

The Advocate of Truth





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THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

By Moises Torres M.

Most of the time in our personal consideration, we apply the benefit of the doubt to people we believe deserve a chance to prove their reasons or to those who may get right before the eyes of the Lord. But almost never do we apply this "benefit of the doubt" to ourselves.

In the Bible, we find people who applied this benefit to themselves, and they were great examples of self-examination. King David once said, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults" (Psalm 19:12). The second part of this same verse in the Reina Valera Version reads, "cleanse thou me from those hidden sins."

These words of David are probably one of the deepest examples of self-examination. He wanted to keep a clean heart before the Lord, and he always prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). But he also considered that some hidden errors or malice could be hiding in the deepest part of his heart, and that is why he prayed saying, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Sometimes we may believe that we are completely right or clean, but we really do not know ourselves as it is declared by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

Sometimes we commit faults or offenses that we are shocked about doing them, and we say, "That's not me! I am not that type of person to act in such an ugly manner." But it happens! This may happen to everyone of us. So we need to accept the possibility that something wrong may be hidden in our hearts which eventually may affect our lives and make us fall. Then we have to approve the veracity of the words of Paul in the above paragraph and also pray the words of David: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults (hidden errors)."

Jeremiah, the prophet, writes: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..." (Jeremiah 17:9). This is another reason why we must apply the benefit of the doubt to ourselves as David did.

This incurable sickness of the heart, described in this verse, is related to "presumptuous sins." David said, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression (falling away)" (Psalm 19:13).

The apostles also applied the benefit of the doubt to themselves when the Lord pronounced that one of them would betray Him. "And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22) They did not try to justify themselves by replying, "It is not I", nor did they accuse one another of that crime, but even though they knew they were clean and would never do something like that against their Master, they humbly examined themselves in that very moment and accepted the possibility to have failed in some way. In other words, they applied the benefit of the doubt to themselves.

Paul mentions this same principle: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (I Corinthians 11:28-29).

Let us be prepared, and examine ourselves so that we are found with a sound spirit to partake of the Lord's Supper emblems at His table this year. Let us remember our Lord's prayer:

"Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil..." (Matthew 6:11-13).

COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

For worry: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought (Do not worry) for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25).

For trouble: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

For bitterness: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

For sickness: “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James 5:14-15).

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:17).

For temptation: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;

but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (I Corinthians 10:13).

“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).

For persecution: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Matthew 5:11).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” (Romans 8:35).

To add courage: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (I Timothy 6:12).

“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:7).

To give strength: “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10).

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

To increase faith: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the

appearing of Jesus Christ” (I Peter 1:7).

To bring hope: “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” (Hebrews 6:18-19).
“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is” (Jeremiah 17:7).

To reveal love: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).
“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (I John 4:8).

--From an old bookmark

Challenges

By Sister I. M. Richards

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Have there ever been times in your life when everything seemed to be quite fine?
And then an unexpected situation slapped you out of line.
To you your world is at a sudden down turn,
And all you could think was Lord, what have I done wrong?

You worry, you contemplate on the dilemma at hand,
It feels like the situation would never change, regardless of how much you grind.
You try with more patience--no result; you pray harder--to you there's no result;
Whatever you do seems only in vain, only to know our loving God is just testing us out.

God sometimes allows the devil to unleash his plots towards us,
He allows peoples to provoke, to disrespect and act piously unjust.
But sometimes we fail to realize once we endure faithfully,

We are becoming that gold tried whose reward is life eternal.

So never murmur against God, never seek an eye for an eye,
God works in ways at times we cannot understand, no matter how tactful we may be.
For perfection is never acquired in a day,
The challenges of life hastens the pace and prepares the way .

The Prayer Of A People

By: Betty Whetstone

O Father, come quickly,
We're footsore and weary,
and need You today;
Your face we are seeking
as we bow to pray.
We earnestly tell You, we need You today,
Our freedom has vanished
somewhere on the way.
And our rulers would tell us
Where we are when we can pray.
Our steps grow more slower,
Our hearts lose all hope;
For Satan has brought us
to the end of our rope.
O Father in Heaven,
won't You speed up Your plan?
And come and rule over us,
as only You can.
We are constantly seeking
Your mercy and grace;
And long to behold the sight of Your face.
We need You, Dear Father,
we are so alone;
Please come to us quickly,
We need to come home.

THOUGHTS ABOUT FAITH

Bond Tennant

“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 11:1).

In the above Scripture, the Apostle Paul encourages us to exercise more faith in our walk with God. When we do this, we please our heavenly Father, and we are assured of receiving eternal life and an entrance into the kingdom. Jesus said, “...According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29).

Paul explained the meaning of faith, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). We really can only understand this Scripture from our spiritual vision which is given to us by our heavenly Father. The apostle wrote in his letter to the church at Corinth, “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” (II Corinthians 4:18). With the children of God, faith is essential to receive the promises that He has given them. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Faith is composed of two parts, an intellectual assurance and a heart reliance. We have never seen God with our natural eyes or heard Him speak audibly. However, we have a mental conviction of what He has done for us in the past and what He is now doing for us. An intellectual appreciation of God’s truth is the principle foundation of our faith. We know that God has a plan and purpose for mankind through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith has rewards that are both present and future. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2). It is

beyond the power of the mind to grasp the fact that we, by nature fallen human creatures, should be given the opportunity to obtain the hope of the glory of God. This hope is clearly stated in the Word of God. The Apostle John wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:1-3).

We are told that we can have the peace of God. In this time of trouble in all the earth, there is no greater blessing that we can have. Men’s hearts are now, and will be more in the future, failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. It is our privilege to enjoy peace as we realize this favor and trust that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord. Jesus tells us, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:27).

God wishes us to learn the lessons of faith, trust, and confidence in Him in order to have peace in our hearts. In the troubling times in which we live, there is fear and perplexity all around us. Yet, we can exercise faith as to the final outcome of the present evil state of affairs in the world. In Luke 21:26-28, we read: “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” We will learn to put our complete trust in God and accept the trials He has permitted us to experience if we have the faith without which it is impossible to please God.

A much-needed talk to parents

WHY DO OUR CHILDREN MISS THE WAY?

Reprinted

Children of prayer and apparently much fine religious training become in some instances a scandal to the church.

How does this happen? Who shall locate the fault in these cases so justly that it shall not lie against God's faithfulness to His promises, not against the faith and hope to train up their children in the way they should go?

The observations and reflections of more than forty years have given me decided opinions on the subject.

FIRST

First in importance and weight of influence is this: The chief reason for these failures in training is that parents did not secure implicit submission to their own authority. Obedience to parents was not established as a principle and wrought into a habit. Submission was not secured by such means and influences that it was rendered cheerfully, under a sense of its rightness, and with the resulting peace and joy that true and generous submission ensures.

This, we believe, has been a real factor in the early history of all those unfortunate cases in which parental hopes have been disappointed and the saddest scandals have accrued to the church.

We have studied this class of wayward children when they were under special religious influence in their youth. We have seen them powerfully convicted of sin. They have told us their dreadful conflicts under pressure of conscious obligation to repent. In many cases they have asked us what could be the reason that repentance came

so easy to others, yet seemed so utterly impossible to them.

In more cases than one, we have made the inquiry: "Did you accustom your heart to cheerful obedience to parents when you were young? Have you ever known what it is to give up your will and be happy about it, even happier than when you held out and carried your point and had your own way?" In all these cases the answer has been in the negative. "I never did submit cheerfully to the will of my father or mother. I always stood my ground doggedly, or I made some sort of compromise which saved my having to give up my will."

SECOND

When it became obvious that this was the uniform answer of those who could not submit their wills to God's will and therefore could find nothing tolerable in the stern demand for repentance, we began to look on this matter of the parental training of children in a new light. It assumed a degree of importance second to nothing in the whole circle of human influence. We were driven to inquire "How is it that there are so many such cases, even in families where the Bible is respected and parents seem to purpose to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?"

We will allude to some observations:

Mr. A and his excellent wife are very much occupied with civic and social affairs. There are many hours of the

day, therefore, in which neither of them knows very definitely where their children are, or what they are doing. If they hear, incidentally, of wrong things done by their children, they find it hard to believe they are at fault, or they know too little about the case to judge and act wisely. Moreover, being very short of time and very much pressed with other duties, the matter will surely not get proper attention nor be discreetly disposed of. Ill tempers, and even crimes are passed by.

Parental charity becomes only the more fondly cherished as the parents find others complaining of their children; and, suspending their otherwise good judgment, they come to feel it their duty to defend them because so few find any good thing to say about them. The children are never thoroughly known to their parents. Of course their wills are not brought into subjection to parental authority.

"Parental charity becomes only the more fondly cherished as the parents find others complaining of their children; and, suspending their otherwise good judgment, they come to feel it their duty to defend them because so few find any good thing to say about them."

Mr. B and his wife are never decided and strong in family government, except when in a passion. When their child becomes impudent and violent, they are stirred up, and then take the case in hand with irregular, and usually excessive, severity. Passionate correction only maddens. It takes long to wipe out the sense of conscious wrong which one such scene will leave on the mind of a child. It is far better to suspend all correction than to administer it while unduly excited.

In the family of Mr. C, the father uses the rod and the mother kisses. She grieves over the severity. He deprecates and bitterly condemns her ruinous indulgence. Hence, even if the father were judicious without a fault, the mother practically forbids his reaching the conscience and the heart of his child. If they are known to differ

radically in their attitudes, it will be a miracle if proper discipline is gained under their joint administration.

Mr. D and his wife mean well, but are just a little easy. Sometimes they say it shall be so, but they lose sight of the case, and obedience is not secured. The little fellow remembers the first omission and makes a mental record of it. He knows that by watching his opportunity, or by prudent delay or resistance, submission to authority can be evaded and he can have his own way. If there comes up an extreme case, and father is very much in earnest, he finds it prudent to give in for the sake of peace and safety. But the principle of universal obedience is destroyed. It is only in obedience in hand, rare and extreme cases, and then on the score of expediency. The moral effect or real obedience as a principle is never gained.

The love of parents should be intelligent. It should set itself thoughtfully to devise and execute the best possible means of promoting the good of loved children. Care should be taken that parental love does not degenerate into a blind impulse to grant the child present indulgence at the cost of future sorrow. God expects a wiser course than this of parents whom He has endowed with intelligence. Yet this is precisely the highway leading to many of the rocks upon which hopes are dashed in the ruin of fondly loved children.

THIRD

Returning to the subject of securing true submission to parental authority, we are persuaded that the best time to begin is very early. Before your words can be argued, while your steady eye and firm hand are the only needed organs of power – that is the best time to begin. Be gentle, but firm and decided. Do not frighten, but cause your will to be known, and being known, to be obeyed.

True, you need discernment. It is unfortunate to push the matter when you are not sure that your meaning is understood. But as soon as your will can be apprehended, and you see that it is, then lose no time in settling the point of authority. It is more easily and more effectively done at this stage of the child's development than at any other. The principle being established, it can be maintained with far less difficulty than if begun later. All the results are incomparably more satisfactory.

God has provided admirable facilities for this early subjugation of the infant's will and for early training in the

habit and principle of implicit obedience. Think how long He had made the period of weak dependent infancy, and how slow the process toward self-reliance. Animals leap by a few quick steps from weakness to strength, from helplessness to self-reliance. Children mature slowly during many of the most precious, the richest years of life.

Who can doubt that God has a purpose in this plan? Who can deny that this purpose is to give parents time to do the most important business ever done in human life—the molding of the infant and youthful mind into obedience and virtue? This is a great work, and the long years assigned to it are none too many or too slow in their progress when estimated in the light of the eternal results of careful and thorough parental nurture.

We must notice also the remarkable fact that during the earliest development of a child's moral consciousness parents stand in many vital respects in the place of God, for the infant's mind can as yet know no other God. His idea of a higher power travel to his father and mother, and rests there. His impressions of a higher beneficent love, which becomes to him the foundation of all good, go no farther than that. To him the perpetual presence is that of parents only. God as yet has made no other manifestation to his infant mind. Consequently, the development of his sense of obligation to obey and his dawning notions of rightful authority are their responsibility.

FOURTH

In the light of these facts, it will be seen to be of the utmost importance that parents establish in a child's mind as perfect an idea of the true God as is possible in the nature of the case. It is their duty to make sure that no wrong deed or temper on their part is responsible for an unworthy idea of the Father in heaven being established.

All the essential points in the relation of a child to his parents are involved in a child's relationship to God. It is, therefore, the parent's responsibility to see that disobedience to rightful authority never becomes a principle. Not only should it never be suffered to grow into a habit, but it should never be suffered to pass unrebuked and uncorrected.

Submission to parental authority, if made to rest on its true foundation, provides the best facilities for true conversion to God at the earliest moment after the claims

of God can be understood and the knowledge of the washing away the guilt of sin. Where obedience to parents has been established on the basis of its intrinsic rightness, resistance to the perceived claims of God will scarcely be thought of. We believe it to be true that in the great majority of such cases the heart is yielded to God readily when His claims are first distinctly seen. The dogged obstinacy, so natural to those who never have given up their will to a higher one, does not assert itself.

"All the essential points in the relation of a child to his parents are involved in a child's relationship to God. It is, therefore, the parent's responsibility to see that disobedience to rightful authority never becomes a principle."

Hence the experience of those who labor for the salvation of souls brings out a great amount of testimony in this connection. On the one hand, it reveals that well trained children are usually led to Christ with readiness, as though it were natural for them to love goodness and to yield their will to pure and rightful authority. On the other hand, those whom no terror can persuade, and no manifested love can melt to obedience and contrition, are always young people who have never learned to submit to the authority of their parents.



When Children of God Don't Listen

By David DeLong

Children of God, because of their relationship to the Lord, want to do His will. However, there are times when they don't do that will, and one reason for this is that they didn't listen carefully enough to God's instructions. The result of this is usually sin on the believer's part, and the end result is sometimes disastrous. Let us examine some examples in the Bible where children of God just plain didn't listen carefully to the Lord.

The most consequential example of God's people not heeding His instructions is found in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. At first it seems that Adam and Eve did listen carefully to the Lord's commandment to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We pick up this scenario in Genesis chapters two and three. "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil...And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:8-9; 16-17).

The commandment of God was plain and simple. Neither Adam nor Eve misunderstood it. However, they appear to have only half-heartedly listened to the command, not really thinking about the consequences for dis-

obedience. Notice how easily they were swayed to disregard this commandment of life and death. "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:1-7).

One might argue that this couple in the Garden of Eden did not really know what death was, and so it was easier for them to disobey God's commandment. But, God had told them all they needed to know to obey Him, as He also tells us today. There is absolutely no reason for disobedience. No one can ever claim ignorance of God's will, especially when we have His Word to guide us. The most tragic part of the story is that this disobedience on

the part of Adam and Eve not only brought death to them, but also it brought death to the whole human race. Romans 5:17-19 reads: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." We learn that through Adam's disobedience death came to the human race, while through Christ's perfect obedience eternal life comes to all who receive Him and follow His example.

Moses was a faithful follower of the Lord, but we will see that in a moment of anger and frustration with the children of Israel he was excluded from entering the Promised Land. The Israelites, at the time, had no water so they argued with Moses and Aaron about the situation. Numbers chapter 20 brings us the story. "And the people chided with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me

not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them. This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them" (verses 3-13).

Moses was to speak to the rock and God would produce the water needed for all the people and their beasts to drink. Moses however, in disobedience, struck the rock twice and the water came forth abundantly. The rock apparently represented the Lord Jesus Christ as we can discern from I Corinthians 10:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Christ, we know, would not be struck (crucified) twice to give eternal life to His followers.

When the children of Israel were about to enter the Promised Land we learn concerning Moses: "And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people: Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:48-52). It serves children of God well to listen carefully to the instructions of the Lord!

King Solomon was a person who loved the Lord (see I Kings 3:3). When the Lord appeared to him in a dream, Solomon asked for an understanding heart to judge God's people. Next we read: "And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have

done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days" (I Kings 3:10-14).

Already Solomon had begun to break the commandments of the Lord. Back in verse one of our text we read: "And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about." Solomon must have known the warning given by the Lord through Moses in Exodus 34:12-16. This passage of Scripture declares: "Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."

Solomon, we have read, married Pharaoh's daughter and brought her right into the city of David. He also married many other strange women. We turn now to I Kings 11:1-8: "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of

David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods."

Furthermore, we read of the Lord's reaction to Solomon's disobedience in verses 9-10: "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded." Solomon did not listen to the Lord in a two-fold manner. First, he did not listen to God's Word when he married strange wives, and second he did not listen when he turned to other gods. We can get involved with bad things too if we do not carefully listen to the Lord's instructions.

This next event is startling because it involves an Egyptian king bringing God's Word to King Josiah of Judah. Second Chronicles 35 brings to us the fascinating story. "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in

Israel: and, behold, they are written in the lamentations. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to that which was written in the law of the LORD, And his deeds, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah" (verses 20-27).

What a shame that this godly king of Judah was dead before his time. God had even warned him not to fight with Necho, king of Egypt. Someone might say that King Josiah may not have been sure that a pagan king was speaking the truth to him. No matter! The warning by Necho should have given pause to Josiah to stay out of battle with him. God may give His people instructions through other people at times. However, we must compare other peoples' instructions with the written Word of God to make sure that those instructions really are from Him. King Josiah should have listened more carefully to God's warning.

One of the most tragic incidents, perhaps, of not heeding God's warning is with the Apostle Paul himself. Acts chapter 21 records the circumstances of this tragedy. Paul, and other disciples, were in Syria at the city of Tyre. Then we learn: "And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem" (verse 4). Later, they went to Caesarea. "And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done" (verses 10-14).

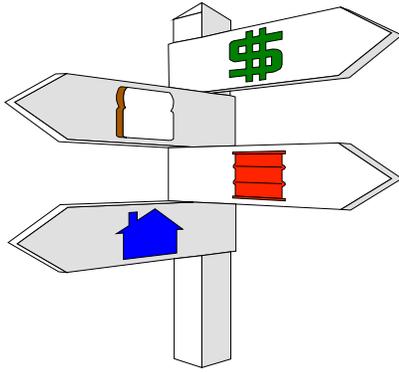
Later we know that Paul did go to Jerusalem and was put in chains (see Acts 21:15-33). Still later he went to Rome (see 28:16). He lived for at least another two years, doing ministry for the Lord (see verse 30). How long Paul might have lived if he had listened to the Lord we can only speculate. But the Lord must have wanted him to live a

"Already Solomon had begun to break the commandments of the Lord."

longer life of service because he warned him twice not to go to Jerusalem. Paul's intentions were noble. But the Lord wants us to listen and be obedient, not just noble in our intentions. Paul probably learned this the hard way.

The Lord speaks to us in various ways, most notably through His written Word, the Bible. Sometimes, however, He speaks to us through people, in Paul's case through prophets. Proverbs 11:14 instructs us: "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Yes, the Lord speaks to us. But, are we listening carefully?





THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

If you have any items of interest that you would like to submit to this segment, please send them to The Church of God Publishing House, PO Box 328, Salem, WV 26426-0328.

More Ebola Scare

The following is a short insert from the **Houston Chronicle: Travelers from Mali screened For Ebola now** - NEW York – Travelers from Mali will be subjected to the same screening and monitoring that was ordered for people arriving from three other Ebola-affected countries, U.S. health officials said Sunday.

Mali is not suffering widespread Ebola illnesses. But federal officials are growing increasingly worried about a new cluster of seven illnesses in Mali that have left health workers scrambling.

Economic Warning

I heard on the news that red warning lights are flashing for the world's major economies, and the global economy's problems just seem to be multiplying.

Rich Donating Less

The following is an article by David Crary of the Associated Press entitled **Study: Rich donating less of their income**. The article appeared in the *Houston Chronicle*:

“NEW YORK – Even as the income gap widens, the wealthiest Americans are giving a smaller share of their income to charity, while poor and middle-income people are donating a larger share, according to an extensive analysis of IRS data conducted by the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

The Chronicle, a leading source of news coverage of the nonprofit world, said in a report being released Monday the Americans who earned \$200,000 or more reduced the share of their income they gave to charity by 4.6 percent from 2006 to 2012. Those earning less than \$100,000 donated 4.5 percent more of their income, the report said.

The analysis was based on tax returns filed by Americans who itemize their deductions, including their charitable gifts. Rankings were compiled for states and

metropolitan areas based on the ratio of contributions to adjusted gross income. According to the report, changes in giving patterns were most pronounced in major cities, where the percentage of income that residents donated dropped markedly between 2006 and 2012. In Philadelphia and Buffalo, N.Y., the share of income given to charity fell by more than 10 percent; there was a 9 percent drop in Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St. Paul and Washington, D.C.

Tami Phillips of the Midnight Mission, a Los Angeles charity serving homeless people, credited gifts from low and moderate income people, for helping sustain its programs during the recession

“It hits closer to home,” said Phillips. “Any day, they too could become homeless.

The Chronicle's editor, Stacy Palmer, noted that wealthy donors, overall, were more oriented toward support of the arts and higher education than lower-income donors, and less oriented toward support of social-service charities.

At the state level, residents of Utah were the nation's most generous, donating \$65.60 to charity for every \$1,000 they earned. One factor is Utah's large presence of Mormons, whose church practices call for them to give at least 10 percent of their income to charity.

Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee – also with high proportions of loyal churchgoers – were next in the rankings.

At the bottom of the list was New Hampshire, where residents gave \$17.40 for every \$1,000 they earned. Its neighbors, Maine and Vermont, were the next lowest.

The cities where residents gave the smallest share of their income to charity were Hartford, Ct; Providence, R.I., and San Jose, Calif.”

Comment

Those who are not wealthy donate to charity out of their concern for those who really do need help in obtaining the basic necessities in life, whether it be food, clothing or just a place to lay their heads. The wealthy donors' donations to the support of the arts and higher education is good in its own way, but it does very little for the poor who lack the basic necessities in life.

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness” (Psalm 41:1-3).

Fewer Cows To Come Home

I read an article in the newspaper which reported that there are fewer cows now because of the many droughts and other national disasters which have occurred. This has caused the price of leather and beef to really increase.

RENDER TO GOD HIS OWN

In this time of high cost of living, when it takes so much to live, we sometimes are tempted to withhold the tithe from God and spend it up on our own lusts.

When we are tempted, remember God is able to lengthen the life of things which we wear as He did the clothes of Israel while they wandered in the wilderness. Remember when Elijah came to the widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17) who was going to make a cake for herself and her son and die. Elijah said, “...Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cask first...” (verse 13). She did, and during all this drought her barrel of meal did not diminish, neither did the cruse of oil fail. Besides, remember the loaves and fishes Jesus fed the multitude. You may say that has nothing to do with what I give to the Lord. God is the same today and always. He could increase or He could diminish.

Is He able to do as much today? Remember, God has promised to pour us out a blessing that we will not be able to receive it. Let us believe God for He has promised to be with us always even to the end of the world (age). Do you believe? The things that happened to them back there are for our admonition on whom the end of the earth has come.

Let us not rob God but render to Him what He has asked, and you will never want. We are told by the

Psalmist that HE has never seen the righteous begging bread. May our faith be increased so we can take hold of the promises of God and render to God what is His regardless of what the times may be.

All things belong to God; we are just stewards. So let us be just stewards, that He may say, “...Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

May we think upon these things for there are great and precious promises to those who do.

Reprinted

Obedience

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21). Can anything be more wonderful than to be loved by God and His Son Jesus! I do not think so!

As we study the Old Testament, it is very evident that Israel's troubles were all due to the fact that they would not obey God's Commandments. Even though God performed miracle after miracle for them when they came out of Egypt and wandered in the wilderness, they looked at the pagan cultures around them and followed after them, worshipped idols and intermarried. These were all things God told them they should not do. This also caused them to be dispersed to the four corners of the world.

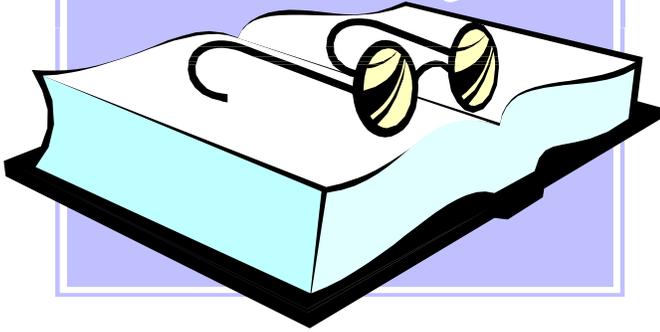
Jesus also put down Commandments for us to follow. He tells us that when we obey, and accept Him as our Saviour, we will have a part in His coming Kingdom. Also, God will love us, as well as Jesus.

Yet today, for many, just like the Israelites, the worldly things look much more pleasing. So they do not obey! This age is fast growing to a close. Without studying our Bibles, and finding out what God and Jesus are telling us, and ignoring the prophecies being fulfilled in our time, we run the risk of being left behind when Jesus comes for His saints. It will be too late! Do not be one on the outside on that day. While it is still “today,” **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”** (II Timothy 2:15). Then **“...Repent, and be baptized... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)”** (Acts 2:38).

--Ruth Spence

BIBLE

Study



QUESTION: Will you please comment on the difference between being meek and being proud?

ANSWER: Meek means gentle. Moses is a good example. Moses was a gentle man. He was mild of temper, patient, humble, longsuffering. What made him thus? God spake with him mouth to mouth, and he beheld the similitude of the Lord. He dwelt in God's presence. He stood before His face. No one was nearer to God than His servant Moses, and to no prophet did the Lord reveal Himself as He did to Moses. That made Moses, the mediator of the Old Testament, Christ-like.

Pride is the opposite of meekness. The farther from God sinful man is, the prouder he becomes. We have observed this in the past. Think of Mussolini and of Hitler and his Nazi gang! Also we can think of the weak nations in these days who say that they are strong! The closer to God a man is, the meeker he is. The Lord Jesus, who could testify, "I and the Father are one," was meeker than Moses. In fact he was so meek that all comparisons with others fail. Christ must be formed in us. The nearer we draw to our heavenly Father in Christ Jesus, the more we will be renewed after the image of Him who "when he was reviled, reviled not again."

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Miriam and Aaron, who were jealous of Moses, and opposed him, experienced this. Moses, the meek, was honored by the Lord. God blesses the meek. They shall find rest unto their souls, and they shall inherit

Questions and Answers

the earth.

The proud despise the meek. They ridiculed the lowly Nazarene, bleeding and dying at Calvary. But in Him there is salvation. In His death, he triumphed over His foes, and God has given Him a Name which is above every name.

Only those will be truly great who are conformed to the image of Christ and who become meek like Moses, the man of God.

QUESTION: Please name some attributes of the Bible. Why and how should I read it?

ANSWER: The Bible contains the Mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of the believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable.

Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the child of God's charter.

Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet.

Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and the river of pleasure. It is given you in life, it will be opened at the great white throne judgment, and be remembered for all time. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the work of the saints, and condemns all who trifle with its sacred contents.

QUESTION: What does concision mean?

ANSWER: Concision means a cutting down, a mutilation, or a hacking. It is used of that Jewish party which insisted upon circumcision for Christians. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" (Philippians 3:2).

QUESTION: What really is a graven image?

ANSWER: Some people think that graven images are tombstones. Others may think that graven images are things that inspire fear of God rather than His love.

A graven image is simply another name for an idol. An idol is a figure which has been carved, or engraved, in wood or stone. The graven images of the heathen were mostly likenesses of persons or animals which were worshiped as gods. So great was their idolatry that God, who is the author of the Ten Commandments, forbid any kind of image making, including representations of the Lord Himself.

QUESTION: Did Jesus ever quote from other books not now included in the canon?

ANSWER: Doubtless our Lord knew of many writings claiming to be inspired. However, I am not aware that He quoted from any but the recognized canonical books.

QUESTION: Does the first part of Deuteronomy 10:17 mean that there is more than one god?

ANSWER: The first part of Deuteronomy 10:17 says, "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords."

In II Corinthians 4:4, Satan is called the god of this world. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." In I Corinthians 10:20, the gods of the heathen world are said to be demons. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." In addition to these, there are many imaginary gods. However, the eternal God is Sovereign over them all, and in the real sense there is no god but He.

QUESTION: Was the worship of the Virgin Mary popular in early Christianity as the Catholic Church claims?

ANSWER: The notion that the worship of the Virgin Mary was popular in early Christianity has been installed by the Catholic Church to justify its practice. However, honest declarations of her own scholars are in direct contrast. The following are two of them from **The Catholic Encyclopedia** under the heading *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*: "We do not meet with any clear traces of the cultus of the Blessed Virgin in the first Christian centuries." "Evidence regarding the popular practice of the early centuries is almost lacking."

QUESTION: What is one benefit of Sabbath observance?

ANSWER: Sabbath observance will develop within us a closer relationship with God. It also gives us an opportunity to separate ourselves from the world and all of its distractions.

QUESTION: Will you please define a sacrament and comment a little on its meaning?

ANSWER: A sacrament has been defined as an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace. The Roman and Greek Churches accept seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders, marriage. The reformers recognize two, those held to be directly instituted by our Lord Himself, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

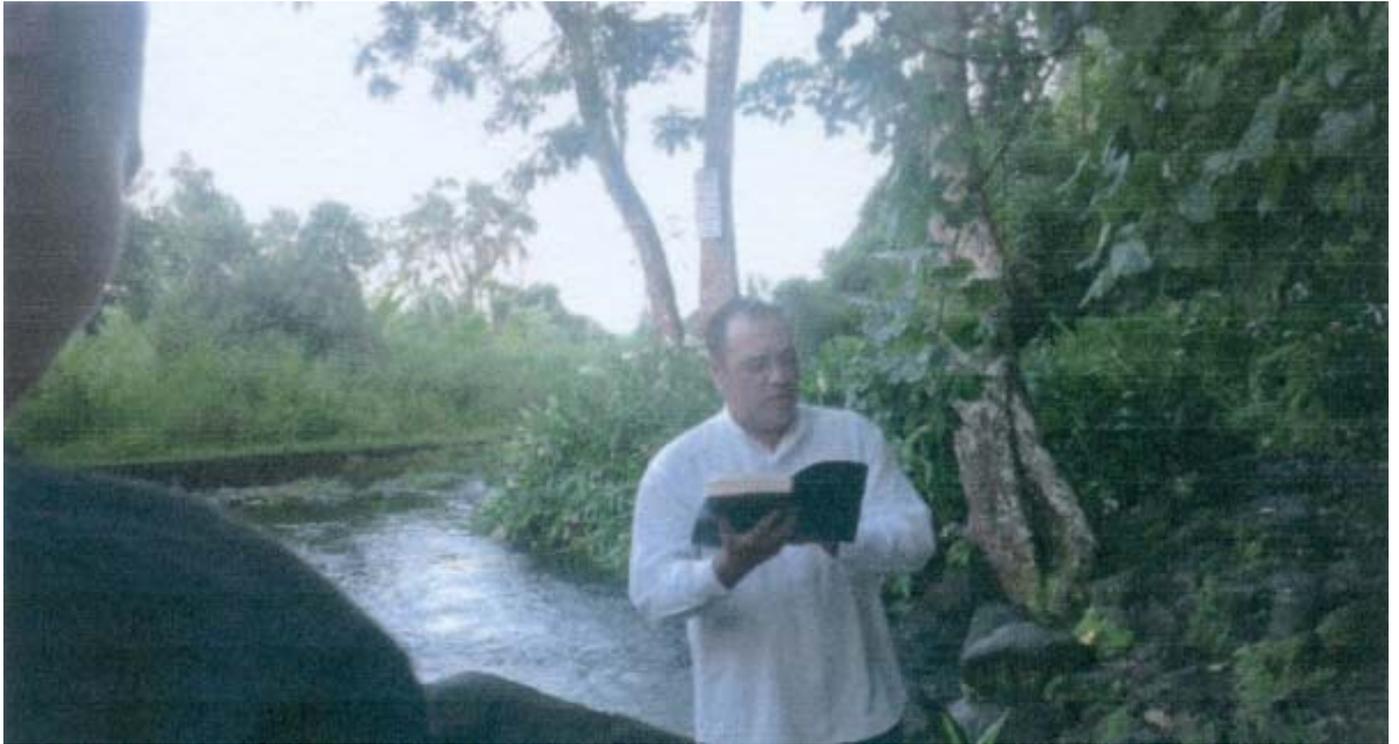
It is agreed that in the sacraments the Christian is concerned with a divine means of grace. The sacraments are not merely human institutions which derive their sole value from men. But this does not mean that they hold a magic charm and produce their effect upon life by the mere fact of their being employed. Their value depends upon the attitude of the recipient. In other words, they are worthless without faith and the knowledge of their meaning. The sacrament, whether baptism or the Lord's Supper, may not be administered purely as an external rite, and the one receiving it be dismissed as though the external act had bestowed a spiritual benefit. We are saved by faith alone! The sacraments are aids and reminders. Each is a symbol which keeps before the believer's mind certain elements of following Christ. The sacraments can serve to enhance the life of the spirit in the one receiving them, only as they produce in that one a greater faith and purer life.



Tahiti

Baptisms being performed in Tahiti.





Brother Toofa reading from the Scriptures at the baptismal site.



LESSON I

CHRIST CLEANSSES THE LEPER AND HEALS THE CENTURION'S SERVANT**Scripture Reading: Matthew 8:1-13.****Golden Text: Matthew 8:7.****“And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.”**

1. When Jesus came down from the mountains, there were multitudes following Him. Who came unto Jesus, and what did he ask Jesus to do? Matthew 8:1-2.

2. Did Jesus immediately cleanse that man of his leprosy? Matthew 8:3.

NOTE: Leprosy is a chronic, infectious disease, marked by ulcers and scabs, followed by deformity of parts of the body. Do you think this was a miraculous thing for Jesus to do?

3. What did Jesus say to the man in Matthew 8:4?

4. When Jesus entered Capernaum, who came seeking Jesus, and who was sick? Matthew 8:5-6.

5. What did Jesus say to the centurion? Matthew 8:7.

6. Did the centurion feel he was worthy to have Jesus come to his home? Why? Matthew 8:8-9.

7. Did Jesus marvel at the great faith of this man? Matthew 8:10.

8. What did Jesus tell the centurion to do, and was the servant healed? Matthew 8:13.

NOTE: You can also read about this story in Luke 7:1-10.

LESSON II

CHRIST HEALETH THE WITHERED HAND**Scripture Reading: Mark 3:1-12.****Golden Text: Mark 3:4.****“And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.”**

1. Where was Jesus when He saw the man with a withered hand? Mark 3:1.

2. The Pharisees were watching Jesus to see if He would heal on the Sabbath day so they could accuse Him of breaking that day. What questions did Jesus ask them about doing good on the Sabbath in Mark 3:2-4?

3. Why was Jesus grieved at this time? Did He immediately restore the man's hand to normal? Mark 3:5.

4. What did the Pharisees immediately seek to do to Jesus? Mark 3:6.

5. Where did Jesus go with His disciples? Did many follow Him? Mark 3:7.

6. In what other places did the multitudes follow Him when they heard of the great things He had done? Mark 3:8.

7. Where did Jesus then go to get away from the crowd? Mark 3:9.

8. Had He healed very many? Did they realize He was the Son of God? Mark 3:10-11.

9. Did He ask them to not make Him known? Mark 3:12.

LESSON III

CHRIST CASTS OUT THE LEGION OF DEVILS

Scripture Reading: Mark 5:1-20.

Golden Text: Mark 5:8.

“For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.”

1. When Jesus was come out of the ship, who met Him? What was wrong with this man? Mark 5:1-2.
2. Where had this man been dwelling? How did He act? Mark 5:3-5.
3. Did he worship Jesus when he saw Him, and what did he ask Jesus? Mark 5:6-7.
4. What did Jesus say to cause the unclean spirit to come out? Mark 5:8.
5. What was the man’s name, and what did his name mean? Mark 5:9.
6. What was near in the mountains, and what did Jesus do to them? What happened to them, and how many were there? Mark 5:11-13.
7. Did this story spread over the country? Did many come to see what had been done? Mark 5:14.
8. When the people came to see the man who was there in his right mind, how did they feel? Mark 5:15-17.
9. What did Jesus tell this man to do, and did he obey Jesus? Mark 5:18-20.

LESSON IV

JESUS RAISETH THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

Scripture Reading: Mark 5:35-43.

Golden Text: Mark 5:39 (last part).

“...Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.”

1. Who came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house, and what did they want with Jesus? Mark 5:35.
2. As soon as Jesus heard the word, what did He say unto the ruler of the synagogue? Mark 5:36.
3. Did anyone accompany Jesus to the ruler of the synagogue? Mark 5:37.
4. What did He find at this house? Mark 5:38.
5. When Jesus came in, what did He say to them? Mark 5:39.
6. Did they make fun of Jesus? What did He do with the people? Whom did He take in to where the damsel was laying? Mark 5:40.
7. Jesus took the girl by the hand, and what did He say to her? Mark 5:41.
8. Did the girl arise and walk? How old was she? Mark 5:42.
9. What did Jesus charge them to do? Mark 5:43.

SINGING BIRDIE

By Barbara Sauder Millard

I watched a little birdie

In a green willow tree.

He cocked his wee, shiny head

And sang this song to me:

“I’m just a little birdie:

I cannot jump or play.

I just sing the love of God

All through the long, long day.

I’m just a little birdie

In a green willow tree,

Singing praises to Jesus,

Won’t you come sing with me?”



THE BOX WITH THE GOLDEN KEY

By May Stanley

Joy looked puzzled as she read the familiar handwriting on the white envelope Mother had just handed her. "To Joy On Her 14th Birthday" was written on the envelope. "Mother, where did this come from? she asked. "Uncle James has been in India for a year now."

"Uncle James gave that envelope to me before he left," Mother said, smiling. "He said that I was to give it to you on this special day."

"I wonder what it could be?" Joy's forehead wrinkled in a frown as she stared at it.

"Open it, silly," her younger brother Ricky, told her. "You will never find out by looking at it."

Joy laughed. "Might be a good idea," she said, ripping open the envelope. As she pulled out the letter something shiny fell into her lap.

"A little gold key!" She gasped, turning it over in her hand. Eagerly, she read the letter out loud.

"Dear Joy."

"I am sorry that I cannot be with you in person today. But I have a treasure box for you. This little gold key will open it if you follow directions carefully. First, go to my former room next to Ricky's. You will find a small black box in the top bureau drawer. It contains the first clue. God bless you, and may the treasure bring much happiness to you."

"Uncle James."

Joy jumped up. "Come on, Ricky. What are we waiting for?"

Quickly she ran to Uncle James' room and opened the top bureau drawer. Ricky was close at her heels.

"O look, Ricky!" she said as she pulled a black box from the drawer. "Let us see what is inside."

Eagerly she reached in and pulled out a bit of paper. It read, "This is the clue to the treasure; May it bring you joy without measure. Next you will hunt in a place out in front, where in summer you find lots of pleasure."

"Where is that?" Ricky asked. "I do not get it."

Joy thought for a moment. "He could mean outside in front of the house--maybe the porch." She dashed down the stairs. "Come on. Let us get a garden trowel to dig in the stone urn by the steps. That will be our first try."

"It is a good thing it is too early for Mother to have anything planted out here yet," Joy said breathlessly as she dug in the hard dirt in the stone urn.

"I cannot find anything here."

Ricky had been peering under the porch steps and other places he thought likely. "I have not found anything either," he said.

Joy looked around her. Suddenly her face brightened. "The summer house! Let us inspect the summer house! It follows the clue."

Ricky ran after her as she headed across the front yard for the little summer house where they often played in the summer, shaded from the heat.

Joy began to search everywhere: behind the benches, under the old table, in a hole under the steps. Vines covered the summer house, and she began to explore there. Little by little she worked her way upward. Near the top of the trellis, where the vines grew thickest, her fingers struck something hard and unfamiliar.

"There is a box here," she called to Ricky.

"Push that bench over here, please. I cannot reach it."

She stood on the bench and tugged. The box was overgrown by the vine in such a way that she could not budge it. She pulled the vines apart one at a time, until finally the box loosened. A thrill tingled through her as she got it down.

She felt disappointed when she looked at it. It was just an ordinary tin box. She began to tug at the lid. Rusted

through, it broke off in her hand. There was some colored cellophane inside. She opened it and another note fell into her hand.

"It is another clue," Ricky said, looking over her shoulder.

With fingers that trembled, Joy removed the wrapper, and read,

"Take a little stroll out to the road,
Turn right, half a mile from your abode:
Take with you a shovel,
And gird near the hovel,
By the tumble down porch there is a toad."

"That sounds corny", Ricky said. "What does all that mean?"

"I do not know either," Joy told him. "But let us follow the clues one by one. First we will get a shovel. Then we will go out to the road, turn right, and start walking. That part is clear anyway."

After they had walked a ways, Ricky asked, "Joy, what is a hovel?"

"A hovel is a tumbled down old shack, I think."

Suddenly she stopped. "O Ricky, that is it! I think I know where Uncle James meant. It might be that old shack that sits back off the road. Come on, let us run!"

As they came suddenly upon the place, Joy stopped. She would not admit it to Ricky, but the place did look a little scary with its boarded up windows and weeds all around.

"Do you really think this is the place?" Ricky asked. "M-maybe it is somewhere else."

"Yes, I think this is it." Joy's voice trembled a little, "Come on, Ricky, and be sure not to drop the shovel."

As Joy pushed bravely through the weeds and brambles to the shack, she noticed how dead and brittle they seemed to be.

"Here we are," she said. "I guess nobody has been here for years. I do not even see a porch. The clue said it had a tumbled down porch. Come on, let us look at the back."

"This sure is through going," Ricky panted. They both had to stop several times to untangle themselves from the weeds and burrs. Once Joy looked around in the high grass for Ricky but could not find him.

"Ricky!" she screamed frantically.

"Ouch!" Ricky's voice was so near her it made her jump. He pulled himself up. "I stumbled over that rabbit hole. Phew, I hope we soon find that treasure."

Ricky poked among the high grass near the porch. Joy saw some large stones near by.

"O Ricky!" she cried to her startled brother. "Here is a big, cold dead toad!"

"Well, what do you know about that," Ricky said. "I thought something bit you. It is an iron toad."

"I guess you did, the way I screamed!" Joy walked back to where she had found the toad. "See that bare spot? That is where the toad was sitting. Let us start to dig there."

"All right, I got the shovel, and I will start." Ricky pushed it into the soft earth. Joy let him dig until she saw he was getting tired. Then she took her turn.

"Did you hear that, Ricky?" she dropped to her knees and reached in the hole. "It seems to be a metal box. I will have to dig a little more."

Finally, Joy had the metal box on the ground before her. She took her gold key and turned it in the lock.

"It-it is a package-all wrapped in oilshin!" Joy cried. "O Ricky, this must be the treasure at last!"

Impatiently, she tugged at the wrappings. When she finally got the gift unwrapped, she gasped with pleasure.

"A Bible! A beautiful Bible in white leather and with gold edges! So this is the treasure!"

"Aw, I thought it would be gold or precious jewels, or something like that." Ricky was clearly disappointed.

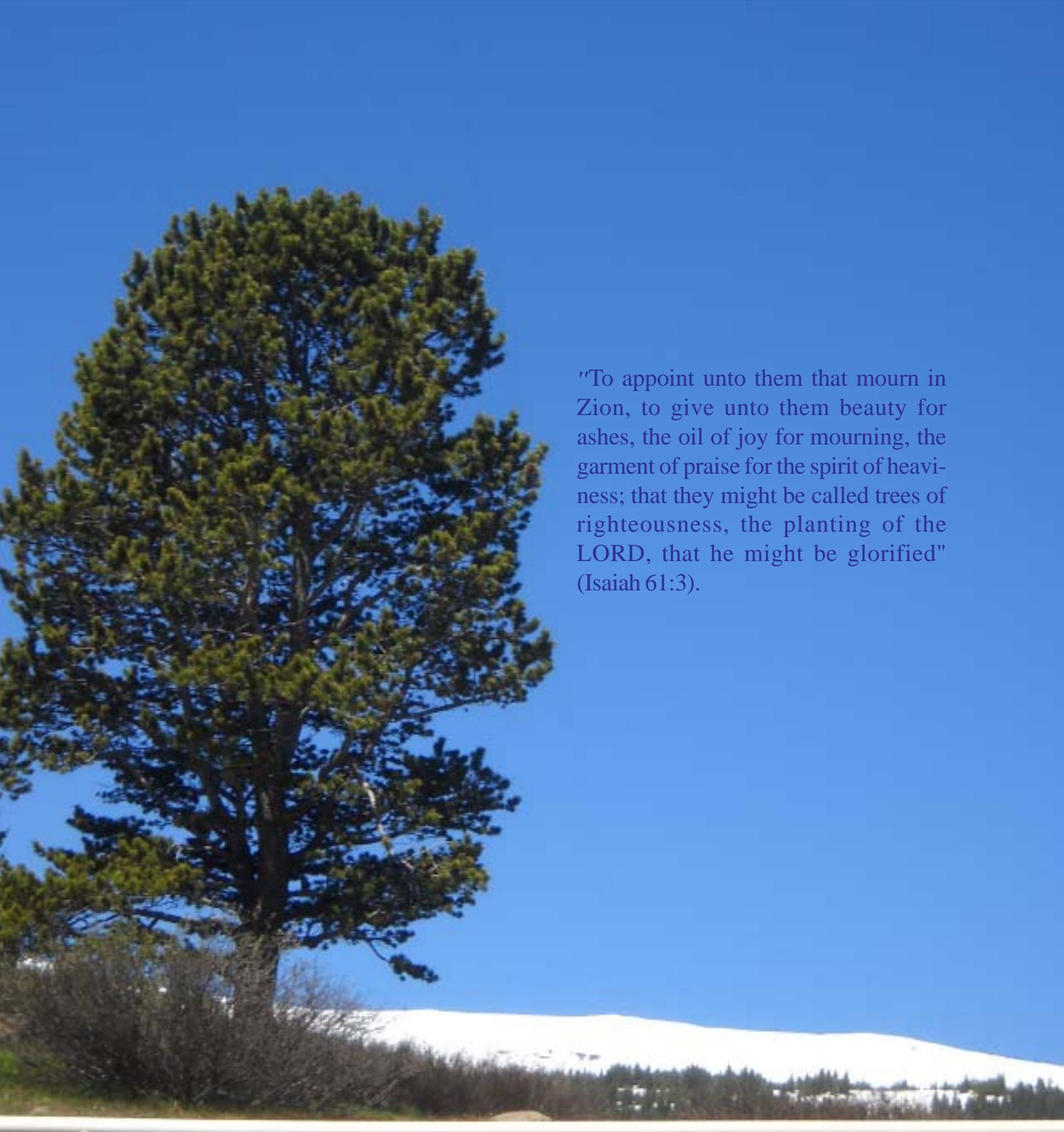
"O Ricky, this treasure is better than that kind of one. Listen to what Uncle James has written on the flyleaf: 'But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'" (Matthew 6:20-21).

"Say, that is right," Ricky said. "That is why we love Jesus more than anything in the world. Say Sis, your Bible is a beaut."

Joy hugged it tightly to her as they started back through the underbrush. "I love it more than anything I own. And it was lots of fun to find it on a treasure hunt."

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"To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3).

