

Bible Lessons

Quarterly Lessons for Adults and Young People



Bible Doctrines

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. —Psalm 19:7

Volume 58, No. 1
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*Publishing Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.
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NOTICE

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THEME FOR THE FIRST QUARTER 2026—THIRD QUARTER, 1981

Due to traveling with Bro. Doug Wall to the Huruma Dolar camp meeting and orphanage, I, Cliff, got behind on lesson-writing and have not been able to catch up. Therefore, we are doing a rerun of a basic Bible Lesson in 1981 by Bro. Leslie Busbee. You will notice current Reflections and slight wording revisions without changing the Bible truths.

The lessons for this series of Bible studies are subjects of great importance. They are vital Bible doctrines outlined in clear scriptural expressions, and yet they are so often erroneously taught and misconstrued. We should remember that if the Bible clearly teaches a thing, we should walk in obedience to that truth, regardless of who teaches it or who does not teach it. All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for our spiritual well-being. Many times, the teachings of the Bible cross the human nature, what we have been taught, or our own thoughts. We should be wary in these matters and take heed that we submit to the judgment of Scripture. The Bible is here to instruct and correct us in the way of righteousness and to bring us to a more perfect understanding of God's will for us. While the last quarter covered "True Christianity," this quarter will branch out into more doctrinal and moral themes associated with practical and earthly living, and all with our eternal, everlasting abode in mind. Mankind lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. If the Bible teaches it, it is for us.

—Written by Bro. Leslie Busbee; revisited by Bro. Clifford L. Cole

JANUARY 4, 2026 THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

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

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

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

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Luke 17:20 And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:

21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Hebrews 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

MEMORY VERSE: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. —**Romans 14:17**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the King of Glory, set up the Kingdom of God, which is a spiritual kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, established in the hearts and lives of men and women.

WORD DEFINITIONS

“The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” The Greek sentence can be more clearly rendered: “The Royal Majesty of the heavens has approached.”

LESSON BACKGROUND

There are several choice passages of Scripture for a lesson about the Kingdom of God; we have two from prophecy. The first is Isaiah's vivid foretelling of the coming of Jesus Christ. It speaks of the government, the throne, and the kingdom. There is no questioning that He who was to be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We then have the prophecy from Daniel, where Daniel interpreted the king's dream that revealed the four universal kingdoms. First was the Babylonian kingdom; it was to be followed by the Medes and Persians, then came the Greeks, and finally the Roman Empire took over. It was in the days of these kings and during the Roman Empire that Jesus came and set up His glorious kingdom of peace. The angel's message to the virgin Mary reveals the truth of the Kingdom. While many yet look for Christ to literally sit on David's throne in Jerusalem, the saints of this Evening Light rejoice to know that He is seated upon David's throne now at the right hand of God, ruling His people in the Spirit.

Jesus and John both said that the Kingdom of God was at hand, or near. We then have two of Jesus' own declarations concerning His kingdom, showing that it was not a literal kingdom of outward show, but rather a kingdom within the souls of men. The writer in Hebrews labels it a "kingdom which cannot be moved"; we receive it when we are saved from all sin. We have used Romans 14:17 as our memory verse that every Christian should know by heart, but it is also the key verse to our whole lesson. Paul spoke these words in an effort to get the Christians of his day not to be so overly concerned about "meat and drink"/"religious rules and traditions" without regard to the grace of God. "For," he said, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why is the salvation of God revealed as a kingdom?
2. Will Christ redeem anyone He cannot rule? What does the term kingdom imply?

3. Name some of the differences between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.
4. Where is the throne of David, and when will Christ sit on it?
5. What kind of effect does the Kingdom of God have upon the heart of man?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What a glorious theme is the Kingdom of God! What a treasure and a reality it is to the child of God! When we survey the kingdoms of the world in history and in current times, we behold much evil and vanity. We see kings and monarchs filled with pride and evil ruling their subjects without the love or fear of God. We see not only kingdoms rise against kingdoms, but we also see strife and bloodshed as subjects rise against their leaders. Let us turn our eyes from these fleeting, earthly dominions to behold, in the Spirit, a realm of conquering peace and love. How can a man be truly ruled and governed? Only when the affections are won and the nature subdued with love can a man be controlled. The Kingdom of God is one where love dictates our actions and service to our King and Savior. The love of Christ conquers all rebellion and pride, bringing man into the realm of humility and peace. What good is a throne of ivory or a throne of gold whereupon one might sit in pomp and worldly honor when the hearts of his subjects are not really submitted to him? The kingdom of God cometh not with observation or outward show. Many people glory in appearance and not in heart (II Corinthians 5:12). They love to parade in superfluity and pretense for the admiration of self. The Kingdom of God does not go that route; instead, it bypasses the sight of the eyes and the outward display, reaching into the very soul of man, his innermost being. There, it transforms vain desires into godliness, faith, and meekness. Christ is truly King in this sense. He is the King of Glory. He desires not the kingdoms of this world and all the riches and honors of them. He was offered these things once by Satan, but the glitter and gleam of earthly dominion did not allure or attract His mind; He was building an eternal kingdom, one not of this world. His wisdom was not of this world, and thereby, the princes of this world understood it not. Because of not understanding, they rejected Him and crucified Him. But in His resurrected power, He has taken the kingdom and shares it with all who believe and obey Him. When we

are born again of the Spirit, we come under the rule and authority of His eternal Kingship. We don't have to wait for an earthly kingdom; we can be in the Kingdom of God now. Many speculate on the future "coming King" and what will happen in what they call "the millennium," but such theories fade to nothingness before the reality of the spiritual Kingdom of God reigning in men's hearts now.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

A clear vision of the Kingdom of God is foundational to understanding God's plan of salvation and its practical implications in our lives. Failure to grasp the beautifully simple truths of this Kingdom often leads to convoluted and erroneous doctrines in eschatology (the study of end times), overlooked distinctions between the old and new covenants, and sub-standard living that substitutes the daily reality of Christ's triumphant reign over sin with a distant hope of deliverance in some future age. How blessed is the truth to a sin-sickened heart that it may be translated in a moment from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of God's dear Son! What hope swells in the heart of the Gentile to read that the throne of David and its covenant blessings to the Jews were transferred to the Kingship of Christ and thus conferred on a spiritual lineage of believers whom Paul described as Jews inwardly.

I once worked with a man who would share many "prophetic insights" and fantastical applications of Biblical symbolism to current events. However, in the next breath, he boasted that he was one of the most lustful men alive. Revelation of this Kingdom doesn't come by human intellect; as Nicodemus learned, only those born from above can truly see this Kingdom. Its truths seem counterintuitive to the masses accustomed to serving fleshly desires and impulses. For example, why wouldn't Jesus permit His disciples to bear arms in self-defense and for their righteous cause? Because our Kingdom is not of this world and its weapons are not carnal. This Kingdom transcends all the nations, governments, and causes of this earth. May our allegiance to the King of kings lead us to boldly proclaim ourselves as strangers and pilgrims here below, citizens of a heavenly Kingdom.

—Bro. Clint Doolittle

JANUARY 11, 2026
HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Hebrews 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

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

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

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

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

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

Mark 11:22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.

24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

John 20:24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

MEMORY VERSE: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. —**Hebrews 11:6**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: There is no substitute for believing in God and taking Him at His Word. The flesh tends to doubt and to harbor unbelief. This negative tendency must be overcome through determined and unwavering confidence in God and His faithfulness. Faith is believing without sight or sense, simply accepting God's word and promise as the basis for what we desire.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Faith: The Greek word is *pistis*, which means persuasion, credence, belief, trust, and reliance.

"By it (*faith*) the elders obtained a good report": The Greek *tenn* for "obtained a good report" is the word martyr, which means a witness or testimony. By faith, the elders left a good testimony, being proven in their lives of the realities of what they believed in.

LESSON BACKGROUND

From two of the original twelve disciples and from one who afterward believed, we have taken our lesson on faith today. There is a great opinion that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews was Paul. If it were Paul, he had great qualifications to say what he did about the difference between the law system under Moses and that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ. We see it expressed many times in his other epistles. Faith had been overlooked by Saul and by many of his day; they had clung tenaciously to the righteousness of the law. For this reason, Paul's testimony of faith in Jesus Christ is of great value to us, coming from one who really tried to quench the light of faith.

John and Mark were eyewitnesses to Christ. Mark was a young man in Jesus' day who later became a worker for Him. John leaned on the bosom of Christ. All three of these brethren are united in the exhortation to have faith. The writer in Hebrews centralizes his argument on behalf of faith by quoting from Habakkuk 2:4, which declares that "the just shall live by his faith." It is a responsibility every soul has before God, to believe in Him and count Him faithful. There is no way around it; we must enter the realm of faith if we are to succeed in the Christian life. Every aspect of faith cannot be mentioned in this lesson. But let us study and give it great thought and prayer. It is not a preference. There is no alternative. We must have faith in God.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Can you think of various points along life's journey where one would be tempted to cast away their confidence? Name some.
2. How does patience connect with faith?
3. What causes one to draw back? To what do they draw back?
4. Is there any limit placed on the exercise of faith?
5. Why is it more blessed to believe without seeing?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Faith is believing, simply receiving what in His promise God has revealed." No better way could it be said than in the words of this song. The downfall of Israel was that they failed to believe God. They drew back in unbelief from the commandment to go forward in faith. Unbelief is the product of the flesh and pride. We must rise above sight, circumstances, conditions, and situations if we are to fulfill the Heavenly plan for our lives. People may blame their spiritual lack or failure on other people, but this blame is misappropriated. Our failure to believe and trust God for power and grace brings spiritual weakness. Faith finds great success in the attitude and disposition of a little child. Jesus said that we must become like little children if we would enter the kingdom of Heaven. A little child accepts readily the responsibility of faith because he has not yet acquired knowledge of any ability in himself. Herein is the difficulty of having faith. It is too easy to look around and find answers for our needs in our own

strength or in logical explanations of nature. The world today is motivated and ruled by unbelief. Lack of faith is at the bottom of many spiritual difficulties and frustrations. Faith cannot germinate and prosper in the pride of man. Faith is the breath of humility and dependence on God. "Since I'm dependent, Lord, on thee, why should I doubt thy saving grace?" Oh, that we all would be determined to hold fast our confidence! We should resist and overcome any tendency to doubt and fear.

When Jesus cursed the fig tree, the disciples heard it. On the morrow, as they passed by the fig tree again, they marveled to see it dried up. It was then that Jesus uttered those important words: "Have faith in God." He puts it to us as an opportunity to take God at His word, and what we desire when we pray to believe and count it done. Thomas was determined not to believe that Christ had been resurrected until he had seen and touched Him and His wounds. "Be not faithless but believing" was the Lord's admonition to Thomas, making it clear that it is God's will for us to believe on the strength of the testimony of His witnesses. Jesus has promised to come again. Faith in this promise is waning, and as Peter forewarned, many have lost hope and cast away their confidence in the second coming of Christ. The Scriptures have set before us the challenge to have faith in God and His Word. In one place, Jesus asked the question: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8)?

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

The topic of our lesson states a prime solution to the question posed at the end of the Comments and Application section. We must have faith in God and His Word; Jesus will be looking for it when He returns. The comments let us know that the world is ruled by unbelief. I'm reminded of a minister who made a statement over twenty years ago saying, "Faith is at a low ebb!" I'm afraid it is much lower now than when the statement was made. Recently, I heard of a term, "deconstruction." There is a trend in this country where it is said that people are openly using logic to reason out and take apart tenets of the faith they seemingly had.

As a result, they are turning away from Christianity and what they believe. Some have turned away to the extent that they are openly saying they no longer believe in God.

This movement tells me that there is a lack in a person's experience; therefore, they can reason themselves out of their standing of faith. This trend has been around since the time of the Apostles and beyond. Did not Eve reason herself out of what she was told about the tree of knowledge after her encounter with the serpent? To have faith in God doesn't mean to just believe but also to live in a way that we have daily encounters with God showing us the virtues of believing in Him!

Faith is not stagnant! We are told that His goodness and His mercies are new to us every morning. We are to take such experiences and build upon our most holy faith, Jude 20, 21. We then will have something to stand on that defies logic, human reasoning, science, and the ways of the world.

—Bro. Paul Phillips

TELL THE LORD

Uncle Philip was in debt. He was a good, honest man, but at this time he owed the sum of fifty dollars (*equivalent to \$1928 today*). His creditor was a merchant who had often trusted him, and had always been faithfully paid. But it was a time of political excitement, and the creditor was interested in the party against which the debtor voted. An abrupt demand was made for a settlement. Uncle Phillip was very willing to settle but was not quite able. It was a season when money was scarce. Those who owed him had nothing wherewith to pay, and those who would have gladly lent him money were also without funds. He hoped the merchant, who knew his integrity, would deal leniently with him; but not so. A suit was brought, judgment obtained, and an execution laid upon his furniture.

It was a sad day when the sheriff entered Uncle Philip's house. Such a thing had never occurred in the family before. Respectable and respected they had ever lived, and the disgrace and inconvenience of a sale, at a time when money was so scarce in the neighborhood, that the furniture would not bring ten percent of its value, was a cruelty and injustice that wrung the good man's heart.

The family sat grief-stricken for some time in a room to which they had retired when the blow came. At last Uncle Phillip arose: "Come, wife, come, children," he said, "let us tell the Lord." Kneeling down, he laid the case before his heavenly Father, committing the affair to Him.

When the little group rose from their knees, the load had passed from each heart, and the tears they wiped from their eyes were tears of trustful submission.

Uncle Philip's house had long afforded lodging to the circuit preacher, and that day the guest was expected. Aunt Nellie went to prepare the dinner, glad that the servant of God could once more be entertained before their table and bed should be sold.

The family was cheerful as usual when the preacher came. Why trouble him with distress that he could not alleviate? But as they sat talking with him after dinner, somehow the story came out. They felt that the good man's prayers would be a comfort; besides, he would soon learn it from the public, so they told him all. How strange it seemed, however, when the preacher, instead of expressing sympathy, abruptly arose, exclaiming, "Now I know why that letter came." He left the room, while Uncle Phillip and Aunt Nellie looked at each other in astonishment.

In a few minutes, he returned with a letter in his hand. "I should have explained, dear friends," he said, "but the joy of being chosen as the instrument to deliver you from this perplexity caused me to forget good manners. Today I received a letter and wondered why it was sent to me. It is from an elderly lady in New York, and it contains a fifty-dollar check, which she requests me to present to the first good man I find in difficulty, only requiring that, if ever he is able, he shall repay it to the Lord. It is the exact sum you need, my brother. Take it and give God thanks."

Uncle Philip later repaid that fifty dollars into the Lord's treasury with double interest. To this day, every trial or difficulty that visits his house, whether great or small, is told to the Lord.

—From Sketches From Life

JANUARY 18, 2026

HUMILITY

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

Luke 18:9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The rightful, honorable course for a man to take is the way of humility. Before God and before man, one should have a lowly mind and attitude, following the example that Jesus left us.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Think soberly: Think with a sound mind, moderate.

Despise others: Make utterly nothing of others.

Humility: From the French word *humus*, which means the earth or ground. The real meaning of humility and humbleness is lowliness. A humble person is a lowly person.

Abased: Brought low. It is better to humble oneself than to be humbled.

LESSON BACKGROUND

One of the allurements that Satan presented to Eve in the temptation was the desire to be made wise. It was a drawing away from the lowly state or position into a higher realm of esteem and thought. Since that time, pride has been the downfall of the human race. One has made the statement that pride is not a sin, but rather it is the taproot of all sin. Man's inclination to be proud and haughty, self-confident and self-exalting, has led him on a downward course away from his God.

In the plan of salvation, Jesus sets a pattern for us to follow in lowliness and humility. He humbled Himself and became obedient to the cross after condescending to the human level from the heights of the Godhead. He was willing to die for the sins of mankind rather than to hold Himself in exaltation. Pride puts everything in distortion and out of context. Man cannot survey life in its true focus and clearness without humility. The scriptural command is: "Humble thyself"! One may say, "How humble"? The answer: down to where you really are. Pride puts things out of proportion and exalts the mind into a realm of unreal existence. Humility brings us down to what we really are and helps us to see ourselves just as is true. Humility helps one to be truly conscious of his needs. A proud man is proud that he knows so much; a humble man is humble that he knows no more. King Nebuchadnezzar felt that he was so great and attributed all his accomplishments to himself. But after spending seven years as a beast of the field, he was ready to humble himself and confess the truth. It is an imperative lesson for us today to learn the way of humility.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What damage and harm is sustained through pride?
2. Can you think of some of reasons why a person would think more highly of themselves than they ought to?
3. What was the fault of the Pharisee?
4. What should the attitude of the younger toward the elder be?
5. What was Christ's act of humility, and how can we follow that same example?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Humility is the door of entrance into grace. God resists the proud. The proud in heart who seek to approach unto God and divine things will not be welcomed or blessed by Him. Many people seek to conform to the display of religion for the praise of men. They shun the lowly side of religion. They want people to think and speak well of them, but they visualize very little of what it takes for God to commend them. Pride can be deep-seated, but it can be corrected very simply by humbling oneself. It is to relax and condescend in the mind and attitude to a rightful and sober aspect of oneself. A person who cannot be entreated or admonished is a proud person who knows not the great secret of humility. A humble person can be entreated and approached without fear and will not take offense at anything. No injury, misuse, abuse, misunderstanding, or hurt of any kind will arouse retaliation in the heart of a humble man.

Jesus set an example of humility when He was wrongfully accused, tried, and executed on a Roman cross without fighting for His escape. Humility will not allow a person to become involved in strife and contention. One would rather suffer wrong than do wrong. Humility does not contend for their own pleasure or way. Let this mind be in you; permit the principles of humility to become reality in your life; seek to be non-offensive and harmless; tame your human nature with rightful understandings of the divine nature. God's grace will help you, but you must put forth an earnest effort. Patience, forbearance, gentleness, compassion, kindness, and longsuffering are all the fruits of humility. Seek humility and strive to walk in Christ's steps, and you will be exalted in God's favor and grace.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Humility is a hidden gem that the human mind often overlooks, failing to realize its true value. The natural man looks at humility from a different perspective than does God.

The natural man looks down on humility. He sees it as being deprived of the respect, honor, and dignity he deserves. The natural man refuses it as a proper way of life. He looks at it with disdain and disgust. "Who wants to live like that?" He might ask. "You are looked down upon without respect!" The way of pride and arrogance seems better. In it he gets honor and praise. His self-esteem is promoted, and he will be happy and confident. Through this analysis, the natural man is deceived into thinking that self-pride is better than humility. And yet, he misses its true value. It is like the story of the old violin being sold at an auction where nobody realized its value until the most beautiful tune was played on it by "the master's hand." Humility is like that!

Humility, from God's perspective, is a priceless gem. The person who is humble has the "touch of the master's hand" on their life. It is priceless and has a beauty that radiates from within. The master is God Himself who crowns them with His glorious grace. What a beautiful life, the life of humility. God takes them from the "corner," dusts them off, and plays the most beautiful melody that warms the heart of all the hearers! God exalts and gives His grace to the humble. In Philippians 2:9-11, we read that God exalted Jesus. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Also, the humble, who refused to exalt themselves or take exaltation from others, will be exalted by God, the only one to exalt them.

—Sis. Doris Clay

THE PIOUS WASHERWOMAN

Among the flock to which it was once my joy to minister in one of our southern states, there was a poor woman, "Mrs. Galentine," who, at the age of fifty, despite every obstacle in her earthly lot,

sought and found the Savior. Few cases in my charge touched my heart more than hers. Though homely in speech and ungainly in person, she is yet, I believe, one of the "pure in heart who shall see God." She probably never knew much joy until she found it at the foot of the cross, for her husband was a drunkard, and she lived in the midst of poverty and ignorance. Through the abounding mercy of God, some word from my lips was made the arrow that pierced her heart, and she sought the Lord with strong crying until He heard her prayers and gave her peace. And now with a beaming face, hearty voice, and eager grasp of the hand did she always meet me!

Her gratitude and love to the Lord who had bought her, was not only expressed to me, one of His ambassadors, but like the woman of Samaria, she could not keep the glad news to herself. She often went about telling others what a Savior she had found. When there was sickness, sorrow, or death among her neighbors, there by the bedside or the coffin was I sure to meet her face of honest sympathy. There, too, was her hand outstretched in such aid as even the poor can give each other. Once I was called to visit the sick-chamber of a young girl. I had been there often, for her decline was slow, had expounded to her the way of salvation, and she had listened with sorrowful, meek attention, but had not expressed a definite hope in the salvation of her soul. Now her young life was wasting rapidly away. The time had come when she required the constant attention of those around her, for her strength was gone, and she lay as helpless as an infant.

As my wife and I entered the house one beautiful afternoon, we were met at the door by the hushed and tender greetings of our friend, Mrs. Galentine. "Are you here?" I said with some surprise. "Can you leave your work and come so far at this time of day?" "Oh, yes," she replied, "I did up my washing early this morning, and have been here all day. The poor thing can do no more than a babe for herself now, and her mother is worn out with nursing."

"Ah," I thought, "We call it benevolence when a wealthy lady selects from her ample stores a few delicacies and rides in her easy carriage to some humble abode, spends half an hour beside some bed of the languishing, and then leaves having spread some good cheer. It is benevolence, and when it is offered from the heart, it is a sacrifice well-pleasing to God. But how much greater is the self-denial which the poor must practice when they would do a charity!"

"...Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:3, 4). In like manner did our humble friend, for she lived by the labor of her hands.

Mrs. Galentine then led us up to the chamber of suffering. How neat and pleasant had the hand of watchful kindness made the poor little room! There was a clean white coverlet on the bed and a window open beside it, through which the cheerful beams of the spring sunshine came in and warmed the slender frame upon which the chill dews of death were beginning to fall. In front of the little mirror was a bouquet of simple flowers.

The young girl was only sixteen. Her auburn hair was neatly combed back from her delicate brow and rested softly on her cheek, where the tender bloom of youth still lingered, as if feeling loathe to fade so soon. Her mournful blue eyes were cast down. It was a sad sight, and at first, we hardly knew what to say. But soon, taking the little transparent hand in mine, I talked to her of the tender mercies that are in Christ Jesus. I then opened the Bible and read to her from its precious promises. Mrs. Galentine sat weeping, partly concealed by the bedpost. Presently she exclaimed, "Oh, how true, how sweet that is! I am so glad you have come."

Some days before her departure, the young girl expressed a timid trust in Christ; but when the hour of darkest trial came, the glory that had been veiled with clouds suddenly flashed out, and lit up her raptured spirit with joys unspeakable.

Her faithful friend, Mrs. Galentine, assisted in the last duties, and we stood together beside her grave, hoping one day to behold her rise, clad in garments of light.

At length, I was called to part with my beloved people, and in my farewell rounds, I could not forget this faithful servant of Christ, and loving friend of my own. It was moving to see her unspoken agony as she came out to meet me for the last time as her pastor. As I was ending my brief visit, she broke off a large branch from a beautiful oleander in full bloom, and said: "Give this to your wife, who was then sick in bed, with love and good-bye/farewell from me." I remonstrated her for thus mutilating her only bush. "It doesn't matter now," said she, "I don't mind. I was only growing it for her." She then wrung my hand with tears, sobs, and blessings on us all, and we parted.

Some years later, I had the opportunity of visiting that still-cherished congregation. Among those who called to greet me was Mrs. Galentine, as hearty and loving, as ready with smiles and tears as ever. My heart overflowed and my eyes became misty as I listened to her graphic account of the obstacles that had threatened to interfere with her joy with getting to hear me preach the past Sunday. "I would not let anything trouble me," she said, "I was determined that it should be a happy day. My poor husband got drunk and railed against Christianity. But I said to myself, 'It shan't trouble me today. I am determined this shall be a happy day.' This thing went wrong, and that thing went wrong, but I said to myself, 'I won't let it disturb me today.' It was a happy day, oh, such a happy day! It made me think of the time when you found me in our alley at the washtub and spoke those words I will never forget it to my dying day. I went to church for a while and then quit. You looked so solemn at me, and said, 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' Those words still ring in my ears."

I parted from her with the assured hope that if I see her honest face no more on earth, I shall one day behold it beaming with the reflected glories of the Lamb before the Father's throne.

—From Sketches From-Life (revisited)

JANUARY 25, 2026

GOD'S COMMAND FOR HOLY LIVING

1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

1 Corinthians 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

2 Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Peter 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

MEMORY VERSE: Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. —**Hebrews 12:14**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Holiness of heart and life is taught in the Bible; commanded by God; provided for in the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ; exemplified by Christ Jesus Himself and is the only pathway that leads to eternal life.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Holy: Sacred; morally pure and blameless. The words holiness and sanctification in the Greek are from the same word. Strong's Greek: 38. ἁγιασμός (hagiasmos)—sanctification, holiness, consecration

Defile: Spoil, ruin, pollute, filthiness; soil or stain.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In the beginning, God created man in His own image. This was not only an outward likeness of the physical body, but it was a likeness of character, disposition, attitude, desire, purpose, and principle. In other words, it was a spiritual likeness. The scriptures term this kind of nature as a holy nature, a state of sacredness or purity. It was this inward principle that was defiled and polluted by man's transgressing the commandment of God and sinning against Him. Through sin, man became unholy and unfit for God's presence and fellowship, but Jesus took on Himself the sins of mankind and bore their just punishment on Calvary's tree. He died for sin and arose in triumph from the grave to give man the power and blessing to be holy and pure before God again. Thus, we see that all the scriptures in our lesson, taken from the New Testament writers, impress upon us the law of holiness that God gives us in Christ. It is a blind and erring soul that denies the truth of holiness in the Bible. The Bible not only commands and provides holiness as a state of mind and heart, but we are also taught practical holiness as well. There is to be holiness in all manner of conversation and godliness. The very tenor and sense of Scripture calls man from the ways of the world to a holy standard in God and Christ.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Holiness is misunderstood and hated by the world. Can you think of a reason for this?
2. What are some of the benefits of being holy, as seen in our lesson?
3. How can being holy mean freedom from impurity and sin?
4. Why should we be holy?
5. What has God in Christ done to make us holy? What are we to do to perfect holiness?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The fact that holiness is commanded of the Lord, and provisions for such holiness are found in the New Testament plan of salvation,

cannot be justly or reasonably denied according to Scripture. There is just no doubt about it; God wants us to be holy. It is not a preference with Him, nor does He give us any option; He commands us to be holy. But there are certain factors involved to assist man in his pursuit of holiness found in the scriptures of our lesson. Let us notice some of them.

"Gird up the loins of your mind." The thoughts of man are not God's thoughts. There must be a willingness and a determination on our part to be teachable and instructible, actually warring against the powers of satan to bring every thought into subjection to Christ. This is one reason why many people are not holy. Their thoughts are not established. Their minds are blinded by wrong thoughts.

"Be sober." Soberness, as we learned in our previous lesson, is the quality of having a sound mind.

"Hope to the end." I John 3:3 states that every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. We should have insight into the hope of Christ's calling. This hope will help inspire and move us to a holy way of living.

"As obedient children." Obedience is the framework of holiness. Submission to God and His perfect will is the foundation of Christianity. In submitting to the will of the Father and allowing Himself to be hung on the cross, Christ sanctified Himself. John 17:19. Vile and corrupt affections and desires are the greatest enemies to Christ and His perfect holiness. We must subject our mortal desires to God and conform our habits of life to the pattern of His holiness.

"He hath chosen us in Him that we should be holy." Here is a factor from God's standpoint. He wants us to be holy. He wanted man from the beginning to be holy.

"Ye are bought with a price." Christ suffered that we might be holy.

"Be ye separate and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, saith the Lord."

"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved." See the benefits of holiness. Being aware of the impending destruction of this material realm supports the cause of holiness in the soul.

May there be in each of you the fervent desire and earnest resolve to be holy by the grace of God.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

Holiness is something that is not flexible or changeable. It is an attribute of God. Many times we live our lives by rules. We carefully manage and choreograph our lives so that we don't violate the rules, and yet we also give ourselves allowances for behavior we don't see as wrong. We may look to justification such as "You can't show me chapter and verse." Yet, when I read the Bible, I see that obedience is one of the pillars to successfully pleasing God.

It was disobedience that led to the first failure in the garden—not because the fruit was bad or because it was evil, but because man had been asked not to partake and chose to anyway. It was their disobedience that led to the fall.

I think of the rich young man who approached Jesus with the question, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus said, "Keep the commandments." The young man asked, "Which?" Jesus listed off several of the Ten Commandments. The young man responded that he had been keeping those since his youth. He asked, if he lacked anything else. Jesus then gave him a commandment, which is recorded in our scriptures today as a chapter and verse; for the young man, it was a personal statement from Jesus. "Go, sell what you have, give to the poor, and come follow me." The young man walked away sorrowful. He decided not to obey.

Many times in life we "limit" ourselves to following the rules, but we don't cultivate that truly holy walk with the Lord to where He can command us beyond the rules; where He can use us as He sees fit; where we are a vessel clean and ready, able to be used at a moment's notice. We need to be willing to be obedient to the leadings of the Holy Spirit, not leaning to our own fleshly interpretation of right and wrong, good or evil. We need to trust the Lord that He knows best and cares and loves us.

The agony of our world today is from simple disobedience. Let us be a part of the light of holiness that shines into the world for souls to see the hope that we have through God and His Son! We must be holy as He is holy.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

FEBRUARY 1, 2026
BIBLE MODESTY

1 Timothy 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

9 In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.

1 Peter 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

MEMORY VERSE: I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands... In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel...(which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. —**1 Timothy 2:8-10**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God wills that we adorn our souls with the spiritual graces of faith, love, meekness, kindness, holiness, and truth while we modestly dress and clothe our physical bodies with neat and clean garments that will cover our nakedness.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Modest: Orderly and decent.

Shame-facedness: Bashfulness, having downcast eyes (toward men) and awe (toward God). (*Strong's*)

Plaiting the hair: Elaborate braiding of the hair.

Amazement: Fear and alarm.

LESSON BACKGROUND

When Adam and Eve disobeyed the command of their Creator and partook of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, the first sense of “their eyes being opened” was they didn’t feel properly clothed. Their guilty conscience of being found naked caused them to desire to be clothed, so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. But this did not please God. Afterward, the Lord God made coats of skins and clothed them.

When Noah drank too much wine, he lay uncovered in his tent. His youngest son, Ham, went in and saw him and apparently had a wrong attitude of heart or attitude of moral impurity and was cursed because of this instance. In the law, God manifested His displeasure for looking on the nakedness of the human body outside the sanctity of marriage.

An open mind and a willing, obedient heart will have to acknowledge that the holiness of the Lord will not allow the exposition of the physical human body as it is today. God's will is that we be clothed and that the form and surface of the body be covered. In the Old Testament era, women even covered their faces in the presence of men other than their husbands. Until the last 100 years, society, as a general rule, respected this law of modesty. Appallingly, the standard has now been so lowered that many forms of decency have been cast aside! The body must be clothed sufficiently and must not be attired with unnecessary adornments. The Lord wants us to be adorned with spiritual graces of the heart.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why would God look with displeasure on immodestly adorning the outward man?
2. What is His purpose in requiring the physical body of men and women to be properly clothed?
3. What is the scriptural attitude that a woman should have with respect to her person?
4. What is the adornment that God wants us to have?
5. What effect does outward adorning have upon the inner man? Is it dangerous or harmful?
6. What is the attitude that a woman should have toward her husband? What is the attitude a man should have toward his wife?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The loss of modesty in the hearts of men and women has contributed to a decline in moral standards, leading to a rapid increase in immorality and sin, which is filling the cup of iniquity in God's eye of wrath. The souls of God's people are vexed from day to day with sight of all the undress and immodesty being demonstrated to public view. There is no real standard in the lives of many people. Men and women brazenly parade in public with their arms, legs, midriffs bare, and [their form] exposed in such a shameful manner. The human body was created to be beautiful and lovely, but because of sin and moral corruption, God has placed very careful boundaries upon humanity in this respect for our own protection. It is a sin to allow one's body to be indecently exposed. It is just as sinful for a man to dress immodestly as it is for a woman. Adultery, fornication, and abuse are widespread today. It would be much less prevalent if men and women would properly clothe and conduct themselves modestly. Pride fills the heart as the spirit of the world fastens upon people, causing them to adorn their bodies with rings and piercings of all sorts, eye-shadow, rouge, lipstick, painted nails, etc. These are no small matters. There is a current of this artificial beauty flowing, even in religious people. It is an error for men and women to profess Christ, while at the same time adorning their bodies with ornaments of an artificial nature; it is not consistent with the Christian

profession. The Christian standard is to adorn oneself for the love and fellowship with their Lord and Saviour. “Gold, pearls, and costly array” or anything worn or done to draw attention to oneself, is strictly forbidden by the Bible. How can we do it, my friend, when Scripture is so plain? It is amazing how close this lies to the human heart. How inclined the carnal mind is to adorn the outer man for the praise of fellowman! It would be wise for each one of us to look into this subject and seek to please God rather than man. Wouldn't it be sad to come to the judgment thinking we are alright, only to be turned away because these scriptures have been ignored?

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

When I was a teenager, our pastor, Bro. Clifford Wilson preached a message on dress that has stuck with me through the years. He referred to 4 Laws, based on the Word of God, regarding dress:

1) The Law of Gender: men dress like men and women like women. 2) The Law of Utility: we clothe ourselves based on necessity and for protection. To keep warm in the winter, we add layers and remove them in the summer. This also includes protection within the environment. 3) The Law of Decency: to cover. 4) The Law of Modesty. A person can be covered from head to foot, but the clothes are so tight and revealing or so overdone with adornment as to be immodest. He expressed his belief that we have the freedom to dress within the framework of these laws, but that freedom stops when one law crosses the boundary of another. For example, “The Law of Utility” allows for removing some layers of clothing when it's hot, or when washing dishes, to roll up the sleeves, as long as “The Law of Decency” isn't broken. This guideline has served through the years to help me navigate dress choices. (*Moral Law*, pgs. 193-194; <https://www.churchofgodeveninglight.com/wp-content/uploads/Moral-Law.pdf>)

When Eric was in the service and we were living in Germany on his deployments, I would book tours to different countries. Feeling a little vulnerable about going alone, I had an epiphany. Modest clothing, by not attracting attention, was a layer of protection.

An ancient philosopher said, “A superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions.” Abraham Lincoln and George Washington Carver were widely known for their modesty in words

and actions. Even the business world recognizes the benefits of modesty. “Humility is at the core of effective leadership while modesty is the backbone of advancement.”

The heart reveals itself through attitudes, actions, demeanor, and dress. Modesty is core to the Christian life. It begins in the heart. Without saying a word, we are communicating. Like all Biblical virtues, it benefits every area we allow it to reign in our lives.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

REAL LIFE APPLICATION

Miss Wilson paused before ending the Girls’ Meeting. While she waited, a visitor named Miss Browne stood up. “May I say something?” she asked quietly. “Of course,” said Miss Wilson, wondering what she would share.

“I expected your leader to mention modest dress as an outward sign of the inner purity she talked about tonight,” Miss Browne began. “Maybe this point feels more real to me than to most girls, because I learned it the hard way. You don’t have to learn it like I did if you’ll listen to me. Forgive me for being blunt, but I care more about helping girls than giving pretty speeches. Here’s my story:

“When I was little, my father died. My mother tried her best to care for her four daughters, but it was too hard. One by one, we were sent to live with neighbors and relatives. Some homes were good; some were not. The effects showed on us, and I went downhill fast. By my mid-teens, I was low. People say ‘wine and women’ ruin men; for me it was ‘wine and men,’ and too much of both. Then I realized how miserable I was, but I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know God, and neither did my friends. I drank even more and felt even worse. One day, a kind Christian woman found me in the gutter, nursed me back to health, and led me to God. How I love that saint!

“When my heart changed, my outward life changed too. I’m not praising my sinful past, but it taught me the danger of trying to live for Christ while looking just like the world.

“I know this from experience. Innocent girls like you may not—may God spare you from the pain—” She stopped, swallowed, and wiped her eyes.

“You may want an example,” she continued after composing herself. “I’ll share one from my life. After I was converted, I cleaned out my wardrobe within a few days. Dancing gowns, sleeveless dresses, makeup, and similar things had to go. As quickly as I could, I replaced them with clothes that reflected inner beauty—especially a gentle and quiet spirit.

“That went well, and I was happy for months. Then one evening I visited an old friend across the city. She didn’t know I had been converted.

“‘Why, Edi,’ she exclaimed, looking me over, ‘how old-fashioned you look! Has Paris gone back to Noah’s ark for ideas?’ She giggled and patted my long sleeves. ‘And don’t you trip on that long skirt? Edi, Edi!’ She stepped back and took in the full view again.

“She kept at it all evening. By the time I left, she had talked me into wearing one of her outfits and fixing my hair like I did before my conversion. When I looked in the mirror, I felt both pleased and afraid.

“‘There now,’ she said, flattering me, ‘that takes ten years off you!’

“‘And also, my peace,’ I thought, but I was too afraid to say it. I soon started home. It was a lonely three-block walk to the streetcar, and my thoughts bothered me. I found I couldn’t pray. I felt helpless, like a lost child. As I hurried across the first intersection, a stranger stepped up and said, ‘Hello.’ I didn’t answer—just walked faster. I was scared and prayed for God to help me.

“I believe God heard me. I don’t know why He should have, after my foolishness that evening, but I know He did; otherwise, I wouldn’t be here to tell you. As I stood by the corner drugstore looking at magazines in the window, I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder.

“‘You walk fast, don’t you?’ said the same voice. ‘But I caught up.’

“My heart pounded. I looked through the window to see if anyone nearby could help. What could I do? ‘God,’ I begged, ‘You must help me!’ But why should He help me? How could I expect it? It felt cheap even to ask. I wanted to go inside, but my trolley was due any second. If I missed it, I’d have to wait for the next one.

“I tried to hide my fear by flipping through a magazine faster.

“‘Do you like that one? I’ll buy it for you,’ he tried.

“‘No, thanks,’ I said.

“‘Waiting for the next Lake Court car?’ he asked.

“‘Yes,’ I answered, hoping he’d leave. Instead, I’d given him more information.

“‘Why wait?’ he said. ‘My car’s right around the corner. Let’s go.’

“Suddenly, I turned on him—my fear was gone. ‘You think I’m naive and easy prey, don’t you? Listen! I know your tactics. I’ve fallen for your kind too often—sometimes because I wanted to, sometimes because I felt I had to. Tonight, thank God, it’ll be neither. My life isn’t prey anymore since—’ I looked at myself and knew my appearance didn’t match my words, but I finished anyway—‘since I became a Christian.’

“‘A Christian? Are you a Christian?’ He looked me up and down. ‘Well, who would guess it from your looks?’

“‘What do you know about Christians?’ I asked, stung by his words.

“‘Not much. My mother was one. I just know she didn’t believe in dressing like you are.’

“‘I wanted to say, ‘Neither do I,’ but I knew it wouldn’t help.

“‘Well,’ he said, stepping back a little—he had been standing too close—‘my hat’s off to you anyway. Sorry to have bothered you. Now, may I give some advice? Men like me find the women we’re after at places like this, at this hour, dressed like you. You’re one of the few I’ve misjudged. Is the mistake mine—or yours?’

“‘I’ve learned my lesson,’ I admitted. ‘You had a right to judge me as you did. From now on, I’ll try harder to show what kind of woman I am.’

“‘You’d better,’ he said seriously, ‘if you want men’s respect.’ He started to go. ‘And whatever you do, hold on to your religion. It’s the real thing—the only thing that can keep a person on track. I had it once for a short time and lost it, so I know. You’ll be on the losing side too, unless you quit this.’

“‘I know what you mean—and I’m quitting it tonight. If you ever see me again, I’ll look... well... different from this.’

“‘I hope so. Safe trip home. Good night.’

“‘Good night—and thanks for the advice,’ I called. ‘And thank You, God,’ I whispered as I sat down on the streetcar, ‘for the lesson You gave me through this. I promise to learn from it.’

“Girls, I have kept that promise. It has protected me and helped me grow spiritually. I’m sharing this so you can be wiser than I was. Learn from someone who knows, and avoid the regrets that will always be mine.”

After the meeting, Miss Wilson hurried to Miss Browne and took her hand. "Thank you, Miss Browne. You said exactly what I wanted my girls to hear. Thank you again."

"I don't need thanks," said Miss Browne. "I'm just glad if I helped. If I can spare even one girl the pain I went through, I'll be happy. Some people think girls should learn by experience, but I can tell you from experience—the price is too high."

—*The High Price of Worldliness*, Ida Bontrager (revisited)

FEBRUARY 8, 2026

MORAL PURITY

1 Timothy 5:22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

2 Timothy 2:22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Colossians 3:5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

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

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

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

1 Corinthians 6:9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

MEMORY VERSE: For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. —**1 Thessalonians 4:7**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The grace of God in Jesus Christ teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, conforming our lives in this world to the holy standard and purity of God's law.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Mortify: To deaden or subdue.

Evil concupiscence: Evil desire.

Effeminate: This word, along with "abusers of themselves with mankind," has to do with male sex corruption and deviation from purity and includes homosexuality and lesbianism.

Extortioner: One who robs or unlawfully acquires gain.

LESSON BACKGROUND

It is evident in various places in the New Testament writings that God is calling His saints to pure and holy standards of life and character. Paul's instructions to Timothy, along with his teachings to the various congregations of the saints, show plainly that the Christian profession is worthy of the noblest, purest, holiest, and most reverent manner of living. This moral purity means a separation from all wrong and evil, and an abhorrence for the same. There were many evils back in those days, just as there are today. In our time, the great current of evil and sin is intensified, and many precious young people are swept away with the tide of vice and immorality. At

first, these offer attractions, promising pleasure deluxe and offering what seems to be advantages for happiness. These promises are what allures the unsuspecting soul. But, oh, the end. The end of these things is corruption, disease, and death. It means much for a person to take heed to the words of the Holy Scriptures and to the warnings of the saints. Many a young, beautiful girl is ruined, and many a fine, young gentleman is marred for life because of participation in these evils. God is calling for moral purity. He wants the lives of his saints to be above reproach and dishonor.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What is the danger of laying hands suddenly on a man?
2. What are the advantages and benefits of being morally pure?
3. In what realm of the natural life of man has satan defiled the most?
4. What actions spring from unrestrained and uncontrolled natural appetites?
5. In light of Scripture, is there any hope for a person who willfully becomes stained with these things?
6. Is there any way of deliverance?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

We are living in a world where fornication, adultery, lustful living, homosexuality, and every other kind of base evil are rampant. The “gay movement” (*now called LGBTQ+*) is clamoring for recognized status in society. In time, they will probably get what they are calling for if the Lord tarries His coming long enough. They are even getting into some churches. It was reported in a newspaper that a church allowed a young woman to undress before the congregation. They said, “This is her expression, and she has a right to be noticed.” But it matters not how low the standard gets among professors of religion. God Almighty is still against all the errors of mankind. He still has a beautiful, “strait and narrow way”; a pure and holy way for His children to follow. What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

God sent total destruction upon the cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, because of these very evils. How much longer is He going to allow His earth to be stained with this rotten corruption? We do not know. We do know that we must be ready for His coming and be free from all the defilements of the world.

Fornication is wrong. I Corinthians 6:18 says that he that commits fornication sins against his own body. Only within the bounds of sacred holy matrimony can a man and woman come together in physical embrace. Living together without being married is wrong; it is an abomination in God's sight. Oh, that the blind would wake up to what they are doing! Oh, that young people would take warning and not be caught in the trap of these things! "Keep yourself pure!" What a challenging command!

It is for one's own good that he strives for morally pure living. Filthy language, obscene jokes and jests, slandering, and impure conversation between the sexes are all condemned by the Holy Word of God. Unclean habits like tobacco, liquor, drugs, and such, must be abhorred by the Christian. God is calling us to a high and holy standard. His grace is sufficient if we are willing to obey.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee (1981)

REFLECTIONS

Moral purity, which requires honesty, faithfulness, and respect for ourselves and others, is essential to establishing and maintaining a thriving relationship that God desires for all of us. The standards of holiness and godliness established from God's word have not and will not ever change. We are reminded in Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Humankind has struggled with moral purity since sin entered the world and disrupted our connection to God. We live in a world where moral impurity is accepted, defended, and justified without shame. Thank God for Jesus! The precious blood of Jesus Christ that was shed provides blood-washed children of God the privilege and opportunity to live a righteous and victorious life in this present evil world. As examples of the believers, we show the world proof of God's power working in and through us. Individuals who struggle and/or yield to temptation are admonished to seek God

more earnestly for help and support beyond their own strength. God's power is more than sufficient to enable us to be overcomers of the temptations and corruption in the world. God's word assures us that His grace is always available and is sufficient for those who are willing to obey and remain pure. "Let a holy life tell the Gospel story, I am a child of God; How he fills the soul with his grace and glory, I am a child of God" (ELS #123,v.3).

—Bro. Tavis Browne

FEBRUARY 15, 2026 THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE AND THE HOME

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Matthew 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,

5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

1 Corinthians 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God instituted the sacred plan for the union of man and woman in holy wedded life. Marriage is for life and is dissolved at the death of one of the persons involved. It is to be a sacred matter and handled with prayer and reverence before God.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In this day of moral deterioration and the breakdown of the sacredness of marriage and the family life, we need to keep a vision of God's original and holy plan for men and women in the realm of wedded relations. Many in our society today have lost sight of the sacredness of marriage and holy matrimony. Marriage was instituted by God at the dawn of creation. The Genesis account, as we have in our lesson, holds valuable truths to which we need to give serious attention. In Deuteronomy 24:1-3, Moses provided for separation and divorce, but Jesus plainly declared that this was not the real pleasure of God. Note the expressions: "because of the hardness of your heart," and "from the beginning it was not so." In Old Testament times, God allowed some things because of certain existing conditions (Acts 17:30), but after He sent His only begotten Son into the world to perfect the plan of redemption for mankind, He calls for man to correct any deviation from His original plan. The Mosaic law system did not bring about a perfect cure for the soul of man, but Jesus came to restore man to his original state. His will is for man and woman to be united in a bond so holy, pure, and precious that it will abide all the years of their lives. When God's will is fully carried out, this is the way that it will be. Marriage is a sacred union, and it should not be entered into with lightness or shallowness of perception.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What are some of the reasons why it is not good for man to be alone?
2. What is to take place before a marriage is even considered to be dissolved?
3. How did Jesus look upon divorce?
4. What is the foundation of a happy marriage?
5. Is there danger in getting a companion for marriage who is not suitable?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

In light of the scriptures of our lesson, we draw sound conclusions concerning the sacred rite of marriage. Since it was instituted at the beginning by God, we can firmly assure ourselves that God would be pleased to have a hand in the arrangement of every marriage between man and woman. This joint venture would help solve many problems connected with marriage today. Far fewer hurtful mistakes would be made if God was given preeminence in marriage plans. Thus, marriage should be approached with prayer and patient waiting on the Lord. When a man or a woman chooses or accepts someone to be their lifetime companion, they need to know what they are doing.

Many couples today begin living together without being united in holy matrimony. Many such people are not Biblically eligible for marriage, yet it is becoming too common to "live together" out of wedlock. This error is a great wickedness.

It is good for a marriage to be performed in a sacred and reverent manner. Bible reading, counsel, prayer, sacred singing, and a godly atmosphere of worship should surround the wedding scene. Let us keep marriage sacred. Jesus made it clear that marriage was to last for life, with no danger or threat of separation or divorce. It is proper to have vows for the marriage ceremony. Each should, in honor and sanctity, vow and promise to each other faithfulness and true love for all of their days.

These vows are made before God, and He expects man to keep them. In the pressures and upheavals of mortal life, they are to stand fast. Man has sought loopholes in Scripture to justify separation and divorce; even zeroing in on a phrase that Jesus used: "except it be for

fornication." But open consideration and due study will reveal that Jesus never meant that to be an excuse for divorce and remarriage, as is done today. Keep in mind God's plan to hold marriage as a sacred ordinance. According to Scripture and the grace of God, we can assuredly say that a happy, successful marriage is possible for us to have.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

I would like us to catch more of a vision of the beautiful plan that God designed for humankind by instituting marriage and the home. It truly is a beautiful plan, and it works wonderfully when people really follow God's design for it.

It all starts with people taking marriage seriously and committing to each other for life. If both spouses agree that divorce is "not an option" for them, then both parties will work hard to keep it together.

Committed spouses value their marriage and embrace the true "team" concept. Each spouse can trust the other to support them when they need it. Yes, they will usually have many differences in their personalities and ways of approaching things, but God intends for those differences to be complementary to the "whole" and to the goals of the marriage, rather than spouses seeing their differences as areas of contention and argument.

Books and articles have been written about The 5 Love Languages. When a spouse understands and makes an effort to speak the "love language" that their soulmate craves to hear and receive, it helps fill up that other partner's "love tank." If you have filled up your spouse's "love tank" they will more likely want to please you in return.

These principles and aspects of marriage were designed by God to help hold a husband and wife, even non-Christians, close together through the hard times of life—to make their home stable, safe, and full of love.

A Mother in Israel told me last year, "Good families are God's masterpieces!" The more I think about that, the more I believe it. What could God enjoy more? Good homes, secure and loving, are where young children can grow and flourish.

—Bro. Ron Cole

FEBRUARY 22, 2026
THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH AND SOUL REST

Exodus 20:8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Mark 2:23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Colossians 2:16 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:

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

MEMORY VERSE: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. —**Matthew 11:28-29**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The seventh-day sabbath rest that was commanded in the law is fulfilled in the spiritual soul rest that Jesus Christ brought in the New Testament.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Sabbath: A Hebrew word meaning to desist from exertion or labor. It means to rest or relax from effort or toil.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson deals with the Old Testament sabbath rest in comparison with the New Testament sabbath rest. Many teach that the seventh-day sabbath is still binding on us today. It was very plain in the law of Moses just how the sabbath was to be kept. Man was to do no work on the sabbath. A man on one occasion was stoned because he was caught gathering sticks on the sabbath (Numbers 15:36).

In the New Testament, we find that God institutes a sabbath that is more than just a one-day-a-week affair. The law-loving spirit in the Jews was quick to condemn the disciples for gathering corn on the sabbath day, but Jesus refuted their unreasonable contentions with a statement that we should consider: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." To endeavor to bind the literal sabbath day commandment upon the New Testament born-again Christian is to claim man was created for the sabbath. The seventh-day sabbath is no longer sufficient for the spiritual needs of man.

Man needs a soul rest. He could keep the seventh day as a sabbath and cease from work on that day all his life, and yet still perish in eternal night if he comes short of the true rest. Let us ask ourselves this question: The rest that Paul in Hebrews 4:1 tells us to fear lest we come short of, is what rest? Is it the old seventh-day rest, or is it the spiritual soul rest in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Careful consideration and weighing all the accompanying discussion will surely reveal that the sabbath we are to keep as New Testament Christians is a soul rest in ceasing from our own works.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did God institute the seventh-day Sabbath in the beginning?
2. What was the conflict between Jesus and the Jews on this question?
3. What truth do we get from what Jesus said in answer to the Jews' critical remarks about His disciples gathering corn on the sabbath?
4. What did Paul say that sabbath days were?
5. What is the Christian sabbath we are to keep in Christ?
6. What does soul rest involve, and what does it take to experience soul rest?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There is no question that God commanded Israel under Moses to keep the literal seventh-day sabbath. However, it is also to be considered that the works were finished from the foundation of the world, and that God blessed the seventh day because He rested and ceased from His work of creation on that day. In Psalm 95 the writer warns Israel (and the warning is repeated to us in Hebrews 3 and 4), not to harden their hearts as Israel did in the provocation and temptation in the wilderness. This statement referred to the time they were commanded to go over into the land of rest (Canaan). At that time their faith failed, and they grieved God with their hardened hearts of unbelief. It was at this time God swore in His wrath "...they shall not enter into my rest." Notice the term "my rest." Paul links the sabbath day rest with this Canaan rest. They were both pointing to the same fulfillment. His rest to Israel was the Canaan land occupation. That was the rest He promised to the Israelites for all their sorrow in Egypt and all their wandering in the wilderness.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). It is not the Canaan rest; it is not the seventh-day rest. It is a soul rest. This soul rest consists of ceasing from the works of self, the flesh, and sin, and allowing God's blessed love and Spirit to work in our lives the great works of righteousness and peace. It is ceasing from the works and strivings of keeping the law (which was not of faith) and resting in the faith of Jesus Christ. This true rest is what it is all about. It is another point in the great argument of the

book of Hebrews where Paul endeavored to wean the minds of the Jews away from the old law system. It is a soul rest that God wants us to enter into: no worry, no doubt, no fear, no anxiety, no sin, no strife, no complaining, no condemnation. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This rest, this soul rest, is by far more needful, necessary, and important than ten thousand literal seventh-day sabbaths.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

In the book *God's Smuggler*, Bro. Andrew relates an interesting story. He and his wife had worked to smuggle Bibles to oppressed Christians in various countries. They needed a large sum of money to continue this work, and the only way they could see to obtain it was by selling their home. The sacrifice was great, and they both struggled to yield, at one point praying to be willing to be willing. One day, The Lord gave them what they didn't have within themselves, a willingness to give up their home for Him. They felt so light and free that they could hardly understand how they had struggled before.

I had a similar experience, but my struggle lasted for a few years. The Lord had put His finger on something, and I drew back. I was unwilling to yield, but also unwilling to turn away from The Lord. So, I struggled and struggled, never getting anywhere until one day when I cried out to The Lord, "Do I have to go through another season like this?" A few days later, I realized that what The Lord was asking of me was not hard at all. I was completely willing and full of peace.

There is a secret here. God wants to work in us both "to will and to do." He has a place of rest for us that does not come from our own strength. If we will let God work, we can enter into His rest.

(The rest of the story for Bro. Andrew and his wife was that they never had to give up their home. The Lord provided the money in another way. As for me, I gave up what The Lord required and have thanked Him many times that He did require it of me. It has proved to be a great benefit to me, and I've never forgotten how He brought me to a place of surrender and rest.)

—Sis. Sarah L. Herron

MARCH 1, 2026
FALSE RELIGION

James 1:26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

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

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

2 John 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

—**Matthew 7: 15**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: One can possess a false religion. The Holy Bible reveals definite guidelines in identifying false religion. The condition of a man's inner life reveals what he is. True religion is that which follows the plain teachings of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Religion: The Greek word means ceremonial observance, that is, the outward demonstration of what you believe.

Profess: To assent or acknowledge. The true Spirit of God manifests Jesus Christ in the heart and life of a Christian, not just with the lips, but with the spirit, actions, and ways.

Pernicious ways: Impure practices.

Philosophy: Love of wisdom.

Rudiments: Elements.

LESSON BACKGROUND

II Peter 1 finished with Peter writing that the prophecy spoken by the prophets was “not by the will of man,” but “by the Holy Ghost.” He then stated that there were also false prophets among the people and warned that even now there would be false teachers among the Church of Jesus Christ. One of the perils Paul spoke of being in was “perils among false brethren.” False religion has been the deceptive work of satan in the lives of men from the beginning. His temptation to Eve had a religious note: “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” The idea that any religious way is right is an error. It is peril to the soul to be unaware of the existence of false religion. The early fathers were very severe in their denunciation of false prophets. It is reported that John, the beloved of Christ, stopped at a bathhouse with some of his associates once. When it was reported that a certain false prophet had

been seen in the building, John at once summoned a withdrawal of his group, fearing that the house might fall in because of the wrath of God upon that individual. False religion is an abomination in the sight of God. It deceives and deprives man of the truth and robs God of the privilege to bless and help souls.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What is the mark of true religion?
2. Name one thing that will make a man's religion vain.
3. How can we know the real Spirit of God?
4. Is it possible for one to be deceived?
5. Who is behind false religion?
6. How can we safeguard ourselves against false religion?
7. Did Jesus warn us about false prophets?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It means so much to have the true Bible salvation that Jesus Christ brought to this world. There are hundreds of religions, but only one salvation. Satan has many substitutes for real Bible salvation. The Jews had a religion based on keeping the law, chiefly the ceremonial part of the law. Their religion was vain; it was false; it did not withstand the burning of the Spirit of God. Jesus brought and taught the true religion that will stand the great judgment shock. To become a true Christian, one must first feel, or sense, one's need of God and the vileness of his sins. He must realize his need of a Savior. There have been people who were convicted of their sins and who, without salvation, started trying to do right. This self-willed determination does not work. Penance, or just turning over a new leaf, will not do. One must reform in the fear of God, but it must be accompanied by faith in what Christ alone can do. One must confess his sins and believe in Christ and His shed blood for forgiveness and peace. To leave out faith or to leave out repentance will cause one to miss the mark. One must be born again; that is, receive a new life from above. "Born Again" means being made a new creature where the old things of sin and the world pass out of our lives and we embrace the new ways of Christ. It is a real experience, and it is the true religion.

In following true religion, one must walk in the light of the Word and obey the teachings of Christ and His apostles. True religion means love and concern for all mankind; hatred and bitterness do not belong. All the teachings of Christ must be revered and followed faithfully. Many doctrines and commandments of men exist. People conceive many ideas and convictions, but these must be weighed against Scripture. One must allow the Spirit of the Lord to come into their heart to teach and lead them into all the truth. The tongue must be controlled, and all the life in the flesh brought into strict discipline of holiness and purity. Separation from the evils of the world and faithfulness to Christ will prevail. True religion will satisfy the soul and manifest itself to those around us.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

When contemplating the idea of true religion versus a false religion, I was reminded of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The contest was designed to prove who the real God was. They both believed the true God should be able to work and have an impact on their lives. No one wants to worship a non-existent God. Many were worshipping Baal, and they were highly devoted to him. They even cut themselves in a plea to have Baal answer their prayers, but Baal could not respond. He could not work on their behalf. In this, it was revealed that the worship of Baal was in vain. It was false religion. No matter how devoted they were to Baal, he could produce nothing in their lives.

The Lord, however, was able to answer in a miraculous way, which revealed His ability to intervene in their lives. He is the living God, and worshipping Him is not in vain.

True God to worship is one aspect of true religion, but another is worshipping God in truth. We must worship Him in spirit and in truth. True religion will impact the one worshipping and will enable them to walk in love and remain unspotted from the world (James 1:27). The result of true religion is the divine influence on our hearts and the reflection in our lives. Our lives should show the effects of God's mighty power at work in us. We should have results in our worship of the Lord; there should be fruit from that relationship.

I also thought of the ones at the judgements who told the Lord, "Have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name done many

wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23). They had a religion, but it was not in truth. It would be heartbreaking to find in the end that your religion was false and in vain.

—Bro. Marvin Moles

THE PAWNED BOOK

W.P. Mackay left home to attend college at the age of seventeen. His mother gave him a Bible, writing her name, his name, and a verse of scripture on the flyleaf. He graduated with very high honors in the field of medicine and became the head of an infidel club where they practiced everything wicked and vile. He was open in his ridicule of God and the Bible. The only thing that gave him any thrill was when an ambulance would unload a patient in a critical condition. One day, they brought in a man on a cot, the lower part of whose body had been horribly crushed. On his face, however, was a look of calm and peace so pronounced that it amazed Dr. Mackay who was accustomed to seeing people suffer. With a smile, the patient asked what the verdict was.

"Oh, I guess we will pull you through and fix you up," replied the doctor.

"No, Doctor I don't want any guesses," the man said. "I want to know if it is life or death. Just lay me down easy, anywhere, Doctor. I am ready. I am saved and am not afraid to die." With a face fairly shining with radiance, he continued, "I know I am going to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"He says, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,' (John 6:37), and I have accepted Him as my own personal Savior. But I want the truth. Just what is my condition?" Whereupon the doctor replied, "You have, at the most, three hours to live."

The doctor was touched, and thinking there might be relatives to notify, asked: "Is there anything you would like us do for you?"

Thanking him, the injured man said, "In one of my pockets is a two-week's paycheck. If you can get to it, I wish you would send it at once to my landlady and ask her to send me the Book."

"What book?" inquired the doctor.

"Oh, just the Book," the man answered. "She will know."

Dr. Mackay arranged for the man's request to be cared for and then started on his rounds through the hospital. Those words kept ringing through his ears, "I am ready, Doctor." "Just lay me down easy, anywhere, Doctor." "I am ready." Dr. Mackay had never been known to inquire about a patient from any personal interest, but for the first time in his life, he wanted to know how this one was getting along. He returned to the ward where the man had been placed, and upon seeing the nurse whom he had assigned to the case, he inquired as to his condition.

"He died just a few minutes ago," the nurse informed him. "Did the book get here?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, it arrived shortly before he died," the nurse answered.

"What was it? His bank book?" inquired the doctor. "No, it wasn't his bank book;" replied the nurse. "He died with it under his pillow."

"What was it?" asked Dr. Mackay.

"It is still there. Go and look at it," said the nurse.

Dr. Mackay went to the bedside, reached under the sheet, and drew a Bible from under the pillow. As he did so the Bible opened, and the pages turned over to the flyleaf. There, in his mother's handwriting, was Dr. Mackay's name, his mother's name, and a verse of scripture. It was the Bible given to him by his mother when he left home to attend college. In a drunken brawl, he had pawned it years before to get whiskey.

Dr. Mackay slipped the book under his coat and rushed upstairs to his private office. He begged God to have mercy on him and in repentance, accepted Christ as his Savior. He came to the realization that, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8); and, "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)."

—A tract

MARCH 8, 2026

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

2 Thessalonians 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

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

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

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

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

MEMORY VERSE: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. —**Hebrews 9:28**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ came to this earth the first time to be the Savior of all mankind to all who would believe and obey Him. He is coming the second time to destroy this world, raise the dead,

punish the wicked, reward the righteous, and take His people to their everlasting dwelling in the new heaven and new earth.

WORD DEFINITIONS

The elements shall melt: The word "melt" and the word "dissolved," also used in the text, are the words translated for the Greek word "*luo*," from which we get our word "loosen." The elements of our natural world are composed of atoms, tiny particles that are either negatively or positively charged. Scientists are baffled by the mysterious force that binds them together, given that positively charged particles repel each other. They recognize that there is a mysterious power holding things together, and that if this power were withdrawn, all the elements would be "loosened" and all creation would disintegrate into oblivion.

Holy conversation: Holy conduct.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The coming of the Lord is a big topic in the religious world. There are many theories and ideas regarding what will take place at that great event. The scriptures that we have chosen for our lesson today speak well for themselves. They need little discussion to make them any clearer. We need to accept the truth that is stated therein. Jesus is coming again in the clouds of heaven, just as He ascended. At His coming, He will punish the wicked, who will be given their due reward for their evil ways. He will be glorified and admired by all who have loved and obeyed Him in this life. He will destroy the world and all the elements. He will gather His people together and take them to that heavenly home that has been prepared for them. All that will take place will be in His control. Our responsibility is to BE PREPARED AT ALL TIMES.

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What are some of the plain statements in our lesson that tell us that Christ will come again? Do you know why His coming has been delayed through the years?

2. Can you name five things that Christ will do at His second coming?
3. How suddenly will His coming take place?
4. How does the born-again soul feel about the coming of Christ?
5. What must we do about this matter?
6. What will happen to all creation?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To those who are forgiven and washed in the blood of Jesus and are being led by the Spirit of God, the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the great and glorious climax of their godly lives. He shall be admired in all them that believe. The testimony of the Lord and His ministers was believed and acted upon, and when the saints see Him coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, their hearts will be filled with rapture and exultation. It will cause the powers of nature to fall back, and they shall rise to meet the Lord in the air. The long night of earth will end. What a great reunion day that will be when the saints who have long passed away come forth clothed in immortality to join those who have tarried in this world to that time! See the mighty host ascending in adulation and praises to their Heavenly King! What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!

Sadly, for those who are not saved, it will be a day of weeping. There will be no chance to repent or amend their condition. There will be no “tribulation” time on earth, nor a thousand-year reign! The earth will be dissolved, burned up, and destroyed. What will be left after this is accomplished? The earth will not be burned over and renewed; it will be destroyed. The wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction and separated from the presence of the Lord. Note the expression “everlasting destruction.” The second death in the lake of fire will be their doom. They will not be annihilated, as many believe. They will suffer forever for their failure to serve the Lord Christ. It is a fearful thing to face. Thus, the words of the Lord Jesus and His apostles entreat us to accept Him and His wonderful salvation, to and walk in the light of His Holy Word. Doing so will enable us to face His second coming with joy and victory.

—Bro. Leslie Busbee

REFLECTIONS

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son (Matthew 22:2). John the Baptist tells us He (*Jesus*) is the bridegroom and that the bride is *the congregation of believers* (John 3:29a). God, in His great plan, wanted a bride for His Son. He looked upon earth and saw the souls of mankind that He so dearly loved, but He knew "sin could not enter there." We are all sinners with no right to Heaven's bliss, so, God sent Jesus to be a sacrifice for our souls' redemption. Whosoever believes in Him shall have everlasting life (John 3:16-17). God made a way of escape for those who will believe. Jesus also told us, "I go to prepare a place for you and if I go, I will come again (*2nd coming*) and will receive you (*the bride*) unto myself (John 14:2-3). John saw a holy city, the new Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2)—a prepared people. These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb (Revelation 7:14). Are we ready to say our wedding vows to our bridegroom?

We have a song in our ELS hymnal (#238) that says, "I will follow Thee, my Savior, Where so e're my lot may be; where Thou goest I will follow, Yes, my Lord, I'll follow thee." Are we committed to our bridegroom? Are we longing for our marriage supper with Jesus, our bridegroom (Revelation 19:9)? Jesus said, "Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20, *2nd coming*). Oh, what a day that will be!! Our great wedding day!

—Bro. Rick Cox

MARCH 15, 2026 THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

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

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

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and

hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

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

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

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

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Matthew 12:42 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

Romans 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

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

—**Ecclesiastes 12:14**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: All mankind from all ages of time will stand before their Maker to be judged at the last day. They will receive the due recompense for their deeds done while in this life. God will be the judge, and He will judge in righteousness the secrets of men's hearts.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 17:30 The times of this ignorance God winked at: God overlooked and bore with men in their ignorance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Among the many visions given from God to John on the Isle of Patmos was the scene of the final judgment. It is a scene that will be a reality one day. It will be the fulfillment of the prophecy that Jude quoted from Enoch, the seventh from Adam. It seems that sinful man has become so hardened that he has failed to realize that his ways and deeds will be judged by Almighty God. He has forgotten that the all-seeing eye of the Lord weighs not only his deeds, but his motives as well. Along with many other scriptures which are not used in this lesson, we are made aware that God's judgment will be based on His truth and what is really in the hearts of people. Man is prone to judging, but his judgment is treacherous and often inaccurate, because man only sees the surface, but God cannot be mocked. His judgments are true and unbiased. The earth will end exactly as God designed.

God is faithful to reveal our sins to us in this life, and we can be judged and set free and clear by the gospel before the final judgement. Jesus mentions the Queen of Sheba being at the judgment, condemning the people of Jesus' day. He also mentions the men of Nineveh condemning His generation because they repented at Jonah's preaching, and yet a "greater than Jonah is here." He spoke about the judgment being more tolerable for Sodom than for some of the cities of His day. A great cloud of witnesses is going to be in the judgment. We will all be there also to give an account of ourselves.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Who all will be at the last judgment?
2. Why will there be a last judgment?
3. Who will be the Judge?
4. What will judgment be based upon?

5. What kind of judgment will it be?
6. How will we relate to this judgment?
7. Will there be individual responsibility at the judgment?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Almost every believer in the Bible and the Christian faith will acknowledge the truth of a judgment to come; the scriptures are plain. However, there are diverse opinions about how the final judgment will be carried out, but it is not for us to enter into arguments. The real issue is not what will take place, but how we will fare on the judgment day. Both the dead and the living will be judged, and each will receive what he has done while in this body.

"The books were opened (Revelation 20:12a)." Some believe this means the Old and the New Testament. It does no violence to the scriptures to use this thought, but I am more disposed to the interpretation that the books that will be opened at the judgment will be the record of men's lives. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Revelation 20:12b)." We are writing daily our life's book. Some day that book will be opened. It will then be the final judgment.

Judgment must now begin at the house of God. We are being judged now by the eternal Word of God found in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must measure up to this judgment. We might be able to hide under a profession now and evade the judgment of the truth, but we are only hurting ourselves when we do this, because at the judgment bar of God there will be no hiding place. Our only hiding place is in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has come to reconcile us back to God before that final day. Christ died on the cross for us. His mercy rejoices against the judgment of God and gives us freedom from condemnation. Now is the accepted time to prepare to meet the judgment. We should judge ourselves and let God also judge us, so that we will not be condemned along with the world (I Corinthians 2:15).

I will have to give an account of myself. No one else can plead my cause on that day. It will be every man for himself. May our hearts be stirred with the determination to live so that we can meet Him in peace at the judgment.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

The reflections of this lesson cause some scriptures to come to my mind. Through faith we understand:

The worlds were framed by the word of God (Hebrews 11:3). The day of the Lord will come...the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

I am reminded of the sign at Monark. "I Must Die, But When? I Must Meet God, But How? I Will Live in Eternity, But Where?

Revelation 20:11-12 gives a vivid picture of each of us standing before God.

Several years ago, while in prayer, I asked the Lord to give me a vision of the judgment scene. One night, soon after, I had a dream. In this dream, I was standing outside at night when I heard a great noise, and I knew that the End had come. A tall building in the distance began to tremble and crumbled to the ground. All around me, places in the earth started opening, spewing out smoke. Instantly, there were people everywhere around me waiting to be judged. At that instant, I had no thought about whether someone else was ready to meet God. All of my attention was focused on, "Am I ready?"

I did not get to see a continuation of the judgment scene. I woke up, so thankful this was just a dream, and fell to my knees by the bed, praying for God to help me be ready for that Great Day.

There were times in the past when I looked around at what others were doing and wondered whether they would make it to Heaven if they kept going down their path. This dream reminded me that on Judgement Day, my focus will be only on my own standing before God when my book is opened.

As I write this, I am again reminded to pray for others and to try to help them, but the bottom line is that I will stand before God, alone, with no excuses. God help me never forget!

—Bro. Dan Doolittle

MARCH 22, 2026
HELL—EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT FOR THE WICKED

Mark 9:43 And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

44 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

45 And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

46 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

47 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

48 Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

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

Hebrews 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

MEMORY VERSE: The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all nations that forget God. —**Psalms 9:17**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Those who refuse God's offered grace and salvation will be deemed fit for everlasting punishment in a burning lake of fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. God does

not really send a man to this place, but rather, man chooses the road that leads to this.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Hell: The Greek word is Gehenna, which means a place of refuse for burning, something on the order of a city dump.

Worm: a grub or maggot. This is a term that refers to the torment that will eat at the conscience forever.

LESSON BACKGROUND

For many years, satan has been at the game of persuading people to give up the idea of a burning hell, a place of everlasting punishment. He has many false prophets in the land telling the people that hell is merely the grave or the realm of disembodied spirits. But we are persuaded in the light of these scriptures that there is a burning place of torment that will be the doom of all who reject God's mercy and persistently go on in their sins. The phrase "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" is a direct quotation from Isaiah 66:24. The association of these two Scriptures together (the one in Isaiah and the one in our lesson) confirms the truth of eternal punishment. People who deliberately and willfully transgress against God's will are asking for trouble. God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but there does come a time when judgment and punishment are meted out. No, we do not employ effort to scare people into seeking the Lord, but there are severe consequences to sin. God is love, but He is also to be feared and held with respect. False prophets will be held accountable for the erroneous teachings that have lulled people into a careless approach to this matter. Hell is real. Be assured of this. Christ's will is for none to go there, but if souls stubbornly refuse His grace, there is no other course to take.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. What three members of the body did Jesus mention that might offend one? Was He talking about the literal body members?

2. What does the phrase "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" imply?
3. For whom was everlasting fire prepared?
4. What is the second death?
5. Are the scriptures of our lesson sufficient to prove the doctrine of eternal punishment? Can you think of other scriptures that support this?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Jesus mentioned three areas that can be a cause for offence; they could also be figuratively labeled as three areas of temptation in our lives. They correspond with the three elements of the world mentioned in I John 2:15-16; they are also relative to the three points of Eve's temptation and the three points of Christ's temptation.

The "foot" that Jesus said we should cut off is the element of pride that seems bent on taking over the soul. We must work against this and offset its downward pull with humility. The "hand" would have to do with the desires of the flesh or the appetites of the body. Unrestrained and undisciplined, these currents of mortal desire will contaminate the soul and lead astray. The "eye" corresponds with the lust of the eyes, against which we all must guard. We should keep our eyes on the Lord and not on the pleasures of this world.

The Lord loves us and does not desire the loss of any these members, but it is our choice as to what course we will take and where we will end up. Life or death is before us; it is ours to choose where we will spend eternity.

In Matthew 25 we see the judgment scene where the sheep will be divided from the goats. It was said of those who were condemned: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous unto life eternal." Oh, how plain are these words of our Savior! How we should fear and tremble rather than trifle with their sacred and holy meaning! No one relishes the thought of going to hell, but many people are going to be there simply because they refused to give up their ways in order to live for Jesus.

Let us be persuaded that there is a place of everlasting punishment and have grace to live for Jesus that we might escape that awful place and save someone else from going there also.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

We know hell (*Gehenna, the eternal lake of fire*) is real because Christ both gave us specific descriptions of its unspeakable torments and warned us to cut off our dearest enjoyments that could land us there. Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, but hell hath enlarged herself because of all who have rejected God's faithful dealings on their conscience to follow his plan and refused to forsake their own way.

Years ago, a young friend demonstrated this rejection of light by telling me that since he did not enjoy praising and worshipping God in church here, he really did not want to go to heaven, where that is all that people do. So, like multitudes of others, he chose the pleasures and curses of sin instead of "breaking off his sins with righteousness." While almost everyone believes they will go to heaven, will God ever force worship of those in heaven who have not voluntarily sought to mirror his righteousness here and now? Can anyone stand in heaven before his awesome holiness in their filthy garments without being consumed by his fiery condemnation over their sin?

I do not want to become a vessel of God's wrath, fitted for destruction in a dark, endless, hopeless pit of fire, writhing in agony, frenzied and terrorized by screaming, cursing, and hating wretches and demons. God made all the good things on earth for His creation to enjoy, but there will be no goodwill in hell, since hell is the complete absence of God and holds all the opposite characteristics of heaven. All the terrible anguish of mind, spirit, and body on earth will be a million times worse in hell without time to bring it to an end; time is our friend now. Loneliness and hopelessness will accompany those who used to be old friends; they will then despise each other instead of comforting one another in their unfathomable sufferings. There will be zero enjoyment in hell.

*"If, then you're lost and forgotten,
Writhing in flames of despair,
You will remember you've chosen
To be there."*

"The reflections and reproaches of the sinner's own conscience are the worm that dieth not; which will cleave to the damned soul as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it

till it is quite devoured. *Son, remember* will set this worm gnawing; and how terrible will it bite that word (Prov. 5:12,23) *How have I hated instruction!* The soul that is food to this worm, dies not" (*Matthew Henry Commentary*).

"Lord, I want to go to Heaven. Hell is an awful, awful place."

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

A VISION OF PARENTS MEETING THEIR CHILDREN IN ETERNITY

I had been saved about six weeks and was much troubled over a neighbor's young daughter who had been converted recently. This girl's father had been very wroth over her experience of salvation, telling her she would have to give it up or leave home. I was much troubled over the situation and burdened for others lost. As I stood before my window it seemed as if the side of the building were vanishing out of existence. I looked down at my feet to see if I were still on earth, and a voice said, "Look ahead."

As I looked before me, to my horror, I stood before a great lake of fire, miles and miles wide it seemed, with no other side in view. There, just a few feet down below came an object moving. As I watched it I discerned the hands of a man as if swimming along in water. He swam swiftly within a few feet of where I was standing, and there seemed to be a wall of some kind around this place. He was making his way to this. It looked like a great concrete wall. This man made his way very close to what seemed to be the last stroke before he could touch the wall. I watched anxiously to see if he could get a hold of that wall, but a great flame of fire rose between this last stroke and the wall, and he was several feet down before he showed his face again.

About this time a voice was heard coming through the flames, a voice well known to this man-the voice of his beloved son. They met face to face in my view. He looked about eighteen years old. Oh! the horror on the face of the father when he met his son in a devil's hell. Then this accusation was made by the son, "Oh! Father, if you had been a Christian, if you only had not drunk, smoked, and cursed, but had been a praying father, I would not be here today."

Then came a beautiful woman swimming along. She made a try for the wall; but was turned back by that great flame. She, too, heard a familiar voice, that of her precious daughter-the voice of the baby

that she had held to her breast and heard its laughter, its little cries as a baby. All of a sudden the memories of that baby voice, the sound of those little feet as they pattered to and fro in the home, the different turns of life as she grew into womanhood, the beautiful daughter about the age of 16 or 18, met Mother in hell, face to face. The surprised look as the two faces met! Oh! I can never describe! Her daughter said, "Oh, Mother, if you had only been a Christian mother and taught me about the Lord." Mother was speechless. Their destiny was sealed; life was ended.

When at last it had vanished, I was myself again, beside my window. I had both hands entangled in my hair and my eyes were wet with tears. I cried, "O God, why am I seeing such a place since I am trying to serve you?" He said, "Go forth and warn others not to meet their sons and daughters in a devil's hell."

—Della Patrick (revisited)

MARCH 29, 2026

THE HOPE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.

Philippians 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

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

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

2 Corinthians 4:17 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 4:17 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 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

2 Peter 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

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

Hebrews 13:14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

MEMORY VERSE: For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. —**Galatians 5:5**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The treasures of those who are saved in Christ are not in this present world. We are looking for eternal life and blessings in the world to come. We will live forever with Christ and all the redeemed of all ages after this present world is destroyed.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Earnest expectation: Eager anticipation.

Conversation: Citizenship.

Vile body: Body of our humiliation, Greek.

Tabernacle: Tent.

Dissolved: Taken down.

LESSON BACKGROUND

We have chosen a few scriptures to make up our lesson from many in the Bible that speak of the hope of the righteous. These

scriptures are very expressive and clear, yet they are veiled in a mystery so holy and charming. We must be aware of the importance that the hope of Christ's calling was to the early-day Christians, for it is still that hope that sustains the righteous in their cause today. Take our hope away, and we are of all men most miserable. Jesus, Paul, and Peter are uniformly agreed on this issue.

Many things are provided for us by the Spirit in the New Testament plan of salvation; we need grace, peace, joy, strength, wisdom, understanding, and faith. These are available to us now, but there are also great benefits of salvation we have not yet reached nor will we reach until we are called away from this world and ushered into that world beyond the veil. Summed up, it is the great love and affection that the Heavenly Father has for those who really serve Him. He has prepared a home beyond the highest dream or imagination of the human heart. The knowledge we have of that home above, attained through Scripture and glimpses that we gather through Christian experience, holds our souls like an anchor to our Rock.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

POINTS TO PONDER

1. Will we have a literal mansion in heaven?
2. Why does God not describe heaven in full detail to us?
3. What does the hope in Christ mean to the Christian in the trials and afflictions that he suffers?
4. What does this hope mean to one whose affections are centered down here in this present world?
5. What is the Christian life without this hope?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

To be a child of God, one must face and overcome many obstacles and adversities in this present world. Measure-by-measure, the Christian is called to a life so holy and pure that he is out of step with the current around him. More and more, he develops into holiness and righteousness as he draws nearer to the end of his journey. Sometimes it seems that he is submerged in the din of the battle. What is it that keeps him running the Christian race and fighting the good fight? The love of Christ, the grace of God, the comfort of the Spirit are vital for

his success, but it is the hope that he has in what he will receive in the future that gives ardor to his determination to press on. He is persuaded that the Bible is true. He knows that there is a place in heaven waiting for him. It shines brightly in his eye of faith. Thus, he earnestly looks forward to the future and endures the present ills with joy. Paul expressed it as "our light affliction"; it is not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us. "Were ten thousand worlds around me, all so easy to obtain, they were nought beside the glory of that crown that I shall gain." This hope is what sustained Paul as he faced the Roman chopping block. It sustained fifty million martyrs who were dispatched by terrible methods through the Dark Ages. It is the counterbalance of all that we as children of God meet and bear in this world. It is an ever-bearing seal of patience and endurance, no matter what the world or satan may heap upon us. Regardless of the depth of suffering or humiliation, we still lift our eyes with steadfast hope. Death, as it approaches the Christian, has no power to chill the heart. Hope looks beyond its dark shadow and sees rest and eternal life on the other shore. Truly, the hope of a Christian is the anchor of the soul.

—Bro. Leslie C. Busbee

REFLECTIONS

"Blessed hope we have within us is an anchor to the soul. It is both steadfast and sure. It is founded on the promises of Father's written Word and will evermore endure."

In Job 14:14 the word speaks, "If a man die, shall he live *again*? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Job 19:25-26 says, "For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: and *though* after skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God." It is a hope that goes beyond the grave. It also sustains us in life so that we are not in despair. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, we could rest in God, knowing it was in His control. He has the whole world in His hands.

The word speaks of men's hearts failing them for fear, looking at the things that are coming on the earth in Luke 21:26. We think of climate change, but we remember Noah's flood and Elijah's three years with no rain. God is still on the throne. We don't have to despair. Hope is an anchor to the soul.

—E. E. Gracey

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