

"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).....

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Guest Editorial

Gog and Magog Part 2 of 6

Identifying Gog

Ezekiel 38:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog.

Let us begin our study to gain understanding of what the prophecy is speaking. In our last article we began a study concerning Gog and Magog. We established rules on studying prophecies. In this issue we want to begin our study of this subject and identify Gog. To do this, we must follow the rules established in our previous article. First, we must establish the time parameter for our text. When does this prophetic utterance have its time setting? Notice that Ezekiel 38:1 commenced with the words, "And the word of the LORD came." The word *and* is a conjunction and unites this verse with the thought of the preceding chapter.

When the Prophet Ezekiel originally penned this writing, he did not divide it into chapters. Men later did this for ready reference sake. He wrote the original text in continuity; therefore, anytime a chapter commences with the word *and*, you must revert to the previous chapter to see what the writer was dealing with. To help establish the prophetic time frame of our text, we must revert to Chapter 37.

Ezekiel 37:14 says, "And shall put my spirit in, you, and ye shall live." When was this to occur? It never occurred in the annals of the Old Testament, not for the general populace. John 7:37-39 states: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said [he was quoting a prophecy here], out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on

him should receive.)" The prophecy was to occur when people believed on Jesus Christ, or after He came in His first advent.

This prophecy points forward to a new day, as Peter said, when a day would dawn (2 Peter 1:19), not the Prophet's day. However, a new era was to commence, which was the Christian Dispensation. Notice that God, through the Prophet Ezekiel, said, "And [I] shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live." When did God ordain this to occur? When does one receive life and live? Roman 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus troth made me free from the law of sin and death." Life came when the Spirit came. When did the Spirit come? He came in this New Testament Dispensation. Romans 8:10 reads, "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life." Life comes through the Spirit, which Christ Jesus made available after His first coming.

Second Corinthian 3:6 tells us that "the spirit giveth life." What is the lesson? In establishing the prophetic time frame for our Scripture text, we can see this phrase in Ezekiel 37:14, when the Lord said, "And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live." This is a prophetic passage that points toward the New Testament Dispensation. It was not an Old Testament reality, not for the age of the Old Testament. Understanding that is needful because many try to take Gog and Magog and, these occurrences and relegate them back to the annals of history as something that literally occurred with Israel and her enemies. If you search the records of history, you will find no occurrence that matches what is prophesied in Ezekiel, Chapters 38 and 39, because it was not a literal occurrence, but it was a prophecy to be fulfilled in the day in which we live. Therefore, this prophecy is concerning the New Testament Dispensation.

Do other passages clearly identify the time frame of this prophecy? Look again at Ezekiel 37:24. (You will recall that we are reverting to Chapter 37 because our text in Chapter 38 commenced with the word *and*, letting us know that this was a continuation of prior thought

[continued on page 25]

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

9 Knowing that Christ being raised

from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Are You Dead to Sin?



Brother Roger L. Decker

Power Over Sin

There is little doubt that some are misusing and misteaching the grace of God. The Apostle Paul made it clear that the grace of God was not given as a covering for sin, but rather as a reigning power to enable one to have victory over sin. Romans 5:21 says, "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." The grace of God is a reigning power in the Christian's life.

Some people will tell you that

you cannot live free from sin. To say that, you would have to do away with Romans, Chapter 6, because it states very explicitly that one can be freed from sin. Many can testify that this is true. One has reigning power over sin when God supplies the grace. Thank God, the Christian does not have to sin, by the grace of God. It is not possible within oneself to overcome sin. You cannot do it by gritting your teeth and saying, "I am not going to sin." You cannot overcome sin because you are wise or strong. Only the power of God can enable you to live free from sin. Doing the best you can when you

do not have God is not good enough. That is what got you in trouble. When you turn yourself over to Jesus Christ, you will have reigning power that comes from above to give you power over sin.

With God's reigning grace in your life, you can have complete deliverance and victory over sin. The morning-time church went forth from victory unto victory. God's grace is not given so that you can join a church or just to go to Heaven with. God's grace gives you power to live right, power to shun evil, and power to do that which is pleasing in the sight of Almighty

God.

The life of sin ends with salvation; the fountain of sin stops. Why is that? When you get old-time salvation, you step into another fountain. The Prophet Zechariah said it is a fountain filled with blood, flowing from Emmanuel's side. He wrote in Zechariah 13:1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Those who plunge into their fountain are cleansed and made whiter than snow. The sin business ends with salvation, not with joining a church. Sin ends with old-time, Holy Ghost conversion, which is prompted by conviction, humility, repentance, forsaking, and a desire to follow Jesus all the way; all of this takes place in conversion.

Sin Stops When Salvation Comes In

There is more that takes place in salvation than many people want to acknowledge. The "old man" is dead in salvation. You may say, "He is still kicking around." Then you need to be saved. The Scripture text says in verse 6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." When you get saved, you stop serving sin; that is when the old man is destroyed. When is the body of sin destroyed, that you should not serve sin? When you get genuine salvation, you stop serving sin instantly. When the "old man" dies, there is a death, a burial, and a resurrection.

Sin and salvation are opposites; they do not go together. When Jesus went into the temple, the money changers had to go. When Jesus comes into your life, sin has to depart. Sin and salvation cannot continue in the same life together. Before righteousness comes in, a cleansing of all sin must take place, because the Bible says so.

Sin and righteousness cannot be

in a Christian's life at the same time. James made this very plain in James 3:9-12: "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh."

Jesus also made plain that sin and righteousness are opposites. He said in Matthew 7:13-20: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

When you look at a certain fruit tree, you expect that tree to produce one particular fruit. You would not go to a peach tree to look for apples. The Christian's life produces righteousness, fruit that becomes a Christian. Saints take after their Father. When you see a Christian, you should see Jesus. A corrupt tree does not bring forth good fruit, and a good tree does not produce corrupt fruit.

Sin crucified Jesus. It is a destroyer of that which is good. Seeing people depart and go their own way is sad. Often they get to the place where one can hardly

recognize them. When a sinner becomes converted, the old life of sin is cut off; it stops immediately. It is not a prolonged process to get victory over sin.

What Did Christ Come to Do?

The Christian life is a progressive walk in sanctification. However, getting rid of sin is not just a repressing of lust and evil desires; it is a complete cleansing. You cannot add one thing to salvation; it brings perfect deliverance. An individual who knows little about theology can be wonderfully saved, though he may be in the depths of vile sin.

One is sanctified by Truth. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." As the Christian hears the Word of God, he lays aside this and that. It is a progressive work of sanctification all the way through until you go into eternity. In fact, sanctification begins to work before you are even saved through a call of the Spirit, asking you to step aside from the world and come to Jesus Christ; that is a sanctifying work. Also, there is a sanctifying, cleansing work at salvation, which liberates you from sin, and then there is sanctification after salvation.

The grace of God keeps the child of God. He cannot get along without grace. One member of the household that the Christian always has with him is grace; grace is always there. As long as one is living for God, grace is present.

Isaiah 61:1-3 reads: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for

the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." What did Jesus Christ come to do? He came to proclaim liberty to the captives, to open the prison house to those who are bound.

The story comes to my mind about a large prison in the Midwest, which housed many prisoners. The prison had been there for about thirty years, and it came up to an anniversary date. The prison officials decided, "We will let the prisoners take part in the celebration of the length of time the prison has been here." So, the warden sent around a piece of paper and a pencil to have them write what they would like to do or what they would like to see happen in that prison on that particular date. Most of the prisoners agreed that they would like to see an open house. Friend, that is what Jesus Christ came to do. He came to open the prison doors for those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Sinner friend, Jesus Christ opened the doors to the prison of sin, and you can walk out free. You can be liberated from sin.

"Whosoever Abideth in Him Sinneth Not"

God's people do not commit sin. They can, but they desire to live perfect lives. They do not want to flirt around with sin or commit sin, and they do not practice sin. That is tough on 99 percent of religion, but it fits the Church of God just right, because God's people do not commit sin.

John wrote in 1 John 3:4-9: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is

righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. [The devil was never an angel that dwelled in God's Heaven. In the beginning he was doing what he was created to do; he is a tempter.] For this purpose [or for this reason] the Son of God was manifested [or made known], that he might destroy the works of the devil. [What are the works of the devil? He works to bring sin and destruction.] Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

In 1 John 5:18 John stated, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." John spoke so plainly because they were in a time of apostasy, a time when a falling away was beginning to take hold. Some were creeping in unawares, Jude said some were getting in and teaching that they never did sin. John set them straight when he told them that all have sinned, but he let them know that when one becomes a child of God, he does not commit sin.

John spoke so plainly concerning sin in First, Second, and Third John that even the sinner can understand. He said in 1 John 3:7, "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Oh, what a deception is going on today. Many preachers are telling people, "I sin, you sin, and we all sin." On the contrary, children of God do not commit sin. You may say, "Well, our preacher teaches that you have to sin a little every day." Then, you ought to flee that place; get out of there quickly. You need to flee for your life because your soul depends upon it. According to Revelation 17:5, it is "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS." You need to come to Zion, the Church of the Living God.

There is no excuse for wrongdoing. You cannot plead heredity, environment, or adverse circumstances. Salvation removes the guilt of sin, the stain of sin, and the penalty of sin. Then, it does not stop there: it gives you victory over sin. You do not have to say yes to temptation any longer, dear one. God has an abundance of grace for you.

Spiritual Baptism

You can live holy, by the grace of God. How is this possible? Our Scripture text states in verse 11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Verse 2 of our Scripture text asks, "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" In other words, just as a dead man is dead to what is going on around him, the Christian is dead to sin. Though sin is going on all around him, he is not involved in it. Spiritually, he has had a death and a burial, and in that death and burial went the old man and his deeds. The Christian is dead to the things of the world and to sin. He is in the world but not of the world. He is alive unto God. As long as he stays alive unto God, he will be dead to sin.

The Christian does not desire to go back to the old life. He no longer wants to be a partaker of sinful deeds. You may ask, "What about temptations?" He has victory over temptations through the grace of God. Temptation is not sin; yielding to temptation produces sin. Sin has no hold on the child of God. When does this all come about? When an individual is baptized into Jesus. This baptism is a spiritual baptism. You cannot get baptized into Jesus Christ in water baptism. You should already be in Jesus Christ before you are baptized in water. Jesus was a child of God before John baptized Him in the river, and He was a child of God when He came out of the water. If you are a sinner

when you are baptized, you are going to come out a wet sinner.

You can only get into Jesus Christ through spiritual baptism. If the Spirit of God is not in your life, you are not a child of God. Spiritual baptism inducts you into the church and puts you in Christ and puts Christ in you; this is a baptism of the Holy Spirit that makes you a new man, no matter what your race is, where you come from, how much money you have, or what your circumstances are. When you come to Jesus Christ, He will make you a new creature, and new creatures are in the New Jerusalem. That old Jerusalem is not good enough for the new Jew. The new Jew has to have a New Jerusalem. What is that New Jerusalem? The Church of God.

You may say, "One of these days we will see that New Jerusalem descend from God out of Heaven." You are too late. It is happening right now. Every individual who is born again becomes a new Jew, and he is born from above. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The Spirit of God places you in the body of Christ, or the Church of the Living God. Salvation takes away the bondage of sin and replaces it with something wonderful, something marvelous. God does not just take away sin and let you go your own way. No, when sin is removed, Jesus Christ comes in. He is wonderful and marvelous!

Instruments of Righteousness

The Christian finds fulfillment in serving God, in seeking those things which are above, because a change has taken place in his life. He enjoys going to the house of God. David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1). He also enjoys reading his Bible, praying,

and telling others about Jesus. That is his favorite subject. He enjoys working with the brethren, and he enjoys the fellowship of the saints. The reason is that he has been changed. He is not the same man that he used to be. He is a new creature. He acts differently, talks differently, and walks differently. He goes to places where he did not used to go, and he refrains from going to places where he used to go because his heart is clean.

To be saved, one must die out to sin. In our Scripture text, Paul mentioned a death, a burial, and a resurrection. He said in verses 7-8: "For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." A death takes place in salvation. You become dead to the things that Jesus died out to. The Christian ceases to be under the influence of sin. He is dead to the authority of sin, dead to its ruling power. Paul wrote in verse 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you."

The Christian is also dead to sin's commands. Paul said in Romans 6:13, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Christian does not have to give in to the command of sin. Also, he is dead to the seasonal pleasure of sin. Concerning Moses, Hebrews 11:24-25 states: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Dear one, the Bible tells you there is pleasure in sin, but it is only for a season. When is that season? It is only in the sowing season. If there were no pleasure in sin, there would be no attraction to sin.

Do not listen to the wiles of the enemy speaking to your soul, telling

you that you are missing something and that you ought to go out and sow wild oats. There is pleasure in sin; but remember, it is only seasonal. Along with that pleasure comes a reaping time, and the reaping time brings no pleasure. The Bible lets you know that if you sow to the wind, you will reap a whirlwind. Hosea 8:7 says, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up."

A New Life of Righteousness

The Christian is free from the shame of sin. Romans 6:21 says, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." The Christian is free from spiritual death as long as he walks in the light. Romans 6:23 tells you, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Paul said in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." Dead men must be buried. The old man is crucified and buried and must not resurrect again. When an individual is dead, literally speaking, and buried, you do not expect to see him walking around again. Similarly, with a Christian, when the old life is dead and buried, the old man should be dead and buried, spiritually speaking.

Our Scripture text says in verse 4, "... that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." A resurrection takes place, and one comes alive to the things of God and the attributes of God. He is alive to His communion and desires His fellowship. He has risen to a new walk with Christ. He begins a new life of righteousness, and he desires light, understanding, and knowledge concerning the things of God. Also, he desires to be more like

Jesus.

When the pastor or the evangelist preaches and comes close to where the Christian is living, he says, "Yea and amen," even though he may not be measured up. Perhaps he has never heard it before, but when the message comes across the pulpit, he does not fuss about it. He puts on Truth immediately and walks in it.

When the pastor preaches the Bible standard on adornment, the Christian removes the earrings and the rings and does not put them on again. You may say, "The Bible speaks about a ring." It certainly does, on the hand. If you were to wear one according to the Bible, you would have to put a ring on your hand for authority to do family business, because the ring was used as a stamp when conducting business.

When the message is preached concerning makeup, the Christian woman will not put it on again. She will not just throw the makeup in a drawer, waiting for a time when she gets lean in her soul. Also, when the Bible standard is preached about modest apparel, the Christian will dress modestly. He or she has begun a new life of righteousness and is ready and willing to obey. God gives one time to take hold of the message, and He knows how much time is needed.

"No Man Can Serve Two Masters"

A child of God will not rebel against holiness or the message of the one church. Some people rise up and say, "All churches are fine." However, they need to look in the Word of God, because they have lost their vision, if they ever had one. The Bible still says there is one body, one church. Jesus said, "I will build my church." That word is singular, not plural. A child of God may be new and may not understand it, but he or she will not fight it.

A true child of God will not go

down to Babylon once he or she has received light and understanding. Babylon does not have anything for the child of God but bondage. There is nothing good in the Word of God even associated with Babylon. That system is false and corrupt! God is calling His people out of it. To where is He calling them? He is calling them to Mount Zion, the Church of the Living God.

People who run from church to church need to get their hearts right with God and get rooted and grounded in a good Church of God congregation. If the place you attend is not a good Church of God congregation, or if you do not have confidence in the pastor, you need to flee, because your soul is at stake. When Babylon displays all her pearls and all her finery, she does not affect the saints of God. They have been spoiled; they eat the heavenly manna from above. It is good feasting at the Father's table in the Church of the Living God. The Lord leads His people beside still waters, and they have peace in their souls. They have fine pasture and do not want to leave God's house. They are satisfied in Jesus.

Sad to say, some have played round so much that they have lost their experience with God, and they are struggling to go on with religious professions. They can no longer rejoice in the Truth. Ones around

them can shout and holler amen, but not them. The question is, Are you dead to sin? Does sin have power over you? Does sin still have glitter that attracts you to it? You cannot be a servant of sin and a servant of righteousness at the same time. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Christian friend, when it comes to sin, your activity in it should be like a dead man's activity in life. What kind of activity is that? No activity. How does the Lord find your heart? Are you a servant of sin or of obedience unto righteousness? In Romans 6:16 Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" There is no in-between. You are in one category or the other.

Friend, Jesus wants to help you. If you are still giving in to sin, Jesus has something better for you. He wants to cleanse you. He can give you complete victory in your soul. You can be alive unto God and dead to sin.

(Cassette C-3269E)

Neglect your business and become bankrupt.

Neglect your health and be in your grave.

Neglect your fields and have no harvest.

Neglect your soul and be eternally lost!

Jude 1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:

2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.

3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hold Fast the Faith



Brother Brett Wilson

"Earnestly Contend for the Faith"

You need to have faith for many areas of your life. When you come to Christ, you need to have faith for salvation and for keeping your salvation. You are kept by the holy power of God, not by your own power. At one time I tried to muster up the power on my own, but I could not do it. I had to fall down on my knees to get more of God's power. Also, you must have faith for the healing of your body.

The definition of contend is, "to struggle or to fight for." If you want to maintain your salvation, you must keep fighting the devil. The devil works through individuals, so you must be aware of how your adversary, the devil, works. Christian friend, you are fighting the devil, and he will come right into your home if he can. Therefore, you need to be aware of his snares. You need to fight

for your salvation and for the freedom that you have in the Church of the Living God. I love the song that says, "O Church of God! I love thy courts, Thou mother of the free; Thou blessed home of all the saved, I dwell content in thee." To keep that song, you have to live it.

Our Scripture text says that you should "earnestly contend for the faith." The faith that I am talking about is trusting God, trusting the Savior, and trusting the Holy Ghost to lead and direct you. Many times the religious world leaves out part of the Holy Trinity. They may preach about one part of the Trinity, but they leave out the others. We need all three. You may say, "Well, I confessed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and He forgave me of my sins." Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? I am not talking about a false fire that many are manifesting in the religious world today, but I am speaking of

being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Young person, you should not play around the edge of the world. There was a time in my life when I had to decide whether to serve God. When you go to the house of worship, you must have reverence. There is not enough reverence in the house of worship. Many times when people enter the sanctuary, they sit on the pews and play with their children or use their children as an excuse to go out the doors. Some people use the excuse of their children for not sitting toward the front. The sanctuary is dedicated to the Lord. If you want fire in the services, you must get back to the blessed old Bible and get back to the message that the old brethren used to preach in straightness and clarity.

This common salvation should not be watered down and mingled with false religion. There should be a separate distinction between false

religion and the Church of God. Saints of God should look like Church of God people. The Church of God message is still Truth, and her standard is still the Bible standard.

Living According to the Standard of God's Word

Verse 4 of our Scripture text says that certain men crept in unawares. Such men water down the Gospel. They say the outward appearance does not matter and that only what is on the inside matters. On the contrary, what is inside a man will show on the outside. Friend, if you are not clean on the inside, it is going to be manifested on the outside. If you are not bearing fruit for God, you are dead on the inside, spiritually speaking.

You cannot say, "I have the Holy Ghost, and I am happy in my soul," and then go home and act like a devil the rest of the week and truly be saved. Also, a Christian does not cuss or chew tobacco or tell his boss, "I am not going to listen to you." Many preachers have quit preaching these things because they are afraid of hurting people's feelings, but it is better to hurt their feelings in this life than for them to come to the Day of Judgment and hear the Lord say, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." The Church of God way is living pure, clean, and holy. I do not want to water down the Gospel. I do not want any thief coming into my spiritual home and taking things away. We each need to abide by God's Word.

I used to be a draftsman, and we had certain standards to go by. If someone did not go by those standards, the boss said, "What is this? I want it changed." As a part of the Church of God, you need to live according to the standard of God's Word. If you are not doing that, then you need to make some changes. You need to get further from the world and further from looking like the world. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you

that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Saint, you have to walk worthy of your calling. Some people want to walk worthy when they attend the worship services, but they need to walk worthy twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As the people of God, we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and we must live right.

In the Old Testament the priests did not go into the holy place living any old way. They were careful when they went in to offer sacrifices. They had to be without fault. If they were not, God struck them dead. The high priest had a rope tied around one leg so that someone could drag him back if he was guilty when he went in to the holy of holies. I am surprised that God has not struck more people dead today. You may say, "Well, we are living in an age of grace and mercy." That is true, but you also need to be aware of the wrath of God.

We read in Ephesians 4:2, "With all lowliness . . ." Correction helped me to realize that I must stay humble and respect other people's positions. Some positions in the church require administering discipline. I remember some ushers correcting me when I was a young person. They said, "You know you are not supposed to be doing that." I appreciate that. One reason there is division is that people do not respect other people's positions. Ministers have no business meddling in another brother's congregation; it is none of their concern. No doubt, they have enough problems in their own congregations. Being a pastor is a full-time job. Some ministers like to rush at an opportunity to "help" another man's sheep. I do not want to lend an ear to another man's sheep. Some have the attitude, "I am going to go down to the altar and deal with Brother So-and-So because I know him so well. We have been friends for awhile." There is a danger in that! If you, as a minister, are not careful, you will lend an ear to something that his or her pastor

should be dealing with. You may not know the whole situation. The ministry ought to have respect for one another. Friend, if you have problems and you have a godly pastor, you should counsel with him, not with another minister.

Before I counsel a young person in my congregation, if his or her parents are saved, I like for them to be right there. If they cannot be there right then, I may have to deal with the situation one on one, but sooner or later, I want the parents involved. Why? Parents need to know what is going on with their children when it comes to their spiritual lives.

Besetting Weights

Again, Ephesians 4:2 says, "With all lowliness . . ." When one becomes a minister, he may be tempted to think he has really accomplished something in life, but he must remember that without God he is nothing. Problems start when one forgets where he came from. We each need to stay low before our brothers and sisters.

Christian friend, you need to realize that God wants to call you for service. Nowadays people worry about getting a good education, what car to buy, and how large a home they can afford. However, the most important concern in life should be the work of God. One should be willing to sacrifice a college education if God asks. Now, a college education is fine if the Lord allows you, but you need to realize that God should come first. If you have to go far away from your home congregation to go to college, it could hurt your Christian experience. I am talking about contending for the faith. To see more divine healing and to have more power with God, each individual must do what God's Word says to do.

Ephesians 4:2-7 states: "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body,

and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Notice that Paul said there is "one Lord." If the older brethren had the same Lord we have today, we should have the same Gospel. In essence, Paul said, "I must die out to self daily in this life." Saint, you must put off some things. If God has revealed some things to you that you need to put off and you do not do it, it will affect your Christian experience.

Do you have weights besetting you? Have you refused to set aside certain things? Often people fail to measure to the message and then backslide. Some think they can live in sin for a couple of weeks and then get back to God, but that is not the way it works. Another problem is that people do not stay at an altar of prayer until they get the victory. Sometimes when people go to the altar, the ministers lay hands on them and pray for them, and away they go. However, it takes time to deal with some situations. As ministers, we need to have discernment.

The Perfecting of the Saints

Ephesians, Chapter 4, says there is one body and one Spirit. Away with liberalism and compromise! Verses 12-13, speaking of pastors and evangelists, state: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Saint, you need to be perfected. That is the reason you need to attend the church services. When you hear the Word, it should cause you to live straight.

The Scripture talks about the perfecting of the saints. As a

minister, you need to realize that your duty is to perfect the saints and to see the Word of God go forward. The saints should contend for the faith and be workers together for God. How can you be a worker if you shirk your duties? As a minister, it is your duty to make sure that the fire is fanned and encourage people to listen to God's call. This call that I am talking about will make you realize your responsibility, not only to yourself but also to others. Also, you need to make sure that your responsibility is coupled with the Spirit of God.

Paul wrote, "... till we all come in the unity of the faith." Someone may say, "Well, one of these days we all will come in the unity of the faith when we get on the other side." I do not find in the Word of God where it says that will take place over on the other side. The Scripture is speaking of now. Isaiah 52:8 tells us that the watchmen will see eye to eye. I have heard ministers say, "Oh, there are some things that we are not always going to agree on." If we each have the mind of Christ, we will see eye to eye. When I got saved, the Lord cleaned up my thoughts and gave me a new mind, the mind of Christ.

If you have the mind of Christ, you will do what Christ would do if He were here in your shoes. When Jesus was walking on the face of this earth, He performed miracles. His Apostles did the same thing. When Peter's shadow passed across some who were sick, they became well. He did not say, "Oh, I hope they get well after I pray for them." The nominal religious world sometimes asks, "Of what faith are you?" Friend, there is only one faith. It seems that thinking comes right around the Church of God. Some have asked, "What do you teach? Do you teach the same thing that Brother So-and-So teaches?" Ministers of the Church of God should be teaching and preaching and living the same doctrine. The young people are looking at the older generation and saying, "Well, they have all these problems and don't know what to do with them." Young

person, I will tell you what you need to do: you need to commit them to God. It is going to be up to you one of these days to carry Truth forward.

I remember an older sister telling me, "I have one thing on my mind, and that is to pass on the torch of Truth." Saint, you need to pass the torch of Truth to others. Young person, you need to pay more attention in the services so you can help others. You need to live so that you can point others in the right direction.

The only way to measure to Truth is to bring under your flesh daily. You need to look at God's Word and say, "Lord, I want to see the church go forward." You might have had failures in the past, but you need to go forward for God. If you just sit around and cry over what has happened in the past, you cannot pass the torch of Truth to others.

When things go wrong, people always want to blame others. They say, "Well, if our pastor were better . . ." or "If the older saints had . . ." or "If the young people were better, we wouldn't have these problems." People need to realize that many times the problem lies with them. Friend, you need to press the battle on. Do not give up!

God's Word says the man of God must blow the trumpet. If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, the people will not know how to live. The people of God need to live the Word of God, walk in unity, and speak the same thing. You need to follow the same path that the saints of old followed. You should not stay home from the house of worship when you can be there. People miss church for all kinds of petty reasons. Some say they need to do the laundry or wash their cars or their families are having a get-together. Saint, you need to go to the house of worship; that is your duty. A little sniffling should not keep you from the house of worship.

Diligently Seek the Lord

When the people of God walk as the Lord wants them to walk, they

will get along in perfect harmony. When perfect harmony is lacking, you need to find out with whom you are walking. Hebrews 11:1-2 says: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." We each need to have a good report within and without.

Verse 6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is." Saint, do you remember when you came to God for your salvation. You trusted that He would forgive your sins. He is still the same God, and He wants you to trust Him for everything. When you go through trials, God does not want you to put your trust in your mom and dad; they might not always be around. You need to lean on God.

I realize that many people who have an earthly family in the Church of God want to rely on one another, but what happens if one goes astray? Are you going to go with that one? That is what is going on nowadays. Often family members follow other family members, whether they are right or wrong.

Again, verse 6 reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Friend, you have to seek Him diligently. You cannot be haphazard about it. Verse 7 states, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." You may wonder whether you should hold to the standard so tightly and if God really expects those things out of you. You may say, "What happens if I come to the Day of Judgment and find out that I did not have to do all those things?" Friend, if that is your attitude, if you are the type of person who wants to barely make it in, you are probably going to miss it.

Some people have said to me, "We should not have to be burdened down with some of these teachings." As stated in the Revelation message,

they have left their first love. They do not have a fervent love for Jesus Christ and the church. Also, if they truly love the church, they love the people of God, and they will stay put and live the Gospel.

Living for God means making commitments. Young person, you need to be committed to God and the work of God. When young people come to the age of dating, some have the attitude, "I am going to date this girl, but when she is not looking, I am going to date someone else." Friend, that attitude is displeasing to God. This is often where young people have failed in courtship. That same attitude can carry over into married life and spiritual life. Also, if you are not faithful on the job in a physical sense, you will not be faithful in a spiritual sense toward God in what He has for you to do. Saint, you need to be settled.

Hold Fast

The Church of God is a separate people. You should not go down to Babylon to learn her ways. You must be saved if you preach, play the piano, lead the song service, teach a Sunday school class, or whatever you do in the work of God. You must be established and settled in your experience with God and committed to the congregation of the Church of the Living God.

Ephesians 4:5 says we need to have one baptism, one faith, and one Lord. Moses did, Noah did, and the three Hebrew children did. They did not fear for their lives. They served God whatever the consequences. The Hebrew boys refused to eat the king's meat because it had been offered to idols. Today many people cower down because of relatives or because some who say they are Church of God want them to compromise. The three Hebrew children did not do that, and Daniel did not cower down either.

We read in Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside

every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross [He endured; He is our example in all phases of life], despising the shame." People said of Jesus, "Look at Him hanging on the Cross. If He were really Lord, He could save Himself. He healed others, so why can't He save Himself?" Friend, are you willing to suffer for the Savior? We, as the church, need to stand beside one another and defend one another. We need to protect one another from compromise and uphold God's man. Just as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands during the battle, today the saints need to lift up the ministry to the throne of grace.

Hebrews 12:2-3, speaking of Jesus, says: ". . . endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." As the Church of God, we need to hold tight to what God has given us. Ministers need to protect the Church of God by blowing the trumpet and warning the people. Sometimes the message of the Gospel may find you short. It is better to take care of the need before you get embarrassed. When a minister preaches and God shows you a need, why don't you submit to Him before you get exposed? Friend, it is time to get more serious about the things of God.

As the Church of God, we need to lift the banner of Truth high. Young person, you need to get a grip on this faith. You are not the church of tomorrow, but you are the church of today if you have been born into the family of God. You need to arise and start taking hold of some things. Get down on your knees, study your Bible, get involved in the work of God, and hold fast the faith.

(Cassette C-4566A)

Matthew 5:13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden underfoot of men.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Good Works

The Light of the World

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the first thing He taught the people was that God brought us into this world for a reason. Before I was saved, I often wondered, "What is the meaning of life?" I often thought about those hard questions in life. When the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, she asked him some hard questions. Some of those questions might have been, "Why do we do the things we do? What is the reason for living? What is the purpose of life?" Friend, I have good news for you. There are answers to all these questions. God has created you to be a laborer, one who glorifies Him; that is the whole reason for life. As a reward, when you are finished, you will enjoy eternity with Him forever and ever. While you are here in this world, God wants you to spend your time glorifying Him, lifting up the name of Jesus.

Brother Daniel Webster

Our Scripture text says that no man lights a candle and puts it under a bushel. If you light a candle, you would not put it underneath something; you would raise it high so that you could see. Child of God, you are like unto a candle, and Jesus is the light that lights up the candle. When He comes into your heart and life, He brings your candle to life. He did not do that for the light to be hidden. That does not do any good. God wants you to put it up on a candlestick so that people can see what He has done. He wants the world to recognize that He can change lives. He is the Great Creator, and He is alive and well. God is not dead. The world would like to believe that God is dead, but He is not dead. He is very much alive and brings life to every soul. The reason we live is to shine our light in the darkness of this old world so that precious souls might be drawn to Him. If you hide this light where no



one can see it, it is of no value. It is like salt that has lost its saltiness, or its savor; it is worthless. All you can do with it is throw it out.

Jesus likened God's people to a city set on a hill. You cannot help but see a city set on a hill. At night the lights from that city shine across the hillside, and in the daytime you can see the buildings because they are elevated. It cannot be hidden because it is up on a hill. Saint, God has put you on Mount Zion, the highest of all mountains. He has placed you at the very top, and He wants you to be seen, not to give you any glory or praise, but so that God can receive all the glory and all the praise for the things that He has worked in your life.

**"Created in Christ Jesus
Unto Good Works"**

We read in Titus 3:5 that we are not saved by works; nevertheless,

works are a very essential part of the Christian life. Salvation does not come because you are a nice person, because you are someone special, or because you do good things and you deserve to be saved. No, salvation comes only one way, and that is because God is merciful.

God had mercy in that He let me live long enough to receive salvation. He had plenty of chances to take my life before I got saved. I cursed Him, I did not think anything about Him, and I had nothing to do with Him. I just went about doing my own thing, and as my Creator, He had every right to snuff out my life, but He was merciful. He saw that someday He would have an opportunity to use me for something worthwhile.

Living for Jesus is worthwhile. It is the only thing worthwhile in life, because it is the only reward that you are going to take with you. You can struggle and labor and fight all your life for earthly things, but someday someone else is going to own them. You will not have anything to say in the matter, because you are going to leave all those things behind. You can labor for one thing that will always stay with you, and that is what you do for Jesus. God records the work you do for Him in His Book. He takes note of each deed. Ephesians 2:10 tells us that we are His workmanship. The reason He made us was for us to produce good works, to prosper His kingdom.

As I studied this subject, I did a little research on the phrase "good works" and found that phrase is mentioned only in the New Testament. That certainly gives us something to think about, because there are not any good works without Jesus. Many people think that they can do good deeds and help other people and think that those good deeds will get them into Heaven. On the contrary, the Bible lets us know there were not any good works before Jesus came. It does not matter how good one thinks he is, unless Jesus is in his life, all the works he does are in vain. They are of no value and of no benefit except

for one's own glory and recognition. Until Jesus moves in, there are not any good works. Without Jesus no work is good enough to take you to Heaven.

The Bible lets us know in 1 Corinthians that you could even give your body to be burned, but without charity it would profit you nothing. What is that charity? It is God in us. God is love, and unless He is in us, our good works are worthless and vain. The Ecclesiastes writer wrote, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Without God, works will not do you one bit of good.

When Jesus moves in, then one has the opportunity to produce good works that will benefit people. In some cases, it might be the same deeds one did without Jesus, but after he is saved, they count for something, because Jesus is the One motivating him to do the things he does. The difference is that Jesus dwells within. Friend, your good works are of no value without Jesus. On the other hand, when Jesus moves in, He expects good works of you as you live each day. He wants you to be a witness to your neighbors, to your co-workers, to others around you in the shopping malls, or wherever you are. As a Christian, you have been placed as a candle, lit, on a candlestick to be seen. Jesus is the One for whom you must work. Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." God's purpose for us is to produce good works and glorify Him. That is our reason for living.

In Titus 2:14 we read, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." God's people are the kindest and the most generous people on this earth. They treat people with all the love and kindness that God can give them. When

people are not God's people, you can tell, because they do not have that love and kindness. They might claim to be religious, but unless they produce good works and have the very manifestation of God within, they have nothing. Friend, you can wear the right clothes and do all the right things, but if you do not have Christ in you, it is all vanity; it is of no value.

A Peculiar People

Again, Titus 2:14 reads, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people . . ." God's people are peculiar, special people. Saint, the world thinks you are peculiar when you abstain from the things of this world. When you do not laugh at smutty things that the world laughs at or carry on as the world does, and when you spend your Sundays and Wednesday nights at church, the world thinks you are peculiar. People sometimes ask, "Do you go to church every night during revivals and twice on Sundays?" When we answer yes, that just amazes them. They say, "How can you do that?" Well, the reason is that Jesus is in us, and we like to be with others who have Jesus. That is called fellowship, and God's people enjoy it.

Friend, you do not have to get out the whiskey bottle or do the awful things the world does to have a good time. If you have the Spirit of God, being with other saints is wonderful. There is something about being with God's people that thrills the soul. As God's people, we have been called to manifest the sweet Spirit of God and to show Christ to this world. James 2:20 tells us that faith without works is dead. I might have all the faith in the world, but I cannot show that faith without works. I might tell you all about it, but I cannot show it without works. Works are necessary. God has made us for that very purpose.

What are those good works? First Peter 2:12 reads, "Having your

conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." One thing that is a great witness to people is being honest with the business community and with the people with whom you deal. Today people are stunned if you find something valuable and try to return it.

If a bank teller gives you too much money in change, you should give it back and say, "You gave me too much." That will be a witness to the teller and others who hear about it. I have had occasions when the store clerks have forgotten to charge me for merchandise. The first thing the world says when this happens is, "Great! I didn't have to pay for that." When God is in you, you will let that person know right away that he or she forgot to charge you.

I am in the heating and cooling business, and sometimes people have forgotten to send me bills. It astonishes them when I call and say, "I owe you some money. When are you going to send me the bill so I can pay you?" Honesty is always a witness, and that is what God wants.

Some people are honest only when it is convenient. If you are a child of God, you will be honest whether it is convenient or not. Sometimes being honest might put you under pressure should someone want you to lie and you will not do it. Nevertheless, God still expects you to be honest and to stand for what is right. In doing so, you are doing a good work, because it witnesses to others that something is different about you. Christian young person, being honest can show others that something is different about you when you do not cheat on tests and you will not let anyone else look at your tests and cheat. A popular idea at school is, "I'll show you my answers if you show me yours." If you are a Christian, you will not do that. You will say, "You find your own answers. I will keep mine to myself." That is what is honest and

right, and that is what God expects of you.

Again, we read in 1 Peter 2:12, "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, [Some people will not like you when you are honest, and others will appreciate your honesty. Obviously if it is to their benefit, people want you to be honest. Otherwise, they might speak evil of you.] they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." If people are honest with themselves, they will say, "Well, I don't like him, but he is right." Good works are necessary in the Christian's life, and being honest is also necessary.

One thing that many people are dishonest about is their income taxes. There is nothing wrong with paying the least amount that you owe legally if you pay what is necessary. Some people will do whatever they can to avoid paying their taxes, whether it is legal or not. That is not God's will. Saint, you must be honest, even with your taxes. No matter how much you disapprove of what the government does with your tax dollars, it is necessary that you are honest about your tax reports. In doing so, God will bless you. He always blesses and works things out for us.

God needs individuals upon whom others can look and say, "I can count on what he says. He has never lied to me, and I know he never will. You need to live so that people can have that confidence in you. That is what God wants. There was a time in society when honesty was more common. Often when people shook hands over a business deal, that was as good as a written contract. Our society has lost that today. Now, just because a person is honest does not mean that he or she is going to Heaven. It is when Jesus is in the heart that honesty can be of benefit to the soul and to those around you.

Showing Yourself a Pattern of Good Works

We read in Titus 2:1-12: "But speak

thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

The world knows how a Christian ought to live. Many see all the falseness going on in religion, and they say, "I don't want anything to do with religion, because they're all a bunch of hypocrites."

When a person gets saved and starts to live out the Word that Paul wrote to Titus, he is obedient to his master. Who is that? Your master is your employer. He is the one who is your boss, and when Paul said, "not answering again," he was saying, "Don't argue or fuss with him." You ought to obey him as long as what he tells you to do is within the law. On the other hand, if he tries to get you to do something illegal or dishonest, you need to find another job, because it is not worth fooling with or losing your soul over. God will bless you for that.

God has allowed the grace of God to bring forth salvation, and it has appeared to all men. While not everyone obeys the grace of God, most people know what it says. Everyone understands how men ought to live. That is common knowledge that God has put in us; that is part of His wonderful blessing in creating the humans that we are. By giving us this knowledge of how we ought to live, God is faithful to each of us. When the world looks on and sees that we claim to be Christians, we have a big responsibility. They are looking and depending on us to be as candles in a dark room. Physically, without light in a dark room, we will stumble, trip over something, and fall. When there is light, we can see what is around us so that we do not fall. The world needs spiritual light. Child of God, you are the light of the world. Jesus is the light within you, and He shines forth from you to produce the light needed in this dark world.

In Titus, Chapter 2, we read that the world knows how we ought to live. Verses 7-8 state: "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."

Saint, you need to have the testimony that Paul had when he said, in essence, "I live with a clear conscience before God and man." Your testimony ought to be, "I refuse to do anything that people can point their fingers at and say, 'If he is a Christian, I don't want anything to do with what he has.'" You ought to live so that the world does not have an opportunity to say that.

Many people are creating all kinds of commotion and carrying on in all kinds of ways, yet they claim to be God's people. The world looks on and says, "My, what an awful mess! I don't want anything to do with that." They say that because they are seeing corruption in those who claim to be God's people that God did not intend

to be there. Despite all that, God still has a true people, and I am glad that we are a part of those people.

Glorifying God With Good Works

God's people are filled with good works. As a Christian, you should be as the widow woman mentioned in Acts 9:36: "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Verse 37 tells us that she passed away. Because of the good things that she had done for others, the saints sent for Peter to come and pray for her, and God raised her up.

As a child of God, you need to be filled with good works and live your life for others. If you start living for others, self will not be so important. When you get your mind off self and on others, things go much smoother. Otherwise, you will tend to feel sorry for yourself. That is easy to do when you go through trials and sorrows. As long as you dwell on your sorrow and grief, then all you can do is feel sad. God can help you to shake yourself and cause you to say, "It is time to be a help to someone else." God can lift you and help you to get your eyes fixed on helping others. You need to live so that you can help others.

First Timothy 2:10 reads, "But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." Many places in the New Testament refer to good works, because that is what God wants in our lives. We read in 1 Timothy 5:24-25: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid."

Friend, you cannot hide your life. No matter how pretty your smile is, you cannot fool the Spirit of God, although some people have tried. Some are recorded in the Bible, and they dropped dead trying. There is

something about the glory of God in a saved person's life that lets people know that person is a child of God. He may not say a thing about God, but there is something about his life that radiates the glory of God. It may be through a smile or through the warmth of a handshake. The Spirit of God witnesses from heart to heart when one is His child.

Again, 1 Timothy 5:25 reads, "Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand . . ." God will manifest these good works before people. Christians do not do good works to receive recognition. God takes note of what you do, and He will reward you for the things you do, even though you had no intention of receiving a reward. God wants to do that for you because He loves you so. I am thankful for that.

Jesus spoke of doing good works. He said in Matthew 6:3-4: "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." The Father always sees everything we do. Just a smile is a wonderful work. Sometimes, the world is stunned when you say to them, "Good morning," especially if it is a Monday morning. They do not quite understand that. That is a good work, and it is something that God wants us to do. Saint, you can help the world around you by smiling and facing it in a better way.

Be Rich in Good Works

The Bible teaches that God sees all these things, and He takes note of them. Psalm 44:21 says, "Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." He knows everything you do, and He knows why you do it. One song says, "Just to know that He knows, That my Lord understands, And His look of compassion to see; Soothes the pain in my heart, Is a balm for my wounds, Bringing comfort and peace unto me." Just to know that He knows is a great consolation. He

understands why you do the things you do.

Have you ever tried to do your best to help with something and it just seemed to fall flat? Perhaps someone looked at you and said, "Now, why did you do that?" Well, God knows. He knows the secrets of the heart. He knows why you did it, and He will bless you for it. Do not let that be a discouragement to you or affect you so that you say, "I will never try that again." God might want you to try it again, and next time you might do it better.

I remember the first time I sang in public after I was saved. I had never sung in public before, and it was a terrifying moment. Had I listened to the devil, I never would have done it. I had to overcome that, because I did not feel that I did very well; nevertheless, I refused to listen to discouraging thoughts and discouraging spirits and pressed on to do what God wanted me to do. My friend, you need to press on. Do not let things that you feel are failures stop you from doing the work of God. At times you will fail. You will try to do something, feeling that God is in it, and then find out later than it was more self than God. Do not let that discourage you. Pick up where you left off, and ask God to help you to gain greater discernment so that you can do better in your next attempt to labor for Him. Do not let failures hold you back. Step forward, and keep going.

Since I have gotten saved, often had I listened to the devil, I would have quit, because I felt as if I had failed. Those were the times when I had to get down on my knees and talk to God. He is so loving, so kind, and so gracious. He knows the secrets of your heart, and He knows what you really want out of life. If He sees that you really want to live for Him, He will lift you right back up and help you on your way so that you can live for Him.

Jeremiah 17:10 says, "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of

his doings." Jeremiah 23:24 says, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD There is no place to hide from God. Because of that, no matter what work you do (Jesus said even if you give a cup of water in His name), God takes note of it. Christian friend, someone somewhere needs you. It may be your neighbor or someone with whom you work. You will meet people that no one else will have an opportunity to talk to about salvation. You may not have a chance to speak to them, but sometimes just your presence will witness to people. God wants you to shine forth and be what He would have you to be. You have been called for that purpose.

First Timothy 6:18 states, "That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate." God wants you to be so rich in good works that other people cannot help but see.

Young person, be encouraged. The world is looking on, and they are amazed when they see young people living for God. People have asked me, "How do you get your young people to participate in church services?" I tell them that we do not force them to participate, but because Jesus is in them, they want to serve God and sing to His glory. They do it because they have a desire. Working for the glory of God is a good work.

"If Thou Wilt Be Perfect"

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:17, "That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In other words, you have everything; all good works are in you. That is what God wants out of your life. Again, Titus 2:7 states, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works." You need to be an example to other people of how good works should be. You need to do everything you can for God.

If each of us would live with the thought in mind, "I want to be an example to someone else," what a difference it would make in our lives,

because suddenly we would realize that someone is looking on us. When you go to the church services, is your attitude, "I want to be a help and an encouragement to someone"? If so, God will bless you for it, and He will cause you to come into the services with a smile. Many times that very thing will help someone who is pressed down. Saint, when someone is grieving, you need to be in a position to help that one by encouraging him or her and saying, "I am praying for you." It is such a blessing to have someone come to you in the time of need and say, "I am praying for you."

God wants you to help someone in some way. If you seek to do good works, God will direct you. If you ask God to help you find someone to help, He will lead you to the right individual. Titus 3:14 says, "And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful." In John 15:5 Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Good works are only through Jesus. There is nothing good that you can do in yourself to be of benefit to anyone. In Matthew 19:16 one came to Jesus and said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered by telling him there is none good but One, and that is God. Jesus would not even take the glory Himself of being good. God is the One who makes you good.

If you are good, it is only because Jesus is in your life. Matthew 19:17-21 states: "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God [Jesus told him what he needed to do if he intended to have eternal life]: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou

shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

"The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? [This young man felt that he was in good shape. He said, 'I have done all these good things,' but then came the real test.] Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect [in other words, if you really want eternal life], go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

Until that time, this young man had been obedient to all the Mosaic Law. He had obeyed all the commandments, but the Spirit of God was not in him. What was his problem? He was a selfish person; self was more important to him than God. The Bible lets us know that he went away sorrowfully. He would not yield. He would not let loose of his earthly possessions to help other people. Now, that does not mean that when one gets saved, if he has any money at all, he has to give it all to the poor. That was not what Jesus was getting at. He was saying that one must be willing to give up self to follow Him.

No matter how many good works you do, if you do not follow Christ, they are of no value. It grieves my heart when people no longer follow Jesus, yet they continue with their works. If they do not want to fellowship God's people, something is wrong. Many have overridden the Holy Spirit for so long that they have become deceived. They feel they are justified in the things they do. However, that is not God's way.

If you want your good works to produce what God intends, then you must follow Jesus. When you follow Him, you will follow the Word of God, because Jesus is the Word in written form. John, Chapter 1, states that the Word became life, and that Word dwells within you when you follow Jesus.

Faith Produces Works

Hebrews 10:24 tells us, "And let us consider one another to provoke

unto love and to good works." Child of God, that is what God wants you to do. You are to encourage others to do good works. If you are doing things that God does not want you to do, He takes note of that, and He takes care of all things. If you have the attitude of considering one another to provoke unto love, you will not work to split things apart, but to love one another and work together.

How can we provoke one another unto love? One way is by "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." There is no greater encouragement for a preacher than to have people to preach to. If he were the only one in church, that would be very discouraging. James 2:14 says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" Many people today say, "We are saved by faith, and that is all we need." Well, let me give you an example of that. Imagine that you and I were together in a building, and I saw that the floor and the walls were on fire, so I told you, "This building is on fire." Suppose you said, "Well, he wouldn't lie to me. I have faith that he told me the truth. The building must be on fire," yet you did not leave the building. Now, would that save you? No, you would perish in the burning building. Faith alone will not save you. Faith must produce works.

If you study the life of Jesus, you will notice that every time He worked a miracle for someone, He had that person do something. Today we each have things to do in our own experiences, such as forsaking our own thoughts and our own ways. There is something that every one must do to gain this experience of salvation. We each have to repent; that is a work that everyone must do to get saved. These are things that faith alone cannot do. You see, you can believe that God is until you die, but if you do not do something about it, you will be lost. The Bible says the devils believe and tremble, but they will not repent. Friend, you will

perish if you do not produce works with faith.

We read in James 2:14-18: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? [For example, if you see a man who needs a coat, and you have a coat under your arm, will just saying, 'May God bless you and keep you warm' make him any warmer? No, that would not help him at all. The good works produce the benefit.] Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

You cannot show anyone your faith without works. You may tell them about your faith and tell them all about everything you believe, but that will not show them anything. Good works to show your faith. When someone has a serious affliction and he or she is willing to trust God for divine healing, that shows faith. Someone may say, "Yes, I trust God," but that does not show people anything unless that person goes through an affliction. Now, I am not condemning anyone for anything. I am just using that as an example of how we show our faith. Showing our faith is one way we can witness to people.

James 2:19-23 says: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he

was called the Friend of God."

Abraham carried his faith to the very end. God said to him, "Take your son up on the mountain to a place where I will show you, and offer him for a sacrifice." Prior to that, God had said, "Out of your son I am going to raise up a mighty nation, one so great that the sands of the earth cannot even number them." Then God said, in so many words, "Take your son and sacrifice him." Abraham believed God, and he obeyed. That is a good example of faith. Abraham had confidence in God as he told his son, "We will go up and offer a sacrifice to the Lord, and then we will come back down." Abraham knew that somehow God was going to work it out, and He did. Faith without works is dead. James said in James 2:26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Saint, I want to encourage you to keep

pressing in the things that God has for you to do. God is taking note of it all.

Remember that unless Jesus is the One who motivates you, those works are of no value or benefit. No matter how pleasant a person you are, unless you have been born again, there is no spiritual life in you. If the Spirit of God is not motivating your life, there is no good in you. Jesus let us know that all goodness comes from God.

Each of us can do things that no one else can do. There is a soul out there that you can reach that no one else can reach. Only God knows what He wants you to say. He wants you to produce good works. He saved you for that purpose. The Giver of life, Jesus Christ, has given you a reason for living.

Christian friend, I want to encourage you to keep pressing and to keep doing what is right. Do not

let past failures discourage you or cause you to quit and never try again. That is just the devil talking. Keep pressing and keep doing what God wants you to do. Some people have the idea, "As long as I am reading the Bible and praying, those are my good works." No, those things are necessary to maintain your Christian experience. Good works go beyond doing those things, because without those things you cannot do anything anyway. God is the One who must direct you. Reading the Bible and praying are necessary, but doing good works is living the life before people, adorning the doctrine. If it is Truth, you ought to live it to its fullest. You ought to measure to everything that God has shown you. If you will do the things that God wants you to do, you will be full of good works, and God will be pleased.

(Cassette C-4350E)

The devil is willing for a person to profess Christianity
as long as he does not practice it.

Radio Log



LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Newark, Ohio	WCLT-AM 1430	Sunday	7:15 a.m.-8:00 a.m.
Anderson, Indiana	WQME-FM 98.7	Sunday	8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m.
Gaffney, South Carolina	WAGI-FM 105.3	Monday	8:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

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Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weighth the spirits.

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

Making Excuses



Brother Bob Mikesell

Characteristics of Human Nature

Solomon, the author of the Proverbs, was a very wise man. God gave him wisdom that was unparalleled by any in this world, and he understood the human body and its senses. Two natures that work in the body of the Christian are the human nature and the divine nature, and there is a conflict between the two. To illustrate the human nature, you can take the example of a young child whose mother has a cookie jar on the counter. Suppose the mother says, "Johnny, don't eat any cookies. You have to wait until after supper"; then she leaves the room. As good mothers do not go far, she peeks in and sees him reach in the cookie jar, pick up a cookie, and eat it. So, she walks back into the room, looks at Johnny with the cookie crumbs on his face, and asks, "Did you eat a cookie?" (She knows he did; she watched him.) He says, "I didn't eat a cookie." Why would he say that? He has a fleshly nature that says, "If I say yes, Mom is going to paddle my behind for disobeying; so to stop that

from happening, I will say no."

Another example of human nature is the fear of falling, or the fear of heights. I have a fear of heights. I work on construction sites, and sometimes I have to climb ladders thirty to forty feet high and walk along trusses. When I get up there and look down, there is a fear within me. I have never fallen from that height, but I do have a protective sense within me that says, "When you are up here, you need to be cautious. You need to hold on and take care of yourself." Protective measures such as this are to protect our bodies. If you know something is hot, you do not touch it because you have a protective sense inside.

Self-justification is one characteristic of human nature. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 16:2, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes . . ." That is self justification, which is a part of human nature. In the latter part of that same verse Solomon wrote, ". . . but the Lord weighth the spirits." The Lord sees what a person's motives are.

Self justification compels people to make excuses when faced with shortcomings in their lives. Those shortcomings may be revealed through the pastor preaching a message. I count it a privilege when God reveals things to me in a message. Sometimes it hurts, but I never want to get to the place where I get offended by the message of God. I want to keep a tender heart so that I can acknowledge my need and say, "Thank You, Lord, for showing me where I can move up." Many people are not that way. Often when the message of God goes forth, they have a tendency to apply the message to others instead of taking what God has for them. If they would stop looking at others and start looking at themselves, they would be better off spiritually.

Reasoning Out Shortcomings

Making excuses for the things you do in your life is easy. God has given you a mind that can reason. Isaiah 1:18 reads, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD."

People can train some animals to do amazing things, but they cannot reason. They can only do what comes naturally to them and what they are trained to do. Man is special in the sight of God, so reasoning is good.

Human reasoning can also be bad, because too often people try to reason out shortcomings in their lives when they know they are doing something they should not do. For example, trying to reason, "This is not so bad." A good example of this occurred when I first got saved. I did not grow up under the message of Truth. I was nineteen years old before I had ever heard the word *saved*, and I had no idea what it meant. The first time I went to the Church of God, the pastor's wife asked me if I were saved. I said, "Well, I guess so. I was baptized in the Church of Christ, so I suppose I am"; yet I was not saved. It did not take hearing many messages after that for me to understand what being saved really meant.

When my wife and I first got married, we had a television. By that time, I had been saved for a while and knew that having a television was not conducive to Christian living. However, since I had not been raised in the church, over the years, I had developed a habit of watching it. Although the Lord convicted me of that habit after I got saved, I would say, "Well, I am not going to watch anything but the news." I thought, "How bad can the news be? There is no swearing or anything ungodly on the evening news." Nevertheless, it was not long until I was watching the news and the program after the news, and next I was watching the program before the news, and so on. Do you see how it can gradually ensnare you? This happened because I reasoned in my mind that just watching the news was not so bad. Finally, I came to myself and said, "I have to get rid of it." That was the only way that I could have victory. Do you see how the mind can reason things out? That is only one example.

No doubt, every child of God could think of an instance where he

or she tried to reason things out. However, when one does that and then gets down to pray, that thing will be right there. For example, you may say, "Lord, I am coming to You in prayer. I want to look to You for strength for the day." However, in the back of your mind is the thought, "Yes, but I have a television." So you say, "Well, Lord, You know all about that. Anyway, I need You for today." Again, the thought comes, "Yes, but you have a television." That will block your prayers until finally you will want to get rid of it. However, it will not be long before you reason in your mind, "Well, I won't watch it as much." Child of God, you cannot have complete victory in your life as long as you reason things out and make excuses for your shortcomings.

Trying to Justify Wrongdoing

Today the world is full of people who make excuses for their wrongdoings. Gone are the days of guilt and innocence. Now people have to find out why a wrong was done: they dissect it and analyze it, and then figure out what to do about it. Our court systems have made a mockery of justice. When someone commits a crime and comes before the court, the defense attorney tells how the defendant grew up and describes his family life. Why? Because psychologists say those things factor into why a person acts as he does. A case that really stands out in my mind happened a few years ago when two brothers shot their parents, took all their money, and went to the Caribbean. When the law officers found them, they were having a good time spending the money. However, when the boys were brought back to America and tried for their crime, the only thing I read in the newspapers or heard on the news was how bad those boys were brought up—how they were verbally and physically abused. It seemed that the media was trying to justify what those boys had done.

Often when a murder is committed, some people say, "Well,

maybe if I had been in that person's place, I would have done the same thing." Although people may try to justify a wrong that someone has done, the fact is, the penalty has to be paid. God does not look into your background to see why you have done what you have done. With God you are either innocent or guilty. He does not take into consideration how you were raised or where you lived. Sometimes people say, "Well, you wouldn't be a Christian if you worked where I work." I always answer, "Well, if I couldn't be a Christian and work where you work, I would find another job." Being a Christian is much more important than making a dollar or two more an hour at a certain place. You may say, "Well, if you were raised in the neighborhood or in the home where I was raised, there would be no way that you could be a Christian." Friend, it might be difficult, but God's grace is sufficient. God says, "Have you done what I told you to do?" You either obey or disobey; that is what God looks at.

Sometimes people make excuses for not doing what is right. That kind of spirit can creep into the Church of God and affect the saints. We need to be very careful to take heed when God says, "I know you have been doing this. You might have hidden it from the pastor and everyone else, but I see all things. I look down into your heart, and I know your thoughts." When God says that to you, you need to realize that He is being faithful to your soul. God is saying, "Listen, child of God, you are going down the wrong road; you need to turn around."

Often when there is construction on the highway, the workers put up big warning signs to tell you that a road is closed and that you must take an alternate route. If you keep going the same direction, you will see another warning sign telling you the same thing. If you continue going down that road, there will be a fence across the road and a sign that says, "Road Closed." The fence and the signs are placed there because if you

were to go any farther, you would be in danger.

God does the same thing for His children. Getting off track is not hard. If you start going down the wrong road, God will throw up a warning flag, so to speak. He will say, "Child of God, you have started down the wrong road. You need to turn around and come back." However, sometimes people become stubborn and keep going. Then God will throw up another warning sign, saying, "This road will lead you to hell. You need to turn around and go back." Too often people just keep going until they come to the point where God says, "This is it! If you go any further, you will reach the point of no return." Even then, some people continue in the wrong direction.

One songwriter penned the words, "There's a line that is drawn by rejecting the Lord." A few years ago God gave me a real vision of what those words mean. Too many people do not realize there is a line that is drawn. They think there will always be another opportunity, another time when they can get saved and make their wrongs right. However, the Bible clearly lets you know that there is a line drawn by rejecting the Lord. You can sear your conscience, making it so hard that the Spirit of God cannot penetrate it; then you will be in trouble with God.

Failing to Destroy What God said to Utterly Destroy

Let us look at the story of a man who had been chosen of God. We want to consider what his life came to when he disobeyed God and made excuses for having done so. We read in 1 Samuel 15:1-3: "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and

smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

God, through the Prophet Samuel, in essence, told King Saul, "When the people of Israel were coming up out of the land of Egypt, Amalek was against them. I didn't do anything at the time, but I have kept that in remembrance. Now, because of what they did to the children of God, you are to utterly destroy them." This is a good lesson, teaching the children of God not to take matters into their own hands but to let God work them out. People are against the children of God on every side. If you live a godly life, people are going to be against you. If no one is against you, you should check the way you are living, because God wants people who shine as lights to a lost and dying world. If you are not a light to the people you are around, then God cannot use you.

When people are against you, do not try to take things into your own hands. Do not try to get revenge on people who wrong you. The Bible says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). This story in 1 Samuel, Chapter 15, is a good example of someone taking matters into his own hands. God told Saul to smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they had. He told them to kill every man, woman; and child and every animal. When God tells you to do something, unless you do it God's way, you will displease Him.

Verses 4-9 read: "And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of

Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."

The Prophet Samuel went to Saul and said that God wanted him to destroy everything. When the people of God got there, they started doing what God had told them to do; however, when they saw the sheep and the oxen, they thought, "Why don't we keep them? What is the point of killing them? They are just animals. Let's take them back and mix them with our animals to make our animals strong. We can even sacrifice some to the Lord." The Bible says they kept not only some animals but also King Agag.

Blaming Others for One's Disobedience

First Samuel 15:10-13 states: "Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. [This is a good example of a true man of God. He did not hear from someone else that Saul had not done what he was supposed to do, but the word of the Lord came directly to the Prophet. Then the Prophet was grieved and cried to the Lord all night. Samuel did not just say, 'Well, okay, Lord,' and go on. It grieved him, and he cried and lamented over the situation.] And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about,

and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

Being a man of God, Samuel knew that Saul did not do as he was told. In verse 14 Samuel asked Saul, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Samuel was very observant. When he came walking through the countryside, he heard the sheep bleating. You may ask, "What does that have to do with anything?" The sheep were bleating because they knew they were in an unfamiliar place.

Verses 15-21 tell us: "And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. [First, Saul said, 'I have done all that the Lord commanded me to do.' So Samuel confronted him by saying, in essence, 'Then why are those sheep bleating and why are those oxen lowing?' Saul said, 'The people brought them back so we could offer them up to the Lord. Wasn't that a great thing to do?'] Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.

"And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? [In other words, Samuel was saying, 'When you were little in your own sight, God was able to use you. But when God made you the king over the people of Israel, you let that go to your head and become your ruination. You thought you were greater than the God who placed you in that position.] And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly

upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal."

In essence, Saul said, "I would have obeyed, but the people wanted to take of the spoil." Earlier Saul said they had brought back the animals to sacrifice to the Lord. Then, in verse 21 he said, "But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things." When the Israelites went through the tents and saw the gold, the silver, and the expensive garments that the Amalekites had, they took them. So, Saul said, in so many words, "I have obeyed what the Lord told me to do. The people disobeyed the Lord. What could I do against all the people?"

Failing to Come Clean of Wrongdoing

In verse 22 Samuel said, "Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Samuel was saying, "You can bring all the animals and sacrifice them unto the Lord, but that does not mean one thing if you have disobeyed. To obey is better than sacrifice." Today many people think they are okay if they pay their tithes. They use their tithes as Saul was using sacrifices. In the Bible we can read the account of two men who went to the temple to pray. One man said, "I give my tithe and do everything I am supposed to do." He used that as a sacrifice to the Lord. Some people are like that today, yet down inside they are not living as they know they should live. They are not obeying the Word of the Lord. They are allowing things in their lives that God once convicted

them of.

The Prophet Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice." If the people had obeyed God's Word, the Lord would have been pleased with them. However, because they did what they wanted to do and then used the excuse of sacrifice, God was displeased with them. Verse 23 says, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, [At one time God had sent prophets out with instructions to kill every person involved with witchcraft. God was comparing rebellion to the sin of witchcraft. That has not changed today. God still feels the same way about rebellious people who will not hearken to His voice. Some people think they can get by doing what they want to do and reasoning it out and making excuses for things in their lives.] and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Verses 24-26 read: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." When Samuel came to Saul and said, "What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" God was giving Saul space to repent. In the Book of Revelation, speaking of the harlot Jezebel, God said, "I gave her space to repent, and she repented not." God is faithful to everyone, giving them space to repent.

The rule of the Bible is that we sin not. As you read God's Word, you will find that the theme of the Bible is for people to live above sin, to live holy lives. Though the rule is that we sin not, God knows that it is possible for the Christian to fall and commit sin. Therefore, God gives people

space to repent. We read in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if [Babylon likes to use the word *when*, but the Bible says *if*] any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." If you should commit sin, you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. God will give you space to repent of sin. You can come to Him, ask forgiveness, and He will wash the record clean.

When God gave Saul a space to repent, he would not come clean. He said, "I have done all that the Lord has commanded me to do." Samuel gave Saul another opportunity to repent, but again Saul said, "I have done everything that I was supposed to do, but the people . . ." Finally, the Prophet had to pronounce judgment. Only then did Saul say, "I have sinned," but it was too late. He had passed up his space of repentance. The Prophet said, "The Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." God rejected Saul because he was too stubborn and too rebellious to come clean of his wrongdoings. He made excuses for the things he had done and blamed the people.

The first excuse recorded in history was given in the Book of Genesis. When God questioned Adam about eating the fruit of the tree, the first thing Adam said was, "The woman that You gave me, she made me eat it." Then God went to the woman, and she said, "The serpent made me do it." Then, when God questioned the serpent, of course there was no one else to blame. Man has been making excuses ever since.

Failing to Be Where You Ought to Be

Let us look at another example in 2 Samuel 11:1-3: "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon,

and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, [There are two problems with the beginning of this story. One, David was supposed to be in the battle; he was not where he was supposed to be. Second, he spent all day in bed. He did not get up until the evening. There are many places in the Bible where it mentions rising early. When people do not go where they are supposed to go and are lazy, it does nothing but get them into trouble.] and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

"And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" David sent for her, and she ended up getting pregnant; then David was in a jam. Uriah had been out on the battlefield, and back home, his wife got pregnant. Someone was going to have to answer for that. It was not something she could conceal for too long.

Verse 6 reads, "And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite." David was thinking, "I will get Uriah back here to smooth this thing over so that no one has to know." He sent for Uriah, but David was not counting on Uriah being a man of outstanding character. When Uriah came back from the heat of the battle, David said, "Uriah, you have been a good soldier. Stay here for a couple of days; go to your house and relax. Get a little rest, and then you can go back to the battle." Uriah left the palace, but he did not go home. He slept at the palace doorstep. When David heard of it, he brought Uriah in and said, "What is the problem? Go on home," but Uriah said, in essence, "How can I go home and eat and partake of my wife's company while my fellow soldiers are in the battle? That would not be right."

David had another plan. He got Uriah to partake of some strong

drink. He thought he could get him drunk, and then surely he would go and stay with his wife. Again, Uriah would not go to his own house. When David saw that Uriah was not going to cooperate with his plans, he sent a letter to Joab, by the hand of Uriah, which read, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, then withdraw from him so that he will be smitten and die." Joab did as he was instructed, and Uriah was killed. The children of Israel lost many other men so that Uriah would be killed.

After David heard that Uriah was dead, he sent for Bathsheba, married her, and they had a baby. However, the Bible says, "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD" (verse 27). You can see why when you look at all that David had done. He committed adultery, he lied, and then he committed murder to try to cover up the lie and the adultery.

Acknowledging Your Transgression

Second Samuel 12:1-7a states: "And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

"And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die [David was ready to kill that man for taking another man's ewe lamb]; And he shall restore the lamb

fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man." As I read this, I thought of how we need more Church of God preachers like that in this world today, men of God are not afraid to say, "Thou art the man." Too many preachers want to make sure that they do not offend anyone. The devil will try to get a man of God to back off the message a little. Sometimes when God has laid a message on my heart to preach, the devil has said, "Just back off a little. You don't want anyone to become angry and think ill of you." Thankfully, when the time came, the Lord gave me the grace and the strength to preach what He told me to preach. Sad to say, some preachers will not do that.

Verses 7-8 tell us: "And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things." God had given David so much, and had that been too little, God would have given him more. David was called the apple of God's eye in one place in the Bible. God would have done anything for David, yet David took another man's wife and committed murder.

When Nathan said, "Thou art the man," David said in verse 13, "I have sinned against the LORD." David did not make excuses. When the Prophet Samuel confronted him with his wrongdoing, he acknowledged it. That is what God is looking for in people today. He is looking for those who, when faced with the mirror of His Word, will own their condition and say, "I have sinned." Many people do not like to use those words. When they go to an altar of prayer, they try to use every word but the word sin. They say, "Lord, forgive me for what I have done. Forgive me for my wrong, my

mistake, my shortcoming, my fault." They try so hard to get out of saying, "Lord, forgive me for my sin." However, that is what God wants to hear.

All Things Are Now Ready

Another example of making excuses is found in Luke 14:15-24: "And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.

"And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

When it comes to the things of God, there is a danger in making excuses. The latter part of verse 24

says that none of those men whom he had bidden would taste of his supper. Friend, do not fall into that place. You need to do as David did when confronted with wrongs that you have done. Do not make excuses, but simply say, "Forgive me, Lord, for I have sinned." Sinner friend, making excuses for why you have not given your life to Jesus Christ is easy.

Young person, you may be thinking, "I will get saved after I graduate from high school, when I can get away from the influence of my classmates" or "After I have graduated from college, I can really devote all my time to the things of God; that is when I will get saved." The Bible lets you know that now is the time; today is the day. Do not make excuses. You never know when you are going to leave this world. Child of God, perhaps God has shown you something in your life that you need to take care of. If so, do not make excuses for it and try to reason it out. Just say, "Lord, you see what I have done. Forgive me for it."

Friend, God has seen fit to give you another day of life. You ought to thank Him for giving you another opportunity to get your life straightened out, to get right with Him. This could be your last opportunity to get right with God. In closing, do not make excuses for the wrongs in your life. When you make excuses, it will not be long before the Spirit of God will just quit talking to you. You may still go to the church services regularly and have a form of godliness and yet not be what you know you ought to be. My friend, if you have a need, I pray that you will take care of it today.

(Cassette C-4363M)

No man ever regretted
CHRISTIANITY
on his deathbed.

[Guest Editorial-continued from page 2]
prior thought.) To establish the timeframe for our text, you must survey the context. Ezekiel 37:24 says, "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd."

God, through the Prophet, said, "David my servant shall be king over them." Who is this David? It could not have been the literal David, because at that juncture in history, he had already been dead for approximately 428 years. David died in approximately B.C. 1015, and this text was penned in B.C. 587. That is a difference of 428 years, so this is not a Scripture to be taken literally.

The name David in the Hebrew means "beloved." Who is the fulfillment of this Scripture that says, "David my servant shall be king over them"? On the Mount of Transfiguration, we find that a voice spoke out of Heaven. The latter portion of Matthew 17:5 states, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." God said, "This is my beloved;" or He could have just as well said, "This is my David," because the name David means "beloved." When, in the prophetic text, he said, "David my servant shall be king over them," He could have just as well said, "Beloved my servant shall be king over them." This prophetic reference is to Jesus Christ.

Every Bible student knows that Jesus said in Revelation 22:16, "I am the root and the offspring of David." This David spoken of prophetically is an allusion to Jesus Christ. Therefore, it places the time setting of this prophecy, not in the Prophet's day, but in this New Testament period. Establishing the timeframe is very vital to eliminate confusion when we study Gog and Magog, who they are, and what actually occurred.

To further ascertain that this timeframe is referring to our day, Ezekiel 37:24 says, "And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd." Who is that "one shepherd" referencing? In John 10:14 Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." He stated in verse 16, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall

be one fold, and one shepherd." Who is the one shepherd? In verse 14 Jesus said, "I am."

Who is the one shepherd of which the prophecy is speaking? Who is the David that shall be king? Who is the beloved one that shall be king and be the one shepherd over the people of God? The answer to each of these questions is Jesus Christ. The prophecy is not of some past age, but it points toward the New Testament period.

Another Scripture that identifies the prophetic timeframe which houses our text is Ezekiel 37:27, which says, "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Where else do we hear such language? In 2 Corinthians 6:16 Paul penned, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Notice that he quoted Ezekiel 37:27. This is a clear indication that the Prophet was speaking of our day.

Ezekiel 38:14 reads, "Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?" Verse 16 says, "And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days." The Greek English Septuagint reads, "in the last days."

Biblically speaking, what are the last days? Hebrews 1:1-2 declares: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets [speaking of the Old Testament era], Hath in these [present tense] last days spoken unto us by his Son." The Apostle penned this epistle in approximately A.D. 63 to A.D. 69, which makes it a present-tense reality. He said in verse 2, "Hath [present tense] in these last days spoken unto us [in a plural and present reality] . . ." Notice that the writer incorporated himself in these prophetic last days.

Going back further than A.D. 63, in Acts 2:16-17, we read: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days . . ." This takes

us back to the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 33. Biblically speaking, this tells us that the last days commenced with the Day of Pentecost. Now that you understand that, we can lay much confusion to rest. Many false teachers and misunderstanding people take prophetic Scriptures and say, "Oh, you know what the Bible says it will be like in the last days." Well, the last days commenced in A.D. 33. We have been in the final dispensation of time since then. I trust that you can see the timeframe for our prophetic text is the New Testament dispensation.

Understanding that this entire prophecy has its timeframe in the New Testament is important. One scholar said this: "Some, forgetting that this is a figure, have searched history to find some campaign in the land of Israel, some overthrow of invaders to fix this prophecy, but it has not been found." The temple that Ezekiel described in his prophetic writings has never had a literal fulfillment. No literal temple has ever matched Ezekiel's description because he was describing the church. He was looking forward prophetically, down through the telescope of time, seeing a new day and seeing realities that we enjoy in the New Testament era of time. Some claim that Gog was the Lydian King Gyges, others have said he was Cambyses, and yet others have stated that he was Antiochus Epiphanes, and so on. Again, you need to understand the truth of this text. To do that, we must firmly establish the timeframe.

The second rule that we must establish is the nature of the prophetic language in our text. Again, Ezekiel 37:1 says, "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD [if you are going to see the Truth, it must come through the avenue of the Spirit] and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones." Verse 11 says, "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel." What is the lesson? He was speaking figuratively, or symbolically. I repeat, this could not have been literally the whole house of Israel or he would not have had anyone to talk to. Ezekiel was speaking in a spiritual sense and revealing truth by employing figures, or symbols.

Let us look closely at Ezekiel, Chapter 39. I want you to see that the language is figurative. Verse 11 says, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this Gospel Day], that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude." We are talking about the nature of this text. It says "there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude."

Verse 18 says, "Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood." How could one bury Gog and all his multitude and drink the blood and eat the flesh? This reiterates the truth that literalism is beyond the scope of this text. They both could not be literal, for they could not bury the bodies and yet eat the bodies; therefore, the nature of this text is figurative; he was employing imagery.

Now that we have established the timeframe and nature of the language, let us see who Gog is. Ezekiel 38:2 says, "Son of man, set thy face against Gog." This tells us several things. First, it tells us that God was against whoever Gog was. God considered him an enemy to the people of God and the cause of God. As with most Hebrew names, the name Gog had spiritual significance; that is the reason God employed it. The name Gog in our text comes from the Hebrew word spelled *Gowg*. The word *Gowg* appears eleven times in the Bible: ten in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament, in Revelation, Chapter 20. Nine of the ten times that it appears in the Old Testament, it appears in Ezekiel, Chapters 38 and 39.

The word *Gog* literally means "roof, covering, or a mountain." We can positively identify who Gog is. Remember that definition, because it will take on more meaning as we study. Let us go to Revelation, Chapter 20, to identify Gog. Verses 7-8 read: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." The Revelation is the only place in the New Testament

where Gog and Magog are identified by that title. This verse lets us know that they are instruments of the devil and that their primary work was religious. Verse 8 says they went out to deceive. Again, verse 7 reads, "And when the thousand years [that was the Dark Ages, from A. D. 530 to A.D. 1530] are expired, Satan . . ." The word in this text is referring to the dragon. Verse 2 says, "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan [or the Greek words are *accuser* and *adversary*, not the devil personified]." The word *devil* in the Greek in verse 2 is "accuser," and the word *Satan* in verses 2 and 7 is the word "adversary." This was not the devil personified, but a system that he was using, which was pagan Rome.

Verse 8 says, "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea." We can see that this was a massive move by the phrase "as the sand of the sea." Notice that it establishes some truths and gives us some phrases to understand.

Verse 9 talks about the "breadth of the earth." Verse 8 talks about gathering them together to battle. Now let us go to Revelation, Chapter 16, to see that similar phrases are employed. Verses 12-14 state: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Here we can see similar phrases. Revelation 20:9 talks about "breadth of the earth," Revelation 16:14 talks about "the whole world." Revelation 20:8 states clearly "to gather them to the battle," and Revelation 16:14 says "to gather them to the battle." Here the same efforts are being accomplished, which lets us know that the characters who are accomplishing them are the same.

In Revelation 16:13 he calls them the dragon (paganism), the beast (papalism), and the false prophet (Protestantism). Then he stated in verse 14 that "they go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world to gather them to the battle." Revelation 20:8 says that they have gone forth "to the four corners of the earth." It tells us explicitly that they went forth "to gather them to the battle" in verse 8.

Again, we can see the effort is the same, and the characters accomplishing the effort are the same. Revelation, Chapter 20, calls them Satan, Gog, and Magog; yet they are the same characters as depicted in Revelation, Chapter 16, and referred to as the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The effort is the same (they are working to gather together to the battle), so it is no mystery that the cast of characters is the same. It is just simply speaking in another term to denote a different attribute of truth.

I want you to notice that both chapters begin with the dragon. Revelation 16:13 says, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism]." Revelation 20:7 tells us, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan [verse 2 says the dragon]." Both texts begin the same, and both texts are followed by two other devilish forces.

In Revelation 16:13 he said "the beast and the false prophet," but in Revelation 20:8 he said "Gog and Magog." Nevertheless, they are the same forces. Gog is the beast of Revelation 16:13, or the system known as papalism. Bear in mind that we are speaking of religious systems, not individuals. God loves every individual and is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). These systems are out to deceive and accomplish a spiritually damning work.

Does anything else put forth this truth? Certainly so. We must remember that Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is pure." God has divine design and Truth incorporated in every Word that He has chosen to be placed in the sacred Scriptures.

Now, remember, the Hebrew word *Gowg* means "roof, covering, or mountain." How can we connect that with papalism? Revelation 8:8 speaks

of the second angel (that period of time from A.D. 270 to A.D. 530), which says, "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain [Gowg means mountain] burning with fire was cast into the sea." Of what is this a spiritual picture? It portrays apostasy. Hebrews 12:22-23 tells you that the mountain represents the church. Being on fire was a picture of the Holy Spirit, how they were anointed and on fire with the Spirit of God; then something happened. She fell out of her elevated, lofty position. As a mountain, it was cast into the sea. Everyone knows what happens when fire goes into the sea: the fire is extinguished. This is a picture of apostasy. This mountain went into the sea, and out of this same sea came a beast, or a religious organization.

In Revelation 13:1 John said, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns." These are portraits in symbolic expressions of the religious system known as Roman Catholicism. The seven heads are the seven heads of government that Rome had, and the ten horns were the ten minor kingdoms that comprised the Roman Empire. This mountain that was cast into the sea portrayed nothing more than falling out of the hands of God and into the hands of man.

Revelation 17:15 tells you the "sea," or the "waters," represents people. This system in the morning time fell out of divine control and an exalted position as a mountain; it went down to the level of falling into the hands of men. The fire was extinguished, and out of the minds of those same men rose a system of religion that was beastly, carnal, and without any divinity. This system that was identified, according to Revelation 13:18, by a man who bears an inscription: six hundred threescore and six. Who is that? On the triple crown of the Pope of Rome, on the miter, is inscribed in Latin the words "Vicarius Filiidei," meaning Vicar of the Son of God. The numeric expression, with V = 5, I = 1, and so forth, when totaled, equates to the six hundred three score and six, or 666. So, this apostate mountain is a picture of Roman Catholicism. It was a system that came up out of

apostasy. It was this papal beast, or Gog, (Gog means mountain) that was no longer under divine control, but under human control. That fallen mountain serves as a roof, a shelter, or a covering for every type of ungodly spirit.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." This happened in the morning time when this mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea. Look at what he prophesied would happen. Verse 2 says, "Speaking lies . . ." Roman Catholicism teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary, meaning that she remained perpetually a virgin, even though she had other children after Jesus Christ. Also, they teach the bodily ascension of Mary, that she bodily ascended into Heaven. The Bible teaches us that all the bodies are in the graves until the day of the resurrection. They teach that she is a mediatrix. Contrariwise, the Bible says there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

What else do they teach? Verse 3 says, "Forbidding to marry . . ." Roman Catholicism teaches celibacy, which is contradictory to the Word of God. God said, "It is not good for a man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18), yet they say it is. Verse 3 continues, ". . . and commanding to abstain from meats." For years on Friday they were not permitted to eat meat, yet they could eat fish. John 21:5 tells us that Jesus, after He was resurrected, said, "Children, have ye any meat?" Then, in verse 6, He said, "Cast the net on the right side." After the catch, He sat down and ate fish. I suppose Jesus did not know that fish was not meat.

I want you to understand what happened and how that system has become a covering. Paul went on to say in verse 8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little." Roman Catholicism is full of bodily exercise, full of genuflecting, full of flagellation, and full of other things that work on the body but have no spiritual merit at all. When they follow those religious practices, that supposedly covers all their sins, all their wrongdoing, and places them in proper standing.

However, that is not true; that is speaking a lie.

Let us consider the truths that the meaning of the word *Gog* provide us. You will recall that *Gog* means "roof, covering, or mountain." We have already shown you that the mountain portrays the apostasy that produced the system of Roman Catholicism. Now, stop and think. It also provides a covering. There is only one acceptable covering for sin, and that is the blood of Jesus Christ. However, this system of religion concocted and provided their own coverings. How? They have auricular confession, or confessional booths, and they have their acts of penance, supposedly to pay for their sins.

They have devised purgatory for when they go into eternity, to supposedly purge them. That system has made merchandise of men's souls by requiring fees to perform the services, which they say are necessary to allow one to leave purgatory. This system allows men to cover their sinful lives and deeds with religious performances rather than divine reality. Because the true church exposes this, they are at odds with her and consider her to be an enemy. Gog portrays an enemy and an opposing force to the Church of God in this evening time. It is the religious system of papalism, or Roman Catholicism. I trust that you can see it. We are not speaking of individuals, but of systems contrary to the sound teachings of God's eternal Word.

The prophecy had its setting in the New Testament, not in the Old Testament. Its nature was figurative, not literal. Its reality is found in the New Testament realities. Satan, Gog and Magog of Revelation, Chapter 20, are exactly comparable to the dragon, the beast, and the image of Revelation, Chapter 16. In the next part of this series, we will study into the depths of Magog, and then we will see the fate and what occurs. I trust that you can see in this lesson the reality of the identity of Gog.

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