

"For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

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This monthly religious journal is published for the benefit of the Church of God universally. It is our supreme purpose to reach the world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to reveal the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error, war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding traditions of men that have no biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matt. 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thess. 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21; Eph. 4)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matt. 28:19-20; John 13; 1 Cor. 11:23, 34)
- Eternal life (Matt. 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7, 8)

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
- Final rewards (Rev. 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- Bible name of the Church (Acts 20:28; Gal. 1:13; John. 17:11)

We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or items.

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Vol. 31 April 2001 No. 4

Annual Financial Report

In Mark 2:1-12 we read of an account of "one sick of the palsy" who "was borne of four" (verse 3). This passage very aptly depicts the necessity of a unified effort to get one to Christ in the face of great obstacles. Just as "they could not come nigh unto him for the press," there are great masses today, even swelling crowds of religious folks who are hindering the honest hearted from seeing and getting to Christ. Just as this man in this text, they are sick and need the Great Physician. If they are ever to get past the masses, there must be a unified effort by the saints to get them to Christ. One means of banding together for a common effort to get people to Christ and Truth is through the avenue of *The Gospel Trumpeter*. Now in our thirty-first year, we are feverishly working, like the men who took up the roof and lowered the man into the house where Jesus was, to get Truth into every home possible. Currently, we send out approximately eighteen thousand issues every month. This is a vast undertaking, and just as with the one mentioned in Mark, Chapter 2, it takes many to cant' this work forward. We certainly appreciate the great host of workers who commit their time and energies tirelessly to see that this publication goes forth on a regular basis.

However, more help is needed. As you can see from the figures below, not only is this a mammoth undertaking in the sense of the labor expended, but it is an effort that requires enormous financial commitment as well. With the cost of postage and materials continuing to escalate, the financial responsibility continues to accelerate. We have never affixed a subscription rate to this monthly holiness journal because we desire all, regardless of their financial means, to receive the Truth. You could be one of those hands that gets the man to Christ by joining in this labor with your financial support. Should you desire to help defray some of these expenses, you may send a donation to: *The Gospel Trumpeter*, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, Ohio 43055.

You can also view *The Gospel Trumpeter* on our web site at www.godsacres.org. We deeply appreciate the prayers of the people of God and trust that you will continue to remember this ministry in your prayers as we endeavor to continue to be a people who "publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:70).

Statement of Condition for 12 months ending January 31, 2001



Income	Expenses
Supplies	\$34,343.94
Utilities	3,922.00
Labor/Payroll Taxes	7,800.00
Donations/Offerings	\$14,488.61
Equipment Purchased	9,005.64
Postage	44,416.37
Maintenance & Repairs	<u>2,700.00</u>
Subtotals	\$102,167.95

Balance paid out of the general fund of the
Church of God congregation at Newark, OH

\$87,679.34

Psalm 92:1 It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

2 To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: 1 will triumph in the works of thy hands.

5 O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

6 A brutish man knoweth not;

neither doth a fool understand this.

7 When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever:

8 But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore.

9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

10 But my horn shaft thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: 1 shall be anointed with fresh oil.

11 Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ears shall

hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.

12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

15 To show that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.



Continuing to Grow

Part 2 of 2

Brother Roger L. Decker

Walking With God

In the second part of this two-part series on continuing to grow, again I want to focus on verse 12: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." In the last issue we mentioned that growth is necessary and that when it stops, something is wrong. Animals need to grow, crops need to grow, grass needs to grow, and children need to grow. Also, it is very necessary that we each grow spiritually in the Christian life. As

you grow, you will find that you will have a closer walk with the Lord. The closer you walk with God, the more you are going to benefit, because God is going to be the same whether you walk with Him or not. You are not going to change Him.

Some men in the Bible walked closely with God, and they were mighty men for the Lord. Genesis 5:24 says, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." He walked with God in the early part of Creation. Genesis 6:9 tells us, "These are the

generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." Noah walked with the same God that Enoch walked with.

To walk with God is a biblical expression of fellowship and obedience. You cannot walk with God without obedience. One old song says, "He walks with me, and He talks with me." As a child of God, God walks with you and dwells within you. You cannot walk with God without obeying Him.

Read the testimony concerning Noah: "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." God walks with the perfect one. Some say, "No one can be perfect in this life." Contrariwise, if you are not perfect in this life, you are not going to make it to the next life with Jesus Christ. When we talk about perfection, we are not talking about human perfection. We are talking about the perfection of the soul and the spirit. All sin must be gone. Noah was a perfect man in his generation, and Noah walked with God.

Christian friend, the Lord does not want you to stay a babe in Christ all your days. It might be that the Lord has need of your talent. He wants to use your gift and your ability, but He cannot use you if you remain in the baby stage. The Lord wants to use those who are mature. The mature Christian can take persecutions and offenses.

We found in the previous issue that Christ is the source and the aim of our growth. Then, we looked at some hindrances to spiritual growth. Also, we studied the parable of the sower and the various types of soil, which represent the hearts of men, and the seed, which represents the Word of God. We found that you cannot mingle the seed. Additionally, we learned that hindrances to spiritual growth include interferences. We found that these things can, if one is not careful to take them to the Lord, drag one down spiritually.

Friend, you should not allow hindrances to keep working on you without taking them to the Lord. Do not try to battle discouragement in your own toughness or in your own wisdom because you have been serving God for a while. The devil is smarter than you are. Therefore, you need to take it to the Lord

immediately. Do not tarry, but make haste. Something else you should not do is gossip. You are not so spiritual that the devil cannot get to you. Your standing grace comes from Jesus Christ.

Being Workers Together With Christ

Now, in this message we want to look at ways to overcome hindrances and how you can lead a spiritual life. First, if you are saved, you should become active in the work of the congregation. However, if you are not saved, you have no business singing in the choir, singing specials, or doing anything else in the work of God. As a child of God, you should make yourself available to those in charge of different areas of responsibility in the congregation. There is work for everyone. Our Scripture lesson says in verse 14, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

We all are workers together with Christ. Second Corinthians 6:1 says, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." You need to become a worker for the Lord. Let it be known that you are willing to work, and then make yourself available. You should have the same outlook or attitude that the Prophet Isaiah had. Isaiah said in Isaiah 6:8, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." You should tell the Lord that you want to work for Him.

Each one is needed, not just certain people. The church is a family. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. There are no big I's or little you's. No name is better than anyone else's, because the greatest name you have is brother or sister. It is great to be in the family of God. We all are equal. Some preach and others teach. We each have different

callings, yet we each have to get to Heaven the same way.

Perhaps you can play an instrument. You should play it for the glory of God. Maybe you played an instrument in school but have never used that talent for the Lord. You need to talk to the Lord about it. According to the Scripture, the players on the instruments are in Zion. You will be more spiritual if you use your talents for God.

Consider those who stand on a podium to represent their country in the Olympics when they receive a gold, silver, or bronze medal. You may see pictures of them in their glory, but you do not see the hours of hard labor that they put in. The rewards are outstanding, but it takes hard work, long hours, and tremendous discipline.

The kingdom of God will take in your talent, your gift, and your abilities. Everyone has a job in the kingdom. You do not want to be as those whom Jesus said were standing in the marketplace. Matthew 20:3 reads, "And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace." We need to be busy for God.

Private Devotions to God

What else will help you to overcome hindrances? You can work harder on your private devotions to God. You may say, "Well, I spend time with the Lord." You should try to spend more time with Him. If you study about the lives of some famous men of God, such as Billy Sunday, D.L. Moody, John and Charles Wesley, and others, you will find that they spent much time with God, and God used them mightily.

If you want to be spiritual, work harder at your private devotions to God. No doubt, each of us could improve along this line. I do not know of anyone who

can say, "I spend too much time with the Lord." Christian friend, you cannot exist on starvation rations, spiritually speaking. I am not talking about merely attending church services on Wednesdays and Sundays; I am talking about spending private time with the Lord. Doing that will help to supply the spiritual nourishment needed for growth. You need to spend time with the Lord in prayer and in reading and studying the Bible.

You may say, "I don't understand all of what I read." Well, I do not know of anyone who understands everything. The only One I know who can take care of that is Jesus Christ. Even Peter said some things are hard to be understood. Paul exhorted Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

Even in the Old Testament, reading the Scriptures was necessary. Jeremiah 36:8 says, "And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house." We have great examples in the Word of God of prayer. Genesis 20:17, speaking of Abraham, says, "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children." Numbers 11:2 reads, "And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched." Nehemiah wrote in Nehemiah 1:4, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."

Speaking of Jesus, Mark 1:35 states, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." If you will spend more time with the Lord, you will benefit in your

soul. You are not going to change God, but you will change. You cannot be spiritual without talking to your Heavenly Father.

Luke 18:1 reads, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." You ought always to pray, whether you feel like it or not and whether you are in a hurry or not. Jesus said that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." You should spend time alone with the Lord each day. How long should you spend? That is between you and God, but do not neglect to spend time alone with Him daily, and you will see greater growth in your spiritual experience. You will begin to see that your spirit and soul will get stronger and stronger. The next thing you know, you will want more of God. You will desire the things of God more, and you will feel more like working for God, just from spending more time with Him.

Child of God, do not stay a babe in Christ. Don't just go to an altar of prayer and pray and receive forgiveness and then just expect God to keep you without your putting forth effort. God will bless you for a while, but you must do some things to stay spiritual. You may say, "Well, I can't spend much time." You need to spend what time you can, and ask God to help you. You should not get yourself in a bind and say, "I am going to spend a certain amount of time." You will end up coming a few minutes short, and then you will feel condemned. One song the little children sing is, "Read your Bible, pray every day." Perhaps you have heard that song since you were a child. It is more than just a little song for children; it is true.

Personal Evangelism

What else will help you to overcome hindrances and grow spiritually? Leading someone to

Christ, or personal evangelism, will help you to grow spiritually. You should be a worker for the Lord for souls. Though you are in your elder years, you can visit people in hospitals, nursing homes, or wherever to win others to the Lord.

Someone may say, "Well, I don't know how to talk to people about the Lord." Then you can be just like the woman at the well to whom Jesus spoke. She went into the city and she said, in essence, "Come and see a Man who can tell you what you need to know." Maybe you do not know how to explain salvation to others, but you can bring them to someone who does. You should not hide behind the excuse, "I don't know how to talk to souls." One thing is sure, if you have Christ in your soul, you can tell others what He has done for you. You do not have to lay out the history of the church and go through all the days of persecution (the Dark Ages, and so on), but you can tell them what Jesus Christ has done for your soul. Then, if you cannot explain the steps to salvation, you can either take them to someone who can or call someone who can.

Proverbs 11:30 says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." The soul winner is full of wisdom. Why? He is working at the most important thing that matters in this life. Young person, instead of being a cutup or a smart aleck in school, you can be an example to those out in the world who are caught up in drugs and other vices. You can show them how a person should live. God can keep you in school.

Nothing surpasses the thrill that comes to your soul from leading someone to Christ. Nothing will thrill your soul any more than seeing someone that you have worked with come to the house of God and start down the aisle for salvation. When that happens, that person gets blessed

and you also get blessed. That is a tremendous thrill!

Those who become involved in leading others to Christ get their minds off themselves and upon others. Sometimes individuals focus on themselves too much: my cares, my life, my feelings. It is high time to be more concerned about others.

In John 4:34 Jesus said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." In Luke 19:9 Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Jesus had soul winning on His mind. On the Day of Pentecost, about one hundred twenty prayed in the Upper Room, and look at the mighty results when the Spirit of God moved in: thousands were won to the Lord.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He will help us today just as He helped the morning-time church. We are living in a time of great opportunity. With persecution going on all around, we are still in the great Day of God Almighty. There is a great work to be done. Christian friend, do not let the devil destroy you. Do not let the devil pull you down and get you to look at the persecution. You need to keep your eyes on the goal, and the goal is winning souls for Jesus Christ. God will take care of things. Soul winning will help you to grow spiritually.

When Peter went to prison, what did the saints do? They prayed. When people do not have the grace of God and power with God, what do they do? They have carnal communication, and they turn to fleshly acts instead of soul winning.

Self-Examination

Another thing that will help you to overcome hindrances is to make a habit of self-examination. Do you want to keep a tender

conscience? Let the Word of God work on you. You should not talk and carry on in the church services, biding your time until the dismissal prayer. Let God examine your heart. Do not try to apply the message to someone else. Self-examination is never easy, but it is necessary for true spiritual growth. Being found wanting is not pleasant. It is a terrible feeling when the Lord corrects you, but it is necessary, just as the discipline of children is necessary in the home. If you are going to be a child of God, you must take discipline. The Lord is going to correct and chastise you at times. It will not feel good, but it will help you.

We want to examine ourselves in relation to Christ. Second Corinthians 13:5 says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" Paul said to examine yourself, to see whether you are in the faith and to prove your own self.

David prayed in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God [though he was a king, he knew of a higher King who needed to search him], and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In other words, David was saying, "If I am heading the wrong way, turn me, Lord. Know my thoughts. Lead me in the way everlasting. Get me back on the right track."

Keep Pressing On

Another way to overcome hindrances to spiritual growth is to press on until your experience comes up to the standard that God has set for the church, and He tells us in His Word what that standard is. Revelation 3:15-16 says: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would

thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." What is the standard for the church? God wants us hot, spiritually speaking, and He will not settle for anything less. If you want to be a useful vessel in the kingdom, you cannot be cold or lukewarm.

If people will be honest and will admit that they are cold, they can receive help. Read what Jesus said about being lukewarm: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot [in other words, because you have an old religious spirit and you are satisfied with nominal religion], I will spue thee out of my mouth." Often the reason many people do not get help is that they are satisfied where they are. Some are afraid that God is going to call on them to do something, and they are not ready to do it. However, if God asks you to do anything, He will give you everything you need to carry it out. The reason God does not call on some people to do things is that they are never available. They always have something else to do.

God has good things for you if you will hold steady and work for Him. Do not become satisfied in a lukewarm condition when you could be hot in your experience for God. The Word of God will help you to get where you ought to be. God wants to use you. Do not stay a babe in Christ. You cannot be victorious in your Christian experience with a little of the world today and a little of serving God on Wednesday evenings and Sundays, and then go back to the world again. You must get deeper than that. If you have a need in your soul, won't you obey God?

(Cassette C-4235E)

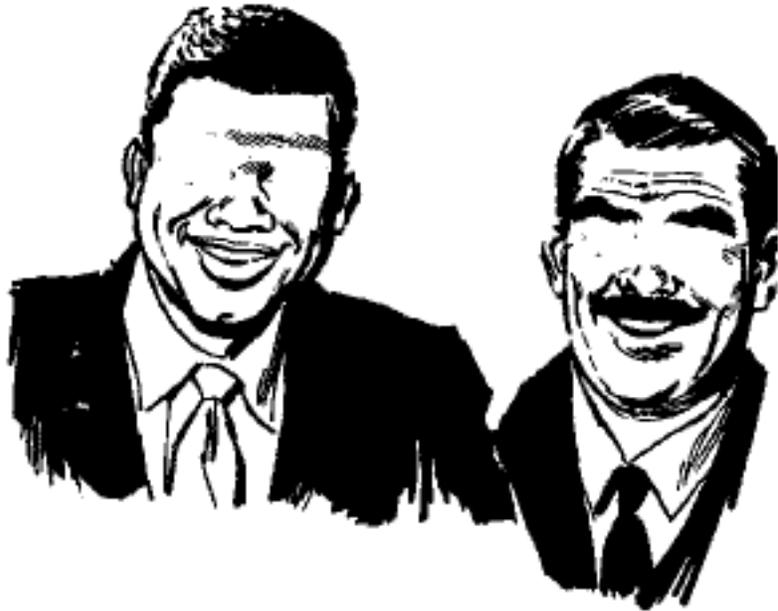
**BEWARE OF THE HIGH
COST OF LOW LIVING**

Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

25 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

26 Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.



Blind Guides of Modern-Day Religion

Brother C. H. Dickerson

Are You Leaning on God or on Others?

As we study the Word, we realize that God sent the Law and the Prophets to prepare the way for Christ. The Scripture tells us that the light was a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ. When Christ came, the Pharisees became blinded because they did not want to walk in the light. In Matthew 13:15 Jesus said, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." When light came, the Pharisees closed

their eyes. As a result, they did not see the Truth and did not walk in the Truth. As Jesus looked upon this situation, He called the religious leaders of that day "blind guides."

Physical light can be either beneficial or harmful. Vegetation needs light, and it is necessary for it to grow. On the other hand, automobile lights placed on vehicles to light the way so the driver can see to drive in the dark can be harmful and blinding if one does not switch the high beams to dim when he meets other drivers on the road. God has called each saint to be a guide, to show others how to live godly lives and make Heaven their home. You see, being a saint of God is entirely different from having a form of

religion. God wants you to show this lost and dying world that salvation will save them from a life of sin, turn their lives around, and make them new creatures.

In Acts, Chapter 26, you can read that God called Paul. You may think of Paul and say, "Well, he had a calling." As a child of God, you have a calling, and the Lord has called you for the very same purpose that He called Paul. Jesus told Paul in Acts 26:16, "But rise, and stand upon thy feet . . ." Christian friend, you need to stand upon your feet and not lean on anyone else. We are living in a day when people are leaning on others more than they are leaning on God. This is not a family religion. God requires individual service. It does not make any

difference what your mother and father do or what your husband or wife does. When you get saved, God wants you to stand on your own feet and take a stand for the old-fashioned Gospel.

Called for a Purpose

Salvation will save you from a life of sin, turn your life around, and make you a brand-new creature. When you get hold of old-time salvation, you will be standing on the Rock. You will not be shifted, and no one will be able to change your mind. We are living in a time when many blind guides are leading people, and they are shaving the Truth. Nevertheless, God's people are still standing on the Solid Rock, and they will not be shifted in any way, shape, or form. They stand as witnesses and guides to this lost and dying world. People in the world need help, and it is up to the saints of God to give them that help. As a child of God, you can help them by living God's eternal Truth and not deviating from it in any way.

Jesus told Paul in Acts 26:16, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness . . ." I want to emphasize that God wants you to be a witness to this lost and dying world so that others can see there is something to this great salvation. When you look at many religious people today, you cannot tell them from the world by the way they dress, by the places they go, by the way they talk, and by the way they act. They act and look as the world does, but God's people are different. Saint, you need to show them that Jesus did not die in vain. God's plan of salvation can lift a person above the quagmire of sin.

Jesus continued to say to Paul: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen,

and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people . . ." (Acts 26:16-17). Saint, God never called you to look to see who is around before you testify. When you get old-time salvation, you can stand up and say what God wants you to say. God can deliver you from the people.

Verses 17-19 go on to say: ". . . and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee [He has called you for one purpose, and that is], To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision [he was faithful to what God called him for]." Christian friend, as you stand before the judgment bar of God, the focus will not be so much on what you have not done as much as it will be on whether you have been a faithful witness. Have you been faithful to the calling that God has called you for, to show this salvation to the world?

Omitting the Weightier Matters

Though the Pharisees and Sadducees had religious works, Jesus told them in Matthew 23:23, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Also, in verse 25 He spoke of their being full of extortion and excess, or not having self-restraint: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."

As we study this, we are not

going to deal with Jesus' day as much as we are the day and age in which we are living, because this trait of omitting the weightier matters has reached every age.

In the Book of Revelation, in the first of the seven letters that Jesus wrote to the church, the church at Ephesus (representing the first church age) had omitted a weightier matter: they had left their first love. In the fourth letter, which He wrote to the church at Thyatira, He told them that He knew their works. He was simply letting them know that they had omitted the weightier matters. They had too much of their own works, and they also allowed false teachers to come in and seduce the people. Jesus wrote to the church at Sardis, in essence, "You have a name that you live, but you are dead."

In the seventh letter that Jesus wrote, to the Laodiceans, which represents our age, He said the people do not even realize they are blind. In other words, they have the Truth, but they are too preoccupied with other things. Jesus let us know that the people of this age are lukewarm. In other words, the Truth is being taught, but people are not measuring up as God wants them to. Now, He was not saying that of everyone, but this is the trend of the age in which we are living. Too many people are occupied with things that have no eternal profit.

Today we are living in one of the busiest ages ever. The first things that people cut back on in their busy schedules are prayer, reading the Word of God, and assembling themselves at the house of God. They are so preoccupied with material things that have no spiritual benefit. No matter how much you gain of this old world's goods, it is of no benefit to you spiritually. One of these days you will face physical death, and all earthly things will lose their value.

Eternity is the everlasting part of

the church. Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 15:24, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God:" To get into the kingdom of God, you have to get into the church. The kingdom of God, the body of Christ, the kingdom of Heaven, and the church all mean the same thing. When the end comes, God is going to deliver the church up to be with the Lord forever and ever.

Today men still persist in their love and affections for this present, evil world. Paul wrote to the people at Galatia in Galatians 1:4 and told them why Christ really died. He said, "Who gave himself for our sins, [He died on the Cross of Calvary to save us from our sins, not in our sins, so that we do not have to sin. Though we are in this old, sinful world, we do not have to be partakers of it.] that he might deliver us from this present evil world." Friend, you can have victory over the things that the world is doing. You do not have to dress or act as the world does. Christ died to raise you above those things and to give you victory over them.

The saints of God love to serve God. They love the Truth and the way that God has given them. In fact, they love it so much that many have chosen to suffer persecution, hardships, and martyrdom rather than to give up God's eternal Truth. The true saints of God yet today stand for the Truth, though it is not popular. Friend, the only way you can live above sin and make Heaven your home is to go God's way and do what He wants you to do.

Perverting the Gospel of Christ

There is a danger in our day, because men are declaring an entirely different message from the Lord's. In the Lord's day, He emphasized quality. As you read

the Scriptures, you can see that the saints had one purpose in mind, and that was to build up the church. To do this, they had one standard wherever they went, they saw the one church, and they were one people. Today instead of building up the church, some people are more interested in building up their own congregations, whatever the cost. It does not make any difference to them whether they steal someone else's sheep or how they do it, just so they build up their own congregations.

I have never seen the devil as bold as he is in the day and age in which we live. He is so bold that he (working through people) will come into the midst of the saints and try to sow discord and try to steal another brother's sheep. Some are trying to teach another Jesus, and some are trying to teach another standard. Nevertheless, there is only one Bible standard, one people, and one church. When someone comes around and tries to tear down a congregation, tear down the Bible standard, or talks about another congregation, you had better get away from him or her quickly, because that person will take you down spiritually. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:1, "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.)" Paul was simply stating that men did not choose him to be an Apostle, but God chose him. He also made it known that he was going to please God, whether he pleased men or not. Why? Because God chose him.

In verses 6-7 he said: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Paul warned the church of the danger of those who preach a different kind of message, and it

causes defilement of the temple. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 he let us know there is a danger in defiling this temple. He wrote: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? [To whom was he talking? He was speaking to the saints of God, those who were saved and walking in the light.] If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

You are the only one who can defile your temple. When Paul was talking about defiling the temple, he was speaking of living below the Bible standard. When you live less than that, you are defiling your temple. God said if you defile your temple, He will destroy you. Christ came to save people from their sins and set them free from this present, evil world. If you go back and fool around with this old world or if you live less than what God's standard is, you are defiling the temple. God said He would destroy you.

There is a danger in seeking the way of least resistance. From the material aspect, I believe each of us is looking for the easiest way to do things. If you were working on something, and using a wrench would make the job easier, no doubt you would invest in one because you would want to do the job the easiest way possible. Now, if you are not careful, that same way of thinking can creep over into spiritual things. Often people want to do things the way of least resistance, but God knows what is needed. Sometimes He chooses to take you through hard places.

God's Message to His Watchman

Acts 20:28 states, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." Oh, what a difference there would be in the church

today if people would abide by that message. In other words, preacher, you are to take heed to yourself, and then to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you the overseer.

If God has called you to be a pastor, you have all you can do to manage your own congregation without trying to run someone else's. You are to keep your nose out of everyone else's business. Whenever someone tries to manage another brother's congregation, he is outside the bounds of God's Word. The Word of God says you are to take care of the congregation over which God has made you the overseer. If you will do that, you will have your hands full. You will not have time to run anyone else's congregation.

God also said you are to feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. Then, in another Scripture, He told where the man of God is going to get the message. Ezekiel 3:17 reads, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth." God is particular where you get what you preach. God said to get the Word at His mouth and to give the people warning.

In Ezekiel 2:6-10 He said: "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: [If there was ever a day when God's people were in the midst of scorpions, it is in the day and age in which we are living. They have one thing in mind, and that is to destroy the Truth and God's people.] be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

"And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man,

hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

Many people talk about religion and claim that they are right on the inside and that they are on their way to Heaven. However, when God gets hold of an individual, He cleans him up on the inside and the outside. If a person is not clean on the outside after he has had time to see the light, he is not clean on the inside. If a person is clean on the inside, he will clean up the outside. You cannot sit around God's church, look and act as the world does, and be in worldly company all the time, and then say that you are clean on the inside. No, when God cleanses the inside, you will detest the things of this old evil world.

I thank God for a salvation that gets on the inside and comes to the outside. When a person gets saved, it will not be long until you will see the outside become just as clean as the inside. That is what God wants. God's people are a gazingstock. We are living testimonies to this lost and dying world.

Guard Against Being Corrupted From the Simplicity of Christ

Acts 20:22-24 says: "And now, behold, I [Paul] go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which

I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." In other words, Paul did not receive what he had in a school somewhere, but he received it from Jesus Christ.

Verses 25-27 read: "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." If you are a minister, God wants you to declare the whole counsel of God. You should not pull back; you need to stand your ground. When you stand on the ground that God has given you and follow the commandments and the standard that He has given, you are not going to see people come into your congregation by the droves. You will see them come in, but only one here and one there. God wants people who are holy, people who will let Him work in the midst. God's people still have unity, and they are still working together. It is a privilege to go to the house of God and hear the good songs of Zion and feel the sweet Spirit of God.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:14: "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear [this is the reason Paul said he was jealous over them], lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

Paul was telling the people at Corinth that he was jealous over them because he had preached the Gospel to them and had espoused them to one husband, Jesus Christ. He did not want others who would let down the standard to preach to them. He was concerned that they might follow them and fall away from the true and living God. Every true pastor ought to be jealous over his people from this standpoint, lest someone sow a seed of discord among them. If a pastor is jealous over his people as he ought to be, when he sees someone trying to sow discord, it ought to stir him and cause him to take a stand against that person.

Too many people have the idea, "Well, that won't bother me, because I am so strong in the things of God." Friend, Paul said, in essence, "I fear, lest that old serpent, the same serpent that beguiled Eve through subtlety in the garden, try to sow corrupt seed in you." God said to stay away from all those things, but Satan says, "It won't hurt you." God said to keep His commandments and ordinances and stay away from anything contrary to them, but today the devil says, "That won't hurt you."

Friend, if you fail to avoid anything contrary to God's Word, it will kill you, spiritually speaking. God said to stay away from old Babylon, and He also said to avoid people who sow discord. You may get the idea, "I am strong enough in the Word of God and the things of God that it won't hurt me if I listen to someone." On the contrary, it will hurt you. It will sow a seed, and you will defile your temple. When you defile the temple, God said, "I will destroy you."

Paul told the congregation at Corinth, "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy." The reason he was jealous over them was that he had stood and preached the Gospel to them. Paul was afraid

that someone would come in and preach another gospel to them and cause them to defile their temples. If Paul was concerned about that, every true man of God ought to be concerned about it today.

God's Law Does Not Change

Too much preaching today is just to make people feel guilty rather than to warn them of the world to come. We are living in a time when people are more concerned about seeing people at an altar than they are in seeing people dig deep and get a good, solid experience with God. The saints do not always have to go to an altar to dig deep and obey the Truth. Sometimes all they have to do is listen to a good, solid Church of God message, and it will cause them to withdraw themselves from this world more and more.

I want you to realize that this life is the only dressing room for eternity that we will ever have. When you get under Holy Ghost preaching, you ought to see some places in your experience where you take off some things and put on some things. You see, it is not how people feel today. If you merely get people to feel bad and that causes them to go to an altar of prayer rather than to have godly sorrow, it will not be long until they will forget that and be back to the same thing. People need to realize that they are crucifying Christ afresh, and then they will get straightened out, live for God, and quit playing around.

Today many people omit things in the Scriptures that God clearly requires His people to do. In Luke 11:42 Jesus said, "But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe the mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." In the day and age in which we are living, too

often the same weight of judgment is not used in every case.

In our text of Scripture, in verse 23, Jesus talked about omitting the weightier matters. He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

God has given us a law, and it does not change, no matter who you are. God's commandments measure the pastor and then the people. The same judgment is ruled out. If you are not careful, my friend, you will get into the very same thing that the Pharisees and the Sadducees did and omit the weightier matters. You see, some people strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. That means they wrest the Scriptures, and the things of God that ought to be done are left undone and they accept lesser things.

Are You Focusing on Eternal Matters?

God absolutely demands some things. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about that which He demands. First, God demands that you continue in the faith. It is not enough to get saved, but you must continue in that. Paul taught in Colossians 1:21-23: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."

God wants you to be grounded

and to build on the Rock, He wants you to get settled in your experience. Then you will not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you have heard preached. God demands that you get settled and continue in the faith, if you are going to make Heaven your home.

Second, God demands that you lay aside every weight and grow in grace. Peter talked about growing in grace. When you first get saved, grace might be a little short, but God wants you to grow in grace. To lay aside every weight means that you lay aside anything that upsets you or weighs you down so that you do not have time for the things of God. These weights will cause your mind to be drawn to everything but the things of God. Why do you need to lay aside every weight? God demands to be first in your heart and life. God knows that you must work and spend time with your companion and your children, but He does not want you to become weighed down to where you cannot enjoy the things of God. You must take time to pray, take time to read and study the Bible, and take time to assemble yourself with the saints at the house of God. Sunday is the Lord's day, and you ought to spend that day for the Lord. If you are not careful, you will get so busy that you hope the preacher hurries so you can get home and do what you want to do.

Third, God demands that you seek those things which are above. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:1, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." In biblical days the saints did not have a board to decide whether to accept or reject something. They did what God said, and that was all there was to it. Holiness and righteousness were taught.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33,

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." When Paul came on the scene, although people had been taught circumcision of the flesh, he changed that. God showed him and he taught it as circumcision of the heart, and the saints accepted it.

Too many people are focusing on temporal things today, and those temporal things will pass away. There is nothing wrong with having a house, money, a car, a job, and so on. Nevertheless, these things are going to pass away. The only thing that has eternal value is what you have done for Christ. Temporal things are keeping people from serving God, keeping people out of the worship services, and keeping people from spending time praying and reading God's Word; yet those temporal things are going to pass away.

I like to use this illustration. When a man finds the woman of his choice, they get married. After they get married, children come along, and if the wife is not careful, she will spend all her time on the children and neglect the husband. Those children are all going to get married one day and leave the home, but she will still have a husband. This is similar to what God is saying. People are neglecting serving Him for temporal things. There are people today who were once strong in the things of God, but their jobs or houses or prestige got in the way. Now you do not see them around the house of God. They failed to realize that all those things are going to pass away.

Friend, you might have a high-paying job with a good pension, but one day those things are going to pass away. Perhaps you once served God and sang, preached, testified, or taught a Sunday school class for Him; but you have allowed something temporal, such

as a better job, to take first place in your life and moved away. We are living in a day when once large, stable businesses are closing, causing thousands of people to be out of work. Friend, you might have left God for those things, but they will pass away; then you will still be confronted with what you have done with God.

A Better and an Enduring Substance

Paul talked about an enduring substance, and he also told how you could get it. As a Christian, you need to come to the place where you realize that you have something greater in you than what is in the world. God has flocks of overcomers, and He has called pastors to feed those individual flocks where He has placed them. No one cares for a flock like its own, true pastor, and the only one who can feed the flock is the pastor. Jesus made this quite clear when He spoke to Peter and said, "Feed my lambs" and "feed my sheep."

God's true sheep will not listen to another shepherd. The Word of God tells you that in John 10:3-5: "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This is what God's sheep will do. Someone may say, "He was talking about Christ." Yes, he was, but Christ also placed an undershepherd over each flock, and God's sheep will not follow anyone else. In John 8:47 Jesus said, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."

Again, the Hebrew writer

stressed in Hebrews 10:34, "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." This enduring substance is something that will last for the soul, or the inward man. God wants you to go after something that will benefit you spiritually. He does not want you to go after temporal things and abandon the things of God. He wants you to go after an enduring substance.

Your physical body is earthly; it came from the earth. God has ordained that you are going back to the dust, and only He knows when. It may be today or tomorrow. Too much time is spent on the outward man and not enough time is spent on the inward man. When it comes to the inward man, most people do not think much about him. Sometimes Christians leave their estates to sinful children, but not many estates are being left to the church.

Today much emphasis is being placed on quantity instead of quality. We need to see a complete selling out of God's people. People need to deepen down in their experiences with God, and it will only come through complete dedication to Him. Also, you need to follow the star, a godly pastor who preaches the Truth. The Book of Revelation says he is the star, or the angel. You are to follow him if he is preaching the Gospel. The world is watching, and what people are seeing is what they are going to follow. God wants you to sell out to Him completely and hand down this Gospel to others.

Are You Setting the Right Goal?

Paul said in the Colossian letter: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your

life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:2-3). Friend, what is your goal? Are you working hard to hand down an estate to your children? Are you cutting corners on the things of God or working hard to hand down a lasting example to your companion, your children, and your grandchildren? Is your goal to see how much of this old world's goods you can accumulate? You could hand down something lasting to your children, something that they could look at and say, "Dad and Mom were truly saints of God."

Friend, only things that are lasting are the things of God. Your children and grandchildren are watching your life. Are you putting the things of God first? What is your primary concern? What do you want to hand down to your loved ones more than anything else? Is it a large estate? Because of that, do you neglect the things of God and the church? Do you neglect giving God what belongs to Him so that you can

hand it down to your children after you are gone or are you working to hand down something enduring?

Again, God said if you defile your temple, He will destroy you. Christian friend, God has called you to live a holy life so that people can see Christ through your life. God is looking at your heart. May God help you to seek the right goal so that you can hand down the right thing. One song writer wrote, "Only one life, will soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." I remember a plaque that used to hang on the wall of my dad and mom's home that read, "Only the things that are done for God will last."

Friend, are you putting your all into living for God? If you have failed to do that, you ought to start now so that you can hand down something that will last throughout the endless age of eternity.

(Cassette C-4559M)

WHERE IS HAPPINESS?

Not in unbelief—

Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Not in pleasure—

Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure, if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Not in money—

Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in position and fame—

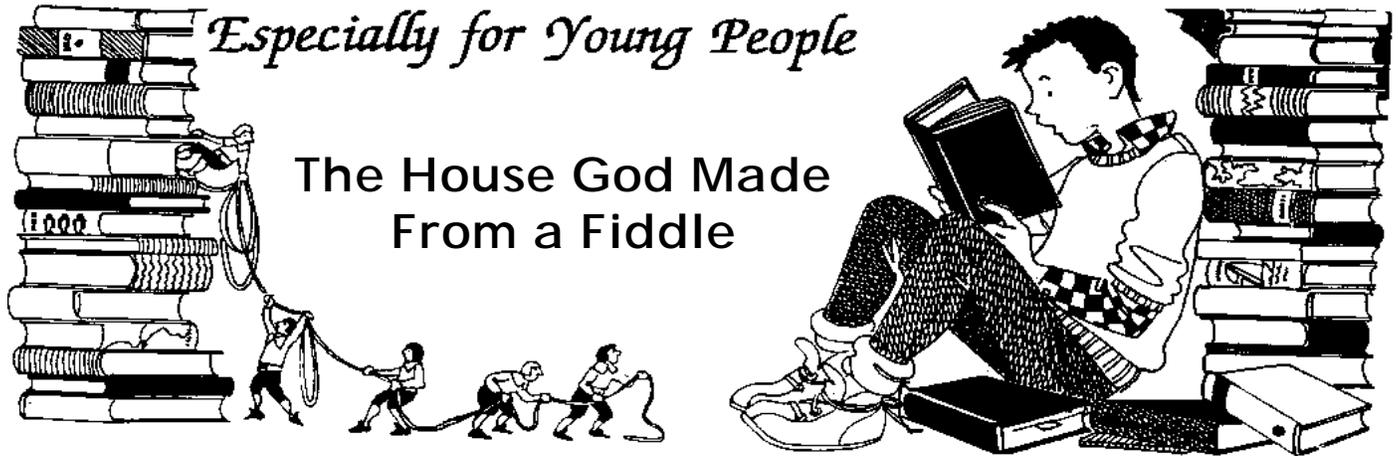
Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood, a struggle; old age, a regret."

Not in military glory—

Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept, because he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where, then, is happiness found?

The answer is simple: In Christ alone. He said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."



I know of a Sunday school which was started in the cellar of a vacant barn in the mountains of North Carolina. When it rained, the children would have to raise their crude benches on a large rock to keep their feet out of the water. No rain ever kept them at home.

Sunday after Sunday, they trudged over the steep mountain paths to listen to the beautiful stories that Sister Jennie was sure to tell them and to see the bright pictures on the chart. She had told them of how God loved all children and that one way to work for Him and please Him was to help Him take care of them. She had taught them the verse, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Not far from the vacant barn stood a small orphanage, and Sister Jennie told the children that perhaps they could help to feed the fatherless, motherless little ones there; and a certain day was appointed for them to bring anything they could for the orphanage basket.

"Now, what verse did we have last Sunday?" the teacher had asked, and little Delia Ann had repeated slowly and shyly, "In as much as you did it to one of my brothers, you did it to me."

"That was almost exactly right, Delia Ann. Now, who can tell us what it means?"

"I kin," said Joe. "It means when a fellow gives something to another 'cause he belongs to God, why-er-why, God thinks as it's as good's if he had given it to Him,

'cause He loves both a lot."

"Well, then, we must remember that when we give our things to these children it is giving to God, and He will be glad to have even the least little thing you can bring."

The great Sunday afternoon came, bringing every child with a bundle all ready for the big basket—"God's basket" they called it.

"I brung three cabbages," said Billy proudly. "What did yo-uns bring?"

"I've got a half-peck of Irish taters," shouted Jim.

"They kin have enough corn for once," said Emma, as she displayed the contents of her basket on her arm.

One by one the children told what the curiously shaped packages and little baskets contained—all except little Delia Ann, the shabbiest one of them all. She stood apart from the others, looking on with great gray eyes filled with tears, which finally overflowed, while the hand which clasped her tiny bundle was hidden behind her.

"Now, Delia Ann, show yer hand, quick," said Jim.

The tears fell faster, and the child made no reply until Sister Jennie turned to her with a smile.

"I-I ain't got nothin' but-but-one tater I saved yestiddy, Sister Jennie. Dad wouldn't give me nothin', but I didn't eat my tater so's I could give God that," she sobbed.

Sister Jennie's eyes were wet as she put her arms around the child.

"God thinks you have brought a great deal, Delia Ann, because you have given Him what you wanted

yourself. Now, let us put everything in the basket, and then we will take it over to Mrs. Bailey for the children."

They were crowding eagerly around the basket when a familiar sound caused Sister Jennie to look up with a smile of welcome.

The newcomer dragged himself slowly along. He was a man of about thirty-five years, but his face wore the expression of a child of twelve. He was partly paralyzed and could use only one hand, with which he whittled small toys out of soft pine. Now he carried under one arm a small fiddle he had made—his most cherished possession.

He fixed his childlike eyes on the basket in the midst of the eager children.

"What is that for?" he asked.

"We are having such a nice time, Mr. Rafe," answered Sister Jennie. "We are going to help God take care of His children at the orphanage. We have all brought something for them to eat, and we are going to take the basket over soon."

"It is like giving it to God; Sister Jennie said so," said Delia Ann shyly. "Are you, sure 'nought?"

"Yes, Mr. Rafe, God counts it all for Him."

"Wisht I had somethin'," said the cripple, wistfully.

"Never mind. You can help next time," said the teacher, with her smile. Mr. Rafe looked on quietly for a few minutes, while the children filled the basket; then his eyes brightened.

"Sister Jennie," he said, eagerly,

"did you say as how God could do anything?"

"Yes, anything that He sees is best to do."

"Could He make a house out of a fiddle?"

"Yes, I think He could," answered Sister Jennie, without hesitation.

"Well, then. I'm goin' to give Him my fiddle, and I want Him to make a house out of it for poor crippled boys

like me." Limping slowly forward, he laid his beloved fiddle on the top of the pile of vegetables.

The heavy basket was proudly carried by the children in turn and gladly received and heartily enjoyed by those at the little orphanage. But what became of the fiddle?

Sister Jennie gained possession of it the next day and told its story to a minister in Asheville. He used it in a

sermon, at the close of which an offering was collected for a home for crippled boys.

After awhile a little house was built among the mountains—the house God made from a fiddle.

Selected

The Atonement

Down from the glory of Father's shining kingdom,
Down to a sinful world our dying souls to win,
Came there a Savior so full of love and mercy,
Came He—oh, blessed One, to rescue me from sin.

Hungry and thirsty, by Satan sorely tempted,
Weary and fainting, nor a pillow for His head;
Walking the thorn-path, accused, despised, rejected,
Thus came my Savior, this unfriendly earth to tread.

Hark! From the garden a cry of bitter anguish,
Pleads One for succor and for comfort from above;
Jesus is bearing our many sins and sorrows,
Hear from Gethsemane the whispers of His love.

See on Mount Calv'ry the Son of God is dying,
Dying in agony, forsaken on the tree;
Dark hang the shadows, all nature in commotion;
Dies there a Holy One, my captive soul to free.

Oh, think of Calv'ry, the darksome scene of Calv'ry,
Even the glowing sun refuses now to shine;
Jesus is dying, the guiltless for the guilty,
O soul, receive Him now, embracing love divine.

D. O. Teasley

Isaiah 2:1 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4 And he shall judge among the

nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The Mountain of the Lord's House



Brother Allen Polston

The Spiritual Dwelling Place of God's People

The Prophet Isaiah said it would come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the top of the mountains. We read in Hebrews 1:1-2: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." The Hebrew writer referred to the last days, and we are still in that period of time.

We also want to consider Acts,

Chapter 2, which verifies where we are standing today. The Day of Pentecost was upon the disciples of Christ, and the Spirit of God had been sent. People were wondering what was happening. In verses 16-17 Peter said: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." He began to tell the people about what Joel had prophesied. Joel said that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. It is evident that we are living in the last days and coming down to the end of time. Saint, you have a work to do, and you had better get busy doing

it, because time is passing quickly.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:11 of the things that happened in the Old Testament and of many examples. He said, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

Many people confine the thought of the Lord's house to the building where they worship. Certainly we ought to have reverence for the buildings in which God has given us to worship, but God's Word has a much deeper meaning when speaking of the Lord's house than just a building. My mind goes to the time when Jesus' disciples said to

Him, "Look at the beautiful temple—the gold, the silver, all the other fineries." In essence, Jesus said, "All of this is going to pass away, so do not set your affections on it."

The Apostle Paul, writing to a young minister, Timothy, said in 1 Timothy 3:14-15: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Paul was dealing with how one ought to behave as a Christian. Today many people say, "Don't tell me how I ought to live." Well, Paul did, Jesus did, and the Prophets did. Christian friend, you must live as the Bible says to live, if you want to remain a Christian. The house of God is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth. That is what the Prophet Isaiah was talking about, something divine, something wonderful!

Paul wrote concerning the house of the Lord in Ephesians 2:19-22: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

When Paul talked about the household of God, he was dealing with the spiritual dwelling place of the people of God. The Church of God is not just another group of professing religious people. The Church of God was not created, designed, and arranged by men; she is divine.

Jesus, speaking to Peter, said, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Men were saying many different things then, and men are

saying many different things today. Peter got a revelation from God, and Jesus said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Many things come against the Church of God, but they cannot prevail against it.

The House of God

In John 14:1-2 Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Many people misunderstand what He was referring to in this Scripture. He was talking about the Church of God. When Paul mentioned "Father's house," he was speaking of the Church of the Living God. Jesus was talking about that same church when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you." Where? In the church, or the body of Christ. He was going to give up His physical body so the spiritual body could be attached to the Head, which is Christ.

Young person, God has a place for you. He wants to put you to work in the kingdom of God, winning souls and sharing the Gospel with everyone with whom you come into contact. I wish I had gotten saved and gone to work for God when He first started dealing with my heart at ten to twelve years of age. I was only twenty-one years old when God saved me, but I wish I had gotten saved sooner.

Young person, you need to consecrate your life to God and really get down to business with Him. You need to get direction from Him concerning where your place is in the church, and then go to work for the Lord, storing up treasures in Heaven. The only thing that can really bring fulfillment and satisfaction in this life is laboring for God. When the Bible talks about "Father's House" or "the house of God," it is dealing with the Church

of the Living God, the pillar and ground of the Truth.

The prophecy that we read in Isaiah was dealing with something that was to come to pass in the last days. Isaiah was dealing with the Lord's house, the Church of God, and he was prophesying about the church. Many people who lived during the Old Testament times wanted to see the day in which we are living, because they longed to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. We ought to be thankful for what God has given and for what is available to us today. God is not far away; He is very near to us. That ought to make us glad when we think about the reality of what has taken place in the day in which we are living.

God inspired the Prophet Isaiah to record, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." He let us know that in the day in which we are living, the Church of God is not going to have a position among sectarian bodies and denominational groups. The Church of God is not led by the cunning craftiness of men. She is divine, and her dwelling place, the Lord's house, is established in a wonderful location, one that is higher than everything else around her and enables her to see beyond what others can see. The mountain of the Lord's house is established in the top of the mountains.

Mountaintop Experiences

Abraham, who for so long was unable to have a child with his wife Sarah, held to that which God had promised him, and eventually God worked it out. Not long after he got that worked out, he went through a trial where God called upon him to sacrifice his son. Genesis 22:2 says, "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of

Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Abraham is referred to as a patriarch and the father of faith. Where did God call upon him to make such a deep sacrifice and where was God going to accept it? This all took place upon the mountaintop; He was not down among the ungodliness. He was up in a higher position. Abraham did that which God called upon him to do, and God worked it out entirely.

God is still in the business of working out difficult problems and working miracles. I know where I was when God saved me, and if you knew of my condition, you would know that He is still in the business of working miracles. It is a miracle when He lifts an individual up out of sin and that person does not have to go through a withdrawal period. When a person who was once bound by alcohol and could not make it home from work without stopping at a bar can drive straight home on a regular basis, that is a miracle! God is still working miracles. I have not given up on seeing God work miracles today.

We can read of another mountaintop experience in the Book of Exodus. Moses was being called of God. Exodus 3:1-2 says: "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."

God appeared to Moses on a mountaintop. Have you ever had a burning-bush experience? Have you ever gone through a time when it looked as if all hope was gone, and by all physical observations, it looked as though something should have been destroyed, yet God was in the midst to bring you through? No doubt, Moses was looking at

that burning bush, wondering, "Why isn't it being destroyed?" The answer is that God was in the fire, and He was allowing Moses to be intrigued so that he would draw near and God could speak to him about what He wanted him to do. You might have a burning-bush experience from time to time, where you go through something that looks as if all hope is lost; nevertheless, when God helps you, nothing can destroy you.

Once Elijah's servant looked out and thought the enemy had them surrounded completely and would destroy them. However, that was just a physical observation. Through the natural eyes, it looked as though they did not have a chance, but Elijah prayed that the Lord would open his servant's eyes and let him see. God was all around those mountains and hills and had the enemy surrounded. So it is when God is with us. No trial or temptation can take you down when God is with you. When God is in the midst, how wonderful it is! A shepherd boy destroyed a lion when God was in the midst. The big paws of a bear had no power when God was in the midst. Water that would normally destroy people was walled up and God's people walked right through when He was in the midst; God caused a sinking ground to become solid ground so that His people could walk on across. When God is in the midst, things are different. The fiery furnace can become a comfortable retreat when God is with you.

God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses upon the mountain. He called Moses up away from the things down on the plain. Saint, God still wants you to get away from things and get into the secret closet of prayer to get away from the worries, the cares of life, the things that people try to keep you involved in, and all the things that occupy your mind. God is saying, "Come up on the mountain for a while."

In the Old Testament the angels

told Lot to escape to the mountain. There is a time when you need to get up on the mountain, so to speak, to a place where you can get close to God and commune with Him. There He can instruct you.

Getting a Vision of the Church

In our Scripture lesson the Prophet Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains . . ." (verse 2). I thank God that the Church of God is something wonderful. She is not to be compared to anything else. The church is more wonderful than anything the world has to offer. She is established in a high, exalted position. Now, this does not make the Christian act proud, but the church itself is in an exalted position. The saints of God are humble servants before God.

What position does the Lord's house hold in your mind? There are always going to be those who take the broad way rather than the narrow way. The Church of God is not exalted in the minds of those people, because they are caught up in other things such as drinking, carousing, and so on. Many people are seeking great careers and prominent positions in society. Others are seeking worldly pleasures. The world goes to extremes for a few moments of pleasure. The Lord's house is not valuable to ungodly men. They have so many other things that they put before God. The devil has made sure that people have plenty of excuses for not serving God and for not attending the church services. Some say, "Well, our children are involved in sports, so we can't come." Others say, "My favorite show is on Sunday evening, so I can't go." Worldly people value such petty little things more than the things of God.

People who have been born again elevate the Church of God above everything else. The things of

the world look dim to the child of God. I love the old song that says, "The past of my life's way seems dim." The things in my past do not have the glitter and the attraction they once held for me. If you get a vision of the Church of God, this divine creation of God will take priority in your life.

Paul wrote to the Colossians in Colossians 3:2, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." I believe that one thing he was talking about was the church. You need to set your affection on the church. In other words, you need to put your mind to work in the things of God. You ought to put your talents, your energy, your finances, and everything you have to work for God. All the earthly things are going to pass away. Many people spend their money, their time, their energy, and their lives for the things of this world. How sad, when they could be laying up treasures in Heaven. Instead, it is just like casting them into a fire to be burned.

You may say, "I am not going to go too far in sin." If you are unsaved, you do not know how far you will go. You might have some boundaries established in your mind, but the devil is your master. When I was living in sin, I had some boundaries established in my mind that got overrun. I can remember very clearly drawing the lines of limitation in my life, but I lived to regret going much further than that. I got in an awful mess. Sinner friend, you do not know how far you will go. The devil will take you down roads that you thought you would never travel.

That is the reason turning your life over to God is so important while you have an opportunity. While there is a time acceptable with God, you need to get down to business with Him and do what He would have you to do.

Again, verse 2 of our lesson says, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the

LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills." To those who have been born again and redeemed from a life of sin, the things of this old world lose their value. The Psalmist said in Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good." The Lord is wonderful; He is great and mighty.

You may say, "Well, you are lifting up the church a lot." When one lifts up the church, he is lifting up Christ, because the church and Christ are one flesh; they have been joined together. When you get a vision of the Church of God, it overrides all previous things of value and importance. You will take your old list of priorities and toss it out; then you will start making a new list when you get a vision of the Church of God.

Life's Highest Priority

I think about the story that some have told of a merchant man who sailed around the world, gathering up pearls as he went. He had quite a collection, but when he found this one pearl of great price, he sold all the others so he could get this one pearl, the Church of God and the message of Truth. When you get an understanding of the Church of God that the Bible speaks of, it takes all precedence in your life.

Having a family is wonderful, and I would not trade my family. Nevertheless, the things of God take on greater importance. I am glad that God gave me a little home to hang my hat by the door and sleep for the night, but I would not trade the things of God for that home. I appreciate the things that God has given me, but none of those things is as valuable as the Truth. You need to be in the house of worship every time you can so that you can get a better understanding of that which God has established.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs is a book that tells of martyrs of old who suffered for the cause of Christ. It tells of how, up to the last, men

offered, "If you will recant, you won't have to go through this. If you will just back away from serving God, we won't start the fire. Just recant; take back what you said." Nevertheless, those saints of old stood firm.

Some saints even said, "You don't even need to tie me to the stake. I am going to stand right here, because I am not recanting. I am going to serve God regardless of the consequences." Friend, serving God should take all precedence in your life. This is not something minor. Having an understanding of the Truth and having a vision of the Church of God is important and valuable. Some saints mentioned in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* were roped to the backs of horses and dragged through the town until they were dead, some were burned at the stake, and others were put to death by the guillotine.

One man in the book brought one whom he had accused to the place where he would lose his life because of his profession of faith, and the accused man came with the right spirit and the right attitude and said, "I am going to die for the Lord." As he came to that place, it brought such conviction upon the one who had taken him there that he started professing Jesus Christ, and both of them lost their lives.

If you get an understanding of the Church of God, it will become more essential to you than anything else in life. The greatest thing in your life ought to be the things of God and standing for Truth. If more people would sell out to Christ and consecrate their lives to Him completely, we would see much less backsliding. Oh, people would still have troubles. Where there are people, there are going to be situations that have to be worked out. Nevertheless, the Truth is worth more than anything. It is worth more than any position that you could hold in life. Sometimes people get sidetracked by positions, but this Truth is more important than positions.

Others get sidetracked by making money. Some people have said, "I am going to go here or there because I can make really good money." The very first consideration of every decision ought to be, How is it going to affect my relationship with God? and What is it going to mean to my work and labors for God? It does not matter that your salary would double. If it is going to hinder your relationship with God, you should let it go.

Your walk with God should be more precious and more important than anything else in life. Then, later you can say, "Thank God, I did not make that bad decision. I stayed with God and walked with Him." Nothing in this world is more important than the condition of your soul. Young person, you had better think about the condition of your soul. No pleasure and no thrill in the fleshly sense is more important than your soul and the things of God.

How is it in your life? How do

you really see the Truth and the things of God? Is Truth the most precious thing to you? In all that you do, do you first consider, "What is this going to mean to the church? What is this going to mean to my relationship with God?" Everything you do ought to be based upon what God's Word says and the Truth. This is more precious.

I hope you have the Truth elevated in your life to the place that nothing can move you from serving God with all your heart, because that is what is really important.

Verse 3 of our text of Scripture says, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." One clear way of telling whether or not you really hold the church in the position it belongs is by where you are going and by what you are

saying. You may ask, "What do you mean?" Isaiah said, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye." Are you telling others, "Come to the Truth; come and hear the Gospel"? Serving God affects every part of your life. At work you should look for those to whom you can say, "Come and hear this Truth."

You need to check your life. Is serving God a high priority in your life? You should also have a desire to get others in to experience what you have experienced. This is too good to keep to yourself. Are you really working to see souls brought to salvation and the Truth? If this is the highest priority in your life, this is what you are doing. If it is not, you need to get rid of whatever is stealing the place that belongs to God. You need to get rid of anything that is keeping you from having the things of God at the top of your list of priorities. If you will surrender to God, He will help you.

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Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are

honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.



The Christian Attitude

Brother Jeremy Hupp

Choosing to look on the Positive Side

The devil likes to paint a gloomy picture when things do not go as you have planned. When this happens, you need to take them to the Lord in prayer. Letting things discourage you is very easy. If you are not careful, you can get a bad attitude about different circumstances that happen and let those things depress you. Most have heard the saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining." You need to look at the positive side of things rather than the negative side. The devil would have you to look at the

negative side of things.

The Word of God says to be thankful for the little things. You need to look for the positive in every situation you face. You should not sit around and feel sorry for yourself; then you will become depressed. Look at all the good things, you have. When you start thinking about the good things God has done, it gets your mind off the negative and on the positive.

The attitudes you take in situations of life have a great bearing on whether or not you will make it to Heaven. Often you have no control over many situations you face in life, but you do have

complete control over how you react to situations. If you have the right attitude and live right, the Lord will work things out. You can spend all day looking at the negative side of things or you can choose to look at the positive.

One songwriter wrote, "Little is much when God is in it." You may have little, but it is much when you give it to God to use. He would rather have quality than quantity. God would rather have perfect unity among the saints of God than to have strife and division working. God loves His church so much that He allowed His only Son to come and shed His blood. Do not think

He does not care when people work division and strife. He knows, and He is concerned. The Bible says that few are going to make it through; therefore, you should not be surprised if few are willing to press on. I thank God for those who are willing to keep pressing on.

God is going to bless His people. Habakkuk 3:17-18 says: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: [That sounds bad, doesn't it? But what does the next verse say?] Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

You cannot control what people do around you or when people work against you, but you can control how you react. You can say, "No matter what happens around me or what others choose to do, I will rejoice in the Lord." Too many times, people look at the negative side of life. God wants you to look on the positive side.

If your heart is not right, you cannot uphold the standard of God's Word. You may try in the flesh, but if you do not have the Word and the Spirit working together, though you have understanding, you cannot uphold it. It will quickly fade away. I thank God for men who preach the Truth, and I thank God for the Truth. Also, I thank God that we each can have a pure heart. If you keep your heart pure, God will honor that.

Friend, none of us knows how much time we have left on this earth before the Lord comes again. The way things are looking causes us to think it will not be long. However, we cannot just sit around and wait for the Lord to come back. We need to continue to work for God.

I once read a story about a king and his kingdom. The king called in two servants. He told the first servant, "I want you to go throughout the kingdom and gather weeds of all different varieties and

bring them back to me."

Then the king told the other servant, "I want you to go around the kingdom and gather flowers of all different kinds and bring them back to me." He told them that they each had one week, and then the two servants went out. The first servant came back after a week with armfuls of all different kinds of weeds. He said, "I never knew there were so many weeds. I am convinced that all we have in this kingdom is weeds."

Soon the other servant returned and said, "Look at all these flowers. I didn't realize we had so many flowers. We have flowers of every variety imaginable. The way I see it, all we have in this kingdom is flowers." One servant saw only weeds; the other one saw only flowers. Why was that? That was what they were looking for. The man who was looking for weeds found weeds, and the man who was looking for flowers found flowers.

Likewise, if you look for negative things, that is what you are going to see. On the other hand, if you look for positive things and look to help others, you will be lifted. You find what you look for. God is faithful to His people. If you seek Him for help and divine direction, He will give you what you need.

When I first joined the Army, people told me, "It is going to be rough. Those drill sergeants are going to scream and yell at you and break you down." So I prepared my mind. I determined that I was going to be ready. It pays to prepare yourself. Sometimes you know what to expect, and you cannot let those things get you down. You should look for positive things and be thankful.

"Be Careful for Nothing"

Paul said in our Scripture text in Philippians 4:4-6: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in

every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Paul said, "Be careful for nothing." We need to pray about everything. It is easier to pray about big things, such as a house, a new car, a good job, or the right companion. Most people pray about those things, but how about the little things? Sometimes people forget to pray about the little things. The Bible tells us in Song of Solomon 2:15, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes." We must be careful to take care of the little things. Paul said, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." He said "in every thing" so that your heart and mind might be kept.

The Word of God says to be prayerful in everything, with thanksgiving. You need to be very careful. Instead of saying, "Oh, that is so bad," you should praise the Lord. For example, you would not say, "Praise the Lord, I have a flat tire," but you could say, "Thank the Lord, I have a jack and a spare and can change it." The Lord tells us to pray with thanksgiving. So, you could look at a situation and say, "Lord, help me to keep my spirit right and to be thankful." You need to be careful of how you view things. Remember, circumstances could be worse. Also, you need to remember that people are watching how you react, and so is God. When adversity comes, how is your attitude? Do you look on the bright side?

I want you to read a little story called *The Fence*.

There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him to hammer a nail in the back fence every time he lost his temper. The first day the boy drove thirty-seven nails into the fence, and then it gradually dwindled

down.

He discovered that it was easier to control his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally, the day came when the boy did not lose his temper at all. He told his father about it, and his father suggested that he now pull out one nail for each day that he controlled his temper. The days passed, and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that the nails were all gone.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, those words leave a scar, just as these nails have. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out, but no matter how many times you said "I'm sorry," the wound would still be there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one."

Maintaining a Good Attitude

People are watching how you react to adversity. A successful person is one who can adapt in adversity. In the military they take the men who go through basic training and are the most easily adaptable to harsh conditions and make them elite soldiers, such as the Navy Seals. The most successful people are those who react to adversity in the proper way.

Do not think on the negative things in life. You need to think on the positive. If you react in the wrong way, there are consequences. People are watching your life. If you allow your temper to get out of control, people will see. If you are sad and depressed all the time, people notice that, and it will leave a mark on their lives. The little boy who pounded the nails in the fence pulled them out, but they still left marks. Friend, you can go back and tell people, "I'm sorry that I lost my temper," and they can forgive you, but it will leave a mark. Some

people will hold you for the things you do. Thank God, you can get right with God, and He does forget, but your reactions still leave marks on people's lives.

Again, you can go back and apologize for losing your temper or for being grumpy or sad all the time, but the scar will still be there. That will make it difficult for people to get help in their souls. You could go to work and witness to people day after day, but if you were to lose your temper because you could not have the next Friday off, you would leave a bad impression on those who saw you. Then, the next time you ask, "Will you come to church with me?" they would probably say, "No, definitely not. I don't want what you have."

Your attitude is very important. At times it takes much effort to maintain a good attitude. I work very hard to remain upbeat on the job. My goal is to smile and think on good things. You might have a really bad day and have to work late, but think on the positive side and keep an upbeat attitude. Often people have asked me, "Why do you smile all the time?" What an opportunity to let them know that it is because I have the Lord. On the other hand, if someone were to ask you, "Why are you so sad all the time?" that person would not want what you have.

The attitude that you show in your daily living is a witness to others. You can slowly plant seeds in people's lives. I try to enjoy life and enjoy my job. Even when things are not going well, if you keep the joy of the Lord in your life, you will show people something that they will want.

Think on Good Things

The Apostle Paul did not say, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are false, whatsoever things are a lie, whatsoever things are unfair, whatsoever things are despicable, whatsoever things are of a negative report; think on these

things." This is the attitude that many people take. They only think about the lies that people have told about them. They think about all the times they have been wronged, all the times people have not acted lovingly to them, and all the negative reports. What about the positive reports?

Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true [if something is not true, do not think about it], whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Many people are so quick to look at the negative side of everything. We live in a very critical world. People are more critical of the church than they have ever been.

Certainly at times you have a legitimate reason to be upset about things. Undoubtedly there will be times when someone will do you wrong or when someone will cheat you. Those things happen. Someone may do something against Truth or against you; someone may lie about you. Nevertheless, you have no right to hold them for it. The Word of God says in Hebrews 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue." Many people are not willing to do that. They think on the negative things, but that is not what God has commanded us to do.

Even during the times when you feel that you have a legitimate reason to be upset, you should not think on those things. If you catch yourself thinking on those things, remember what God's Word says. It has a list of good things to think on, and none of those things is negative or bad. God wants you to think on godly, holy, pure, honest things.

A wrong or a negative attitude will drain you emotionally and spiritually. If you think on negative things all week, you will go to church on Sunday spiritually

drained. Remember, the attitudes that you have go a long way in determining whether or not you will make it to Heaven.

Shining Forth in Adversity

Acts 16:19-24 reads: "And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

That was not a good day for Paul and Silas. It was a horrible day. If anyone had reason to complain, they did. They could have said, "Let's think about what has happened to us. Those people told lies about us and whipped us for nothing. That is unfair! What about the despicable way they ripped off our clothes in public and beat us? That was so unfair of them to cast us into prison and put our feet in stocks." However, Paul and Silas did not do that. They did not think on their negative circumstances.

What did Paul and Silas do? Verses 25-28 tell us: "And at midnight [at the darkest hour] Paul and Silas [they did not complain and grumble] prayed, and sang praises unto God [no doubt people were watching them, wondering how they were going to react]: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and

immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." All the prisoners were right there; no one had escaped.

The Bible says at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, sang songs, and praised the Lord, and all the prisoners heard them. What happened next? There was a great earthquake, the prison doors were opened, and everyone's shackles fell off. You would have thought that most of them would have gotten up and said, "This is our chance to escape! Let's get out of here!" However, that is not what they did. They wanted to see who Paul and Silas were. They were not worried about getting free from prison. No doubt, they wanted to see what Paul and Silas had to offer. Christian friend, people are watching your life.

Verses 28-30 say: "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" How you react in adversity and the attitudes you take have a great impact on winning souls for God. Paul and Silas could have sat in that prison and felt sorry for themselves, cried over their open wounds, and complained about how they had been wrongly imprisoned and unjustly beaten. Yet, they chose to praise God, and it reaped great rewards.

Friend, as people watch your life, are they drawn to Christ or pushed away because of how you react in adversity? The men in the prison were drawn to Paul and Silas, and the jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Life is not always fair, and the sooner you realize it, the

better you can cope with adversity. People are going to wrong you and do things against you. Some may try to do everything they can to destroy you. You might as well be ready to look on the positive side. People may tell lies about you, cheat you, and bring negative reports about you. Nevertheless, you should not dwell on those things. Life may not seem fair, but you must think on good things. Take the trial or the persecution that you are going through and turn it around for the betterment of souls. Paul and Silas suffered persecution. If you have spent any time in the Word of God, you know that the righteous suffer persecution. Therefore, you need to prepare yourself to be ready to react in a positive way, just as Paul and Silas did. Paul and Silas did not see their trial as a place to become discouraged. They saw it as an opportunity to reach out to souls. Are you reacting in a way that draws souls to Christ? Friend, attitude is everything. People cannot see what is in your heart, but they can see how you react to things. They can see whether you are really happy in the life that you are living.

The Two Choices

I have a story that I would like to share with you. It is a good illustration of how one's attitude affects self and others.

Jerry was the kind of guy some people just did not like. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone asked him how he was doing, he replied, "If I were any better, I would be twins." He was a unique manager because he had several waiters that followed him around from restaurant to restaurant. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was due to his positive attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day,

Jerry told the employee how to look for the positive side of the situation.

Seeing his style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it. You can't be a positive person all the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, 'Jerry, you have two choices today: you can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood.' I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

"Yeah, right, it's not that easy," I protested.

"Yes, it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or a bad mood. The bottom line is, it is your choice how you live your life."

I reflected on what Jerry said, and soon afterward, I left the restaurant business to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him, and I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later I heard that Jerry did something that you are never supposed to do in the restaurant business. He left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Fortunately, Jerry was found quickly and rushed to a local trauma center. After eighteen hours of surgery and weeks of

intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullet still in his body.

I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I would be twins." Then, he said, "Do you want to see my scars?"

I declined to see his wounds, but I did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place.

"The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door. Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die, and I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked.

Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room, I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and the nurses, and I got really scared. In their eyes I read, 'He's a dead man; He's not going to make it.' So I knew that I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked.

He said, "Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me. And she asked if I was allergic to anything." 'Yes,' I replied, and the doctors and nurses all stopped working and waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and said, 'Bullets.' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I'm choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'" Jerry lived, thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

Friend, you have a choice concerning how you live each day. You can choose to be a happy Christian or you can choose to be

depressed. Many people walk around feeling as though they are being cheated out of life because they are Christians. They need to walk closer to God. You cannot control some circumstances in life, but thank God, you can control how you react to each situation.

The man named Jerry in the story chose to live, and his positive attitude allowed him to do that. The same applies to you. The attitude you take in everything will determine whether you live or die spiritually. Thank God, the Word of God can lift you and help you to maintain the right attitude necessary to press on. You may be going through a time in life where you feel depressed, but the Word of God can encourage you.

Looking to God's Word for Encouragement

You may think, "This situation is impossible," but you can look to the Bible. Jesus said in Luke 18:27, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." You may say, "I'm too tired." Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You may say, "No one really loves me," but you can read in John, Chapter 3, that God loves you. You may say, "I can't go on," but 2 Corinthians 12:9 states, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." You may say, "I can't do it," but Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

You may say, "I'm not able," but 2 Corinthians 9:8 says "God is able." You may say, "I can't forgive myself," but in 1 John 1:9 God says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You may say, "I can't manage," but God says in Philippians 4:19, "God shall supply all your need." You can say, "I am afraid," but 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "God hath not given us the spirit of

fear." You may say, "I am always worried and frustrated," but God says in 1 Peter 5:7 "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." You may say, "I don't have enough faith;" but Romans 12:3 says, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." You may say, "I am not smart enough," but in James 1:5 God says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." You may say, "I feel all alone;" but in Hebrews 13:5 God says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

You can think of many negatives, but God wants you to look on the positive side. Notice that all those negatives were not found in the Bible; however, to find the positive side of all those things, all you have to do is look to God's Word. He has a silver lining to every dark cloud you face. In everything you go through in life, when you feel that you cannot make it or when you feel that you do not understand, remember that God has a silver lining.

God wants you to lean heavily upon Him and look to His Word. He wants you to look to Him to see what to do and how to react. Sometimes you may not know what to do and all you can do is say, "Help me, Lord." Often when you read the Bible, the Lord will direct you to the promise you need to help you make it through the situation. God has promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you.

Again, our text says in verse 8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

(Cassette C-4461A)

Effective Witnessing

The "mission" of the church is to carry the Gospel of salvation to all people (Matthew 28:19-20). There is an article I copied years ago about the person witnessing for Christ. I would like to share this with you.

The person witnessing must have:

- 1. An experience of salvation, love, patience, kindness, wisdom, boldness, and peace of God.*
- 2. A wholly dedicated life. What we are gives weight to what we say. All who bear His vessels and carry His message must be clean. We must "walk worthy of the vocation" (Ephesians 4:1).*
- 3. A knowledge of Scripture. Our witness and prayers are always effective when saturated with the Word of God. We must be able to rightly divide the Word of God. We must know how to present the way of salvation. It is essential we have faith, for without faith it is impossible to please God.*
- 4. A passion for souls. How can we stay silent and know souls are dying in sin and lost forever? If we are cold, indifferent, selfish, or at ease, we can never expect to win others. We must have the passion of Christ. We must sacrifice time, comfort and money, for their salvation.*
- 5. Fellowship with Christ. It is at the feet of Jesus we sit and learn. We must commune with Him constantly so those we speak with may know we have been with Jesus. We will manifest His presence, attracting others to Him.*
- 6. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit. We must honor the Spirit wherever we have the opportunity to witness. We must be sure of His presence and leadership, know the Holy Spirit is directing us. We must know it is only the Holy Spirit working through us to win souls to Christ. We must get self completely out of the way and let the Holy Spirit have full control before we can be effective witnesses.*

Jesus said we could do greater works than He did. How can we do greater works than Jesus did? By the Holy Spirit working through us. Jesus could only be in one place at a time, and the Holy Spirit is everywhere at work. Matthew 3:11 says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

Acts 1:8 tells us, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Selected

How Are Your Ear Connections?

A telephone must be properly connected with where the person is to whom we wish to communicate, or it will be of no value to us. If the connection is broken, or the receiver out of order, it will be useless for us to talk into the transmitter: the person on the other end will hear none of our words. We may speak just the same as though he were hearing, but nothing will be accomplished. There must be a proper connection: there must be a responsive vibration at the other end of the wire.

It is just so in spiritual things. One of the most important things is to have our ears properly connected with our hearts. We have often heard the expression, "it just went in at one ear and out the other." By this is meant that the one who heard gave no heed. How often this occurs in regard to the things of God!

When it comes to gossip and idle tales and foolish conversation and things of the sort, we should lend an ear, we should be very careful that they find no lodging place in our hearts. That is the only safe way for our souls. But too often these things are given a place in the heart and mind. Many times there is ready response in the heart for such things. That is the reason some people can never keep spiritual and are always lagging behind. People who have such a responsiveness in their hearts on these lines usually have very poor connection between their ears and their hearts when it comes to the teachings of the Word of God. They can hear the Word preached on almost any subject and not seem to think it means them. They go along in their lives just as they had been doing before. They feel no particular responsibility to obey. They can go on just as if they had never heard, and still profess, and possibly shout occasionally.

There were times when Israel had their connection broken. God said to the Prophet of old, "They hear thy words, but they will not do them." So many times people say, "Was that not

a good sermon today?" Why, yes, how they enjoyed it! But they go their way and give no further heed to what was said. However, in the popular pulpits of today, the preachers too often hold this attitude: "This is my opinion of things. You may take it or let it alone, just as you please; you have a right to your opinions about it." There are a great many people who act upon this idea. They feel that they can take a thing or let it alone, just as they please, even when the words preached are the judgments of God. Many hold that attitude not only toward preaching but toward the Bible also. They read or hear what it says about worldliness, foolish actions and conversation, the wearing of gold for adornment; they read about being patient and holy and blameless, about not returning evil for evil, and about speaking evil of no man; yet they go right on doing the things forbidden, just as though the Book said nothing. They do not take it to heart. The trouble is, the connections between their ears and their hearts are broken as far as these things of God are concerned.

The Bible warns us to take heed how we hear. If we do not treat the preaching of God's Word reverently and listen with reverent hearts to His messages, it is because we do not reverence Him. That attitude of "I shall take or leave alone, just as I please" is one of the very worst attitudes that one can hold. Not only is it dishonoring God, but it is exceedingly dangerous.

When the heart does not hear and feel, there is always a reason. One reason is self-will. People do not like to be told what to do. They like to be masters of themselves. God's government demands complete surrender of self-will and must of necessity do so. If we will be his servants, it is not for us to choose what our lives shall be, nor what we shall say, nor what we shall do. It is His right to command; it is our part to hear and obey. To hear and then to heed just as we please is setting up our authority above His. The two ideas of service and self-will are opposed the one to the other. Self-will always means rebellion against God's will. Therefore, if a person chooses what he will do and leaves undone what he finds

distasteful, he, and not God, is the master. This self-will disposition is very noticeable among nominal professors of religion. They profess to be God's servants, and yet they set their wills not to do certain things that they ought to do, or else to do certain things that they ought not to do. They have their minds and hearts set in the matter. When they hear the Word of God preached on matters predetermined by them, it falls on unhearing ears. There is no response of the heart.

Another reason is love of ease-indolence. People hear the voice of duty, but they do not respond to it because they do not wish to make the necessary effort. They do not let their hearts be pressed by a sense of duty on that particular point, because to obey they must arouse themselves from their indolent attitude.

One symptom showing that the heart does not hear is unbelief. One reason the Jews did not believe Christ was that their hearts were so hard, and that is one reason people do not hear the Gospel in these days. This is not confined to nonprofessing sinners; it is a very common thing among church members.

Reader, how is it with you? Are you one of those who have the connection broken between the ears and the heart? When you hear the Word of God preached on certain subjects, can you slight it or does it sink deep into your conscience and take hold and produce fruit in your life? Are you ready to live by every word of God or do you want to take only that which suits your views? If the latter is true in your case, you are in a dangerous condition. God has the Word preached, not simply to entertain people, but that they may obey it. The soul who delights in God's will does not have to be compelled to listen, nor does he have to be compelled to obey; he is ready both to hear and to obey. If there is something wrong with the connection between your ears and your heart, you had better look after it at once; go to God and have the connection remade. Get your heart taught to feel as it ought to feel and to respond as it ought to respond. Be not a hearer only, but be a doer of God's Word.

C. W. Naylor