dedication, they brought wagons and oxen for the sacrifices (Exodus 35 and Numbers 7).

We also quote from Psalm 41 where David wrote about showing mercy to the poor, listing eight different promises to the one who showed mercy. David loved God and liberally gave gold and silver out of his own treasuries for the building of the temple (I Chronicles 29).

After the captivity, the Israelites liberally brought in gifts for the rebuilding of the temple. Psalm 112 is believed to have been written during that time.

Sad to say, when God's people would leave off loving and worshipping God fervently, there was a slacking off of their generous spirit and deeds of compassion, as well. The prophets sent messages of judgment for their idolatry and lack of mercy and liberality.

Jesus directed many of His commandments toward deeds of mercy, compassion and benevolence, as in the passage from Luke's gospel. He pointed out and commended examples of liberality, including the compassionate Samaritan who cared for the assaulted man on the road to Jericho (Luke 10) and the widow who cast into the treasury all she had in comparison to the Pharisees, who gave but little out of their rich stores (Luke 21).

In the early church, the believers shared in common everything they had and continually sent relief to the widows or poor brethren in other cities, as in the scripture from II Corinthians. The Caesarean centurion, Cornelius, was commended as a man who feared God, prayed continually, and gave "much alms" to the people (Acts 10). Tabitha, or Dorcas, was a woman at Joppa who was "full of good works and almsdeeds" (Acts 9:36-41). When she died the people mourned and showed Peter the clothes which she had made for the needy. In answer to Peter's prayer, God resurrected her, to the joy of the saints and widows who wept for her. In Paul's writings to the saints, there are many balanced teachings about giving to the needy.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Give several examples of commands concerning the treatment of the poor in the Old Testament law.
2. Can you explain the "wicked thought" concerning the Sabbath

year?

3. What verse in the New Testament echoes the thought, “Thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest,” in Deuteronomy 15:10?
4. What does it mean to “consider” the poor?
5. Give several New Testament examples of the generosity of God’s people.
6. In both Old and New Testaments, what are some ways God’s people responded to needs for God’s sanctuary or the work of compassion for the needy?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When you consider it, hasn’t your life been blessed by the compassionate, generous deeds of the saints of God? I can think of many gifts that have personally been given to me; help, hard labor, financial support just when it was needed, or a delicious meal. As Jesus directed, many times the gift was anonymous or given simply and very quietly without fanfare.

In the early church, the disciples soon ran into problems as they gave support to many widows. Paul wrote to Timothy about the need to make sure the recipients were truly deserving and “indeed” qualified for help. In the Old Testament examples, the poor who were given the leftover grain from the harvest were also to come to the field to pick it up from the ground; thus teaching them the necessity of working for their food. So there is prudence and balance in these teachings. Discernment and wisdom must be used as we seek to fulfil the spirit of Christ’s commands to “give.”

At first glance, it would seem that the community the first believers shared was a form of the type of government that enforces financial equality. However, it differed in that it was voluntary and motivated entirely by the Spirit of God’s love dwelling in the believers; and that your “abundance” that was a supply for my “want” was just as easily turned around and reciprocated when I had the abundance which became the supply for your want. When we are filled with God’s Spirit, it will work just that way, without an outside government to coerce it; nor is there any “working the system” to obtain something for myself at the expense of another.

We can see again how the pilgrim/stranger heart that doesn't set its affections on the riches of this world, lives a life of faith, earnest prayer and self denial, is zealous and untiring in its efforts to win souls, and manifests the gentle love and peaceable spirit of Christ, is the heart that reaches out its hands to the poor and needy and quietly gives the help, food or financial means to the work of the gospel. This is the heart of the true saint.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

John Wesley
June 17, 1703 — March 2, 1791

John Wesley is most well-known for his evangelism and writings as the co-founder, along with his brother Charles, of the Methodist movement in England, which re-introduced to the world the biblical concepts of sanctification.

However, not many are aware that he lived a radical life of Christian giving and stewardship based on convictions he first felt while studying as a student at Oxford University. His family was not poor, and he was able to buy nearly anything he needed; however, one day a maid knocked on his door and he noticed that her clothing was little protection against the cold. He reached into his pocket for some money to give her for a coat, but found that his pockets were nearly empty. Convicted for how frivolously he had used his Master's money, he resolved then to limit his expenses so that he would have more money to give to the poor. The first year, with an income of £30, he lived on £28 and had £2 to give away. The next year, his income doubled and he continued to live on £28, and gave £32 away. In year three, with an income of £90, he lived on that same £28 and gave 62 pounds away. Eventually, as his income rose into the thousands of pounds, he gave away the surplus to the poor. One year, with an income of £1,400, he gave away all save £30!

Wesley often preached that Christians shouldn't merely tithe, but give everything to God's work once family and creditors were cared for. When he died in 1791 (he had no children), the majority of the 30,000 pounds [that would be 38,100 US dollars today] he had attained in his life had been given away, save for a few coins found in his pockets and dresser drawers.

Quotes Pertaining to His Generosity and Stewardship:

“[When I die] if I leave behind me ten pounds...you and all

mankind [may] bear witness against me, that I have lived and died a thief and a robber.”

“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can.”

—Bro. Fari Matthews

SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

PEOPLE OF PURE SPEECH

Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Leviticus 19:12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.

Leviticus 24:15 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.

Matthew 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

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

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not

convenient: but rather giving of thanks.

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

Titus 2:6 Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded.

7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

James 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

MEMORY VERSE: Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

—James 3:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Scripture clearly teaches the reverence, truthfulness, kindness and purity of the speech of God’s holy people, who are to be a pattern of good works before a world filled with ungodly speech—swearing, profanity, foolishness, impurity and hatred.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 20:7 “In vain”: falsely; to no good purpose; worthlessly. “The third commandment concerns the manner of worship, that it be with all possible reverence and seriousness. All false oaths are forbidden. All light appealing to God, all profane cursing, is a horrid breach of this command. It matters not whether the word of God, or sacred things, all such-like things break this commandment, and there is no profit, honour, or pleasure in them. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (*Matthew Henry Commentary*).

Leviticus 19:12 “Profane”: from a word which means *to pierce, bore, or wound*; (A form of this word is in Isaiah 53:5, “He was wounded for our transgressions”); desecrate; violate; pollute.

Leviticus 24:15 “Curse”: to be light; swift; trifling; to make

despicable; to make light; to bring contempt or dishonor.

Leviticus 24:16 “Blaspheme”: to pierce or bore through; designate; puncture with holes; to prick, taunt or curse.

Matthew 5:33 “Forswear”: swear falsely; commit perjury.

Matthew 5:34 “Swear”: take oath.

Matthew 5:37 “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay”: “That is, a positive affirmation, or negation, according to your knowledge of the matter concerning which you are called to testify. Do not equivocate; mean what you assert, and adhere to your assertion” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Ephesians 4:29 “Corrupt”: rotten; putrid. “Speech offensive to the hearers, or calculated to infect them with sin; and is in direct opposition to that which is seasoned with salt, and is recommended (Colossians 4:6) as tending to preserve persons from corruption” (*Benson Commentary*).

Ephesians 5:4 “Filthiness”: obscene; indecent; base. “Foolish talking”: “buffoonery, ridicule, or what tends to expose another to contempt” (*Clarke’s Commentary*). “Vain speech, unprofitable to the hearers” (*Matthew Poole’s Commentary*). “Jesting”: from a word meaning to turn; versatile, easily turned, nimble-witted; witty; sharp. In a bad sense, low humor; coarse jesting. “This would be well understood in sensual, frivolous Ephesus; a light, bantering, jesting kind of talk, seasoned with *double entendres* [a word or phrase open to two interpretations, one of which is usually risqué or indecent] and obscene allusions, very pernicious in its moral effect. There is no reason to suppose that the apostle meant to condemn all play of humor, which is a Divine gift, and which in moderation has its own useful place as a means of refreshing and invigorating the spirit; it was the jesting associated with ribaldry that drew his reproof” (*Pulpit Commentary*). “Which are not convenient”: unseemly; not befitting saints. “They do not come up to the proper standard; they are utterly improper in themselves, and highly unbecoming in those who profess Christianity” (*Clarke’s Commentary*). These three words—filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting—from this verse were only used this one time in the New Testament.

Colossians 4:6 “Seasoned with salt”: grace or wisdom which seasons our words, preventing corruption.

Titus 2:8 “Sound”: wholesome; healthy; pure.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have cited several Old Testament passages in our lesson for the sake of establishing the fact that God called His people away from the wickedness of the idolatrous world to a higher way of life. These verses give us His mind concerning our speech, and especially the importance He placed on absolute truthfulness, reverence for sacred things, and purity. They present quite a list of prohibitions: taking God's name in vain, swearing falsely by His name, profaning His name, blaspheming His name, cursing Him.

In the New Testament, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus took several "old time" commandments to a deeper level, expanding them not to just outward behavior, but to that which was in the heart of a person. One such example was His command about swearing. The carnal trend among the Jews was to allow or justify falsehood, deceit, or half-truths by citing objects, such as the heavens or the earth, or one's head, which, they believed, in some way absolved them from their oath and kept them from being charged with perjury. Jesus dealt with this and clearly taught that the issue was unswerving honesty and integrity in all matters.

Historically, Christians who endeavored to live closely by the Apostles' teachings took Jesus' prohibition to mean "all" swearing, and therefore would not swear, even in a court of law. Among these were the Waldensians (Vaudois) and Anabaptists of the middle centuries, who even suffered persecution and death at the hands of the Roman Catholic priests and Inquisitors because they would not swear. Since the Church of God Reformation evolved directly from this line of believers, this view has been passed down to our day. I found revisiting this issue and reviewing the scripture passages both thought-provoking and challenging, and certainly worth our time to study and pray over the matter.

It would be impossible to present in one lesson all the scriptures that pertain to the subject of godly speech. They are all over the Bible. My objective was to present enough information from the Old and New Testaments to clearly show the Bible standard God has required of His people throughout the ages. In this lesson are verses from Paul's epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and to Titus; all speak directly to how careful, pure and wholesome the speech of saints of God should be. James uses nearly the very words of Jesus in

Matthew 5. The writings of the Anabaptists in *Martyr's Mirror* often cite James' letter and the Sermon on the Mount as they encouraged one another to be faithful to the careful, godly way of life taught by the scriptures.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Name the kinds of speech prohibited by Scripture.
2. Explain what it means for “yea” to be “yea” and “nay” to be “nay.”
3. Explain what the scripture means by “salt” seasoning our words.
4. What Christian groups in church history were martyred for their refusal to swear?
5. What is the vision of God's heart for His people that we can see in these scriptures?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We live in a world where not only the ungodly and sinners use language which profanes and misuses God's holy name, but more and more “Christian” people are treating God's name and sacred matters carelessly as well. Looking into God's Word as our guide for conversation and behavior, we can see a pure and holy standard that was lifted up by ancient Bible saints and those in the centuries since then. This is a precious heritage passed down to us by precept and example, and we don't intend to lose it.

One way people compromise this standard is by justifying themselves that they don't SAY God's actual name or use the actual WORD that curses someone. They use substitutions; abbreviations; words that sound almost-like; “mild” profanity that “really doesn't MEAN any harm;” and disrespectful slang that is often off-color.

We ought to pray earnestly for a vision of the godly conversation God wants His people to employ! What kind of speech would be fitting for the saint who lives a life of faith and earnest prayer; who doesn't “fit in” with the world, who is zealous for the salvation of souls, meek, loving and peaceable to all people, pure and chaste in mind and body and “salted” with the Spirit and wisdom of God?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Fred Pruitt
October 4, 1881 — June 6, 1963

The fifth son in a family of seven boys and one girl, Fred Pruitt grew up in Southeastern Kansas with very little religious training, finishing school in the eighth grade. He was tenderhearted as a boy, but soon involved himself in the worldly ways of smoking, drinking, gambling, dancing and swearing. At age sixteen he was baptized and joined the Christian church, but realizing he was still no different from the sinners around him, he quit professing Christianity altogether.

God continued to deal with him, even after he married at age twenty-four and moved with his sixteen-year old wife, Mary, to a homestead in New Mexico. After six or seven years of hard work, the loss of two infants, drought, poverty and hardship, he became deathly ill. A Methodist man spoke to him about God, and although he knew very little about prayer, he promised God he would do better if God would get him out of his trouble. The next day the pain in his body began to leave, beginning at his arm and going out of his body through his toes. Weak and crippled, he began to try to carry out his promise to God. He tried to quit smoking, but didn't have the strength. He tried to figure out which church was right, but became dark and confused. Some years later he heard the song, "He is Just the Same Today," and still later, heard Bro. George Harmon preach about the church of God. Attending monthly meetings at the school house, Fred tried still harder to quit the sins of which he was convicted. He longed to quit cursing and swearing. He would start to curse, then stop and ask God to forgive him. He wished God would strike him dumb so he would never swear again!

Finally, Fred and Mary confessed their sins, believed in Christ, and received peace with God. God led them by His Spirit to be baptized, and for over two months he rejoiced in the wonderful peace and freedom from sin. He began to realize his need for more power over sin after he yielded one day to the temptation to smoke his pipe again. He prayed constantly. God revealed to him the need for a pure heart and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and as he constantly sought for that experience, God soon gave him a definite answer and a lasting victory over sin.

Bro. Fred was called to preach the gospel, and soon God showed

him a vision of the beautiful church of God. He was also called to move to Guthrie Oklahoma, where he began helping with the publishing of a gospel paper. Soon the call from God led him to begin writing articles proclaiming the truths of the gospel. He established the publishing work which printed tracts, books and the paper, *Faith and Victory*. Bro. Fred continued to preach and publish the gospel, writing his experiences in a book, *God's Gracious Dealings*.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

SEPTEMBER 8, 2019

PEOPLE OF TRUTH

Exodus 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. (Also Exodus23:1)

Leviticus 19:11 Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

35 Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

Deuteronomy 25:13 Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

14 Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

15 But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

16 For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Joshua 24:14a Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth.

Psalms 15:1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

Zephaniah 3:13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

John 3:21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Ephesians 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (Also Colossians 3:9-10.)

1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.

Revelation 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Also Revelation 21:8)

MEMORY VERSE: These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood ... A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

—**Proverbs 6:16-19**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: One of the ten commandments was a prohibition of lying, while other Old and New Testament teachings reveal God's will that His people should be a people of truth, sincerity and integrity; lying or hypocrisy will keep a person out of heaven.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 20:16 "Thou shalt not bear false witness": "This forbids speaking falsely on any matter, lying, equivocating, and any way devising or designing to deceive our neighbour. Speaking unjustly against our neighbour, to hurt his reputation. Bearing false witness against him, or in common conversation slandering, backbiting, and tale-bearing; making what is done amiss, worse than it is, and in any way endeavouring to raise our reputation upon the ruin of our neighbour's" (*Matthew Henry Commentary*).

Leviticus 19:35 “Meteyard”: measurements of length or surface, such as the cubit or foot. “Weight”: measurements of anything that is weighed, such as a pound or ton. “Measure”: measures of capacity, such as the biblical homer or ephah; or our gallon or bushel.

Deuteronomy 25:13 “Divers weights”: “stones of unequal weights, the lighter to sell with, the heavier to buy with” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

Deuteronomy 25:16; Proverbs 12:22; Proverbs 6:16
“Abomination”: morally disgusting; an abhorrence; detestable.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The bag of “divers weights” can be an object lesson for our study today. In buying and selling, the ancients used stones for their standards of measuring. Having a standard that was the same for the buyer as well as the seller kept a business transaction honest. As the Israelites increased in commerce, Solomon and the prophets saw the need to re-emphasize the concept to keep them mindful of God’s requirement for honesty. “According to the authorities during the second Temple, he who gives false weight or measure, like the corrupt judge, is guilty of the following five things. He (1) defiles the land; (2) profanes the name of God; (3) causes the Shechinah to depart; (4) makes Israel perish by the sword, and (5) to go into captivity. They appointed public overseers to inspect the weights and measures all over the country; they prohibited weights to be made of iron, lead, or other metal liable to become lighter by wear or rust, and ordered them to be made of polished rock, of glass, &c, and enacted the severest punishment for fraud” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*).

The faithful, absolutely just, equal, and true character of God, who “cannot lie,” and in whom is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” in whose mouth was found “no guile,” who dwells in unapproachable light, and “is light, and in Him is no darkness at all,” rightly demands sincerity, honesty and truth from those who would fellowship Him and dwell with Him in eternity. He could do nothing else; the scriptures are absolutely clear; the examples in Bible history cannot be denied.

The ninth commandment, which was repeated continuously in

various forms throughout the Pentateuch; the appeal from Joshua to the Israelites to serve Jehovah in sincerity and truth; the proclamations in the Psalms and Proverbs and the judgments pronounced by the prophets; Jesus' support of the commandments and condemnation of the Pharisees for their hypocrisy; the apostles' letters to the churches enjoining honest and truthful behavior and speech; and the words of Jesus in Revelation listing those who would have their place in eternal fire—in all of these we can see a clear and holy standard that is non-negotiable.

Actual examples from Scripture are clear as well; telling or living a lie was always discovered and punished. From Achan's cover-up to Ananias and Sapphira's deception, man's attempts at lying to God have proven fatal. Likewise, honest, faithful persons with integrity and "no guile" were always recognized, blessed and commended by God.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Which commandment forbids lying?
2. Can you explain about the "just weights"?
3. In Deuteronomy and Proverbs, what word was used to express God's displeasure toward lying?
4. Who dwells in God's holy hill?
5. Who is God's delight?
6. Describe the behavior of God's "remnant."
7. How is one to worship God?
8. What is the eternal fate of the liar?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Our lesson today is very closely related to the teaching on purity of speech. At the heart of Jesus' "let your yea be yea" message is His standard of absolute honesty.

How may we apply the lesson to the everyday life of saints today? In a world filled with deception—acceptance by even "Christian" people of "little white lies," covetous, dishonest business dealings everywhere from neighborhood car salesmen to powerful pharmaceutical corporations, hypocrisy in religious and government

leaders, bribery and corruption in the judicial system, and traditional holiday celebrations based on lies to children about imaginary characters—God is still calling for His people to raise the standard of true and honest living.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Charles Ebert Orr
May 5, 1861 — September 22, 1933

Charles Orr was converted at age 28 in 1889, while he was a teacher in Tampico, Indiana. In 1891 he met D. S. Warner, who held a meeting in a school house near Charles' home in southern Indiana. Bro. Warner encountered much opposition from the community during this meeting, and Charles was impressed by his gentle spirit and the clearness of his teachings. He also spoke of rooming with Bro. Warner during a ten-night debate he held with a Seventh-Day Adventist preacher, and being powerfully influenced by Bro. Warner's fervent prayer life, writing his experience from Everett, Washington, upon Bro. Warner's death in 1895.

Bro. Charles also was called to minister, evangelizing throughout the Midwest and pastoring at Federalsburg, Maryland, from 1898-1912. He was a man of deep meditation, continuous prayer and a high personal standard of holiness. He wrote several books, songs, such as "Savior, Lead Me" (#137, *ELS*), and many poems. His burden to uphold the Bible standards which had so convicted him led him to publish *Christian Conduct* in 1903, as he began to see changes in the Church of God movement. In 1910, still disturbed by the changes, such as racial segregation and worldliness, he began to publish the *Herald of Truth* periodical, which attracted a following of people like himself, who were grieved because the leadership of the Church of God movement was moving away from its former teachings, and took a harsh, critical stand against "compromise." Bro. Fred Pruitt was one such seeker, and he prayed that God would show him which paper taught the truth—the *Gospel Trumpet* (Anderson) or the *Herald of Truth*. He felt God showed him that both were headed toward spiritual destruction, and that he should keep following the Holy Spirit.

In time, Bro. Orr ceased publication of the *Herald* and joined back with Anderson until 1926. In 1928, now pastor at Hammond,

Louisiana, Bro. Orr was still searching for balance and began another publication, *The Path of Life*. A picture published in Bro. Pruitt's book, *God's Gracious Dealings*, shows him with other ministers at a campmeeting in Shawnee, Oklahoma in 1928. In 1932 he was led to merge his paper with the *Faith and Victory* (published by Bro. Fred Pruitt). While visiting in Guthrie, Oklahoma, in September of 1933, he died after a few weeks' illness. He was predeceased by a first wife, with whom he had five children, who, along with his second wife, Sadie, survived him.

The following excerpt is from Bro. Orr's book, *Christian Conduct*, on the subject of honesty in business: "Many men are prone to misrepresent property they are offering for sale. For instance, a horse may be said to be seven years old by his owner when he knows he is ten. He may represent him to be sound in every way when he knows he is diseased, and for this very reason he desires to sell him. Of course, no man can do these things and be a Christian. The Bible says, 'Lie not one to another' (Colossians 3:9). 'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor' (Ephesians 4:25). The Christian not only tells the truth as is asked him concerning his horse, but he also tells of all his defects though he be unquestioned. If a horse should be in some way diseased or blemished unknown to and unsuspected by the purchasing party, the owner, instead of seeking to hide his defect, frankly tells, if he is a Christian, all about the diseased and blemished condition. This is doing as he would be done unto, and is Christian conduct."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

SEPTEMBER 15, 2019

MEEK AND HUMBLE PEOPLE

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

Matthew 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your

Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

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

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

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

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

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.

James 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

1 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.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: After a long background of dealing with a proud and stubborn people, and having many examples in the Old Testament of God's mercy on those who humbled themselves, when Jesus taught His disciples about His church, He showed by precept and example that humility was an important quality He wanted His people to have.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the days before the exodus and Mount Sinai, God's ways of dealing with mankind were fairly simple: those who believed and called upon Him He honored and guided; the proud idolaters who never sought Him perished in their unbelief. The children of Israel who had been slaves in Egypt for several hundred years were down-trodden and depressed in spirit; after their deliverance He had to establish and then constantly reassure their faith and confidence. It was after He gave them His law and led them through the wilderness

into Canaan that He warned them to beware of pride—prosperity and progress could cause them to forget Him and become self-sufficient.

The years of Israel's kings provide many examples of man's pride that brought him low and God's ways of humbling him—Saul, Solomon, Ahab, Naaman, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Asa; then Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar in the time of the captivity. The prophets pleaded, time and time again, for the people of God to repent of their pride, which had not only caused them to forsake God but also to oppress the poor. A strain of truth began to shine clearly: God longed for a people who would be meek and contrite so He could dwell in them, and in the Messiah's kingdom, those whom He redeemed would be lowly, obedient to His commands and humbly endeavoring to dwell together in unity.

John came preaching repentance and contrition; Jesus followed with teaching after teaching against the arrogance of the Pharisees and a call to meekness and humility. He showed by example—modestly retiring when the crowds wanted to crown Him king, taking the place of a slave and washing His disciples' feet, attributing all of His works and power to His Father, humbling Himself to the death of a criminal—the truly humble life. The disciples struggled with conceit and ambition during Jesus' ministry, but after Pentecost, the fire of the Holy Spirit replaced their self-centeredness with a godly humility. Their teachings echoed the call of their Master. As the Gentiles turned to Christ and worshipped with the believing Jews in one body, humility, as the prophets had foretold, was a characteristic with which the saints were marked. And it remained so wherever people yielded soul and body wholly to God and endeavored to follow the example of Christ.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Share an example from the Old Testament that shows how an individual was blessed when he was humble, but fell into transgression when he was lifted up.
2. In whom did God long to dwell?
3. Share an example of Jesus' own meekness and humility.

4. Share different ways in which God is calling His people to humble themselves.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It is now almost two thousand years after Pentecost, and God still has a people who are meek and humble and who tremble at His word (Isaiah 66:2). Where are they, and what are they like today?

A few clues are in the scriptures in our lesson today; there are many more in the Bible. God's humble people, as we have learned in previous lessons, still do not belong to this world, still walk by faith, and are a people of fervent prayer. All of those things are actually a part of humility as well. So are the qualities of peaceableness, zeal for souls, purity and honesty. Humility just goes right along with the self-denying lifestyle of a true man or woman of God.

Since the true saint does not love the world with its lusts and pride, he or she will not choose the ostentatious, made-for-show lifestyle; the drive to make a statement, appear wealthy, or "wow" the neighbors is not what motivates the saint of God. When you think about it, when the heart is filled with these holy characteristics, it just makes sense that the apostles forbade the wearing of jewelry and costly array, and admonished the women to adorn themselves in modest apparel, displaying a meek (humble) and quiet spirit. The men are exhorted to not love the world, but be a pattern of good works, including sobriety, purity and sincerity.

Consider the example Jesus gave us, with a command to follow, of washing the disciples' feet. This pattern of humility has been a legacy of God's true people down through the ages. Wherever Christianity became formal and lifeless, this practice ceased. Where people sought to follow the scriptures, this practice flourished.

An humble saint doesn't involve himself in quarrels and strife, but is willing to bear reproach, and take wrong rather than do wrong. He or she doesn't seek for honor and prestige. There is a meekness in true wisdom, and a humility with spiritual boldness and strength.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Isaac Chandler
April 20, 1912 — July 11, 1971

He was reared on a farm in Oklahoma. At 14 he was left with the responsibility of supporting his widowed mother and younger sister. His mother, a devout woman, lived a godly example and taught him the Word of God and the value of prayer.

This influence would follow him throughout his life. As he would herd his family's goats through the woods, he would find a place to pray. His choice was a sandstone near a stand of trees. Here he prayed daily to the extent that the imprint of his knees was worn into the sandstone. This faithful humbling before God continued throughout his life.

Bro. Isaac was known throughout the community as a man of faith. He would spend days in fasting and prayer and there are many instances where God heard and answered.

He was six years old when he gave his heart to the Lord and lived a victorious life. At age 14 he began teaching Sunday School in the community and started his preaching ministry at age 20.

By 1964 he was an active pastor, evangelist, and father of more than a dozen children, and lived in Bakersfield, California. He traveled extensively for the cause of the gospel, putting 100,000 miles on his vehicles annually. He lived a life of faith, humbly trusting God for the support of his family, and for the gospel work.

One evening he needed to catch a flight but had no funds to do so. He had a check that needed to be cashed but it was after hours and that department was closed. He went into Mayfair Market to speak with the manager to see if they would cash it anyway. While he waited, the cashier had a heart attack and collapsed. The ambulance was called but before it arrived Bro. Isaac asked if he could pray for her. He did and the Lord revived and healed her. The manager asked what he needed, he showed the check, the manager cashed it and Bro. Isaac had the funds to take the flight. We have a rich heritage of many such miraculous answers to prayer.

My father's guidance as a parent and pastor was: "As long as you are able to get on your knees to pray, you should do that."

—Alice Chandler Johnson (daughter)

SEPTEMBER 22, 2019

PEOPLE OF LIGHT

Judges 5:31 So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

Psalms 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

Psalms 89:15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

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

Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Matthew 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.

Romans 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Ephesians 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.

Philippians 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

I Thessalonians 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

MEMORY VERSE: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the

light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. —I John 1:7

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God’s people have ever been those who walk in light, are filled with God’s light, and who are a beacon of light to the world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Judges 5:31 “Them that love him”: “Not he who ‘believes that God is,’ and comes to Him with formal service and an alienated or negligent heart; not he who recognises the duty of worship, and discharges it because his conscience pricks him, but has no buoyancy within bearing him upwards towards the object of his love; not he who cowers before the dark shadow which some call God; but he who, knowing, trusts, and who, knowing and trusting ‘the love which God hath to us,’ pulses back the throbs of a recipient heart, and loves Him in return—he, and he only, is a worshipper. Let us learn the lesson that Deborah learnt below the palm-trees of Lapidoth, and if we want to understand what a religious man is, recognise that he is a man who loves God” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*).

Psalm 89:15 “Blessed”: happy. “The joyful sound”: the shouting and music that accompanied the feasts of Israel; an allusion either to a shout made upon a victory gained or to the jubilee trumpet, which proclaimed liberty and a restoration of inheritance. “The light of thy countenance”: “The favour and lovingkindness of God manifested in that gracious face which He turns to His servants” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*).

Proverbs 4:18 “Shining”: brightness; splendor; as the light of dawn. “Shineth more and more”: literally, going and shining; a common Hebrew idiom denoting progression or increase. “Unto the perfect day”: high noon, when the sun seems to stand still.

Isaiah 60:1-3 A prophecy of Zion, the dwelling place of God, the church of God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From the lips of Deborah, an Old Testament prophetess, comes a most sublime prophecy of those who love and worship God. It is the last portion of her song celebrating the military victory of General Barak over Sisera, the Canaanite captain, who was actually executed by Jael. Jael was a common tent-dweller who fed Sisera and invited him to rest in her tent, after which she put him to death. The verse compares the victory over Sisera to victory over all of God's enemies, but the thought about those who love God being like the sun points forward to prophecies in the Psalms, Isaiah, Daniel and their fulfillment when Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world."

The verse in Psalm 50 speaks of the origin of the "shining." It is truly God Himself, who indwells Zion, His people. This connects with the verse in Isaiah 60 where Zion, as a light to the world, was to arise and shine that light; it also goes on to say that "the LORD shall arise upon thee." Truly, as God is our light and shines *on* us, He also shines from *within* us, lighting the world *around* us! God lights our path at the beginning when we first trust in Him, but that light grows brighter and brighter as we grow in Him, as the verse in Proverbs shows us.

The apostle Paul's writings to the Romans, Ephesians and Thessalonians make us aware of the responsibility of being children of the light of God. There is reference to "armor," hence, a battle that is being fought between the forces of darkness and the army of light. Our walk then, he warns the Ephesians, is to be "as" children of light. The forces of darkness are called "a wicked and perverse nation" in Philippians, among whom we shine as lights. To the Thessalonians he speaks of the coming of the Lord being like a thief, by which the children of light, walking closely with the Lord of light, will not be entirely surprised. There are ways of darkness, such as drunkenness, of which the children of light are not to partake.

Our memory verse gives the precious promise that, if we walk in God's light, an inner cleansing by Jesus' blood takes place continually in our lives, keeping us pure and holy.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Those who love God will be like the _____.
2. What two things were told of Zion in Psalm 50:2?
3. What is the meaning of the “joyful sound” in Psalm 89:15 and how does it affect those who know it?
4. Daniel speaks of two things which cause the righteous to shine. What are they?
5. Jesus called Himself the “light of the world,” but He called His disciples that as well. Can you explain the meaning?
6. What is the environment in which we shine as lights?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

As we learn from Paul’s epistles to the Romans, Ephesians and Thessalonians, being children of light makes the people of God distinctly different from the world. This is not a difference, as the MaClaren quote in *Word Definitions* points out, of mere duty, formality or fear, but a natural consequence of the power or energy of the light within them. When you “know” the joyful sound of God’s trumpet call to spiritual freedom, when you have a brilliance within you that gets brighter as you mature in Him, and you walk in—advance in, obey, respond to—that light, it leads you out of the deeds you used to do when you were “darkness.”

When we need to know if something is “okay,” let us measure it against the light. Does it go along with the lifestyle of darkness or is it embraced by those walking in light? What is pure, holy, and chaste; true, honest and sincere; virtuous, noble and kind—is fitting for the children of the light. What is obscene, irreverent, suggestive, dishonest, hypocritical or self-centered or in any way caters to the earthly, sensual or devilish realm is of the darkness. People of God will not watch it, have affection for it, follow it or fellowship it because its origin is “the night.”

Jesus once warned that His followers must walk in the light while they have the light. If the light within us turns into darkness because we refuse to walk in it, how great is that darkness! Let us embrace and follow the Light, so it can shine out from us and illuminate the dark lives of people around us!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Ruby Bell
April 10, 1932 — April 6, 2003

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.” Psalm 97:11

It was my mother, Sis. Ruby Bell, who helped me seek the Lord to be saved. By her example she convinced me that there is a God who lives and loves us. Her attitude of kindness and forgiveness still brings back a challenge and sweet memories to me.

What are the chances of a little 14-year-old girl—living in the hills on a 40-acre farm in Arkansas, whose mother had died leaving her with no religious training or church affiliation—passing down a spiritual legacy to the next generation? One tragedy after another in Ruby Bell’s early life tore apart the family as she helped her three young siblings—one brother and two sisters—survive. It was several years later, after she had married and moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, that she found the Lord through a little church in her neighborhood.

The Scripture says, “light is sown for the righteous.” Where is it sown? It is sown at the crossroads and areas of trouble in our lives. It is sown in our desperate places of need. It is sown in our places of sorrow. It is sown at our places of temptation. Light doesn’t just appear by happenstance. It has been sown there years ago by our gracious heavenly Father who knows ahead what we will face. He sows it just when and where we need it to be. God’s light will continue to lead ordinary people like my mother to more and more light as we go through life. Praise God! On the crowning day we will be with the “the father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

My dear mother walked in the light she had, and when more light came she stepped up to it. Life was hard for her, but she stayed in the light of God, and He was her guide, as He led her out and to the true Church of God where there was no man rule. We each have the privilege to walk this way. We can expect light, understanding and clarity that will lead and guide us through every place if we need it. It will be beyond our human expectations. The key here is letting God know that we are needing and wanting His light.

—Bro. James Bell

SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

JOYFUL PEOPLE

II Chronicles 5:11 And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course:

12 Also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)

13 It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD;

14 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

Psalms 100:1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Psalms 149:2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand.

9b This honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

Isaiah 35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 65:18 But be ye glad rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

Nehemiah 12:42b And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer.

43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for

God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

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

MEMORY VERSE: Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. —**Isaiah 56:7**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Singing and joyful worship was a central part of Old Testament Israel; they were known by it. When they were carried away to Babylonian captivity, God prophesied that when He brought them back to their land, they would return with singing, which literally took place in Nehemiah's day and is spiritually fulfilled in the saints of the New Testament church of God, who are also known by their joyful songs of praise.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It's exciting to read of the wonderful cloud of glory that covered the Old Testament temple as the worshippers rejoiced and sang! Joy and singing has always been a part of the worship of Jehovah. Even the morning stars and the heavenly sons of God rejoiced and sang at the time of the creation of the earth (Job 38:7). There is "music" in the spheres; in the sunrise and the sunset (Psalm 65:8); the rivers and trees "clap their hands" and the mountains, deserts and the wilderness rejoice and sing (Psalm 98:8, Isaiah 35:1-2 and 55:12)

because of the presence of the Lord! (Truly, there is literal and spiritual meaning to this!) I've even read of studies done with dolphins and whales deep in ocean waters who "sing," and we know the song of the birds morning by morning is the joyful praise to their creator! The angel choir rejoiced at Jesus' birth, and the scenes in Revelation are alive with songs from a choir which cannot be numbered.

Our first verses are from the scene of the assembly at the dedication of the temple Solomon built. Everything had been put into place and the Levites began their praises to God. The one hundred and twenty priests are a type of the one hundred and twenty disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost; as they sang and prayed, the glory of the Lord came down.

We have referenced two different Psalms, but the entire book of Psalms, the Song of Solomon, and the Lamentations (songs of grief) of Jeremiah are all Old Testament "song books." There are songs in the writings of Moses, Isaiah, and several other prophets. The first of the Psalms we quote is the well-known Hundredth psalm, which is a call to worship. Psalm 149 is most likely a song from the time of the rebuilding of the temple after the return from captivity; the two-edged sword literally meaning the way the Jews rebuilt the temple: a weapon in one hand and a tool in the other. The spiritual fulfillment is certainly in the holy saints of God, who do spiritual battle with God's Word and praise and thanksgiving!

Isaiah 35 and 65 prophesied of the coming home to Zion with songs, joy and gladness. Nehemiah 12 gives the literal fulfillment, as the joy of the newly returned patriots rang out so loud and triumphantly their singing could be heard from a distance!

Our New Testament scriptures show how important singing was in the early church. As the saints endured Roman persecution, the subterranean tunnels known as the Catacombs were inscribed with songs of the saints who took refuge there.

Our memory verse is a prophecy from Isaiah about the true believers who would honor the spiritual sabbath—their lives were kept holy unto the Lord, and their offerings, which are identified in Hebrews as praise and thanksgiving, were acceptable unto God, who had made them joyful in His house of prayer, the church of God.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Describe the wonderful temple scene from II Chronicles.
2. How does Psalm 100 instruct us to serve the Lord?
3. To what does Psalm 149 refer?
4. How did the singers in Nehemiah's time sing?
5. What terms describe singing in the New Testament church?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

God's people have been a joyful people. It was His desire that as He delighted in His people, they would delight in Him. Zephaniah 3:17 speaks that God will "joy" over His people "with singing." So God has joy in us, He gives us joy, and we rejoice in Him!

So far in today's lesson, I have primarily spoken of the joy and gladness expressed in singing and worship. But the joy of the Lord is for everyday life as well. We have joy when we find His Word precious to our hearts (Jeremiah 15:16). He spoke His Word to us that His joy might remain in us, and be "full" (John 15:11). We "count it all joy" when we fall into temptations and troubles (James 1:2). With "joy" we draw water of life out of the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). The joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2). We have joy when lost sheep are brought to the Shepherd's fold (Luke 15:6, 32). He makes mothers to be joyful (Psalm 113:9), and husbands to live joyfully with their wives (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

This brings us to the end of this series of lessons. I have been so inspired with all the scriptures which describe the saints. I have been challenged as I have read the personal stories and studied the histories of God's people down through the years. There are many more character traits which we have not had time or space to cover. Maybe you can launch into a personal study which will inspire and challenge you as well. My earnest desire is to be a true child of God, and a part of that great number of holy saints of God!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

Etta Johnson Davis Brant
January 19, 1904 — October 26, 1992

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine. . ." Proverbs 17:22

It seems there should be a picture of a little lady beside this verse: Sis. Etta Johnson Davis Brandt. She was affectionately known as "Aunt Etta" to all; kindred or not. Joy seemed to overflow her small frame and her laughter was infectious.

Aunt Etta was a gracious hostess and the warmth of her hospitality was enjoyed by many, many people. It was not uncommon for there to be a steady flow of guests , especially young people, who stayed in her country home in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Aunt Etta's example brings a new dimension to selfless living. The riches that she shared were more than monetary. She gave the world her time, her energy, her home and her joy.

"A woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."
Proverbs 31:31

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

