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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Lesson for November 16th
BUILDING CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

Golden Text—As ye have therefore received Jesus Christ the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in him. Col. 2:6,7

The Lesson as a Whole
 No one can begin to build a Christian character until he has become a Christian through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, no one can live a Christian life until he has a Christian life to live. Hence the importance of the new birth, apart from which no one has a divine life.

In many quarters today great stress is laid on character-building, but the solemn truth of man's lost condition by nature is ignored utterly. The Scriptures are very plain as to this. God's word insists that creature righteousness is an idle dream. "There is none righteous, no, not one." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." All that one may boast of in the way of personal righteousness is but as filthy rags in the sight of God, because the natural man's best behaviour is polluted by the corruption of his deceitful heart.

Saul of Tarsus fancied his character to be unimpeachable until he was given a sight of the risen Christ when all his comeliness was turned into corruption and he saw himself in the light of God as the chief of sinners, who could only be saved through the grace of that Saviour whom he had persecuted. Henceforth, as he was occupied with God, he became increasingly like Him. This is true Christian character: conformity to Christ that His life may be made manifest in our mortal bodies. Trying to build such a character in one's own strength, apart from Christ, is like one endeavoring to lift himself up by old-fashioned boot straps.

Historical Setting
 We are unable to say exactly when Peter wrote his Second Epistle, but inasmuch as he refers in it to "all his epistles" when speaking of St. Paul, it is evident that it was written either near the time of Paul's martyrdom or subsequent to it. No date can even be approximated for the Epistle of Jude, which was written to impress the believers with the necessity of a definite stand against false teachers and the cults they sought to foist upon the churches.

Verse by Verse
 2 Pet. 1:5—"Giving all diligence, add to your faith." The Christian life is a growth. It begins in faith, which like the acorn, within which an entire forest is enclosed potentially. "Virtue" is really valor; the soldierly virtue, which we all need to cultivate if we are going to be valiant for truth as we fight the good fight of faith. Out of these proceeds "knowledge" which is gained as we study the Word of God in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Verse 6—"Temperance..... patience..... godliness." When the Word of God abides in the heart it leads to self-control rendered "temperance" and out of this comes patience, the ability to endure without either resentment or anxiety. From these comes true piety, or "godliness," which is really God-likeness, the manifestation of the new nature, which is divinely implanted when one is regenerated.

Verse 7—"Brotherly kindness..... charity." Out of true piety comes fervent love for the Christian brotherhood, which is itself one of the evidences of the new birth. Then there is the culmination, the precious fruitage of charity or compassionate love—a love that knows no bounds, but goes out to all men everywhere. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

Verse 8—"If these things be in you, and abound," the life will be neither idle nor unfruitful, but there will be true spiritual development and ever-increasing knowledge of

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Christ Himself.
 Verse 9—"He that lacketh these things." Where there is a Christian profession but no evidence of a growth in grace, one has no spiritual outlook, but is myopic, occupied with the near things that minister to selfish desires, and unable to discern the importance of those things on which the heart of God is set. With this, too, comes forgetfulness of past deliverances, and so there is danger of slipping back into "old sins" from which one had once been purged.

Verse 10—"Make your calling and election sure." We are called upon to behave ourselves so as to make it evident that we are of those who have been called out of a godless world by divine grace. Note how Paul stresses this in writing to the Thessalonian believers whose election was manifest to all.

Verse 11—"An entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom." Distinguish between a place in the Father's house, which is the same for all those who belong to the new creation and have been made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and a place in Christ's eternal Kingdom which depends very largely upon the measure of our devotion to the Lord while in this scene.

Jude 17—These immediate followers of our Lord were commissioned by Him to make His will known to the church. Much of their testimony has been incorporated in the inspired Epistles of the New Testament, which are to be recognized as the very Word of the living God.

Verse 18—"They told you there should be mockers in the last time." The influx of unbelieving scorners into the professed church was foreseen from the beginning; so none need be surprised that such have risen up to seek to subvert the faith of all who give ear to them.

Verse 19—Such apostates set themselves apart as though they were more enlightened than others, but their corrupt lives indicate the fact that they are devoid of the Spirit of God.

Verse 20—We shall be preserved from going astray if we make God's Word our daily study, thus building ourselves up in the truth, provided we couple with this an attitude of constant dependence on God by praying in the energy of the Holy Spirit: We can pray in the Spirit only as we walk in the Spirit.

Verse 21—That is, we are ever to abide in the consciousness that God's unchanging love is toward us, while we wait in patience, looking on to the return of our Lord, when we shall enter into eternal life in all its fullness.

Verse 24—In this letter we read of angels that fell, and we are warned to beware of those who have fallen away from and repudiated the truth of the Gospel; but we are assured that He in whom we trust is able to preserve us from stumbling until He presents us "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

Verse 25—"The only wise God, or God the only wise—that is, the fountain of all wisdom, to whom all honor is due now and evermore. The Heart of the Lesson

It is one thing to make profession of Christianity. It is quite another to lay hold of Christ in faith. Where this is true, all Christian graces will be manifest as we walk in fellowship with God, careful to avoid that which is evil and to cling in constant trust and assurance to Him, who has power to keep us from failure and to enable us ever to live in the sunshine of His love.

The Walkerton weekly newspaper The Herald-Times has increased its subscription price from \$2 per year to \$2.50. Mounting costs of production and newsprint price are given as the reason for forcing the advance in yearly rate.

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During recent weeks there seems to be a wave of publicity in this capital that obviously has for its basis the claim that Canada's next Prime Minister will be a Roman Catholic. External Affairs Minister Louis St. Laurent when Premier King decides to retire. It is persistent in gossip backstage on Parliament Hill as well as in open discussion the Minister himself that he does not plan to retire shortly as rumored earlier this year but he has now decided to remain in public life.

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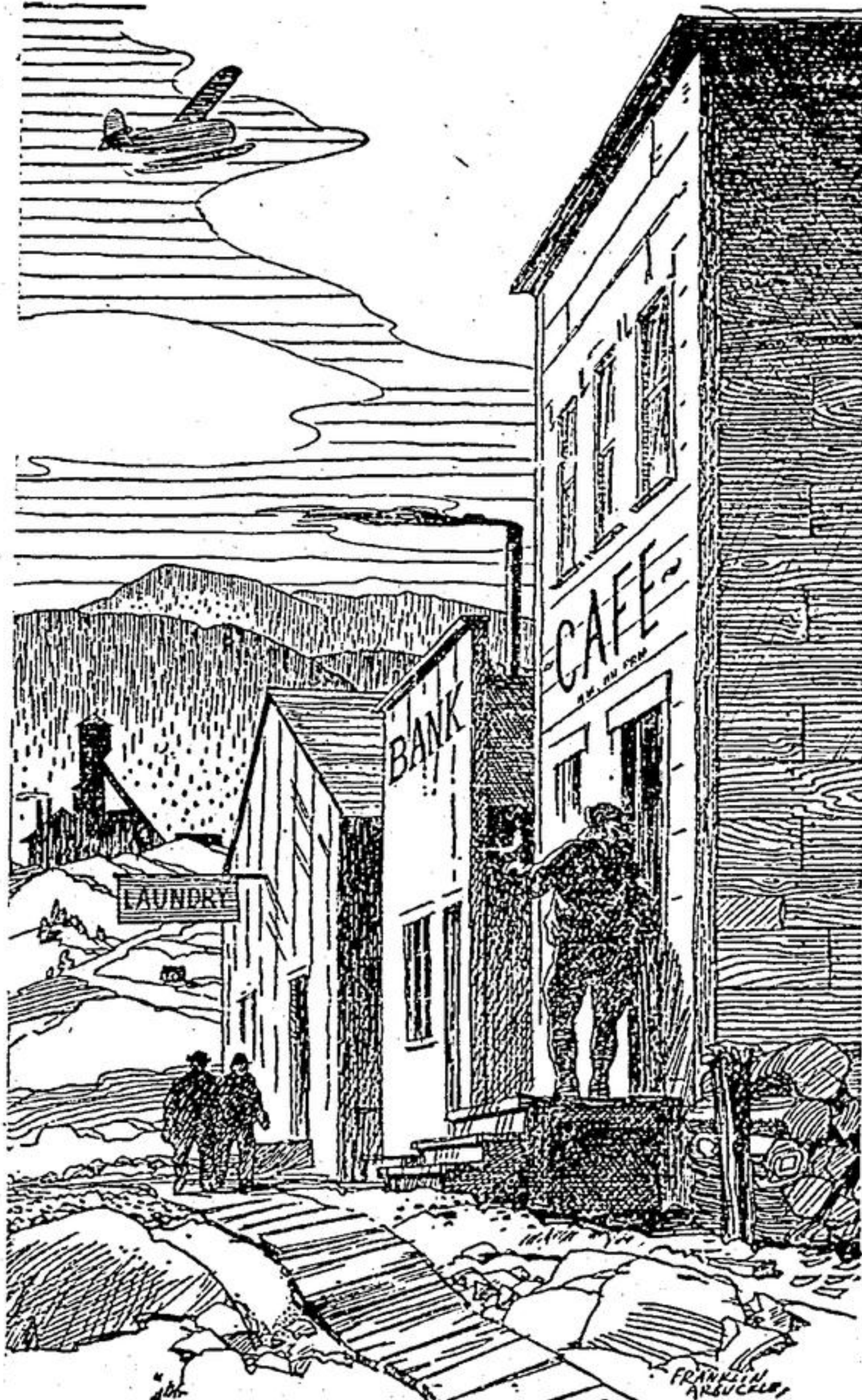
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