

# Bible Lessons



*How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!  
and to get understanding rather to be chosen  
than silver!*

—Proverbs 16:16

**Volume 56, No. 2**  
**April • May • June**  
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*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 56    April • May • June    No. 2

## Table of Contents

DATE	LESSON TITLE	PAGE
Apr 7	Why Did Jesus Have to Die on the Cross?.....	1
Apr 14	Why Did Paul Die Daily?.....	5
Apr 21	Why was Paul Left with a Thorn in the Flesh? .....	10
Apr 28	Why Must Offenses Come?.....	14
May 5	Why Must I Forgive? .....	20
May 12	Why Can't I Choose My Own Path to Heaven? .....	25
May 19	Why did the New Testament Worship on Sunday?...	30
May 26	Why Did Jesus Speak in Parables? .....	34
Jun 2	Why Does God Put the First Last, and the Last First?	39
Jun 9	Why Could Not we Cast Him Out? .....	44
Jun 16	Why Did Peter Not Eat with the Gentile Brethren?...	49
Jun 23	Why did Paul Caution About Speaking in "Unknown Tongues?" .....	52
Jun 30	Why Must I Inherit All My Land? .....	59

*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.  
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## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR THE 2nd QUARTER, 2024

### WHY?

“Why?” is an age-old issue mankind has dealt with since Adam and Eve lived in the Garden of Eden. The devil tricked Eve with a question regarding the Tree of Life, which led to fear and doubt, which ended up in disobedience and sin – which in turn brought about spiritual and physical death.

Not all questions are bad. God created us with natural curiosity, without which we would not progress physically, emotionally, mentally, temporally, or spiritually. Dr. George Washington Carver asked many questions as a boy and never stopped asking them throughout his long life. With God’s help, he discovered over three hundred uses for the peanut! There are many other contributions attributed to Dr. Carver but suffice it to say every discovery and invention he made began with a question.

Many things regarding our spiritual well-being lead us to a question. With God’s help, we will discuss thirteen questions from the New Testament, since many questions from the Old Testament are answered in the New Testament.

*How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver! —Proverbs 16:16*

—Bro. Clifford Cole

### APRIL 7, 2024

#### WHY DID JESUS HAVE TO DIE ON THE CROSS?

**Mark 8:31** And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.

33 But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.

**Luke 9:22** The Son of man must suffer many things, and be

rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

**Luke 9:28** And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was white and* glistening.

30 And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

**Luke 24:13** And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

—*Matthew 26:39*

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The chief reason for Jesus coming to earth as a babe was to die for our sins. It was not easy on His flesh, but He understood that it was the only way to redeem mankind back to Himself. Jesus’ disciples held a dim view of Him suffering and dying, thinking it would be much better if Jesus took an easier path to kingship. After Jesus’ resurrection, it was still difficult for the disciples to process why He had to die. When talking with the two traveling to Emmaus, Jesus patiently went through all the Old Testament prophecies that foretold of His suffering and death. The truth was there all along, but the truth can sometimes hide in plain sight. May the Lord help us all to comprehend the truth He has for us!

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Mark 8:33b **“Savour”**: to have a sentiment or opinion; to be mentally disposed in a certain direction; to set the affection on; to be of the same mind (*Strong’s*).

Luke 9:31b **“Accomplish”**: to make replete, to finish, or to accomplish; to verify or coincide with a prediction; to fulfill; to perfect (*Strong’s*).

Luke 24:15b **“Reason”**: to investigate jointly; to discuss, dispute, enquire, and to question (*Strong’s*).

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

There are hundreds of prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament that tell of His birth, suffering, death, and resurrection. This painful path was the only way to ensure eternal life for you and me. We dare not contemplate what our fate would have been had Jesus “called twelve legions of angels” to deliver him from His hour of torment!

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did Peter respond the way he did when Jesus told the disciples that He must die?
2. What hindered the disciples from accepting the plan of salvation Jesus came to fulfill?
3. How was Jesus' rejection by the religious rulers part of the plan of salvation?
4. Referencing Moses and Elias talking with Jesus about "His decease which he should accomplish," how can death be an accomplishment?
5. How did Jesus' disciples and followers feel immediately after His crucifixion? Why?
6. In what state of mind were the two men on the road to Emmaus?
7. These two men did not recognize Jesus at first. How is that like our state of mind sometimes?
8. What did the two men mean they "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel?"

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

It is fitting that Jesus likened our spiritual life to seed that must fall into the ground and die before it can bring forth more of its kind (John 12:24). Why did God design seeds to die before they reproduce? Why did Jesus set up our spiritual life the same way? It is interesting that He took this analogy as far as He possibly take it when He allowed His own Son to give up His life that we might partake of the spiritual fruit from His death.

There have been times when a farmer started out with only a few seeds of a certain crop he wished to grow. He planted the few seeds that he had, then harvested the crop. He saved the seed from his first crop and had plenty to sow in a large field the second year. Some plants multiply a hundred-fold or more with their seed count, others multiply a thousand-fold or more, while some multiply a million-fold or more. The death of a seed is not counted a loss when new life is brought forth through its death.

Christ understood that His death would result in many souls obtaining eternal life down through the ages of time. The Apostle John, in Revelation 7:9, saw a glorious sight: "After this I beheld, and,

lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”

*“Heavenly Father, thank you for the sacrifice of Your Son for my sins! His death not only bought eternal life for me, but also a numberless host that will populate Heaven forever. Help me to be faithful so that I might be among those that praise you throughout eternity. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

When we ponder the question of why Jesus had to die, I believe it is important to remember that He was a part of the design plan before the foundation of the world. When I make a meal plan, I take into consideration multiple factors: nutrition, season of year, utilization of leftovers, flavor combinations, cost, etc.

The plan of salvation, designed before the need arose, included: conveying the reprehensible nature of sin, satisfying the offended Divine, providing atonement for the sinner, communicating the unfathomable depth of love He had for us despite our sin, modeling obedience and surrender, and ultimately paying the cost. With divine wisdom, a cruel death was the agreed upon culmination for Him to address all these factors and to reenter glory.

What I find unfathomable is that with the realization of the cost both to Himself and also to the souls of all mankind that would be lost by not choosing to follow him, they felt it was worth doing. To be willing to go forward with the creation plan, at such a cost, what immeasurable worth they placed on the souls that would ultimately choose righteousness.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

**APRIL 14, 2024**

## WHY DID PAUL DIE DAILY?

**Acts 20:22** And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

**Romans 8:35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

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

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

**1 Corinthians 4:9** For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

10 We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honourable, but we *are* despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day.

**2 Corinthians 4:7** But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 We *are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we *are* perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

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

11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

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.

**2 Corinthians 11:23** Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

24 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

26 *In* journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

**MEMORY VERSE:** I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. —I Corinthians 15:31

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Paul suffered much for the sake of the gospel of Christ. He did not regard his hardships negatively, however, because he knew it carried an “eternal weight of glory” for himself and others.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 20:22 **“Bound in the spirit”**: urged strongly by the Holy Ghost (*Barnes*).

Romans 8:36 **“Killed all the day long”**: exposed to sufferings and trials equivalent to death (*Barnes*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

When the Apostle Paul [Saul] was converted on the road to Damascus, the Lord spoke to Ananias saying, “Arise, and go into the

street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth” (Acts 9:11b). When Ananias questioned the Lord about going to Saul, the Lord answered, “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:15b, 16).

Paul understood from the beginning of his new walk with Jesus that he would suffer a great deal for the sake of the cross. He embraced his lot gladly, however, knowing that a crown in Heaven waited for him on the other side once his work on earth was done.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. How was Paul able to face certain imprisonment, and possibly death, when he felt called by the Holy Spirit to journey to Jerusalem?
2. Among all the many things Paul suffered while preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, what would have been the hardest to bear? Why?
3. What outlook did Paul maintain through all of his difficulties?
4. How was Paul able to cast all of his cares on the Lord?
5. How is that same grace afforded you and me today?
6. What did Paul mean when he said, “I die daily”?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Recently, while reflecting on my spiritual journey, I realized my spiritual battles have all been in succession. God has been so merciful and wise to not allow me to face everything at once. He has carefully orchestrated the events in my life in the order I could bear them – so long as I carried them to the cross of Jesus and left them there. The battles have brought victories and valuable experience to me, and have shown how God delivers those who cry out to Him for help! “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us” (I Samuel 7:12b).

Have I always triumphed in the first series of blows in these battles? Sometimes yes, but many times no. The Lord has been patient with me, though, and this has taught me to be more patient with myself and with others. More importantly, the many battles in

life have taught me the absolute necessity to die to self—often a daily dying—so that I make it through them successfully. Each battle has always turned toward victory when I came to the place of submitting my will to God and when I put my flesh on the cross and allowed it to be crucified, figuratively speaking. The devil has nothing to work with when we submit our all to God and when we allow our will to be under the will of our Heavenly Father.

There is a story of a man who grew weary of carrying his cross. He decided one day to cut off a little from the end of his cross to make it easier to bear. The shorter cross seemed lighter, so he shortened his cross even more. One day, the man came to a deep, wide, long chasm in his path. He could find no way to go around. The only way to continue was to find a bridge. Alas, there were no materials around with which to build a bridge. He then remembered the cross he carried would work wonderfully as a means of getting to the other side. However, when the man attempted to span the gap with his cross, he discovered that it was a little too short. He had cut off his only means of salvation!

*“Dear Lord, thank you for my cross—the one you designed specifically for me. Thank you for the glorious victory that awaits me when I allow my willfulness to be put to death on that cross! Thank you for the home in Heaven you have prepared for all who allow their cross to perfect them. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

#481 (ELS, Chorus) “Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?”

After a person gets saved, they must learn to die to self to take on the will of God for their life. At that altar of sacrifice there is great victory. When we declare our devotion to the Lord and our willingness to live wholly according to His will, we have successfully died to ourselves in our hearts and minds. This altar experience is not the journey’s end; however, it is the beginning. We are to be living sacrifices; we still have a daily life to live. Each day we are faced with opportunities or challenges in which to exercise our devotion to God. Each choice, whether it be decided quickly or at length, requires us to deny ourselves to live for God. Each time we deny ourselves to live according to God’s will, there is a dying to ourselves. Recently, I was buying groceries, and while I was unloading them in my vehicle, I

noticed one item that I didn't recall scanning. The will of God was for me to go back in and pay for the item. Self would not have made that choice. This instance is just one small example of the many choices we make each day to live for the Lord by dying to ourselves.

—Bro. Marvin Moles

**APRIL 21, 2024**

**WHY WAS PAUL LEFT WITH A THORN IN THE FLESH?**

**2 Corinthians 12:1** It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me.

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

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

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

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

**MEMORY VERSE:** And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. —**2 Corinthians 12:7**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Lord blessed the Apostle Paul with an “abundance of revelations.” He heard unspeakable words, which he understood were not normally heard this side of eternity. Later, when he prayed three times for a “thorn in the flesh” to be removed, the Lord told him that it was necessary for him to bear this affliction to help him keep humble. Paul accepted this without further question or complaint – for he knew it was far better to gain Heaven in the end through the path of suffering than to have the pain removed and miss Heaven.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Co 12:2a **“I knew a man in Christ”**: Paul was most likely referring to himself since he spoke of praying three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed in verse 8.

2 Co 12:2b **“Caught up to the third heaven”**: most likely, a figure of speech referring to a time of sublime communication with God – not literally being transported in the body or spirit to Heaven itself.

2 Co 12:4b **“Heard unspeakable words”**: words too wonderful to repeat, either because no one could believe what was repeated, or simply because no earthly language had the ability to relate what Paul experienced. Some languages have superior ways of expressing certain ideas and emotions when compared with other languages. There are limitations to all earthly languages, however, when it comes to describing God, paradise, Heaven, and the wonderful plan of salvation!

2 Co 12:7b **“Thorn in the flesh”**: Point or prickle (*Strongs*). Adam Clarke believed it most likely that Paul’s “thorn” was the false teacher in the Corinthian church. The circumstances surrounding this kind of trouble would certainly qualify in helping to keep Paul humble! Paul’s thorn may have also been some sort of physical impediment, but it is impossible to know for sure. Whatever the thorn was, God allowed it, knowing there was not a better method to ensure Paul’s humility.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul spoke of “visions and revelations of the Lord.” One possible time he may have caught a little glimpse of Heaven is found in Acts 14:19-20, when Paul was stoned in Lystra. He was taken out of the city and was supposed to have been dead, but as his disciples stood round about him, he rose up. It is also possible that Paul was simply in a trance one day when he heard revelations which were too wonderful for him to repeat. Or, he could have had this experience during the time of his conversion but did not mention it for a while, simply because it was too wonderful. We may never know for sure the exact timing of Paul’s wonderful experience, at least on this side of eternity.

### DISCUSSION:

1. Why was Paul apparently not concerned whether he was in the body or out of the body when he had revelations and words too wonderful to repeat?
2. How could a person be tempted with pride by having an experience such as Paul described?
3. Paul said he gloried in his infirmities rather than in the abundance of his revelations. Why?
4. Why did Paul say he could have been exalted above measure?
5. Paul said he was given a thorn in the flesh but also referred to it as a messenger of satan to buffet him. Who was in control of what Paul suffered?
6. Why do we not know what Paul’s thorn in the flesh was?
7. How is it that “our strength is made perfect in weakness”?
8. Would you be willing for God to remove your “thorn in the flesh” if its absence would later lead you to become prideful?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A pearl is formed when a grain of sand finds its way inside the shell of an oyster. The oyster secretes a mineral and a protein that coats the irritant, eventually forming a beautiful pearl. Difficulties are not intended to destroy us but are merely catalysts for spiritual growth and beauty.

## My Cross

I can't bemoan the little cross  
You've seen is best for me.  
It's been the means of purging dross  
And greater victory.

Though opposite my will it leads  
And at the time seems hard,  
Faith knows you will supply my needs  
And all my fears discard.

I've looked around and seen the load  
That others faithful bear,  
By far mine is the easier road,  
How does my faith compare?

Oh, help me, Lord, my faith increase  
That I might true remain.  
Fulfill thy will, let mine decrease,  
That I might true remain!  
—Anonymous

*“Heavenly Father, thank you for my cross! It may seem difficult at times to understand why I have it, but help me to bear it patiently until you see it is no longer necessary for my spiritual welfare or until you take me home to Heaven. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

The memory verse of this lesson says much about why God left the apostle with a thorn in the flesh. What this thorn was will always be a topic of conjecture, and we will never know what it truly was. This mystery enables us to focus on what is to be learned from Paul's situation. I heard someone once say and I'm paraphrasing, "What we are strong in and noted for, God has a way of taking away from us." It is one of His ways of humbling us. God knows how to lift us up, and He knows how to abase us. Pride is something that can creep into all

of our lives. If the apostle had to be aware of pride, is this not a warning to us, as well? “If Paul was in danger of spiritual pride, who is not?”

Paul’s view of his thorn in the flesh was that it was given or appointed for him. He did not complain, but spoke as one with a clear view of what this thorn worked for him; it had an intended design by God, which he accepted and submitted to being in his life. He sought deliverance from it but submitted to God’s will to leave it in place. The Lord stated, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” God’s sufficiency is more than enough for our needs. This thorn kept Paul in a manner that enabled him to know the power of Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. Can we follow his example and allow a thorn to work in us as it did in Him?

Whatever the thorn, we have the opportunity to seek God about it. Whatever the thorn, we should desire that the end be accomplished in us for which they are designed. Whatever the thorn, let it teach us to be instant in prayer that His grace may be manifested and magnified in our lives.

—Bro. Paul Phillips

**APRIL 28, 2024**

### **WHY MUST OFFENSES COME?**

**Matthew 18:7** Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!

**1 Peter 4:12** Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.



16 Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17 For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God?

18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! —Luke 17:1

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Offenses are part of life on this side of eternity. Everyone has to deal with being offended, whether the offense is justified or not. Peter wrote that we should not think it “strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.” While trials can take many forms, the kind that seem to hurt us the most and that seem “strange” to us, are the times we are hurt and offended by someone.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Mat 18:7 “**Offences**”: a snare; cause of displeasure or sin; occasion to fall; stumbling-block.

Mat 18:7 “**Must needs be**”: needful.

1 Pe 4:12 “**Fiery trial**”: referring to smelting in the refining process.

Luk 17:1 “**It is impossible but that offences come**”: Offenses are bound to come in this life.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

In the first few verses of Matthew 18, Jesus’ disciples came to Him asking, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus told them that they must be converted and become as little children. He also stated that anyone offending one of these little ones that

believed in him would find that it would have been better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck and drowned. Jesus knew the inevitability of offenses, but also stated it would not go well with the one causing the offense.

In verse eight of this same chapter, Jesus also taught that even our own members cause offense. He gave clear instructions about that as well—remove the offense, even if it hurts. Adam Clarke noted that it is not uncommon for a physician to remove an arm or leg of a patient to save a life. In the same manner, it is sometimes necessary to remove certain things from our person that offend our souls. It is far better to enter eternal life by depriving ourselves of certain fleshly pleasures than to keep the pleasure and lose our soul.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. Jesus warned that offenses must come. What are some of the ways we can be offended?
2. Why is woe pronounced on the offender?
3. How important is it that we are not guilty of causing offense?
4. What should we do if we find out we caused an offense without intending to do so?
5. Peter told us to not think it strange when facing a fiery trial. Why did he use the word “strange”?
6. Peter implies that hard things work for our spiritual good. How can this be?
7. What must we do to ensure that the offenses which come our way do not destroy us but refine us?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

One day I happened to overhear a conversation concerning an offense. The two discussing the offense concluded that the offense was clearly unintentional, but it still caused pain to the one offended. While I reflected on that realization, I was reminded that no two people are alike. We are unique in our personalities, thought patterns, and opinions. This uniqueness can sometimes cause discord, just as some musical notes cause discord when played at the same time as another note that happens to not be of a

complimentary frequency. In other words, the musical notes A and B do not sound good together at all, but A and C sound wonderful together. Notes too close on the scale cause discord, just as opinions too close together, yet still different, have the potential for conflict.

Home interior decorators work with colors and patterns, seeking to create a pleasant atmosphere in a home. They are careful to use colors that work well together, rather than colors that clash. Again, like the musical analogy, they must usually separate colors enough to ensure color coordination. A pale yellow wall with an off-white floor covering might cause indigestion with some potential home buyers, whereas the same floor covering next to a wall of a complementary color would be very pleasing to the eye.

Jesus knew our differences would bring conflict, even among those who have the highest regard one for the other. This potential for conflict is true in all family relationships, among neighbors, in every congregation, at work, at school, and even with ourselves. Yes, I can hurt myself with certain decisions.

Realizing that offenses “must come” is the first step in resolving the hurt. Offenses can be roughly separated into the following categories: Unintentional, reactionary, reflexive, collateral, and intentional.

An offense can be unintentional simply because “lemon and chocolate were somehow mixed in the same dish.” While the two flavors can cause an involuntary reaction when put together, they can both be enjoyed when eaten separately. This type of offense is what most of us encounter among reasonable people. It happens often, is not premeditated, but can still hurt intensely until the conflict is resolved through prayer, honesty, humility, and open dialogue.

Reactionary offenses can happen when someone is unintentionally hurt, and the hurt person reacts in their pain, offending the one that hurt them unintentionally. Reactionary offenses can happen so easily, and the pain brought to both parties is very real. This type of offense can be nipped in the bud, however, when the grace of God working in our lives helps us to give the offending party the benefit of the doubt, realizing that the original offense may have been through a misunderstanding or done unwittingly. When we pause long enough to pray about our hurt and

inquire of the offending party what they really meant, the devil is often defeated in his purpose.

The third category, reflexive, is like reactionary, but is best illustrated by the scenario of an animal caught in a trap fighting the person trying to set it free. Most of us have had the experience of trying to help someone that has been hurt by someone else and ended up getting hurt ourselves when trying to help the one that is hurt. Lifeguards know all about this. The rip tide is responsible for a swimmer's distress, but the drowning swimmer can cause the death of the lifeguard if certain precautions are not taken. May God help us all to realize that when a hurting soul lashes out in their distress, they are not necessarily intending evil on us because of who we are, but because we happen to be the one close enough to feel the pain of their desperation.

Collateral pain is often associated with warfare. It is usually referred to as "collateral damage." Civilians caught in the crossfire of a conflict are referred to as collateral damage. It is extremely unfortunate that innocent people are hurt because of someone else's conflict, but it happens. Children of divorcing parents can sometimes feel responsible for their parent's differences, even though they are not. In other conflicts, people totally unrelated to a problem can suffer damage and be offended simply because of their proximity to the situation.

Intentional offenses almost always start with being hurt through one of the other types of offenses – unintentional, reactionary, reflexive, collateral, or intentional. The person committing an intentional offense simply has not allowed the grace of God to cover their hurts. They have blamed God and others for their pain and decided to make others around them miserable too. The intentional offender chooses to assign ill motives to others' actions and seeks revenge for everything that hurts them. As stated in Hebrews 12:15, a root of bitterness springing up, not properly addressed and healed by the grace of God, defiles or hurts many others.

The types of hurts and offenses listed above are not comprehensive in their scope, but the Holy Spirit can help us deal with every unique situation we encounter. God wants to heal us of every offense, lest we be turned out of the way in the end. God also knows that when we are hurting, we are more likely to cause pain in the lives of others.

*“Heavenly Father, heal my offenses. You understand my pain because of the intercession of your Holy Spirit and because of the pain your Son went through for my salvation. Your word tells me in Isaiah 53:4-5 that Jesus bore my griefs and carried my sorrows. The chastisement of my peace was upon Him, and with His stripes I am healed. I claim these promises in Jesus’ name. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Why must offenses come? The same question might be asked a different way: Why is “man born of a woman, of few days, and full of trouble?” Every imaginable sin, temptation, stumbling block, or trouble that affects human emotions becomes Satan’s tool to hinder. It has been said that offenses have almost a 100 percent success rate, regardless of race, color, economic status, or age.

I recall an experience many years ago at a time of heavy burdens in the work of the Lord. There came into my life a very hurtful offense. In the weeks following, I came close to a breakdown. My daughter recommended the book “Hind’s Feet in High Places,” a book which I had not been able to grasp in the past; so, she recommended the children’s book. As the story unfolded, “Much Afraid” found a flower named “Acceptance with Joy.” Then as she came to “Mount Injury,” there was another little flower named “Love and Forgiveness.” Both “flowers” strongly appealed to me! I said, “I need these flowers blooming in my life.”

Some weeks later I was in a meeting and saw the individuals who had offended me. A voice spoke and said, “Don’t even look their way. Don’t even make eye contact!” I did that—I turned my head. But there was another voice and it said, “No, you go and greet them!” I obeyed that voice, and when I reached my hand out, the grace of God flooded me! I had love and I had forgiveness. God’s plan is that we avoid receiving an offense and avoid possibly being lost in eternity.

As a note of encouragement to others who may find themselves in a similar situation: The Lord was able to tear down the walls of offense, both parties were reconciled, and friendship was restored.

—Sis. Maxine Busbee

MAY 5, 2024

## WHY MUST I FORGIVE?

**Matthew 18:21** Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled. —Hebrews 12:15

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus reminded Peter and the other disciples that we all have been guilty at one time or another of sin. Our sin carried a penalty we could not pay, thus condemning us to eternal separation from God forever. When we came to Him acknowledging our sin, and our inability to pay the debt of our sin, He forgave us. How can we, in turn, not forgive our brother who offends us? If we choose not to forgive, God can no longer hold us guiltless, and we fall back into sin and condemnation.

Our memory verse reminds us of another aspect of unforgiveness: We bring trouble to our spirits by our unforgiveness, and we defile many others with our troubled spirit. We may not think it is possible or may not even be aware of it at times, but it is there – because God said it would be so.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Mat 18:21 **“Sin”**: to miss the mark; to err; to be mistaken; to wander from the path of uprightness and honour; to do or go wrong; to violate God’s law (*Thayer’s*).

Mat 18:21 **“Forgive”**: to omit a sin; to lay aside a sin; to put away a sin (*Strong’s*).

Mat 18:22 **“Seventy times seven”**: denoting the perfection of perfection [a perfect or absolute amount] (*F.B. Meyer*).

Mat 18:24 **“Ten thousand talents”**: Adam Clarke states ten thousand was the highest number known in Greek arithmetical notation. If directly translated in the time of Adam Clarke, the sum was equal to the annual revenue of the British Empire. The New Living Translation Bible estimates the amount to be over \$226 million. Other sources say it is equivalent to 160,000 years of wages.

Mat 18:28 **“Hundred pence”**: some sources say approximately \$17, while other’s put it at \$126.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the chapter, just before Peter asked Jesus how often he needed to forgive, the disciples came to Jesus asking, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus called a little child to him, set him amid his disciples, and told them that they must be converted and become as little children. The greatest among them would be those who humbled themselves as a little child.

Child-like humility is paramount in our success as a child of God. Without humility we find it impossible to believe for our salvation, sanctification, and healing. Without humility we will not find the grace to forgive our brother—yea, we will not even see the necessity of forgiveness! Furthermore, we will become an offense to others. No wonder Jesus told them they must become as little children in humility!

Right after Jesus stressed to His disciples the necessity of child-like humility, He dealt with the subject of offenses. It does not go well for anyone who causes an offense, especially when the offense is to one of His little ones. Jesus said, “For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 18:10).

What must a person do, then, if they are offended? Jesus said in Matthew 18:15-20 that they should go to the offending brother privately and tell him of the offense. If the brother understands the offense and tries to make it right, the matter is resolved. If the brother is not able, or is unwilling to acknowledge the offense, the offended party should take one or two more with him and approach the offender again, for the purpose of every word being established, or properly understood. There is a greater chance of the matter being cleared up at this point. If, for whatever reason, and only if indisputable sin is involved, the matter is not settled at the second meeting, the matter can be taken up with a larger body of believers. At this point, the offense becomes a very large concern, for if the offending brother cannot or will not understand the offense he has caused, he will be counted as a heathen, or unbeliever. Again, the third step is *only* to be taken if there is a sin involved that needs to be publicly disclosed.

The primary hurdle in overcoming an offense is pride. Obviously, if the offender is proud, he will find it impossible to ask for



forgiveness until he humbles himself. On the other hand, if the offended brother is not humble, pride on his part will interfere in the process as well. Pride in either party cannot be overlooked while looking for success in reconciliation.

In the parable Jesus used to explain to Peter and the other disciples the necessity of forgiving those who offend us, the servant who owed his king ten thousand talents refused to forgive his fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence. The servant who demanded immediate payment of the little his fellow servant owed him found himself again in debt of the amount he would never be able to pay. Had he been more merciful to his fellow servant, the matter would have had a far better outcome.

It is the same with you and me. There will be times we feel our fellow servant owes us an apology, and possibly a certain level of restitution, yet they are not able to “pay” sufficiently to satisfy us. We may feel they did not properly understand our side of the story in the offense we suffered. Jesus did His best to point out that our debt of sin was an amount we could never repay, yet He absolved us of our huge debt when we admitted our complete inability to pay and asked for His forgiveness. The debt our brother owes us, no matter how large it may seem to us, is never going to measure up to what we were forgiven. Cannot we forgive our brother when we consider it in this light?

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive his brother in a day. How often did his fellow disciples find it necessary to forgive Peter?
2. Why did Peter ask his question seemingly without regard to his own faults?
3. How common is Peter’s mindset regarding offenses?
4. How thankful was the servant that was forgiven the ten thousand talent debt, and how did we come to that conclusion?
5. How does the example of the two servants relate to us regarding our offenses?
6. Why did Jesus deal with the subject of offenses and forgiveness in the order He did?

7. How can it help us to consider offenses and forgiveness in the same order?
8. Who is “one of my little ones”?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There will be times we feel wronged, yet the offender is either unwilling or unable to make it right. If, for whatever reason, our hurt is not resolved to our satisfaction, the devil is sure to paint our case so that we feel our offense is particularly odious.

Thankfully, the usual pattern is that our offenses are cleared up. The problem lies with offenses that seem to drag on, and on, and on. “Why can’t the offender see how they have wronged me and make it right?” Realistically, there are situations where a matter will not be resolved. As an illustration, if one member of a relay team sprains their ankle, they will be unable to complete their part of the relay race, thus spoiling their team’s chance of winning the race. The rest of the team either must forgive their injured teammate or hold a grudge that will never be satisfied. It is the same with you and me in some of our offenses. The offender may have something in their life that greatly hinders their ability to perceive the offense they have caused or prevents them from satisfying the level of restitution we feel is necessary. In such a case, we do well to pray for the offender that they might be healed of their own pain.

*“Dear Lord, thank you for forgiving my sins that would have forever doomed my soul! Help me to forgive others, even as I am forgiven. If I ever feel my brother is not clearing things up as I think he should, help me to remember he may have an emotional or spiritual injury that is hindering him. Amen!”*

### REFLECTIONS

Why must I forgive? This serious question is something that each person should examine. Why? Because Jesus let us know that offenses will come. There is no getting around them. It is a part of living life. The essential thing is what we do with the offenses. It is human nature to hold people responsible for their misdeeds, and that is done by not forgiving and not forgetting them. It is also human nature to retaliate. But Jesus taught forgiveness. The most

thorough way to forgive is to “forget” to the level as though it never happened and to have love for the offender. Forgiveness is a must if we want God to forgive us and to come before His presence in peace.

Unforgiveness is destructive and leads to bitterness. It is destructive to the person that is unforgiving and to many others who will listen to their contentions, as well as to the offender. You may ask yourself how can this be? The person who is offended and does not forgive, carries feelings of hurt around as a weight on their back until they are consumed with them. Unforgiveness is like a cancer eating on their spirit and keeping them from being free. They will oftentimes share these feelings with others, thereby affecting the attitude of others toward the offender, as well as destroying their influence. The effects of unforgiveness are far-reaching. May God help us to forgive right away when we are offended and to realize the seriousness of unforgiveness.

—Sis. Doris Clay

Years ago, a certain brother was tempted with feeling offended. Very quickly, a little voice told him, “Tell no one, not even your wife.” Before long, the brother could not remember what it was that brought the feeling of offense. The Lord helped him to forget!

—Bro. Clifford Cole

**MAY 12, 2024**

### **WHY CAN'T I CHOOSE MY OWN PATH TO HEAVEN?**

**John 10:1** Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.

2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

5 And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.

6 This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not

what things they were which he spake unto them.

7 Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine.

15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.

**John 17:20** Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. —John 14:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** There is only one way to Heaven – through the blood of Jesus Christ. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” There are many religions in the world, but this is not God’s design. Jesus’ prayer was that all who believed in Him would be one, even as He and the Father are one, that the world might believe that His Father had sent Him to the world.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

John 10:3 **“The sheep hear his voice”**: Sheep recognize only one voice of authority and security, their own shepherd. They refuse to acknowledge any other voice.

John 10:7 **“Verily, verily”**: amen and amen; an expression of strong affirmation denoting the certainty and the importance of what he was about to say (*Albert Barnes*).

John 10:7 **“I am the door”**: Jesus affirmed that He was the only lawful entry into the sheepfold. All other entrances are unlawful and can only have the intent of harm to the sheep.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Shepherds, during the time of Jesus’ ministry, would sleep in the doorway of the sheepfold to keep the flock inside and to protect the flock from predators and thieves. If anyone or anything gained entrance into the sheepfold by any other means, the shepherd could only assume it was for ill intent.

In the previous chapter of John, Jesus healed the blind man by making clay and anointing his eyes. The Pharisees not only took issue with this because it was the sabbath day, but also because they regarded themselves as the true shepherds of God’s people. Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God completely upset their long-held traditions and threatened their stranglehold on the people. Jesus may have had all of this on His mind when he related the parable of the Good Shepherd found in the tenth chapter of John.

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. Why did Jesus consider Himself as the only door, or entry, into His Father’s sheepfold?

2. What did Jesus call others who tried to climb up some other way into the sheep fold?
3. Jesus referred to other sheep not yet in the fold. What was His desire and plan for them?
4. How many folds, and how many shepherds did Jesus say His Father had?
5. How many entrances/ways to Heaven can there be if there is only one door?
6. What did Jesus declare of Himself in our memory verse, John 14:6?
7. When an unsaved person sees various means and ways to make it to Heaven, what effect can it have?
8. What effect does it have on a person when they recognize that there is only one true Shepherd, one Heaven, and one way to Heaven?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

“It’s either my way or the highway!” Have you heard this saying before? It is often used when folks refer to someone who insists on doing something their way or they will not do it at all. Sometimes this attitude has no real harm if it only involves something like which brand of motor oil is preferred, or what type of flour a baker uses when baking bread. What would happen, however, if a chess player in a national championship game decided he or she wanted to play by their own rules? If they did not quickly agree to abide by the same rules everyone else plays by, they would find themselves disqualified and shown the door. There are many things in life that have a set of regulations or laws that we either adhere to or suffer the consequences if we fail to do so; there simply isn’t any wiggle room due to the importance or nature of the subject matter. If any leeway were allowed, the result would be diluted or marred.

Is there anything more important than the destiny of our soul? Everyone is free to have their own opinions because God made us with the power of choice, but since it is God’s Heaven we want to go to, we must get there in the manner He has chosen. It is not uncommon for someone to have the idea, “You can go to Heaven your way, and I’ll go my way. We will all get there in the end!” Others meanwhile believe, “You must come to Heaven with us, or you will

not get there!” One belief is extremely inclusive, while the other belief is totally exclusive. What does God say about it? Is He inclusive or exclusive? Or is He simply true to what He knows is best and right? I’m reminded of what Henry Ford said about his early model of passenger cars. “You can have any color of Ford you want, as long as you choose black.” Henry chose black, so everyone else had to agree – or go somewhere else for a new car. We can believe whatever we want regarding the destiny of our soul, but if our way does not align with God’s way, we will end up at the alternate destination. We certainly don’t want that choice!

*“Thank you, Heavenly Father, for my free will. Help me to choose your way to Heaven. Help me to remember that Jesus is the only door. May you find the blood of your Son applied to my heart when I get to the end of my journey. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Contemplate this analogy: Someone who has never been to your house and does not know where you live tries to give you directions to get to your house. Does that make sense? No! God the Father is the creator of earth and heaven. It is God’s heaven not mine or yours. If we want to go to God’s heaven, we must go God’s way. Through His holy word and by His spirit, He has given us the roadmap which instructs us exactly how to get there. It does not make sense for us to try to make our own way. What if everyone got to choose their own way to get to heaven? How many ways would there be? Too numerous to count? We would not be able to differentiate one way from another. It would be absolute confusion, and God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

The enemy is attempting to use that very tactic in the world today. I believe it takes a greater effort (all for naught) to try to figure out another way than to just follow His way. God in His love and mercy made the way possible through the precious blood of Jesus Christ His Son for us to spend eternity with Him in heaven. There is and always will be one true way—the Bible way.

—Bro. Tavis Browne

**MAY 19, 2024**

## **WHY DID THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH WORSHIP ON SUNDAY?**

**Matthew 28:1** In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

**Mark 16:1** And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

Mark 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

**John 20:19** Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

21 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

**Acts 20:7** And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

**1 Corinthians 16:1** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

**Revelations 1:9** I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

**Acts 13:14** But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day,



and sat down.

**Acts 13:42** And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

**Acts 13:44** And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

**Acts 15:21** For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

**Acts 16:13** And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

**Acts 17:2** And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

**See also Acts 18:4**

**MEMORY VERSE:** Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days. —Colossians 2:16

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus rose from the grave on the first day of the week, which began to be called “the Lord’s Day” by those who loved him. From that time on, Jesus’ disciples and the rest of the New Testament church met on the first day of the week rather than keeping the Old Testament sabbath.

Several references are made in Acts of Paul attending synagogue services and preaching to the Jews in other parts of the world on the sabbath. It was necessary for Paul to do this in order for him to interact with the Jews living there that still practiced keeping the sabbath. His greatest desire was for them to be awakened to the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Rev 1:10 “**The Lord’s Day**”: properly means “pertaining to the Lord” (*Albert Barnes*). According to various historical records, the early morning church began worshiping on the first day of the week in honor of Jesus’ resurrection Easter morning.

“**Sabbath**”: God’s people worshiped on this day, the seventh day

of the week, in obedience to His commandment. We call this day “Saturday” today.

## **LESSON BACKGROUND**

God rested on the seventh day after six days of creation. When He gave the law to the children of Israel, He specified that they “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). The sabbath was kept for over 1700 years, along with the rest of the commandments, ordinances, and sacrifices God gave Israel.

When Jesus came, He fulfilled the old law, replacing it with a new covenant, written in our hearts. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Galatians 3:24, 25).

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. How careful were Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, and all the disciples in keeping the sabbath prior to Jesus’ resurrection?
2. Why did they observe the sabbath?
3. What could have gone through the early believers’ minds to universally prompt them to worship on the first day of the week after Jesus’ resurrection?
4. Why did the Apostle Paul attend synagogue sabbath services in his evangelistic trips rather than worshipping only on the first day of the week like the rest of the believers?
5. What scriptures must people use to believe that one must worship God on the sabbath day (Saturday) today?
6. How is worshipping God on the sabbath day tied to the rest of the Old Testament teachings?
7. What do we have today that supersedes the Old Testament?
8. What spiritual advantages do we have in the New Testament dispensation?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

When my wife and I visit our family in West Virginia, we cross a time zone. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, the locals’

time schedule in West Virginia is adjusted one hour ahead of ours. I always face the decision, “Do I reset my wristwatch, or do I leave it one hour slow?” Our phones, thankfully, automatically adjust. Regardless of what we do with our watches, we find it necessary to acknowledge the “new time.”

Jesus “reset the time” in a profound way. He ushered in a new day, the gospel day of salvation. Mankind no longer had to live in sin but could be delivered from sin! Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week. He then set a pattern of appearing to his disciples on the first day of the week in more than one instance. There is nothing specific in the New Testament mandating that believers meet on the first day of the week rather than the sabbath. We can sense, however, that the disciples wanted to meet on the first day because of the special significance the first day of the week now held for them.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the privilege of meeting together on the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day. Thank you for giving us rest in our souls that fulfills the type and shadow of resting on the sabbath. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

The word “Pentecost” comes from the Greek word “pentekoste,” which means “fiftieth.” This special feast ordained by God for the children of Israel, was held once each year on the fiftieth day after the Passover Sabbath. They were to count forward seven Sabbaths after the Passover Sabbath, which was seven weeks, or 49 days. Then on the next day following the seventh Sabbath after Passover Sabbath, which was the fiftieth day, they observed what was known as the Feast of Weeks, or the Harvest Feast. (See Lev. 23:15-22; Exo. 23:16, 34:22, etc.) This special day, which came to be called “Pentecost” always fell on the first day of the week, the day we call Sunday.

Smith’s Bible Dictionary has this to say regarding Pentecost: “... a significance has been found in the fact that the law was given from Sinai on the fiftieth day after the deliverance from Egypt. In the exodus the people were offered to God as living firstfruits; at Sinai their consecration to Him as a nation was completed. The typical significance of the Pentecost is made clear from the events of the day

recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2). Just as the appearance of God on Sinai was the birthday of the Jewish nation, so was the Pentecost the birthday of the Christian Church” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary, Pentecost, pages 499, 500).

In view of the fact that Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday and the Holy Spirit was given on Sunday, seven weeks later, is it any wonder that Sunday became the great Memorial Day of the Gospel?

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

*(Significantly, today, May 19, marks seven weeks since Resurrection Sunday.)*

**MAY 26, 2024**

### **WHY DID JESUS SPEAK IN PARABLES?**

**Matthew 13:10** And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

12 For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:

15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous *men* have desired to see *those things* which ye see, and have not seen *them*; and to hear *those things* which ye hear, and have not heard *them*.

**Matthew 13:34** All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

**Mark 4:33** And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear *it*.

34 But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

**Luke 8:10** And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. —Matthew 7:6

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus, in His great wisdom, taught the eternal truths of His Father to fallen man through parables. We have no record of Jesus teaching by any other means. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all point out that Jesus taught exclusively in parables.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Mat 13:10b **“Parable”**: symbolic language of common life conveying a moral; a comparison or proverb (*Strong’s*).

Mat 13:11 **“Mystery”**: to shut the mouth; a secret (*Strong’s*). A hidden, or secret thing, not obvious to the understanding (*Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus reminded His disciples in Matthew 13:17, “That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them.”

God promised Abraham, “I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 26:4).

God also promised Abraham, and later Hagar, that Ishmael would

be multiplied exceedingly into a great nation. In simple terms, Abraham, through his son Isaac, became the father of the nation Israel, as well as the father of all who serve God through faith. Abraham's son, Ishmael, through the bond woman Hagar, became the father of modern-day Arabia, and in a spiritual sense, all those of Islamic faith.

Jesus, while vising with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, "...spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Moses and Elijah looked forward to the time Jesus would redeem mankind from their debt and from the bondage of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit revealed to both Simeon and Anna who Jesus really was when they saw Him with His parents at the temple in Jerusalem. They had waited with great anticipation for years and were blessed to see with their own eyes the Savior of the world before they died.

There are many others we could mention that looked forward to what we now look back on – the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, our perfect sacrifice for sin. They looked forward by faith, and we look back by faith.

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. Have you ever heard a concept that was totally new to you explained without it being compared to something you already knew? If so, how easy was it to grasp what was being introduced?
2. Compare a history teacher that tells good stories about events in history to someone who reads dates and facts out of a book. Which method will help you the most in retaining the information? Which method will be most enjoyable and best keep your attention? Which method will cause you to think about the subject matter the most?
3. Abraham Lincoln, though not having a pleasing voice, is famous for holding peoples' attention. What made his speeches so memorable?
4. Before the common person learned to read and write, how was history passed down from generation to generation? How was it made relatable to the hearer?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When introducing a new subject to students, a teacher faces the challenge of helping their pupils grasp the concepts being taught. If a student is not able to relate, or compare, the new subject with one they are already familiar with, there is a high likelihood the new subject will be completely misunderstood.

Many years ago, around the age of four, I watched a passenger jet fly overhead. Gazing intently at the aircraft I asked, "Mother, where are they going?" My mother thought for a moment and responded, "Oh, maybe California." My mind's eye imagined a castle called "California" situated in the clouds in the general direction the plane was headed. At that point in time, I did not have sufficient basis to direct my thoughts to the right conclusion. I had not yet studied a map of the United States, knew next to nothing of geography, other than what I had observed through the windows of our car, and had no memory of flying in an airplane.

About five years later, I flew over the same back yard in a Cessna 172. My fourth-grade teacher was a private pilot. She and her husband gave three of my classmates and me a ride in their airplane at the end of the school year. My mother watched us circling overhead, waving both arms, while I looked down, saying, "Well, there's Mother!" It is amazing the difference a boy of four and nine had in the comprehension of flying and of where California was located! By then, I had been introduced to the map of the United States, and I knew that planes merely took people to places on the ground, not to a castle in the clouds.

Jesus introduced a totally foreign concept to the world: salvation *from* our sins, replacing the Old Testament practice of burnt offerings that only rolled our sins forward. The idea of being saved from our sins, and the power and grace to live free from sin thereafter was not something sin-darkened souls could comprehend easily; there was no basis for it, except for the teachings in the Old Testament that pointed forward to that day. Since the people had no prior practical experience of living free from sin, Jesus had to start at a level the people could grasp – stories about everyday life that they already understood. They could comprehend concepts such as a farmer planting a seed and the seed giving up its life to give substance to a new plant that would reproduce after its own kind.

Jesus said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53b). Because they mistook this metaphor as literal, many of His disciples said, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” (John 6:60b). Many turned away from Jesus after this because of their lack of understanding. It took the death and resurrection of Jesus and later the coming of the Holy Spirit for the veil to be removed sufficiently from the eyes of mankind to enable a clear understanding of the free and wonderful gift of salvation. How much harder would it have been for the world to accept God’s plan of salvation if it had only been presented in stark form without the aid of the many parables Jesus used?

*“Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus! Full salvation is, even today, more than a lot of people can comprehend, but we thank you that some do accept it. Thank you for your wonderful parables that teach us so much. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

Parables, parables, parables. Why parables? Parables have a way of making you scratch your head a little bit, but they also tend to stay with you longer. A parable has an indirect way of bringing out a hidden truth. Parables and psalms are like special tools that can reach the mind and heart when direct words will not do.

Parables have long been used. Job spoke in parables in Job 27:1. Was the dream Joseph related in Genesis 37:7 a parable when he said, “My sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf?”

Nathan the prophet came to David with a parable (II Sam 12). It was about a poor man who had one lamb. A rich man, who had a great flock took the poor man’s lamb and killed it. Having a shepherd’s background, David was greatly stirred and pronounced a judgement of death on the rich man. Nathan let him know, “Thou art the man.” The parable hit the nail on the head. David got the point.

Proverbs 25:11 speaks very truly when it states, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” The admonition of the Word also speaks in Proverbs 26:7, “The legs of the lame are not equal: so is the parable in the mouth of fools.” Let us seek God that our words are fitly spoken.

—Bro E.E. Gracey



JUNE 2, 2024

## WHY DOES GOD PUT THE FIRST LAST, AND THE LAST FIRST?

**Matthew 20:9** And when they came that *were hired* about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

10 But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

11 And when they had received *it*, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

12 Saying, These last have wrought *but* one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

13 But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

14 Take *that* thine *is*, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

16 So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

**Mark 9:33** And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?

34 But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who *should be* the greatest.

35 And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, *the same* shall be last of all, and servant of all.

**Mark 10:25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or

mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

31 But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first.

**Luke 13:22** And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them,

24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you *yourselves* thrust out.

29 And they shall come from the east, and *from* the west, and from the north, and *from* the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.

30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

**1 Corinthians 12:22** Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

23 And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another.

***See also Ecclesiastes 9:14-16***

**MEMORY VERSE:** But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last first. —Mark 10:31

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Mankind determines who is first and who is last based on human thinking. God looks at everything with His infinite wisdom and turns everything around the way it should be.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Co 12:22 **“Feeble”**: impotent, sick, without strength, weak.

1 Co 12:23 **“Uncomely”**: shapeless, inelegant (*Strong’s*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, Jesus taught that God does not reward through the merit system but gives eternal life equally and freely to those who enter the kingdom late and to those who enter early.

Jesus’ disciples had many discussions on who should be the greatest among them. Jesus taught them that they should not seek to be first in status but first in service.

When asked by His disciples if there would be few that were saved, Jesus responded that many would enter in from the four corners of the earth, ahead of those who presumed they would be first in line because of their self-righteousness.

Paul taught the Corinthian church that those among them who seemed to be the least worthy had the most honor in God’s sight. Those who seem to be the least honorable are necessary for the spiritual health of the body of Christ.

Solomon observed the human tendency to overlook the wisdom of those whom society had passed over, even if that wisdom had delivered a city from great harm (Ecc 9:15).

### DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Jesus ask the first laborers in the vineyard if their eye was evil?
2. If God was constrained to follow our ideas of “fair,” how would that work out in the end?

3. Why doesn't God have a "second rate" Heaven for those who enter in at the eleventh hour?
4. Do soldiers on a battlefield prefer to follow orders from an officer in the rear or from one that leads in front?
5. Describe ways people can put themselves ahead of others? How can this be a hinderance to us making Heaven?
6. Why did Jesus say there will be many who believe they will get into Heaven because of who they are and what they did, but will be rejected in the end?
7. Using the metaphor of the human body, what did the Apostle Paul teach regarding the members of the body that seem to be less attractive or even unnecessary?
8. Why did God set up the body of Christ with the uncomely parts being so necessary?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

President Lincoln was the second speaker at the Gettysburg battlefield dedication ceremony. The first speaker, Edward Everett, a famous orator, former U.S. senator, former secretary of state, and former president of Harvard College, spoke for two hours – all from memory. President Lincoln's address took only two minutes. Which speech do we remember today? Even Mr. Everett later realized the worth of the president's address and wrote to Mr. Lincoln, "I wish that I could flatter myself that I had come as near to the central idea of the occasion in two hours as you did in two minutes" (*Condensed from History.com*).

Even though Mr. Everett was chosen to give the main address and President Lincoln was asked to "give a few appropriate remarks," Mr. Lincoln did not chafe under the slight but set about to write a concise, to-the-point speech. It is amazing that the Gettysburg Address we all remember today so far eclipses the main two-hour speech that is hardly ever mentioned. I found the words of the two-hour speech but do not have time nor interest enough to read it all.

Job's three friends had many grand ideas, many of which are recorded in the book of Job. At the end of the book, however, God finally got through to Job. Job repented of speaking things about God that were not right and was then told he should pray for his friends. God also spoke to Job's three friends, reprimanding them for not

speaking “of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.” The end of Job was truly blessed. “The first was last, and the last was first” in Job’s case. His is a remarkable story to remember.

Several months ago, Don, the plant engineer at a plant I visited for field measurements, told me of a job promotion he did not get. He believed the young man who got the position was not nearly as qualified as he was, but Don decided to “wait and see if anything else would come up in the near future.” Sure enough, a corporate position over several cement plants in the region opened. At the time of our conversation, Don had already been to two interviews and was looking forward to the third interview. Fast forwarding a few months, Don’s replacement told me recently that Don is now working at the corporate level. He got the job! I appreciated Don’s attitude about the whole situation and now am thankful for him that “the first was last, and the last was first!”

*“Heavenly Father, thank you for the way you set the first last, and the last first! Had it been left up to mankind, we would have gotten it all wrong. Heaven would be populated by those who ‘earned’ it rather than by those who depend solely on the merits of Jesus’ blood. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

It doesn’t take long working with children to see the “me first” attitude. They want to be the first in line, first in a race, first picked, etc. Being the first makes them feel special or possibly better than anyone else. And if they can’t be first, they definitely don’t want to be LAST!

One time in VBS, I was tired of this struggle to be first. The older boys were all determined to be as close to the first position as possible, and the younger children, who weren’t big enough to compete, were always at the end of the line. So, one day as we were lining up for snack, I turned that line around, and the last became first. The next day there wasn’t nearly as much competition to be first. I’ve shared this story with other children, reminding them of the scripture that says, “...the last shall be first.” It usually has a positive effect on their behavior.

The societal rule of “ladies first” can also help to teach this Biblical principle. I had a boy in my Sunday school class who always wanted to be the line leader. It became a problem because others wanted to be the line leader, too. Then we made a rule that the ladies were to go first, while one of the gentlemen was designated doorkeeper and came last. This rule had a positive impact on the whole class. Putting others first and being willing to go last is a good lesson to learn, even for children.

—Sis. Sarah Herron

**JUNE 9, 2024**

### **WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?**

**Mark 9:14** And when he came to *his* disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to *him* saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.

20 And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22 And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things *are* possible to him that believeth.

24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25 When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, *Thou* dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

26 And *the spirit* cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

28 And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

29 And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

**Acts 19:13** Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting. —Mark 9:29

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** While Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, a man brought his son to Jesus' disciples for them to cast out an evil spirit. They were unable to do so. After Jesus cast out the spirit, His disciples asked him why they had been unable.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Mar 9:18 **"Teareth him"**: to disrupt; to convulse (*Strong's*).

Mar 9:29 **"Prayer and fasting"**: humbling oneself as much as possible through earnest prayer and laying aside food and other pleasures. One example of this is found in Daniel 9:3.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Before the events in Mark 9, when the disciples failed to cast out the demon, Jesus had given power to the twelve disciples, as well as to the seventy He sent out, to preach the gospel:

**Luke 10:17** *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

*18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*

*19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.*

*20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

We can only imagine the elation the seventy disciples felt as they related to Jesus that they had cast out devils. Jesus wisely cautioned them to not focus on the power He had given them, but to rejoice that their names were written in heaven.

There are several instances recorded in the gospels of the twelve disciples seeking prominence. One time they asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (Matthew 18:1b). Another time, the mother of James and John asked Jesus, “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom” (Matthew 20:21b). Pride over position and power was something even the disciples had to get victory over.

### DISCUSSION:

1. What expectations did the father of the troubled youth have when he brought his son to where he thought Jesus would be?
2. When he discovered that Jesus was not there but that nine of His disciples were, what do you suppose went through his mind?
3. When Jesus’ disciples either offered, or agreed, to cast out the evil spirit, what must the father have thought then?
4. After Jesus’ disciples tried to cast out the evil spirit, but could not, how encouraged and hopeful would the father be?



5. How many “ups and downs” did the boy’s father suffer by the time Jesus came on the scene?
6. How often can people let us down, especially when we hope they will help us in great difficulty?
7. When someone’s hopes and expectations are high, then dashed, then buoyed up again, only to be destroyed once more, what can easily happen?
8. After being disappointed in man’s ability to help, what are we tempted to do? What should we do?
9. For what reasons might Jesus’ disciples have asked Him about their failure to cast out the evil spirit? What was His answer?
10. How can we apply Jesus’ answer to the many challenges we face today?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Little things matter a lot—especially if the matter at hand is extremely important. Thankfully, the airline industry mandates that the pilot and co-pilot of all commercial flights must go over a written checklist, line by line, before every flight. There simply cannot be one line item missed. Even if the pilots know the checklist by heart, they still must go through it the same way each time—checking and verifying every single point with each other, just to make double-sure. The excellent safety record of the airline industry reflects this careful attention to detail.

In flying, pilots live by the motto, “If something can go wrong, it will.” That is why they try to eliminate as many of these chances as is humanly possible. Spiritually speaking, we can be assured that the enemy of our souls knows the value of us paying attention to the small things—which is why he makes it so tempting for us to do the opposite. “Surely this little thing will not be important enough to matter!”

Peter walked on water for a little while—until he turned his eyes away from Jesus. Turning his eyes a few degrees downward could have seemed like such a small thing and was altogether natural and human. Yet, it made such a tremendous difference! When Jesus told His disciples, “This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting,” He had in mind the difference prayer and fasting makes. Prayer and fasting helps us get to the end of ourselves – helps us to

clear our minds and souls of our own ideas and our foolish pride. God cannot work through our ideas since they are of earthly origin. He wisely chooses to work with His ideas, which are always perfect. If we but humble ourselves and accept His thinking and ways, we can work with Him, and He can work through us. The British evangelist, Henry Varley, said the following: “The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is wholly consecrated to Him” (*Bible.org*).

*“Dear Heavenly Father, help me to mind the little things. Help me to humble myself in prayer and fasting, even if I think I already know the answer – especially if I think I know the answer. Help me to remember that you can do all things if I only get out of the way. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

“This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting” (Mar 9:29). Prayer is such a vital need in our lives. It is mentioned several times of Jesus sending the crowds and even His disciples away so He could go and pray. It is recorded He prayed before selecting the twelve. It is recorded that He was praying at His baptism. Jesus told of all the prayers that He had made for those who followed Him then or would follow Him as time passed.

If we look at when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, we see that there is a tenor to the prayer He gave. This would indicate this needs to happen often, and in fact should probably happen at a minimum daily – “give us this day....” This would indicate not just a weekly prayer asking for food, guidance, help. But a daily close prayer, this day’s prayer.

The disciples asked why they lacked the expected power. Jesus responded that particular spirit only came forth by prayer and fasting. I don’t think Jesus meant to indicate that the disciples should have told the man to come back in a week while they fasted and prayed, but rather they should have been fasting and praying so that when the man approached, they were ready.

It is an imperative part of our walk with the Lord to draw close to Him, to speak with Him, and to listen to what He has to say to us. Prayer allows us communication with the Lord, and meditating and

reading gives Him the opportunity to speak to us. May we keep our prayers away before the Lord to be ready when he needs us.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

**JUNE 16, 2024**

### **WHY DID PETER NOT EAT WITH THE GENTILE BRETHERN?**

**Galatians 2:11** But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

**Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

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

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Paul observed Peter falling under the wrong influence of certain believers from Jerusalem. Peter stopped eating with the Gentile brethren, succumbing to peer pressure from those who still felt it was wrong to associate with anyone but Jews. Paul publicly reminded Peter that it was not right for him to accept the Gentiles into full fellowship, but then turn his back on them when the adherents to the old law were present.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Gal 2:13 **“Dissimulation”**: acting under a feigned part; deceit; hypocrisy (*Strong’s*). To hide under a false appearance.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Peter had a vision of unclean beasts being let down in a sheet from Heaven several years before he dissembled with the Gentile saints in Antioch. He understood through this vision, and by direct revelation of the Holy Spirit, that he “should not call any man common or unclean.” These events are recorded in Acts 10.

In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch when certain men from Jerusalem taught the brethren in Antioch that they had to be circumcised according to Jewish law to be saved. The matter was taken to the brethren in Jerusalem. After “much disputing,” Peter rose up and reminded them of all the vision he had, and of his encounter with Cornelius, the Roman centurion. Peter clearly was convinced that God saw no difference between Jews and Gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas shared with those assembled “what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” James then advised, after agreeing wholeheartedly with Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, that they write unto the Gentile brethren “that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.”

After this, Paul, Silas, and Timothy visited several Gentile congregations and “delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. And so were the churches established in the faith and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:4b, 5).

### DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Paul say Peter “was to be blamed” for the dissimulation rather than those who had come from the church at Jerusalem?
2. Considering the events in the Lesson Background, describe Peter’s spiritual journey regarding the Jewish law.
3. How is it possible that a few believers coming from James’ congregation could have such a negative impact on Peter?
4. What exactly was it that Peter feared about those who stressed adherence to the old law?
5. What impact did Peter’s spiritual regression have on those immediately around him?

6. If the dissimulation had continued at the Antioch gathering, what could have happened?
7. How is it possible that even Barnabus, the Son of Consolation, was persuaded to dissimulate?
8. What does “the truth of the gospel” teach regarding dissimulation?
9. Describe how we can be tempted to dissimulate today.

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Several elements came together when Peter dissembled in Antioch with the believers from Jerusalem: peer pressure, fear, prejudice, and absolute confusion.

Peter originally believed that the Jews were “special” in God’s eyes—His “chosen” people, and superior to the Gentiles. The Lord dealt with him in very clear terms, showing him that this was not true. Later on, however, when fellow Jewish believers from Jerusalem visited the saints in Antioch, peer pressure clouded Peter’s original revelation that all men are equal in God’s eyes. Fear of what might happen if he continued to eat with his Antioch brothers caused him to yield to the temptation to dissimulate – to fake his true feelings and betray his Antioch brothers.

Did Peter completely lose sight of his new-found conviction that all men and women are equal in God’s eyes? Perhaps not. But the fact that he quit eating with his Antioch brethren to avoid the consequences he feared only brought more confusion. Peter’s regression was also perhaps considered worse in God’s eyes than the behavior of the Jewish believers from Jerusalem who had not yet come to an understanding that prejudice is wrong. Paul did not reprimand the brothers from Jerusalem but concentrated on Peter’s regression when he dissembled.

Dissimulating, or hiding our true convictions about a matter, is a high form of betrayal. We betray God, we betray the conviction He gave us, we betray those who put pressure on us, we betray those we pull away from, we betray those who witness our dissimulation, we betray all those who eventually find out about it, and we betray ourselves. Clearly, there are no winners in dissimulation, except the devil.

*“Dear Lord, help me to not dissemble! When I am tempted, for whatever reason, to pull away from a conviction you gave me, help me to stay true. Help me to not betray you, myself, or anyone else through dissimulation! Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

To dissimulate, according to Merriam-Webster online, means to hide your real feelings, character, or intentions. We are warned in the scriptures against dissimulation; therefore, it is essential that we understand the underlying cause so we can avoid falling into the same snare. The devil uses our weak areas to tempt us to do wrong. Peter had a weakness in this area. God had already revealed to him that he didn't want him to consider those whom He had cleaned as “common or unclean.” He also revealed to him that the Gentiles received the Holy Ghost, as well as the Jews; therefore, there was no difference between the races in Christ. There were other underlying factors that caused him to dissimulate. But during a moment of pressure from the brethren from Jerusalem, he yielded to the temptation not to eat with the Gentiles. He knew what God had shown him and should have stood firm on it.

Could we be tempted to act in such a way, given similar circumstances? We must not allow it. Jesus came to break down the “middle wall of partition” between His people. We are equal in the sight of God. If we are placed in a similar situation, we must be honest and stand firmly for the right. Let us not succumb to doing wrong under pressure.

—Sis. Doris Clay

**JUNE 23, 2024**

### **WHY DID PAUL CAUTION ABOUT SPEAKING IN UNKNOWN TONGUES?**

**1 Corinthians 14:1** Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

**2** For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the

spirit he speaketh mysteries.

3 But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

4 He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

5 I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

6 Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

7 And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

8 For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

9 So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

10 There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

11 Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.

14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful.

15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?

17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.

18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:

19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.

21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.

23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?

24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

27 If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret.

28 But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.

29 Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

30 If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.

31 For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.

33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

40 Let all things be done decently and in order.



**MEMORY VERSE:** For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? —I Corinthians 14:8

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Paul’s advice and admonition to the church at Corinth was to follow after spiritual gifts, with prophesy being especially desirable. Paul explained that speaking in an unknown tongue was not profitable to those who do not understand the language being spoken. He exhorted the church to “utter by the tongue words easy to be understood.” It was Paul’s practice of speaking only in the tongue, or language, his audience understood. His purpose was to edify others, not entertain, or draw attention to himself.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Co 14:1 “**Prophecy**”: to foretell events; to speak under inspiration (*Strong’s*); to teach, reprove, admonish, and comfort others (*Thayer Bible Dictionary*).

1 Cor 14:2 “**Unknown tongue**”: a language, specifically one naturally unacquired (*Strong’s*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

These Jews from other nations “were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.” We do not know the exact number of languages represented on that day, but there were several. The gift of tongues did not start out as men speaking in different languages, rather, the audience hearing in their own language.

The effect the gift of tongues had the day the Holy Spirit came was that about three thousand souls were saved. The new believers were from all parts of the globe. They went home and spread the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### DISCUSSION:

1. On the day of Pentecost, how expedient was it for the Holy Spirit to cause every man to hear in their own language?
2. Who planned the timing and conditions of the coming of the Holy Spirit?

3. When speaking in an unknown tongue, or another language, to one or more people, how necessary is it for an interpreter to be there?
4. How difficult would it have been to find enough interpreters on the day of Pentecost?
5. Compare how many souls benefited by the Holy Spirit translating what was said to everyone present? How many would have received the same benefit if the Holy Spirit had not translated?
6. How tempting could it have been to imitate the day of Pentecost by speaking in another language to see if others could understand in their own language?
7. Why did Paul caution against such experiments?
9. How did Paul instruct the church at Corinth to handle situations when someone wanted to speak at the gathering but did not know the commonly spoken language?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

There are certain scriptures people use to promote “speaking in unknown tongues.” Several of them are in the verses quoted above. There are a few other places in the Bible that can possibly refer to speaking in unknown tongues, but when taken in proper context and when balanced with the rest of the Bible, speaking in unknown tongues, just for the sake of doing so, is not advised; rather, it is discouraged.

I recently thumbed through the operating instructions of an appliance we had purchased. As usual, there were several languages I could choose from to gain understanding about the finer points of the appliance. Since I only know English, I flipped the pages until I found the English portion of the literature. I confess I do not have the gift of languages, so I always search until I find the section titled, “English.”

Unless I am interested in learning another language, it does not benefit me to spend any time at all looking at the pages of operating manuals written in any other language but the one I am familiar with. The purpose of all instruction manuals is to instruct and enlighten – never to confuse. In the same way, the Bible is also intended to enlighten—to be a “light unto my path” (Ps 119:105b), and never to cause confusion. Likewise, all the gifts of the Spirit are given for the

sole purpose of edification, encouragement, and instruction. God will never use a gift of His Spirit, including speaking or understanding other languages, to bring confusion. The devil, however, has always tried to hijack all of the gifts of the Spirit to cause havoc wherever he can. The devil is also constantly trying to twist the Bible to fit his agenda.

My wife and I have attended gospel meetings in Germany and Austria in the past. We enjoyed the meetings and enjoyed the fellowship. Any understanding we gleaned from the meetings, however, was only transmitted through the language we understood – English. The same was true for all of those in attendance. At the back of the room were three separate booths for interpreters. The interpreters listened to whatever was being spoken and then translated it into whatever language they were assigned to translate into. There were several there who understood only Deutsch, the German language. Some of those who came from Russia only understood Russian. Many of us from the United States only understood English. A few in attendance understood and spoke all three languages and they were the ones that took turns volunteering for the translating booths. The rest of us donned earphones that received the appropriate translation of everything that was spoken in English, Deutsch or Russian.

The purpose of the three soundproof translating booths was to minimize confusion. The interpreters listened through headphones to everything that was said and repeated those words, in their assigned language, into the headphones for whom they were assigned to translate for. The church in Paul's time could have used a similar method if the technology had been available. The Holy Spirit, however, proved capable of serving as a translator without the aid of modern technology!

Paul did not forbid speaking in unknown tongues, or other languages, but admonished to never "overdo" it. He cautioned that no one was to speak in other languages unless someone was there to interpret. The ministers from the U.S. would not have been wise to say anything at all at the meetings in Germany and Austria unless someone translated into Deutsch and Russian.

*“Heavenly Father, thank you for your Holy Spirit! Thank you for being ever present, when invited into our hearts, to give us understanding when we need it. Help me to remember your Holy Spirit never causes confusion, but only clarity - to those who seek it in sincerity. Amen.”*

## REFLECTIONS

God is a God of order and purpose. He does not desire confusion or disorder among his people.

Many religious groups today promote and encourage “speaking in tongues” during their worship services. They say it is evidence or proof of the Holy Spirit working among them. But the “tongues-speaking” that usually occurs is unintelligible and works up people’s emotions and brings in false religious spirits. The strong spirits associated with this activity can be very deceptive, controlling, and spiritually dangerous. In contrast, the Holy Spirit’s presence among God’s people will be known by calmness, peace, understanding, edification, righteousness, and holy living.

The verses in today’s lesson plainly show that tongues/languages must be used carefully and properly for the intended purposes of reaching out to souls and “edifying the church”—rather than bringing confusion and unseemly demonstrations or causing people to get “out of control.”

Be wary of groups who elevate or focus on one particular “spiritual gift” too much (i.e., tongues) and build their church culture around it. They will be unbalanced in their application of God’s Word and miss the essence of what God really has for them. While there can be a few honest and sincere believers in any group, those few people do not make the group as a whole right.

As Apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians, we should strive to edify the church in ways that produce lasting good. Don’t use “unknown tongues” or seek temporary emotional highs from charismatic speakers, energized music, repetitive chants, or any other substitutes for true spiritual food.

—Bro. Ron Cole

June 30, 2024

## WHY MUST I INHERIT ALL OF MY LAND?

**Numbers 33:50** And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan *near* Jericho, saying,

51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan;

52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places:

53 And ye shall dispossess *the inhabitants* of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it.

55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

56 Moreover it shall come to pass, *that* I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

**Joshua 23:1** And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua waxed old *and* stricken in age.

2 And Joshua called for all Israel, *and* for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old *and* stricken in age:

3 And ye have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God *is* he that hath fought for you.

4 Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

5 And the LORD your God, he shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and ye shall possess their land, as the LORD your God hath promised unto you.

6 Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to* the right hand or *to* the left;

7 That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor

cause to swear *by them*, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

8 But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day.

9 For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but *as for* you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day.

10 One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

11 Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God.

12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

14 And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof.

15 Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all good things are come upon you, which the LORD your God promised you; so shall the LORD bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

16 When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you.

**Judges 2:1** And an angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you.

2 And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

3 Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be *as thorns* in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

4 And it came to pass, when the angel of the LORD spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept.

5 And they called the name of that place Bochim: and they sacrificed there unto the LORD.

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, *being* an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them *shall be* pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

—Numbers 33:55

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The LORD commanded His people to conquer all the land of Canaan, lest it be a snare to them. He promised them, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you” (Numbers 33:3). Unfortunately, by the end of Joshua’s leadership, the people had failed to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. Joshua charged them to exercise caution to not have anything to do with the remnants of the unconquered inhabitants, lest they be overcome by their sins. Rather, they were to

continue to fight until all the land was theirs. When Joshua died those who knew Joshua continued to press on. When these men finally died, however, “There arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). The rest is history. All the dire consequences the LORD warned Israel of if they failed to inherit the whole land of Canaan came to pass.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Nu 33:52 **“Pictures”**: to be like or resemble; carved work or embroidery (*Clarke*).

Nu 33:53 **“Dispossess”**: to occupy by driving out the previous tenants; to seize; to inherit; to expel.

Josh 23:12 **“Make marriages with them”**: It was customary in days of old to give sons and daughters in marriage to families or nations to form a league of peace with them. In the New Testament dispensation, making a spiritual league or marriage with pride and self will allow the pull of the flesh to eventually draw us away from God.

### LESSON BACKGROUND

When God told Abram that his children would inherit the land of Canaan four generations later, He [God] said, “For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Genesis 15:16b). By the time Israel entered the Promised Land, the LORD saw that the cup of iniquity had overflowed. The inhabitants were completely corrupt and needed to be destroyed.

### DISCUSSION:

1. How many of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan did God tell Moses should be destroyed?
2. What prompted God to make such a decree?
3. What did the LORD warn would happen if all the inhabitants were not destroyed?
4. Describe spiritual “inhabitants of the land” we face today.



5. What did Joshua warn would happen if the children of Israel married any of the land of Canaan?
6. What is the spiritual equivalent of marrying an enemy instead of destroying the enemy?
7. Why did the children of Israel not destroy all the inhabitants of the land before Joshua died?
8. In Judges 2:1, “an angel of the LORD” told Israel that they would forever suffer because they had failed to drive out all the inhabitants of the land. How would they suffer?
9. What happened when Joshua died and all the elders that knew Joshua died?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Eleazar was tired—very tired. He marveled at the fact that his hand would not lose its grip on his sword. Wearily, he used his left hand to pry his fingers off his battered weapon, one stiff digit at a time (2 Samuel 23:9). It had been quite a battle. Eleazar’s fellow soldiers had all run the other way when they saw the host of Philistines coming at them. Eleazar decided to stay, praying as he fought, “LORD, please help me! I can’t go on like this much longer but help me to keep at it anyway! Protect me and give me victory through your power and through your right hand!”

God answered Eleazar’s prayer and utterly defeated the enemy. It was not just Eleazar’s sword that did all the work, but God brought the great victory through the sword. What would have happened if Eleazar had fled from the battle like everyone else? Would God have defeated the enemy anyway? No, he had to stand his ground and fight, despite being vastly outnumbered and overwhelmed by the odds.

There will be times we feel just as outnumbered, facing a great host or a lone giant twice our size. The enemy we face will usually be self, disguised as an offense, misunderstanding, something we long to have or do, or a personal failure we regret. What should we do? Fight on and pray and trust for the victory! Many will benefit from the defeat of the enemy. Eleazar’s fellow soldiers returned after the battle and helped themselves to the spoil (2 Samuel 23:10).

If Israel had only had the tenacity and faith of Eleazar when they were first told to utterly destroy all the inhabitants of the land of

Canaan, then the battle Eleazar fought years later would not have been necessary.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, help me to be as determined and faithful as Eleazar in the battles I face today. Help me to not run the other way as Eleazar’s fellow soldiers did. May the victory you give me today bless others, rather than my resignation to defeat cause others to be discouraged also. Amen!”*

## REFLECTIONS

I enjoy looking at old, historical maps, including Bible maps. It is interesting to see how Bible maps of Canaan over time illustrate just how poorly the Israelites did in inheriting the land that had been promised to their forefathers!

Some of the tribes didn't even cross Jordan and were eventually swallowed up by the Ammonites and Moabites. Their land was reclaimed during the years of David and Solomon but later lost forever. However, no tribe's story is sadder to me than that of the Danites.

Although the Danites were the last tribe to receive their inheritance they received good land, including "beachfront property" as someone I know has termed it. However, the Danites couldn't overcome the Amorites who dwelt among them (Judges 1:34) and were forced to inhabit only a small portion of their inheritance. In fact, for several years much of their tribe wandered around Canaan trying to find more land to settle, eventually finding a city in the far north on the eastern border, killing the unsuspecting, peaceful inhabitants there, and renaming the city "Dan." Imagine being reduced to an inland city far removed from territory that abutted the "Great Sea"! Even sadder, the Danites were so far from the tabernacle at Shiloh that they appear to be among the first tribes to institute idol worship (Judges 18). How different would Israel's story have been if the Danites had possessed ALL their land?

—Bro. Fari Matthews

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