

THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

THE OBLIGATION TO BE TRUTHFUL

Golden Text—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—Exod. 20:16

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE
By J. C. Macaulay, D.D.

Approach to the Lesson

I like dogs, and I like dog stories. In an old copy of the Hunter's Torn, an ardent Tennessee hunter wrote the obituary of his favorite hound, Mattie. Among other things he says of her, "She never told a lie in her life." That is really an important point in dogdom. It means that Mattie never "gave tongue" on a rabbit, pretending that she had hit the trail of a fox, and she never kept quiet when she sniffed a fox. And she kept accurate account on other dogs. If they gave tongue and she kept quiet, that was accepted in "court" as proof that the others were lying, while her affirmation was a complete exoneration of suspected "liars." So they called her the "character witness." A truthful hound is a boon to any group of hunters, as a lying hound is a nuisance to the countryside.

If truthfulness counts among dogs, how much more among men, where so much more is at stake, and where it rises from the region of mere animal sense to the realm of morality and responsibility to God. A man whose word is as good as his bond is a tower of strength to any community, but a man who does not even respect his own bond is not only a nuisance, but a moral menace. At the present time the Communist rejection of standards of truth has the whole world on edge, while the revelations of corruption at home have men ask-

ing, "Whom can you believe?" In face of such distressing breakdown in standards of integrity and truthfulness, it is refreshing to turn to the Word of God, and know that here we have truth in the absolute. We have a "God, that cannot lie," and His children must partake of His abhorrence of lying vanities.

Verse by Verse

Exod. 20:16.—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Whether in court of law, or over the back fence, the command holds.

John 18:15.—"And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and . . . another disciple." The other disciple is believed to be John, whose acquaintance with the high priest gave him easy entrance into the court of the palace.

Verse 16.—"Spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter." John meant it as a kindness to Peter, but did not realize into what temptation he was leading him. John doubtless was at ease, and attracted no attention, but Peter was ill at ease in the strange surroundings, and invited questioning. Some Christians may be safe where others are in mortal peril.

Verse 17.—"Art not thou also . . . ? He saith, I am not." He was thoroughly demoralized by fear and the foreign environment. What a downfall from chapter 13:37!

Verse 18.—"And Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." He was trying to put on a brave face, acting out his lie. It had been better for him to shiver outside than to stand in the "way of sinners" (Psa. 1:1).

Verse 19.—"The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." Such procedure in a trial for life was utterly illegal. The high priest should have had a charge ready to prefer, and witnesses to substantiate it.

Verse 20.—"I spake openly." Nothing in the ministry of the Lord Jesus suggested plot or intrigue. All was open, and His teaching was a matter of public

record, noted by official delegates from Jerusalem.

Verse 21.—"Ask them which heard me." A reminder to the high priest that he was acting contrary to proper jurisprudence. The meek Galilean challenged the high priest to honorable procedure.

Verse 22.—"One of the officers . . . struck Jesus," doubtless at a signal from the high priest, who was stung to the quick by the reminder of what he knew to be his duty. Brutality is a poor answer.

Verse 23.—"If I have spoken evil, bear witness . . . why smitest thou me?" Even now Jesus would call these men of Israel back to right ways. The smiting of an uncondemned man was one more illegality.

Verse 24.—"Now Annas had sent him bound to Caiaphas." The reading of the King James Version would suggest that the transfer from Annas to Caiaphas had taken place prior to this, but the Revised Version makes it plain that it was at this point in the proceedings that the transference took place. John does not report the trial before Caiaphas.

Verse 25.—"And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself." He was still in the place of danger. Why did he not flee after his first denial?

Verse 26.—"Did not I see thee in the garden?" "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). Peter's rash act in the garden (John 18:10) was coming back at him. If we draw sword for Jesus, we shall have to stand to it.

Verse 27.—"Peter then denied again; and immediately the cock crew." That raucous call, heralding the first streaks of day, announced the fall of midnight on Peter's soul, but the look of the Saviour (Luke 22:61) sent him out to repentance and ultimate recovery.

The Heart of the Lesson

In last week's lesson we emphasized, as one of the "Topics for Development," the baseness of stealing another's good name. This is a form of attack against which one is helpless. No matter how false, and contrary to all that is known of a person, there

are always those who will believe evil and make it grow in the retelling. The Mosaic Law condemned the practice of false witness as one of the cardinal vices, so seeking to protect men from its poison.

While the term "false witness" refers primarily to a course of law, it covers all manner of slander and evil gossip—anything that would detract from another's honor. It may go even further, and include all lying, all departure from truthfulness. False witness may not always be with intent to lay blame on others. Sometimes it is offered in an attempt to clear oneself, though it only adds more guilt. Sometimes the false witness is given concerning goods, to secure a higher price for them than is just. All such deflection from the truth is wrong.

It was by utterly flouting this Commandment that the leaders of Israel secured the crucifixion of Christ. They actually looked for men who were willing to perjure themselves in offering false witness against Jesus (Matt. 26:59-61), while they themselves presented false witness before Pilate (Luke 23:2). In the midst of all this, one of His own followers, stricken by fear, stooped also to lying, in the attempt to save himself from the "embarrassment" of being linked with Jesus. That falsehood of Peter's, "I know not the man," must have cut deeper than all the cruel lies of His enemies. "That was the most unkindest cut of all." How often do we, by our silent denials as well as by our vocal ones, grieve the heart of our Lord!

There is one bar at which no false witness will be given, one judgment that will not be perverted by falsehood. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," Paul reminds all Christians (2 Cor. 5:10). "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," will be made manifest there. As for the ungodly we are assured that "the judgment of God is according to truth against them that practise such things" (Rom. 2:2, R.V.).

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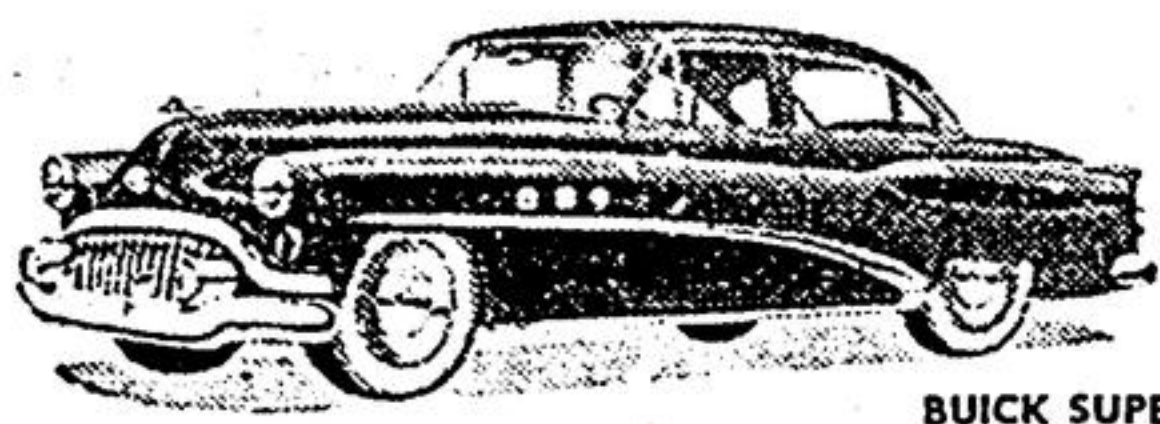
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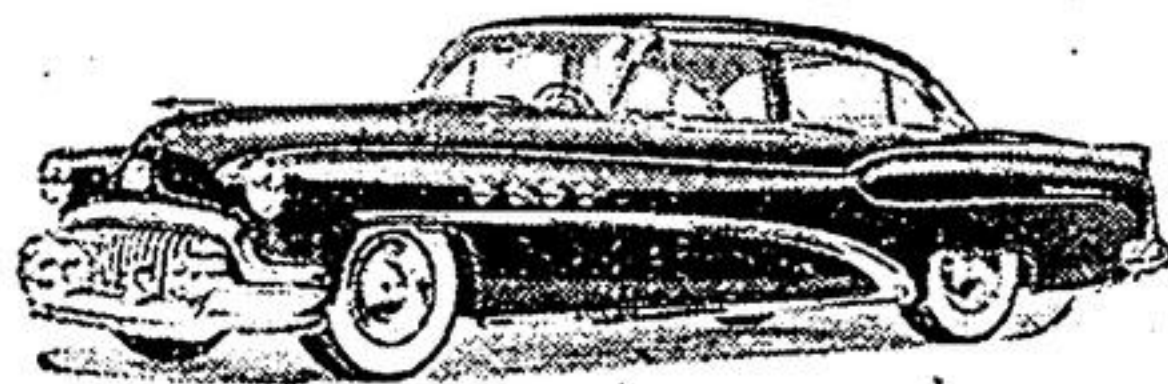
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CINNAMON SANDWICH BISCUITS

Mix and sift once, then sift into a bowl, 2 c. once-sifted pastry flour (or 1 1/2 c. once-sifted hard-wheat flour), 3 tps. Magic Baking Powder, 1/2 tsp. salt and 1/4 c. fine granulated sugar. Cut in finely 4 lbs. chilled shortening. Combine 1 well-beaten egg, 1/2 c. milk and 1/2 tsp. vanilla. Make a well in dry ingredients and add liquids; mix lightly with a fork, adding milk if necessary, to make a soft dough. Knead for 10 seconds on lightly-floured board and roll out to 1/4" thickness; shape with floured 1 1/2" cutter. Cream together 1 1/2 tbs. soft butter or margarine, 1/4 c. lightly-packed brown sugar, 1/2 tsp. grated orange rind and 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon. Using only about half of the creamed mixture, place a small spoonful of the mixture on half of the cut-out rounds of dough; top with remaining rounds of dough and press around edges to seal. Spread biscuits with remaining creamed mixture and arrange, slightly apart, on greased cookie sheet. Bake in hot oven, 450°, about 12 minutes. Serve warm. Yield—16 biscuits.



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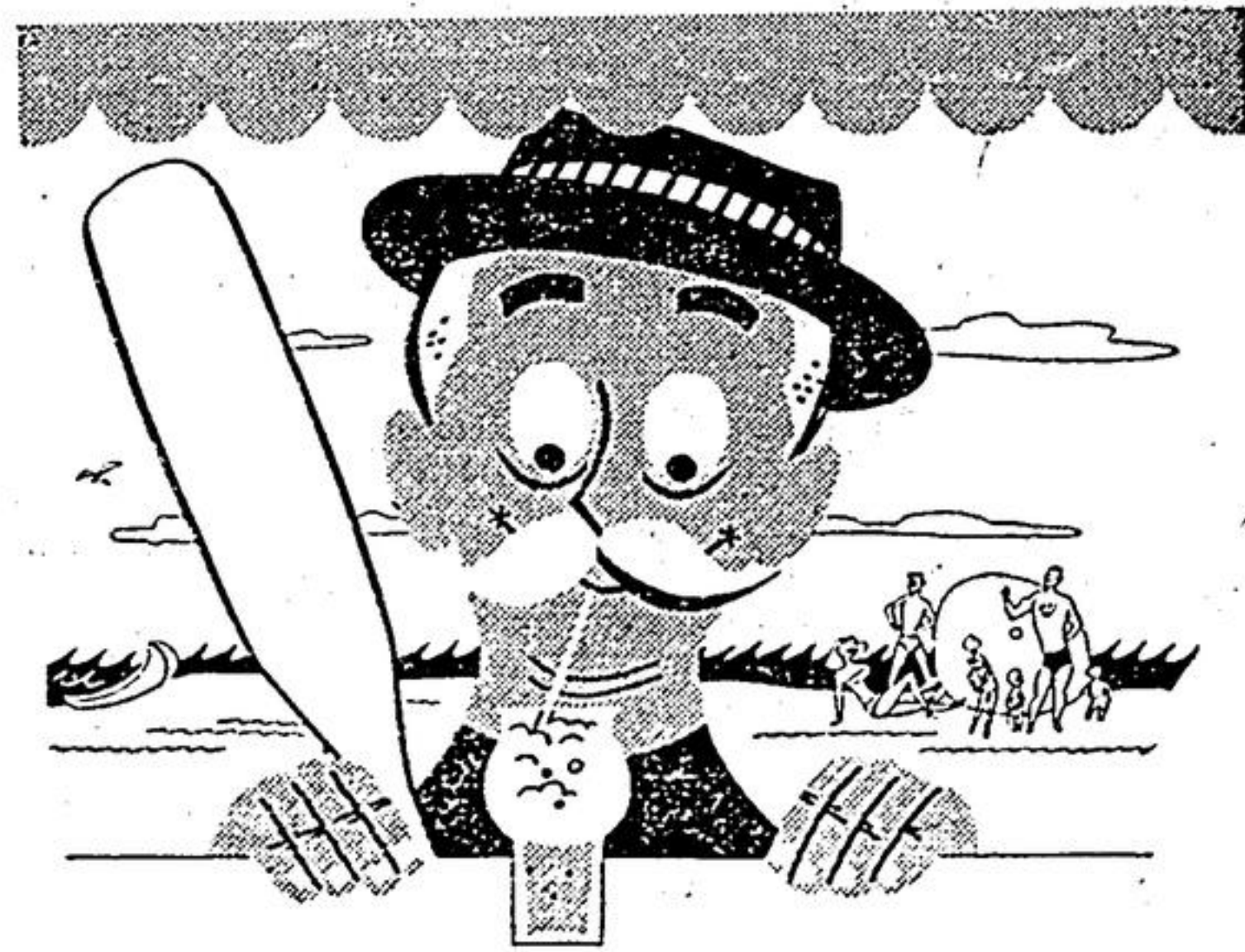
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