

Sunday School LESSON



Living In God's Love

The author of this book is the apostle John. He was the brother of James, the son of Zebedee. He and his brother were a very volatile pair - so much so that Jesus called them "Sons of Thunder." They certainly lived up to this designation when they urged Jesus to call down fire on the Samaritan village that had refused to show hospitality to Jesus and his followers.

However, their association with Jesus and the power of the gospel changed these men from sons of thunder to what Paul called "sons of the light and sons of the day." James became the first of the apostles to die for his faith. John became the apostle of love, advocating the practice of Christian love like the love demonstrated by Christ.

This verse contains one of the most precious promises of God's Word: that we will someday see Jesus as he is and will also be like him in that we have a resurrected, spiritual body that is fitted for eternal life in Heaven.

John says that this will happen when he appears, referring to the second coming of our Lord. The coming appearance of Christ is mentioned in every book of the New Testament except those with only one chapter: Philemon, 2 and 3 John, and Jude. It appears in the New Testament 318 times, an average of once in every twenty verses.

This hope is the hope expressed in verse 2: that someday we will see Jesus as he is and will be like him. We are striving in this life to be like him in Christian character, but we sometimes fail. That is the reason we confess and ask for forgiveness.

Such a hope, John tells us, should motivate us to purify ourselves as Jesus is pure. While on earth, Jesus was tempted as we are by the sinful conditions around him and yet remained pure. We should seek the same purity.

A mother unexpectedly visited her son in his college dormitory and found lewd pictures on the walls. Instead of reprimanding him in front of his friends, she quietly placed a picture of Jesus on his desk. The next time she returned, the lewd pictures were gone. He said, "Mother, when I saw Jesus, those bad pictures had to go."

Of course, we do not know what Jesus looked like physically, but we can saturate our lives with the stories about him in the Gospels so that we feel that we know him personally. Then his presence is always with us as a companion to help us overcome our temptations.

This verse says one should purify himself. This is similar to the phrase in Acts 2:40, when Peter told the multitude to save themselves. Actually they could not save themselves without Christ's cleansing power, nor can we purify ourselves without him.

On the other hand, we do save ourselves when we make the decision of heart and mind to come to Christ. Peter speaks of purifying ourselves "by obeying the truth" that is, the truth of the gospel. God purifies us when we initially come to the Lord, and he continues to purify us as we continually to his will and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This verse is very loosely translated. Literally it says, "Everyone who does sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Lawlessness, is breaking the law, does not refer to violations of the law of Moses, but to a refusal to abide by any law or moral code.

The concept of law is of God, expressing his desire for order and moral purity, whether one speaks on the law of Moses, the law written on the hearts of Gentiles, or the commands to which Jesus referred when he said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

No proof of wrongdoing, AME pastor rules

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREELEYVILLE, S.C. - More than \$300,000 earmarked to rebuild the Mount Zion AME Church after it was torched by Ku Klux Klan arsonists went where it was intended, the church's new minister said.

"I have not found anything that is illegal or wrong," the Rev.

LeRoy Fred said Wednesday after completing an audit of the church's finances.

Questions arose in October when Fred's predecessor, the Rev. Terrance Mackey, was transferred to a larger church in Charleston.

The tiny Williamsburg County church, which has a regular con-

gregation of about 40, burned down in June 1995 - one in a series of racially motivated church burnings. President Clinton launched his war on the burning of black churches at the Mount Zion site last year.

But the church is broke and in debt despite more than \$110,000 in contributions from across the

country and grants from the National Council of Churches.

Mackey said nothing was done improperly and that the audit bears that out.

Mount Zion spent about \$120,000 in insurance, \$90,000 in loan money and \$110,000 in donations and grants to rebuild, church officials say. The congrega-

tion still owes all but one annual payment on a 10-year, \$90,000 rebuilding loan from the Bank of Greeleyville.

In October, Mackey said there would have been no questions about where the money went if church members had attended and paid attention at regular finance meetings.

Season of celebration



Members of a westside church have reason to celebrate. Last Sunday, the congregation of Community Outreach Christian Ministries moved into its sanctuary. The church celebrated with the Rev. David Chadwick and members of Forest Hill Presbyterian Church. The church is located at 1222 Oaklawn Ave.

Ministry fills needs

By Leslie Wakulich TULSA WORLD

TULSA, Okla. - A lot of people take 35 cents for granted, said Frank Crownover.

For someone without an income, coming up with a quarter and a dime to make a telephone call can present yet another problem in an already stressful life.

Many of the residents of Osage Hills Apartments, one of Tulsa's largest public housing complexes, face similar problems every day.

But the light at the end of the tunnel, many say, is an old apartment unit tucked away in the back of the complex. The telephone is free for business calls, and there's always someone behind the desk who's willing to listen.

For 17 years the Osage Hills Apartments Ministry has been more than just an apartment with pictures of a black Jesus hanging on the walls and hot coffee for just a dime.

"I feel like the ministry saved my life," Crownover said. After being released from Parkside psychiatric hospital two months ago, he moved into an apartment at Osage Hills. Like many when they first move in, "I didn't have anything," he said.

The ministry staff managed to find him a chair and a roll-away bed for his small apartment. He started his life over with a few towels, a wash rag, a plate, some silverware and a couple of drinking glasses.

Disabled, Crownover was no longer able to work and suffered from severe depression. He had attempted to take his own life, and if it hadn't been for the help he found at the ministry, "I would have done it again and finished this time," he said.

Lisa Edwards, the executive director of the ministry, said many people living in public housing suffer from a mental illness.

About 90 percent of the approximately 300 residents at Osage Hills are unemployed.

Sister Gabrielle Kocour of the Order of Saint Benedict, the president of the ministry's board of directors, said that even if a lot of the people who live at the complex would work, they probably couldn't hold a job very long because of their limited abilities.

Most of them, she said, "live hand to mouth" and despite their setbacks, "I think they all have dreams." But at this point in their lives, she said, "they're on the bottom rungs." That's who the ministry targets: those who need a friend, a free bus token, a pat on the back or a ride to the doctor.

The ministry was formed by several churches in 1979 with an apartment unit donated by the Tulsa Housing Authority. Through the years it has survived only through donations from the community and the hard work of residents who work as volunteers.

"If it wasn't for the ministry, some people wouldn't eat," said Cynthia Torres, an employee of the ministry. She said usually 30 to 40 people show up for the food three times a week. At the end of the month, when the food stamps are running low, the lines get longer.

At least 50 elderly residents live at Osage Hills and a few of them rely on Edmond to bring their groceries to them.

Lyons' wife admits to addiction

By Jeri Young THE CHARLOTTE POST

Deborah Lyons, the wife of embattled Baptist leader the Rev. Henry Lyons, says alcoholism, not jealousy, caused her to set fire to home owned by her husband and another woman.

In a statement issued Monday by the National Baptist Convention USA, of which her husband is president, Deborah Lyons claims the media has been "unfair" since she set several fires in a home owned by the Rev. Lyons and Bernice Edwards, a convicted felon who served as corporate media relations director for the convention. According to police reports, Deborah Lyons claimed she set the fires, which caused an estimated \$30,000 damage to the \$700,000 home, because her husband was having an affair. She later recanted the statement and has since stated that she was aware of the friendship and business arrangement between Henry Lyons and Edwards.

"My actions in setting fire to the house which has become a national issue and led to state and federal investigations of Dr. Lyons and

others were purely from an alcoholic state and my family had no idea that the media would take this storm of my addiction and use it to begin this horrible nightmare," the statement read.

Since the fire, Henry Lyons' financial and political dealings have been investigated by the convention. According to wire reports, the FBI is also conducting an investigation of Edwards which may include Lyons. In the early '90s, Edwards was convicted of embezzling \$60,000 from a federally-funded program for impoverished African American youth.

In addition to the home, Lyons and Edwards jointly owned a luxury car, jewelry, an exclusive resort time share and attempted to purchase a million-dollar home in Charlotte.

Last week, Deborah Lyons was at her husband's side during a 25-minute statement during which he discussed his future.

"I am a preacher who made some very serious mistakes in judgment," Henry Lyons said. "If I have violated any federal or state laws, it was not my intent. It was

also not my intent to do any act or any financial harm to anyone."

In her statement, Deborah Lyons concurred.

"There has never been a human being more generous, more thoughtful of others and who has dedicated his life to making life better for others," she said. "He has never been selective when it comes to someone in need. Be it

man, woman or child, he has unselfishly given. To insinuate that the women he has helped were somehow romantically involved with him is ridiculous.

"My husband is not a womanizer, only a giving man who has no limits in trying to assist others."

Deborah Lyons claims the backlash against her husband, which in addition to investigations, includes at least three attempts by ministers to oust him as head of NBC, were caused by "unfair local media."



Lyons

Church congress opens annual meeting

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SHREVEPORT, La. - About 300 black leaders will be in Shreveport this week for the Congress of National Black Churches, a coalition of eight major denominations.

The implications go far beyond church walls: speakers at the three-day meeting which opens Tuesday will include leaders in government, business, medicine and other fields.

The group met in Charlotte last year.

"This affords the Shreveport community an opportunity to hear some of the greatest minds in America. I hope it will be an

impetus for our young people to strive for excellence," said the Rev. Joe Gant, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church and a member of the local steering committee for the event.

Gant said each workshop is significant.

"The fastest growing group in HIV infections is black females. That's something the church has to deal with in a healing way," he

said. "In welfare reform, I'd love to see a partnership between the state and churches. And in race relations, we have eight denominations coming together. If we can do that, we can work across racial lines."

Vernon Jordan, a former National Urban League president who was chairman of President Bill Clinton's transition board, is the keynote speaker.

Other speakers are Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League, and John Hope Franklin, chairman of the President's Advisory Commission on Race.

The Rev. Floyd Flake, who stepped down from his 11-year



Jordan

seat in Congress to devote his time to his New York City church, spoke at a breakfast Monday, before the meeting's official start.

"I truly believe we'll come out of this with some resolve to emulate other programs that have worked - or create our own programs," said Cynthia Hightower-Jenkins, a member of the local steering committee.

CNBC also worked with Zondervan, one of the nation's largest Bible publishers to create the African American Devotional Bible. Available in a King James version and New International Version, the Bible features essays by CNBC leaders and laymen from various denominations.