

"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, to 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; 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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Vol. 32 January 2002 No. 1

# Guest Editorial

## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE

### A Time Line to the Establishment of the Kingdom

#### Part 2 of 3

*Daniel 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.*

*32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,*

*33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.*

*34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.*

*35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.*

*44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

In the last issue we were introduced to this prophetic passage where Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and saw a metallic image. This image was a vehicle to transport us from the day of the Prophet to the time of the establishment of the Kingdom of God. In this issue we want to examine this image. It was composed of at least four different metallic substances: gold, silver, brass, and iron. They are in sequence in the prophecy. Daniel 2:32 tells us that the image's head

was of fine gold. Verse 37 states, "Thou, O king [addressing Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon], art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thus a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." This head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar, however, it was not referring to him personally, but to that which God had given him. These four metallic substances represented four kingdoms, or world empires. The first was the Babylonian empire. Was Babylon a world empire? Daniel 5:18-19 reads: "O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him. . . ." When this prophecy said in Daniel 2:38, "And wheresoever the children of men dwell . . . hath he given into thine hand," that prophecy was true. He ruled a vast, worldwide empire.

Why was the empire called a head of gold in Daniel 2:38? Isaiah 14:4 reads, "That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!" Babylon was known as the city of gold, or the golden city. It was a golden kingdom in a golden age. Babylon and its metropolis lay in a garden of the east, and the city lay in a perfect square. It was a cube, fifteen miles on each side, surrounded by a wall that was three hundred fifty feet high and eighty-seven feet thick. Inside this outer wall was an inner wall, and it had one hundred fifty solid brass gates. Its hanging gardens were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The city was surrounded by a moat and stocked to withstand a ten-year siege.

Nebuchadnezzar built a great temple with many decorations of pure gold. Inside the temple stood a  
*[continued on page 25]*



# The Backslider

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **Who Is a Backslider?**

The man who turns away from God will reap the fruit of his own evil doings. A man who has tasted of the good things of God and then tries to seek enjoyment, fulfillment, and satisfaction outside of God's presence is as a man who chases the wind. Why did the Proverb writer say "backslider in heart"? That is where salvation starts, and that is also where backsliding starts. There are great dangers when one backslides, and the enemy of souls will blind a person to those things that are going to take place. One danger in backsliding that ought to put fear in your soul is that you may never get back to God. In that condition, God could call your hand and say, "That's enough; you have been here long enough. It's time for you to come to the Judgment."

If you should backslide, you may never get back to God. Also, backsliding weakens your faith. You will have a very difficult time believing God if you habitually backslide. Also, it will destroy your influence and put you in greater bondage than before you were first saved. I know that firsthand in my own life. When I first came to God, I did not truly sell out to Him. I got away from the Lord and said to myself, "There are certain things that I will never do again." However, one does not know what he will do when the devil takes control. Not only did I do those certain things again, but I went into them deeper than I did the first time. There is great bondage in backsliding.

Backsliding leaves you wide open for deception. The devil can sell you on anything, and then he will give you excuses for the condi-

tion that you are in. He will put thoughts in your mind such as, "If it wasn't for that preacher and the congregation . . ." or "There is no love in that congregation. They don't treat me right, and they don't take an interest in others." Backsliding destroys your confidence in God and also the people's confidence in you. It hinders souls from being saved. Also, it destroys faith that the world has in true Christians. Though people in the world fight Christianity, many of them know what true Christians should be.

A backslider is not an individual who becomes weak and falls, but then sees his need and repents and gets back up. A backslider is an individual who once had a real experience with the Lord, but since has broken his covenant with Him. He once fought side by side with his brothers and sisters in Christ

against the world, the devil, and the flesh; then he changed armies and joined those who oppose Truth. Some who backslide want to be numbered with the congregation of the saints. He is not one who is overcome by the power of temptation in a time of weakness. A backslider is one who feasts, but not at the Lord's table; he feasts on iniquity. He is a lover of sin, but at one time he was a lover of God. Backsliding is dangerous.

### **True Repentance**

What does the Scripture mean when it says, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways"? It simply means that his soul will be engulfed and overwhelmed with foolishness, sin, disappointment, and death. I believe that most backsliding would cease if people would truly repent and get sin out of their hearts. There is too much light, chaffy repentance. It is not prompted by godly sorrow; it is prompted by worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow is the only sorrow that leads to repentance not to be repented of. When one has godly sorrow, he is sorry that he ever sinned against God. One who has godly sorrow is sick of sin and does not want to think of ever hurting God again. Worldly sorrow is sorrow that the world has. It consists of phony half-hearted forgiveness and phony apologies, because people know that is acceptable in society. On the other hand, godly sorrow will cause you to get down on your face before God in true repentance.

Second Chronicles 25:2, speaking about Amaziah, reads: "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart." Some people go to an altar and do what is right for a while, but not with a perfect heart. What shows up imperfections? The trials. Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart. He had some things in his heart that ought not to have been there. He did not truly die out

to self and serve God, and he ended up in idolatry. Why did he turn to idolatry? There was still idolatry in his heart. It caused him to flee Jerusalem and go into another city, and there he was killed.

When people do not truly repent of all their sins and try to hold on to their own desires, their own will, and their own secret sins, it will not be long until they become filled with their own ways. No one gets by with wrong, no matter how much that person tries to cover his sin and thinks God has forgotten. God has not forgotten. If it happened ten years ago, it is still fresh in His mind today. God does not have memory lapses and forget things.

If you have not repented of the things that you have done against God, even though you did those things twenty years ago, in God's eyes it is just as if you did those things today. You cannot bring God down to the level of man. You cannot bring God's thoughts down to your thoughts. God's thoughts are as high above your thoughts as the heavens are above the earth. You are not dealing with a man; you are dealing with God Almighty. A thousand years are as a day in God's eyes. He does not have to strain to remember. He is Omniscient and Omnipotent. He can remember what you have done no matter how long ago it has been, even if you have almost forgotten it. God has not forgotten. God looks at only one thing, and that is, is it under the blood? The sin is still there if it is not under the blood.

### **The Downward Steps of a Backslider**

Judges 16:18-21 reads: "And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep

upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes [the first thing to go on a backslider is his spiritual vision], and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."

This Scripture is an example of the downward steps of a backslider. Samson was a Nazarite, consecrated to the Lord even before his birth. He was to let his hair grow. Also, he was not to drink wine or strong drink, and he was not to touch a dead body. All of this was to show his consecration and devotion to God. If he violated any of those laws, he had to be purified so the vow could be completed.

During that particular time, Israel had disobeyed God and had been given over to the hands of the Philistines. The Scriptures let us know that Samson judged Israel for twenty years. Samson was a real thorn to the armies of the Philistines. When the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, he had tremendous physical strength, beyond what any man has ever had. He could whip armies singlehandedly. He had super power that came from Almighty God.

If you study Samson's life, you will find that he was very careless with his vow of consecration. It is a wonder that God did not bring judgment upon him many times before, but God is long-suffering and patient. Samson is portrayed in the Scriptures as one who was headstrong and had little or no control. He did whatever he wanted to do. We can read that he touched a dead body in Judges 14:8-9: "And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the

lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion." He secretly disobeyed.

Samson was immoral with a harlot. Judges 16:1 tells us, "Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her." Whatever he saw and wanted, he took. He exercised no restraint, and he had no righteous convictions. Samson became immoral and was accustomed to having his own way. You cannot read anywhere that he thought about his immorality and felt bad about it; he just did it. Delilah was Samson's downfall. His relationship with Philistine women brought on most of his major battles with the Philistines. He would not leave them alone. It did not make any difference to Samson about his vows of consecration.

Friend, perhaps you once knew God and had the power of God in your life. All you had to do was call on Him, and He was there to guide, comfort, direct, and help you. Then, just as with Samson, you broke your covenant with God. Dear one, God cannot lie. His part of the covenant is sealed, but there is another part of that covenant. To have a covenant is to have an agreement, and two parties have to be involved. That second party is where the trouble is. You cannot break your agreement with God and still have power with Him.

### **The Results of Careless Living**

We want to look at the end results of a man who had tremendous power with God. Judges 16:21 says, "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house." At least five things in this verse happened to

Samson. First, the Philistines took him. He was no longer walking around of his own free will. He had to do exactly what they said; constraints were put on him. The second thing his enemies did was to put out his eyes. Why? He might have seen what was going on and found a way to escape. How many people's spiritual eyes have been put out? The reason people can do the things they do today is that they have lost their spiritual sight. They can no longer see clearly, so all churches look the same to them.

What did his enemies do next? Third, they took him down to Gaza. Fourth, they bound him with fetters of brass. Fifth, they made him grind in the prison house. This is a perfect picture of what the devil wants to do to your soul if you disobey God's Word. The enemies of Israel had him—the ones he used to play havoc with, embarrass, make mockery of, and taunt.

Christian friend, without the Spirit of the Lord, you are no match for the enemy of your soul. Samson was careless about keeping his vow; he was careless with his obedience. (Samson had a weakness, and you have one too. The devil knows exactly where to tempt you.) The devil tempted Samson in only one area of his life: he tempted him with beautiful women. The devil did not tempt him with stealing or lying; he used women.

Samson did not take that weak area to God and receive strength. He tried to stand in his own strength. Without God's presence, even your strong areas will become weak. Without God's protection, you will become captive to things that are enmity against God. Your mind will become sinful and against the things of God. The Bible instructs you to "gird up the loins of your mind." The battle of Armageddon is not a literal battle; it is a spiritual conflict of right against wrong, Truth against error, holiness against sin. Romans 8:7 reads, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of

God, neither indeed can be."

Saint, if you are not careful, the world will swallow you up. James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." The world is waiting to take you in, and if you lose Jesus Christ, you have no defense against it. Without Jesus Christ, the weakest temptation becomes strong, and the world becomes your master. You will be as a puppet on a string, moving about as the world dictates.

The enemy got Samson, and they were smart enough to put out Samson's eyes so that he could not see a way of escape. That is what the enemy of souls has done to many people. When it comes to spiritual realities, they are totally blind. After the Philistines put out Samson's eyes, instead of his being in control of the situation, they were in control. Instead of Samson flexing his muscles, they flexed theirs. He was at their mercy, but the enemy shows no mercy. The devil will always get you into trouble, but he will never get you out of it. He does not care if you become shipwrecked spiritually or depressed. The only One who cares for your soul is Jesus Christ. There is mercy with the Lord.

### **Spiritual Blindness**

To be blind physically is terrible, but to be blind spiritually is a disaster. You still can go to Heaven and be blind physically. The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" It is shocking how quickly people change their position when they lose their spiritual eyesight. Some who walked in Truth for years understood the truth about "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT," but where are they today? They are in Babylon. I am going to make this plain: there is only one church. Do

not charge God with causing confusion. The devil has worked such a destructive work that now there are thousands of false churches. Nevertheless, in God's Word there is only one. God does not want you to be confused.

The Apostle Paul did not write the Corinthian letters to the church of the Presbyterians or the Pentecostals (Pentecost is not a church; it was a day). He wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:2, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth," and in 2 Corinthians 1:1 he again wrote "unto the church of God which is at Corinth." What church did Paul persecute? He stated in 1 Corinthians 15:9, "I persecuted the church of God."

Some say, "Well, we all are a part of the Church of God." No, not if you are not basing it on the Bible foundation. Others say, "We are the Church of God, but we are called by something else." Well, what is wrong with taking God's name? You may say, "There is nothing in a name." Then why don't you drop your name? Your name identifies who you are. Likewise, the biblical name Church of God identifies God's church. I am not ashamed of her! Christ only purchased one church, the Church of the Living God. Acts 20:28 tells us, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves [he was talking to the elders at Ephesus], and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God . . . ." God only makes overseers over the Church of God. That is no narrower than the Bible. John the Baptist said in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John did not start any church. The church came into being after John the Baptist stepped off the stage of action.

Martin Luther was a reformer, not the name of a church. John Wesley did not start a church. If he were to go into a Methodist church today, they would not hear the same message that he preached. I have read some of his messages and biographies. He would skin them up one

side and down the other, so to speak. Most people today would not take the message he preached, yet they want to flaunt his name.

God does not have anything good to say about Babylon in His Word. If God could have healed her, she would have been healed. The only thing He has to say about Babylon is, "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4). God does not want you in a false church, sitting under the false teachings of millennialisms and "sin more-or-less every day" religion.

Some have changed their position and have taken another look at mystery Babylon. May God have mercy on their souls. Mystery Babylon has an appeal to people who lose their spiritual eyesight. It does not look so bad to them now. They say, "We don't have to be as particular as we used to be. So what if there is some false teaching there; that doesn't hurt anything. What difference does that make? What difference does it make if the women cut their hair or wear split skirts?" The Bible instructs us to wear modest apparel. Shorts, split skirts, and tank tops are not modest apparel.

Revelation 17:6 says when John saw "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT," he "wondered with great admiration," until the angel told him the truth and the mystery of her. Revelation 18:4 says, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people . . . ." Notice that when the voice from Heaven spoke, there was no confusion about what He said. That voice said, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. [And then he went on and said] Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double" (Revelation 18:4-6).

## **The Folly of Being Defeated by the Enemy**

The Philistines put out Samson's eyes. (Sad to say many have had their spiritual eyes put out.) The very thing that took Samson into sin was put out. The enemy knew that his strength might return, but they knew that strong arms and a strong back would be nearly useless when he could not see where he was. All they had to do was stay away from him. Samson once had tremendous strength in his arms, legs, and back; but without his eyes, he was led around by his enemies as they celebrated their victory over him. The Philistines offered a sacrifice to their god and had Samson brought in to make sport of him. He was a mockery.

Backsliding is serious, dear one. If you could see that, you would run to Christ. The Philistines took Samson down to Gaza in his weakness, to a place where he had shown his strength. They wanted to show the Philistine people, "This is the great Samson. He doesn't look like he did before, does he? We have finally gotten rid of this enemy who has killed so many of our people."

When a person backslides, he is a disappointment to those who saw his strength. Someone could have been watching that person for a long time. He might not have had any idea that someone was thinking about turning to God. Christian friend, what a disappointment it would be if you were to fail!

Jeremiah 18:11-17 reads: "Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such

things: the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing [look at backsliding in the eyes of God].

"Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken [people leave all those things that God made in purity]? Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up; To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head. [Why were they doing that? Because of disbelief, as if to say, 'Those people used to have fire in their bones and you could feel the Spirit of God, but look at them now. I am astonished!' And they wagged their heads. Then the Lord said] I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity." It is a dangerous thing to have God turn His back on you, especially in the day of destruction or calamity.

When Samson went to Gaza, there was always trouble, but after he told the secret of his strength and the Philistines took him into captivity, the people of Gaza saw him defeated by the enemy. Many Christians once had really strong testimonies, but then they fell. Some who had confidence in them lost hope in Christianity. Perhaps it was one of their neighbors, friends, relatives, or ones where they did business. This is so serious. They heard their strong testimonies, how God had saved them and turned their lives around, but then they saw them turn away from the righteous principles that they once stood for, they wagged their heads and saw them as ones without hope.

Speaking of Samson, the Scripture says that the enemy brought him down. That is always the trail of a backslider-down, down, down.

They bound him with fetters of brass, and he was at their mercy. Those arms and legs that once did a terrifying work against the enemy were bound, unable to strike fear in the enemy's camp. All the good qualities that Samson might have had were lying dormant in the enemy's camp, and he did the work of a slave, grinding in the prison house. Remember, Samson was a judge, a leader. This was a degrading position.

Many have backslidden and have gone back to being slaves to their own habits, and their conditions are worse. I will use myself as an example again. Before I got saved, I was bound with tobacco, alcohol, cards, and fighting. When I got away from the Lord, I drank more alcohol, smoked more cigarettes, got in many more fights, and was always playing cards. I went back to the same old things again, but that time I was in a worse condition. Once individuals have tasted of the things of God and then turned away, it takes much more to satisfy them. They search, knowing that there is no real satisfaction out in the world, yet they are stubborn enough to keep trying to bury their consciences, trying to soothe their souls.

Jesus said in John 8:34, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Some feel that they have to have cigarettes or they will die, but that is not what it reads on the outside of the cigarette package. The package warns that you have a greater chance of dying if you smoke than if you do not. I cannot get over people suing the tobacco companies because they have lung cancer.

### **Hope for the Backslider**

Many people's condition is much like Paul stated his condition was in Romans, Chapter 7, when he was not saved; he did not have New Testament salvation. He was writing of when he was a Pharisee under the Law. Romans 7:19 states,

"For the good that I would do I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." How would you like to listen to a preacher tell you that on Sunday morning? How would you like to hear him say, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (verse 20)? What hope would he have? And what hope could he give you if that were his present experience? If you want to read about Paul's New Testament experience, you need to read Romans, Chapter 8. In verse 1 he began, "There is therefore now no condemnation. . . ." Condemnation is sin.

The end results of a backslider paint a very unpleasant picture. However, instead of Samson going out and saying, "I will go out as I did before," he showed humility. He said, "O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes" (Judges 16:28). That is just what the Lord will do for those who are away from God but want to return to Him. If that is your condition and your desire, He is remembering you, and He will strengthen you. You can do a wonderful work for God if you will humble yourself in His sight. Dear one, if you are away from the Lord, this needs to be your prayer: "Lord, remember me, and strengthen me." When you pray that prayer in humility, the results that you will find will be greater than ever in your entire life.

Psalm 119:28 reads, "My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word." If you pray a prayer such as that from the heart, the Lord will remember you. One thing about Samson, in all his carrying on, he knew that he had disobeyed God, and he also knew that God had used him to avenge the Philistines; so he asked for strength to do that one more time. He said, "O Lord GOD, remember me," and God did.

Judges 16:29-30 reads: "And Samson took hold of the two middle

pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the

lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

Friend, if you have backslidden, you can still do a great work for God, if you will return to Him. You

can have a greater experience than you ever had before if you will just humble yourself and ask God to strengthen you.

*(Cassette C-4459E)*

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*True prayer is a way of life, not just in case of emergency.*

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## Everyday Prayers

What is prayer all about? Some people have a low opinion of prayer. A minister once said, "I don't think God needs to be persuaded, and He doesn't need to be informed. I'm not assuming God will do something more because I ask Him than He will do otherwise. I don't say, 'O God, I hope it will be sunny tomorrow.'"

However, the Word of God assures us that we may bring all our concerns to our Heavenly Father. Philippians 4:6 tells us, "Be careful [or anxious] for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

First Peter 5:7 says, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." We need to tell God about our cares in order to turn them over to Him.

There is concern about "conversation breakdown" between people in the home, in the schools, and in the church. However, do not let anyone tell you that we cannot talk to God. He is right there to listen to us any hour of the day or night. We do not have to get an appointment or wait in line. How could we "pray without ceasing" if we could not talk to our Heavenly Father any time?

Reporting her experience, one sister said of prayer, "It is a continuous conversation and sharing with my Lord, who laughs with me and cries with me."

Jesus told us to ask the Father for our needs (John 16:23). He told us that the Father is

interested in all the details of our lives, such as food and clothing. He knows all about us, even keeping count of the number of hairs on our heads. If prayer is talking to God, then we can, and should, consult Him about the details of our lives.

Faith Stewart, a longtime faith missionary, had many detailed answers to prayer. During the depression years, a shortage of clothing became acute among ministers working on the mission field. The workers met and prayed earnestly for God to meet this need. Sister Stewart and three other people drove a car upon a necessary journey. They came upon a large package in the middle of the highway. They inquired if anyone had lost it. The package was unmarked outside or inside. They advertised it, but no one claimed it. So, they opened it and found six good suits. The different sizes just fit the six needy brethren "as if they had been made to order," Sister Stewart said. How they praised God!

Yes, I would ask God to make it sunny tomorrow if fair weather was needed for a camp meeting or any outdoor project being held for God's glory. I would ask Him to answer according to His will, for He knows when someone else needs rain worse than we need sun. It is our privilege to bring all our cares to Him.

Selected

*Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

*22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

*23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from*

*me, ye that work iniquity.*

*24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

*25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

*26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man,*

*which built his house upon the sand:*

*27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

*28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:*

*29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*



# The Two Builders



## *Brother Ula Bland*

### **God's Provisions**

John said in 1 John 2:1-2: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin [he tells you not to sin, but then he tells you what to do if you should slip], we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." You do not have any excuse for not living for God. He has made provision for you. If you have sinned, He will forgive you if you truly repent, just as if you had never sinned. If you cover your sins, you are not going to prosper. However,

if you confess and forsake them, He promised to have mercy. John wrote in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We serve a mighty God!

John 13:35 says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." That is agape love. That is God's kind of love. The love of God is shed abroad in each of our hearts by the Holy Spirit when we get saved. That is the reason the Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue." In every circumstance, even if your brother turns against you and hates you, the Scripture

says, "Let brotherly love continue." When God says "Let," it will happen if you let it happen.

In studying the Word of God for this message, I could not get my mind off the Sermon on the Mount. It was one of the greatest messages that Jesus ever brought. Matthew, Chapters 5 through 7, is the Beatitude message. I believe there is enough in that message to save you and keep you saved. There are many warnings in it. Jesus told the people in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Paul said in Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall men arise,

speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

It would be a sad thing to go to church all your life, sing in the choir, preach in the pulpit, and think you are on your way to Heaven and then miss the mark. Jesus said in our Scripture text that many would come to Him in that day. There are going to be many, just as Jesus said, who will not make it. It does not take much to get off course when people do things to you. You may start to hold them for it, but that leads to hatred and bitterness. You cannot make it to Heaven with wrong attitudes. Just as strong as the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" is the command to love the brethren. Also, it is a commandment for a man to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The husband must love his wife.

### **The Law of Sowing and Reaping**

Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Christ gives us the strength and the grace to do it. Titus 2:11-12 states: "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." In spite of the manifestations of the devil, the blessed Church of God can move on as a mighty army. I thank God for that. No other power can hold it down, and no other power can stop it, because God is in her.

You can teach God's Word as one having authority because the Word of God is right. Jesus knew that He was right, and He knew He was God's Son. He did not teach as the scribes and the Pharisees, but He taught as one having authority. He had the authority to teach "Thus saith the Lord." Every minister that God calls has the same authority to preach the Word. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-3: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season. . . . For the time will come

[we are living in that time now], when they will not endure sound doctrine. . . ."

Many do not believe that they have to reap what they sow. They think God is always going to show mercy. However, Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Have you ever considered living for God throughout eternity? You will not have to suffer any more pain or strain or arthritis. People will not put you down or speak against you anymore. You will be before God all the time, holy unto God. Oh, that is worth living for! That is worth laying aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets. It is worth running the race with patience, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

The two builders in our Scripture text represent the whole world. We are either building on the Rock (Christ) or building on sinking sand. One songwriter wrote, "On Christ, the solid Rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand." Even this world will pass away, and all other ground is nothing but sinking sand. You might think you are having a good time living in sin, but you do not know what a good time is until you get Jesus.

Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Through Christ we can have a good life. We do not need drugs. When Jesus comes in, He takes care of everything. He and the devil cannot live in the same house. When Jesus comes in, you stop the sin business; furthermore, you will be delighted to stop sinning. You will not want to sin anymore. You will be able to sing, "The things I used to do, I don't do them anymore, because my mind is

made up and my feet are on the Rock." That Rock is Christ.

### **Building on a Solid Foundation**

In our Scripture lesson, the first builder built on the Rock. Although the second builder had good material, he built on the wrong foundation. All our hope has to be in Jesus. To truly be saved, you must put your trust in the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ and not in yourself. Do not put confidence in the flesh. The Bible tells us that we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is Christ in us that makes the Church of God special, because we have a special Savior.

If you are saved, you ought to act as if you are. Too many people who claim to be saved cannot tolerate anything; they become angry quickly. If you push them too far, they start cussing and swearing. Such people are not in the church. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Saved people act right, and God's people love one another. If you do not love the saints, then you do not have God. There is no need to profess if you do not love. Some people may be hard to love, but you must love them.

Jesus said to love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. When you look to opposition such as this and then look to yourself, you will say, "I am not going to do it." On the other hand when you look to God, you can say as Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." If God enables you to do it, you can do it, but it takes God. You must trust and depend on Him.

In verse 24 of our Scripture text, Jesus brought His sermon to a close. (When a man of God preaches the Word, he wants people to hear and listen, not so much to him, but to the Word of God.) He said, "Therefore . . ." The word therefore

means "because of that." He was referring to what He had taught previously in the chapter. Then he said "whosoever." That leaves room for you and me. Paul said in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The entire verse reads, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." Each of us is building on something, so you might as well build on the solid Rock, the Rock that will not roll. It will stand; it has stood through the ages. The devil does not have anything that can hurt this Rock.

The wise man built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended. Tests and trials are going to come against you. The Bible says that anyone who lives godly will suffer persecution. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:13-17: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The wise man built his house on the Rock. He did what God would have him to do. Verse 25 states, "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." If you wholly follow the Lord, you do not have to worry. Let people talk, and let the devil act up; he cannot do any more than God allows him to do. God will not put any more on you than you can bear.

## Being a Wise Builder

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God is faithful; in every test that you go through, He is watching over you. He knows all about your tests, and He knows about you. If the tests get hard to bear and you become weak, He can make you strong and enable you to endure it. God knows, and He cares. You can cast all your cares upon Him, because He cares for you.

If you have decisions to make, James 1:5 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." He will give you what you need. I thank God for Jesus Christ, the solid Rock. Jesus said, "Upon this rock [upon this truth that Peter declared] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

The wise builder had the right foundation. God has only one church and one foundation, which is Christ Jesus. He is the Rock that we have to build eternal hope on. The rain and all that came against it could not bring it down. The foolish man built his house on the sand. What is sand? Sand can be false doctrine or anything that is not Truth that you are building your hope on. Sand could be material things, those things that are too weak for you to stand on. Thank God, you can build your hope on Christ Jesus. This is what you have to do. You may talk about it, but God wants you to do it.

James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). We preachers have to practice what we preach. If you tell others, "You can make it through your tests and trials," then when they see you going through tests

and trials, they will be encouraged. As leaders, we have to watch ourselves on every hand. We are just under shepherds and must give an account to the Chief Shepherd. When the Chief Shepherd appears, He wants everything to be all right. If you are a minister of God, you have to be very careful, because people are following your life. If you lead them in the wrong direction, you must give an account to God for that. Each of us is going to give an account to God.

John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God did not send His Son for us to ignore Him, reject Him, and fail to live according to the Scriptures. He said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). Moses said whosoever will not hear this Prophet, speaking of Christ, would be cut off from among the people. You cannot get to God without Jesus Christ.

Many times when something happens, the first thought that comes to mind is, "Lord, have mercy." This is true whether you are in sin or whether you are saved. You call on the Lord because you want help from Him, especially when you cannot see your way out. I have heard sinners say, "Lord, have mercy on me." God's mercy is extended toward everyone. He so loved the world that He gave the very best He had. He never intended for anyone to go to hell. First Timothy 2:4 reads, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Paul really wanted to see people saved. In Romans 10:1-3 he said: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God [though people have a zeal of God, that does not mean they have salvation], but not according to

knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Many people have not accepted Christ as their Savior and put their trust in Him.

### **Be Careful of How You Live**

Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to seek and save that which was lost. He was willing to die on the cruel Cross for you. People ridiculed Him and told Him to come down from the Cross. He had the power to come down, but He would not. He stayed there for you and me. The Roman soldiers drove those spikes through His hands and His feet, and He stayed right there because of the love He had for you and me. That is the reason He could say, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). He also said that you are His friend if you do whatsoever He commands you. Hell is going to be hot for those who reject Christ's love. If you are mistreating God's man, then you are mistreating God. It would be horrible to become an enemy of God. Our God is a consuming fire; therefore, you have to be careful. You should not run down God's man or the saints.

When Saul was on his way to Damascus, he saw a great light that shined above the brightness of the noonday sun. He heard a voice from Heaven speaking in the Hebrew tongue, saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Jesus was in Heaven. Saul could not go to Heaven and persecute Jesus; he was persecuting His saints. Jesus is very closely associated with His people, and He loves them so much that He told Paul, "You are persecuting Me." You need to be careful whom you speak against.

You can read in Judges, Chapter 11, about a man named Jephthah; he was the son of a harlot. This man had great respect for God. Israel

had driven him out, because he was the son of a strange woman. However, they needed help to win a battle, so they went to Jephthah. He told them, "I will fight for you if you let me be your leader." So they promised to let him be their head. Then Jephthah went before God and vowed a vow, "If you will help me win this battle, I will sacrifice the first thing that comes out of my house." This man believed in keeping his word. (A man is nothing if he cannot keep his word. If he cannot keep his word, he ought to say, "I cannot do what I said I was going to do.") Jephthah kept his word.

God enabled Jephthah to win that battle. When he came home, the first thing that came out of his house was his only daughter. The Bible says that besides her, he had no other children. Jephthah said in verse 35, "Alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low . . . for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back." You must be careful of what you say. I do not believe Jephthah had to make that kind of vow, but he did. The Scripture says he did according to his vow.

Saint of God, you need to make sure that you are on the Rock. Gossiping, listening to various stories and opinions about things, and sowing discord among the brethren will move you off the Rock. There are some things that God hates, according to Proverbs 6:16. He does not want you to sow discord, run down others, or tear down their influence. Some do that and then get up and sing a song. God is against that.

You will find yourself slipping off this great Rock, drifting away from God, if you do not read the Bible or take an interest in the services as you used to. Then when you look around, you will find that you have drifted so far that you do not want to go back. It happens little by little. In land erosion, little by little, an entire hillside can be washed away. Thank God, you can

stay on the Rock. If your mind is made up, you can stay on the solid Rock.

### **Making the Right Choice**

Another man who stayed on the Rock in the Old Testament was Moses. He was well educated in the Egyptian ways. History states that he was a general in the army; he knew about wars and battle strategy. One day he had to make a choice. Friend, if you are unsaved, you need to make a choice. I thank God for Moses. Hebrews 11:25-26, speaking of Moses, reads: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt . . . ." He esteemed the adversity that came against him greater than the treasures of Egypt.

If you are living in sin, you can make the right choice. Just tell God, "I am tired of the way I am living." When God made man, He did not make him in sin; He made him perfect and upright. However, man sought out many inventions. You do not have to build on sinking sand.

Many times at funerals, the clergy try to put the deceased in Heaven, no matter how ungodly that person lived. That person might not have ever gone to church, yet the speaker wants to try to put that one in Heaven. Preachers do not have any Heaven to put you in, and they do not have a hell to put you in. You are in God's hands. If you are not living right and have not accepted Jesus Christ, hell is going to be your home, and it is a terrible place. Do not let anyone fool you into thinking that there is no hell; There is a hell. I thank God for His Word. The good news is that you do not have to go there.

People are going to hell without any invitation. The rich man who went to hell did not invite anyone else, because it is a terrible place. God does not want you to go there;

that is the reason He gave His life. He hung on the cruel Cross so that you and I would not have to go to hell. Many go to hell despite all that God has done for them. John considered this and said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). That is the kind of love that God has for each of us. He does not want anyone to go to hell.

God never meant for man to live in sin. He wants man to live for Him. He made man for His pleasure and for His glory. God said, "Let us make man in our likeness." Since God made man in His image, He wants man to be like Him. God cannot lie, and He will not fail you. He wants you to be faithful. The Bible says, "It is required in stewardship that a man be found faithful." We are serving a faithful God, and He loves faithful people.

### **Hold Fast to That Which Is Good**

You are blessed if you know the Truth and have a man of God who will tell you the truth. Some people preach just for the money. They are not good shepherds; they are hirelings. David was thinking about his being a shepherd boy. One day as he was thinking about that, no doubt, he began to think about his Shepherd and said, "The LORD is my shepherd." You should let the Lord be your Shepherd.

Psalm 23:1 says, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." That simply means that you will not lack anything that you need. Verses 2-3 read: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul . . . ." When you start getting low in your soul, in your spiritual energy, He will restore your soul.

Verses 4-6 state: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou

preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies [your enemies are trying to kill you, but God prepares a table for you right in the presence of your enemies]: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over [you not only have enough joy for yourself but also for others]. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

A sinner may ask you, "What do you do? You go to church all the time. Do you ever enjoy any recreation?" I tell them, we go from Genesis to Revelation, and then from Revelation back to Genesis, from righteousness to holiness. You talk about a good time! We have a good time in the Lord. That is the reason the songwriter could say, "What a fellowship, what a joy divine, Leaning on the everlasting arms." Praise the Lord!

Saints, let us love one another. If we get to the place where we cannot be a blessing to one another, we are like the salt that has lost its savor; it is not salty anymore. If you had salt in your kitchen that was not salty anymore, you would throw it out. In Matthew 5:13-14 Jesus said: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men [then He encouraged them, and said]. Ye are the light of the world." When you get saved, God puts you in the church. He sets the members in the body as it pleases Him. He did not set you in the church to be a bench warmer or a news reporter; He set you in the church so that you could be a blessing.

If someone looks upon your life and wants what you have, they will want your God to be their God. In the Book of Ruth, you can read that Ruth wanted Naomi's God. She said, "Where you go, I will go. Where you die, I will die." The Church of God moves like a mighty army. God's people love one another. The saints do not gossip or

run down the pastor. When people begin to whisper and backbite, that hinders the church, and it is dangerous to hinder the church. We ought to pray for one another.

First John 4:1 says, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." You need to test every spirit to see whether it is of God. Some people will tell you anything.

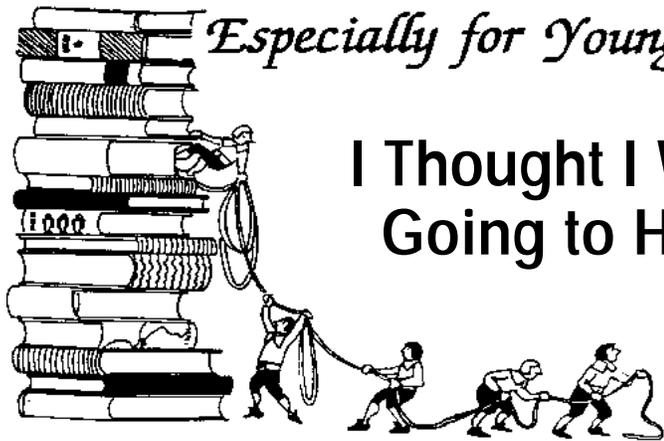
A man told me once that a rat would not eat cheese. I know a rat will eat cheese, but he tried to convince me contrary to that. You cannot believe everything you hear. Paul said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Follow what you know is right. Do not allow a son or a daughter, Mama or Daddy, or anyone else to pull you off track and keep you from doing what is right. God is with what is right. Do not let anyone fool you. You need to stay on the Rock, Christ Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 8:1-4: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

How are you building? Are you building on the sand? What is your main priority in life? The most important priority in life is being prepared to meet God. Your stocks and bonds and bank accounts are not going to be important to you one of these days. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Why would you linger if you do not know the Lord?

*(Cassette C-4707M)*

*Especially for Young People*



## I Thought I Was Going to Hell



There was a good interest and a good crowd the very first night of the revival meeting in town several years ago. Several people came forward to be saved. In the back of the congregation were three young men. They had talked during the song service, and although they had listened attentively to my message, they had begun talking again during the invitation.

The next night there was another good service and a number of people came forward to accept Christ. I particularly noticed one young man. He was bandaged and painted with mercurochrome as though he had recently been in an accident. I had noticed that he walked down the aisle slowly and painfully. I explained to him briefly the plan of salvation and asked him to wait near the front so I might speak to him later.

As I stepped back to the pulpit, I noticed him walking slowly back down the aisle. He walked back to where he had been sitting and took a young woman by the hand, speaking to her earnestly, and then, leading her, came back down the aisle to the front. It was his sister, and she, too, had come to accept Christ. Then I noticed that he had walked back down the aisle, took another young woman by the hand, turned and came back down the aisle leading her to the altar. She was the girl to whom he was engaged to marry, and

she, too, had come to receive Christ. All three of these young people were happily converted.

I was surprised to learn that the young man in bandages was one of the young men who had come the night before and had talked and laughed during the service. One of the three had that very day bought a beautiful used convertible and had taken the other two friends for a ride to the top of a nearby mountain.

The road was narrow, winding, and dangerous. When they had begun their descent, the driver had stepped on the brakes, but the little rubber facing that is bonded to the brake pedal slipped off and the young man's foot hit hard on the accelerator. The car jumped into passing gear and shot toward the curve.

The car turned sideways and skidded over the precipice. All three were thrown out of the car. Incredibly, none of them was killed. All, however, were injured, and taken to the hospital. My young friend was injured the least of all, and after having been bandaged, he had been permitted to return home.

Late that afternoon, he had begged his father to have an ambulance take him to church! Surely the boy was delirious! They did not know if he had suffered internal injuries and it would have been dangerous to move him at all. He

was supposed to lie quietly in bed!

Then the boy explained to his father, "Dad, just last night I went to church, and my friends and I made fun of those who took the preaching seriously. We joked about the idiots who went forward at the invitation. But today, Dad, when that car began to skid and I knew it was going over the cliff, I just had time to think one thing. I thought, 'Only last night I could have been saved! Only last night a man preached about Jesus and urged me to turn from my sins, but I wouldn't do it.'"

The young man paused and then continued, "Dad, when that car went over the precipice, I thought I was going to hell! I did not think I could possibly come out of that alive. But when I did come to, I prayed and promised God that if He would just let me live until tonight, I would go to church and be saved."

The father had been so impressed that, even though the doctors had forbade him to do so, the father took the back seat out of the family car, filled it with pillows, and made his own ambulance in which to take his son to the revival meeting. As a result, the young man came to know the Lord as well as his sister and his sweetheart.

Selected

*Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

*6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

*7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

*8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

*9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*

*10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

*11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in*

*my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

*13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

*14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

*15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*

# It Is God



**Brother Allen Polston**

## **Finding the Real Meaning of Life**

God gives us a real reason to live in these verses of Scripture. While the world is in a race to find the meaning of life and looking to find something that will satisfy them, God gives us the recipe for success, shows us what we need to know, and tells us what to do to find the real meaning of life and our purpose for being here.

We each have a purpose in this world. So many people are lost and do not know what their purpose is. They do not know what is coming next. I spoke to a young man who was on drugs and asked him, "What are your long-term plans? Do you plan to find a companion, raise a family, and straighten out your life?" He said, "I don't have any plans. I don't even have any real dreams." The world around us is full of people who have lost sight of

what life is all about. I thank God that we can go to the very source that makes this clear to us. God has a way of refreshing our minds and souls with His eternal Word to help us to take courage and gain more strength so that we can move on in a greater way.

We find in verse 5 of our Scripture text that the writer was giving us some instructions. He said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." God was speaking

to the Philippians and to each of us. Friend, you need to make sure that the thoughts and opinions you form line up with the mind of Christ. He was outlining it so that we each could see if we are where we ought to be.

The devil will try to turn a person's thinking by saying, "It is not possible to think and live as Jesus did." The cry of the world and false religion is that no one can live free from sin. They say that everyone has to sin a little. However, it is foolish to believe that God could speak the world into existence and do the many miraculous things that He has done, yet say that He cannot give power to live free from sin. God commands us to live holy, and He gives power to accompany that commandment, to those who will yield themselves to what He has to say. I have found it to be so. Even if I had never discovered it, it would still be so. When God says, "Let it be this way," if you desire it to be so, and if you will yield yourself to Him, it will happen. You can have the same kind of mind and life that Jesus had.

What is the mind of Christ? Jesus is not here in a physical, fleshly body to lay these things out for us, but we can hear from Him through His Word to see exactly what kind of mind He had. Verse 6 reads, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Here is a partial description of what kind of mind Jesus had. To discover the will of God and what life is all about, thank God, we do not have to get together and vote. We can read in God's Word about our perfect example, Jesus Christ. We can know for sure what life is all about and what it holds.

Sometimes I look down the road and think of that glorious day when we are going to depart from this world to be with the Lord for evermore. What a wonderful thought that is! Yet so little is known about eternal realms that I cannot go far in that thinking. I do

not have to go far there, because I can be glad for what life is now and for what God has given me. I do not have to wait until I get to Heaven to gain joy. God already has it available to those who will yield themselves to Him and His commandments.

### **The Sacrificial Lamb**

Again, verse 6 says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Jesus was equal with God in the sense of being able to perform and accomplish the same things God can do. The Bible says that before Jesus was ever born here on this earth, He was with God in Heaven. He is a part of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. He raised the dead and healed the sick. We can read about many other things that Jesus Christ did. He was equal with God in power and might. However, He had a special job that only He could perform. They looked in Heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, but no man could open the Book. John the Revelator began to weep and come under a spirit of sadness, but God found One who was worthy. Only One could be the sacrifice so the Book could be opened. Then man in his ignorance, weakness, fallibility, and smallness could connect to the Almighty, eternal God. Jesus Christ was the only One who could open the Book and loosen the seals. If you are unsaved, only He can change your life. He can change you in ways that you never imagined possible.

Jesus had a special job. Neither you nor I could have done what He did. No other man could have done what He did. He was the sacrificial Lamb slain for the sins of the world. He was the perfect sacrifice, because He was without sin.

Picture with me, Jesus in His position of equality with God in the sense of His abiding place in Heaven and in His power and might. We find that He had a

special job that the Holy Spirit could not do and that God the Father was not going to do. Everyone in the world was going to be affected. It saddened God the Father, but only Jesus Christ could do what needed to be done. His job required that He come through the virgin birth and take on the form of man, endure hardships, and face adversities just as we do. Sometimes people forget that Jesus was a man. He had a flesh just as you and I do. He suffered and endured things, and He felt pain. Jesus had a special job, and the angels could not do it; it was reserved for Him.

What happens in our day when one has to suffer and endure more pain or carry a heavier load? Some may feel that they ought to have a little higher position because they are going through more difficulties and suffering a little more.

Jesus held a special position, one that required Him to suffer, and did He ever suffer! If you were to study His life, you would see the passion and suffering of Jesus. You would see how cruel, terrible, and painful His suffering was. Yet He did not demand anything more than being in the lowly, humble position of a servant. He did not lay out demands before God the Father for special recognition.

Although He had a special job and it required more suffering on His part than for others, Jesus did not say, "I want to be compensated for this. Since I have to suffer, I am going to demand a higher position." That was not the mind of Christ. He was willing to endure the suffering that God had ordained. He was willing to endure the pain and go through the trials of being here in the flesh and dying on the Cross, yet He did not demand greater recognition or compensation. He did not think that He was being robbed.

### **Having the Mind of Christ**

Today we live in a dog-eat-dog world. No doubt, when some people think they have reason to be

recognized more than others, they begin to demand positions of authority or superiority. Jesus' mind and His thinking was that He was a humble servant, no matter how much pain He had to endure. He did not say, "Wait a minute! Look at all the pain that I have to go through. Look at the Cross that is ahead of Me. God the Father, You go down and endure it. If I have to do it, then I demand something more." That was not the mind of Christ. Jesus' thinking should carry over into our lives.

God is looking for people who are willing to endure that which He permits to come their way. In the midst of difficult times, He wants people who will not change their attitudes, their spirits, or their thinking, but who will continue to serve Him. We need to say, "This is my place in the great work of God. This is where God has called me, and I am going to do it to the glory of God." God is looking for people who will have the mind of Christ. They will not think that if they go through suffering that they have to be recognized or exalted above others. If you have that kind of thinking, it will not just settle in one part of your life; it will involve every area of your being.

When the spirit of exaltation, or wanting to be lifted up in a fleshly sense, gets hold of people, the holy standard, godly principles, and the Spirit of God will be gone. The Holy Spirit departs from one who has the spirit of exaltation. No matter what you go through, God wants you to keep the mind of Christ. You will not think it robbery if another brother is not going through as much as you are. You will think, "God knows where I am. He has allowed it to come for a reason. In the end, I am going to come out as gold that has been through the furnace. I am going to be a better person than I was before." You should not become angry and upset and shake your fist at God. You must press the battle on and praise God.

Nothing came on Job that God

did not permit to happen, and nothing comes your way that God does not know about. He is very knowledgeable and concerned, and He sees that through every trial, you can become a better person for Him. He wants you to have the same kind of thinking that Jesus had. He wants you to be content, happy, and satisfied in His service, even if it seems that you are having another round with the devil and someone else has not had one for a while. In living for God, you should be content to press the battle on and do your part in the work of God, because God has a reason for it. He is still in control.

### **Christ Made Himself of No Reputation**

We can see Christ's position of equality with God in verse 6. It could have brought Him anything He wanted. Had He wanted to excel in any area on earth, He could have done so. He could have chosen to be wealthy financially or to be the most popular man in town. However, the Bible describes Him as an individual who, when people came to make Him king, slipped away from the crowd and went off alone to pray to His Father. When men tried to exalt Him, He made His way out of there. He was not here to build up any earthly kingdom. All the potential for success was there, but He chose a humble, lowly position.

Think of how people are trying to excel today in different categories. Some go to great extremes to build muscles. Others try to excel in popularity and to become famous and obtain great possessions. Jesus, being equal with God, could have excelled in any category He chose. However, verse 7 of our Scripture lesson tells us that He "made himself of no reputation." Christ could have accomplished many earthly things, but He was not interested in those things. He had something else on His mind, and that was doing the will of God,

being obedient to God, and bringing glory to God the Father.

Jesus made Himself of no reputation. How many people do you know who have great potential and abilities but make themselves of no reputation? They are few and far between. Thank God, those who seek to live as He lived on this earth have the mind of Christ. If you have gotten away from having the mind of Christ, you need to get right back to being the humble servant that God has called you to be.

Again, verse 7 of our Scripture lesson reads, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." As we look at our example and the way He is described, we can get a better vision of one who could have excelled in many earthly ways, but He was not concerned about earthly things.

Paul said that we are to conform to the image of God's Son. If you see a place in your life where you are not following Jesus, then you are to change it. The true meaning of life is found in doing the will of God and being obedient to God's precious Word and His way. That is where we find true satisfaction and real happiness. Dear one, you will not find contentment in worldly things and ungodly lifestyles. Only when an individual yields himself to God wholeheartedly does he begin to discover what life is all about and why God has put him on this earth.

Friend, God sees potential in your life, and He is interested in your soul. He wants to use you for His glory. You need to cast away notions that will lead you astray and into modernism, worldliness, and compromise, away from the old-time, holy way. You need to cast aside those things and walk in this great light in a greater way than ever before. Verse 5 of our Scripture text says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of Christ is humble, meek, and lowly. Is that the kind of mind that you possess?

## **Being Obedient**

In verse 8 of our Scripture text, we read, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." He was found in fashion as a man. In other words, Jesus had the same kinds of fears and problems that you and I have. He went through some of the same sufferings that we encounter. The Scripture says He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. By the grace of God, I want to be obedient unto death. That is the way we each must live this Christian life. You must have the desire to be obedient to the end. Adversities will come, yet you must be obedient to God.

Many things have come against God's people to try to cause them to become disobedient, but they remained true. In the few years since I have been saved, the devil has tried to get me to stray from God's Word. You must be obedient. Notice what is required to be obedient: you must humble yourself. That is the hardest thing about being obedient, because the flesh does not like to humble itself. Nevertheless, this flesh is the same kind of flesh that Jesus had, and He was victorious.

If you humble yourself and become obedient, it will only be after you have gone through a battle. The flesh will not jump at the thought of being humble. It is naturally going to reject any kind of suffering. What would you do if you were to lay your hand on something hot? You would not act so foolish as to let your hand keep burning. If you were to lay your hand on something hot, you would immediately feel pain and jerk your hand away.

We were created to resist pain and suffering of any kind. Therefore, when the flesh has to be humbled, there is some suffering involved. It could be that you need to humble yourself and tell someone that you are sorry for what you said. Have you ever said something too quickly and then realized that

the way you said it was not very nice? God checks you right away if you do, and you had better not reject that. You need to go back and say, "I am sorry about the way I said that."

Being obedient to God often requires humility and suffering. To be obedient, you have to come to the place where you do not live by whether or not something feels good. The world says, "If it feels good, do it." However, that will lead you astray, because some things you must do when you live for God will not feel good. Some things are going to be difficult and even painful. This world needs to see more people who are willing to humble themselves and be obedient to God's Word.

When messages from God come, at times you need to go a little further with God. He knows what doctrines you have been trying to push out of your mind, and He knows where you need to be obedient. He speaks to you through His Word and His Spirit. To be obedient, you have to humble yourself. I thank God for the night that God dealt with my heart and I came to the conclusion, "I am going to humble myself tonight." I prayed at the altar, and God saved my soul. It is no wonder that God inspired Paul to write to the Philippians and tell them, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." That is the kind of mind it takes to be obedient to God's Word. We all are at different places along the way. For example, you might have been saved for many years or you might have been saved for only a few days or months. God is constantly working with each of us to bring us to the place where we can be more obedient and learn more of His will and His way. You will never get to where God says, "Okay, you have reached the maximum, so now you can just coast into eternity." You must constantly walk in the light and learn more of God's way.

Knowing that God can show us

more each year we live for Him is wonderful. God is constantly bringing His people greater understanding and greater light. We have to be obedient, and to be obedient, we must humble ourselves and ask God for help. We need to ask God to give us power, grace, and wisdom.

## **Being Willing to Humble Yourself**

Jesus was willing to humble Himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Why did Paul add the phrase, "even the death of the cross"? He wanted us to think back to the place where men were getting ready to nail Him to that old tree, to consider the pain and the suffering that He endured. He suffered the ultimate by having our sins laid upon Him.

Another thing God wanted us to realize was what Christ's death on the Cross was going to produce. It was going to produce a way for sinful man to be redeemed and turned around. His darkness could be changed into light, and his night could be changed into day. God ordained Jesus' death on the Cross because He had a plan for man to be saved and to live holy. That was His desire in the first place, when He placed Adam and Eve in the garden. He wants man to live holy, clean, and pure, without sin, and to be in fellowship with his Maker. Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient all the way to the end, even the death of the Cross; in other words, even a death that was unwelcome. Jesus prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." He did not want to drink that bitter cup. Even when things began to turn in a way that was naturally unwelcome, still He was obedient. Why? He knew that in being obedient, many individuals would be saved as a result.

Jesus knew that by being obedient to God, even the death of the Cross, down the road, Allen Polston was going to say, "There has to be something better than this

despairing condition that I am in." You were also on His mind. He wanted to be obedient so that you could come to the place where you could be saved. Christ's life shows us that we need to humble ourselves and be obedient.

If God has been dealing with your heart, won't you humble yourself and obey your Maker today? We are not seeing many young people earnestly seeking God for service in the Kingdom of God. Not many are saying, "God, what can I do? What will You call me to do?"

I remember when I was in a camp meeting a few years ago and a man of God stood up and preached from Isaiah 6:8, which says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." God began to deal with my heart. I was not a pastor at the time. I might have only preached a few times, but I went to the altar and prayed. It was not long until God called me to pastor. If you are going to respond to God's call, you must humble yourself and be obedient, and then God will use you. God is looking for young people and people of all ages who, when He calls upon their hearts,

will be obedient and willing to humble themselves.

Humbling yourself and being obedient to God will not cause you to gain popularity or to rise to the top of your class in your school. However, it will cause you to be exalted with God, and that is much better than being exalted in the eyes of the world.

### The Recipe for Success

Verse 9 of our Scripture text says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." When God is calling upon you, if you will humble yourself and be obedient to Him, He will exalt you. It will not matter if you are exalted among your peers. The glories of this old world will not matter when you have the glory of God in your soul. The things that the world can exalt you in are all going to fade away; they are temporal. When God exalts you to heavenly places, in His Truth and in His ways, that is an everlasting exaltation.

Who needs the glory of the world when he can have the glory of God in his heart and soul? Who needs to be exalted by men when God can lift him up into heavenly places and

make his life divine and cause him to find real peace, joy, and satisfaction? The glory of the world loses its thrill and its pull on you when you experience the glory of God in your life. The world loses its attraction when you gain an experience with God.

Does God exalt you? He surely does. He opens your understanding and exalts you in the services and in the Word daily. He lifts you up to heavenly places. Praise God! It is better than the exaltation of the world. It is worth it to humble yourself and be obedient.

Has God spoken to you? You may need to move up in obedience in some areas of your life. Let this be the day that you humble yourself and walk in the light that God has shed upon your pathway. If you are unsaved, your first act of obedience should be to give your heart to God. Won't you pour out your heart to Him and ask Him to save you? The devil may try to make it look complicated and get you to put it off, but it is really not difficult. If you will turn to God with your whole heart and humble yourself, He will do a work in your life.

*(Cassette C-4558E)*

# Radio Log



LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Wellston, Ohio	WJJB-FM 92.5	Thursday	8:05 a.m.-8:35 a.m.
North Little Rock, Arkansas	KMTL-AM 760	Saturday	2:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.
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.

*Isaiah 59:19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.*



# Taking a Definite Stand in the Right Way

*Brother E. David Stegmeier*

## **The Ultimate Standard for the Church of God**

It seems that the devil and all his evil forces are encompassing the saints in greater forces and greater numbers. John wrote in Revelation 12:10 and 12: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven . . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." Although this was written for another period of time, we can glean some things that are applicable to the age in which we are living. The devil knows that his

time is short, so he is working as never before to thwart the progress of the work of God. As saints, we need to work harder than ever before, pray more fervently, and apply ourselves in a greater way to the things of God.

Revelation 12:17 reads, "And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed." Every instrument through which the devil is working is motivated by a spirit of wrath against God's people. As saints, we are a part of the holy remnant, those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This

conflict is becoming more intense and more difficult every day. The forces of evil are encompassing God's people. It is necessary in this day and age that we lift up a standard against the enemy. You might have many thoughts about the standard, but in this message I would like to use it in reference to Jesus Christ. He is our ideal, or our standard. He is the model that each saint is trying to emulate, and He is the ultimate standard for the Church of God.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:21-23: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us [we are in a time of

great suffering, maybe not so much physically, but mentally and spiritually], leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin [it is possible for you to live without sin], neither was guile found in his mouth: [In other words, deceit was not found in His mouth. You need to stand behind what you say, say what you mean, and mean what you say.] Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

When Jesus was criticized, talked about, reprov'd, and censured, He did not revile. Sometimes that is difficult to do. One reason that revivals are necessary is to help us to be better people. I want to be a better person, don't you? I want to be more like Jesus Christ. After revivals and camp meetings are over, if you have listened and applied the Word to your heart, you will be more Christlike: you will be more loving, kind, long-suffering, gentle, merciful, and courteous.

Again, verse 23 says, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; [He did not say, 'I will get even with you.' He was careful about what He said; He weighed His words.] but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." One translation says, "This suffering is all part of the work God has given you. Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in His steps. He never sinned, never told a lie, never answered back when insulted." That is good. There is room for improvement in each of us. We all should want to work at becoming more Christlike. Should someone insult you, you need to be very careful of how you react. You should want to react as Jesus would react.

Above all the men who ever walked upon this earth, Christ was the most innocent. He was without wrongdoing of any kind, yet He

was insulted, mistreated, and abused both physically and mentally. Nevertheless, those things never solicited any kind of wrong actions or words from Him at all. I want to be just like Christ, don't you? All His words and actions were just and right, yet He was reviled and criticized. People were rude, unjust, and cruel to Christ, yet He did not threaten to get even. Today people criticize almost anyone and anything. Saint, you are never justified to retaliate. You are not to strike back or avenge yourself. You must leave things with God; He will take care of matters in His time. God will determine the judgment due to every man and woman. One older sister in our congregation said, "God is exacting to the weight of a feather," and He is. You must be patient and wait on Him. Although others are doing wrong, you are not justified in doing the same. You may say, "Well, they are getting by." No, they are not getting by. No one gets by with wrongdoing. It is acceptable to God that you take unjust treatment in a Christlike manner. This is evidence of grace.

### **Being Fully Persuaded of the Truth**

Consider an Old Testament setting. First Kings 18:21 states, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." When Israel gathered together on Mount Carmel, Ahab and the false prophets were also there. Elijah brought them to a place of decision. In essence, he said, "How long will you hesitate, pause, or vacillate [go back and forth] between worshipping God and worshipping Baal?" God wants His people to take a decided, definite stand for what is right. On Mount Carmel not one person among that mass of people was willing to take a definite stand for

God and for what was right. That was rather pitiful, wasn't it? In that conflict between God and the prophets of Baal, no one was ready to come forward and let it be known where he stood. In this day and age, God wants you to let it be known where you stand. I have taken a definite stand, not just for who I believe, but also for what I know is right. You may ask, "How can you be so positive?" Because it is set forth in the principles of God's eternal Word. Paul said, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded" (2 Timothy 1:12). You can be persuaded by God's Word.

Elijah had reprov'd the people of Israel for mixing the worship of Baal and the worship of God (and that is going on today in so many places-mixing the worship of the material things of this world with the things of God). Many of them were vacillating between God and Baal, so a contest ensued between the true God and Baal. We are not told why the multitude of people halted, but perhaps it was because they lacked deep conviction. In other words, they were not fully persuaded of the Truth. Saint, you should be fully persuaded of that which is right. You may ask, "How can I know?" You must get in your secret closet of prayer and earnestly seek God.

When Paul reasoned with King Agrippa, he said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). No doubt, Agrippa saw truth in what Paul was saying. He realized that what Paul was saying was credible. He believed that the arguments against those things did not amount to anything, but he was not willing to suffer for the Gospel's sake; he was not ready to change his life. He was comfortable with the wavering position that he had taken. Sometimes when you take a stand for Truth, it brings suffering and separation. King Agrippa was not willing to change his conduct or his manner of living. Perhaps part of it

was knowing what certain people and friends would think about his making such a move. Possibly his position was too important. No doubt, pride entered into his decision also. Therefore, he was not willing to make a strong commitment and suffer for it.

Many people in that multitude on Mount Carmel halted because of having a fear of Queen Jezebel, a fear of the reprisals of people, and a fear of being ostracized, shunned, excluded, or isolated. Some might have been afraid of being persecuted. For whatever reason, the masses that assembled on Mount Carmel refused to openly commit themselves. Friend, where are you today? Down deep within you is an innate understanding of what is right and what is wrong. You know it is wrong to speak against God's man. You know it is wrong to set yourself against the things of God and to mistreat your brother or your sister.

Just as that multitude on Mount Carmel refused to openly commit themselves, so it is with many people today. They lack convictions; therefore, they are not fully persuaded, or fully convinced. Some are fearful of what it will cost them if they stand for what is right. I like Elijah because he was unique. He made it known where he stood, and by the grace of God, I want the world to know where I stand. Elijah had backbone. We need more people with the backbone to stand in this day and age. Elijah was not afraid or ashamed to take an open stand, and he positioned himself with the Truth without hesitation. May God help you to take a definite, clear stand for what is right. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Luke 11:23). You are either for or against the cause of God.

### **Standing for Righteous Principles**

No matter what comes, you should never violate righteous principles. If you do not stand for

what is right and stand with those who are on the side of Truth, you become a coward. One song says that cowards will have no place in this battle for Truth and right. You may say, "I will remain in a neutral position." No, you cannot. If you are in a neutral position, you are against the things of God. Many people say, "I am uninformed; I have not heard anything about it." You may use that as an excuse for a time, but once you know the truth, you are duty-bound to do what is right.

It is critical to take a stand for Truth, and it is equally important that you stand in the right way. You may say, "Oh, I am standing for the Truth," but how is your attitude and your spirit? In your stand for Truth, you must stand in the right way. Some people who say they are standing for Truth are actually hindering the progress of Truth rather than helping it. It is necessary that we mortify the flesh and put it to death. Some hinder the progress of the Truth by having an argumentative attitude or spirit. However, God said, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). The Truth will stand. Some like to argue; they become very contentious and quarrelsome, and that is wrong. Saint, when the man of God speaks to you, you should not quarrel and contend with him.

Some people act as if they have a chip on their shoulder, and they want someone to challenge them. They are aggressive, warlike, hostile, and contentious; yet they claim to be standing for Truth. To have a disposition that wants to debate and argue is not a Christlike attitude. As a child of God, you ought to have a kind, considerate mannerism. Brother E. A. Wilson once said, "Some people have lost the finesse that goes with the Gospel"; and that is true. God wants His people to act saintly and respectable. One can reason with another individual about the Truth in the right way. Reasoning and

debating are two different behaviors. The invitation from God recorded in Isaiah 1:18 says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD." In other words, He was saying, "Come, and let us talk it over, and I will give you good, sound reasons why you should do it this way."

I would welcome the opportunity to tell people in a kind, considerate manner why I stand where I stand. It is reasonable, it is according to righteous principles, and it is right. However, too many people would rather believe a lie and be damned. In essence, they are saying, "Do not confuse me with facts. I would rather believe a lie." God said, "Come now, and let us reason together." In other words, "Let us think; let us carefully examine this situation." You need to analyze things from God's perspective, not from your own perspective or from Brother So-and-So's perspective.

Some people stand in an unreasonable, extreme way. I read an article once about a young man who wanted to serve the Lord, and he was going to school in the state of Washington. He had a terrible time with the flesh, so he got a saw and an ice pick. He had taken out one eye with the ice pick and had started on his hand before the university police came to the apartment and rescued him from destroying himself. That is extreme! You need to be careful how you stand for Truth. There is a godly, reasonable, intelligent way to stand for Truth.

Truth is attractive to honest-hearted people. I am not ashamed to discuss what the Church of God stands for with my employer or co-workers. I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is very reasonable. Many times I have shared the Gospel with others and they concur, "That's right, Mr. Stegmeier, but not many people want to do that nowadays." The Bible standard is very reasonable. It is reasonable for a woman to protect

herself. By dressing modestly, she not only protects herself but also the opposite sex.

One song in our hymnal asks the question, "Are you adorning the doctrine, [In other words, 'Are you wearing it? Are you putting it on?'] If you are, it makes you a very beautiful person.] And making attractive the way, [The way of Truth is attractive to honest-hearted people who are seeking to do that which is right. It is a good, wholesome, healthy way to live.] Honoring Christ by your actions And by the words that you say? [Are you honoring Christ by your actions, by the way you talk to others-your employer, your husband or wife, the man of God?] Are you, my brother and sister, proving the Bible is true?" Many people in the world never open the Bible, but they know what the Bible teaches by watching God's people. That is what the Bible means in Romans, Chapter 12. By living as you should, the world will see the will of God and what is right by watching you.

### **Basic Christian Principles**

In standing for Truth, you must have self-control. You should never lay aside basic Christian principles. I am going to enumerate some of them. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:31-32: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Peter said in 1 Peter 3:8 to "be courteous." In other words, you ought to show good manners. Above all people on the face of this world, of those who display good manners, it ought to be the people of God. You should be polite. You may say, "Well, that person is my enemy." Jesus said: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good [there is no reason to mistreat anyone] to them that hate

you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

How should you treat those who work against God's people and the house of God? Romans 16:17 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned [that is solid]; and avoid them." However, you must do all of that in the right spirit. You may ask, "Do you ever avoid people?" Yes, if I see someone who has been working against the congregation of God's people, I avoid that person. I do not spend much time with him or her; nevertheless, I am courteous.

Sometimes it becomes necessary for a man of God to mark an individual who causes divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. The Bible says to avoid those who cause divisions. In other words, do not spend unnecessary time with them. Do not get into an extended conversation with them. Do not deliberate or debate them. You should get out of a conversation as soon as you can. Should such a person approach you, you should politely say, "I have to go," and walk away. You should not treat anyone in a contemptible manner, or without respect. However, if a person's aim is not the glory of God or the upbuilding of His cause and kingdom, you should make a quick exit. If you know that someone is putting his or her own carnal desires ahead of the work of God, that is not for the glory of God. Above everything else, you should work toward making sure that God gets the glory. When a person puts pride and selfish ambition ahead of God and His way, God does not receive any glory for that.

Some people become very dogmatic in their stand for Truth. I have seen people become so extremely dogmatic about their stand for divine healing that they

were intolerant of anyone who did not have their faith, and that is wrong. I believe in divine healing, and I practice it; yet I try to be very understanding of people. How does a person become dogmatic? This occurs when one thinks that his own personal beliefs and ideas are actually doctrine. That is going on today. Where the Word of God is not specific, then you ought to be careful. The Bible explicitly states the standard of a woman's hair and a man's hair, but some things are not explicitly stated. For those things, you should leave it with your pastor and be still.

### **Follow After Righteousness**

You must stand for the Truth in the right way. If you can stand in the right way, then you can have confidence in God that it will work for good. Be sure that you have the right spirit and the right attitude. I have complete confidence that I am in the Truth, but I must stand in a very humble way. It is God who has blessed and honored us; it is nothing of our own doing. Child of God, you must stand for the Truth in the right way with confidence in Him.

You need to stand for the Truth in a practical way, so that others can also stand. You must show others that it is not too difficult. It can be practiced, because it is something that you are practicing. Some say that the way the church is run is beautiful but so idealistic. Is it really practical? Yes, it is practical! You may inquire, "Do you mean that we can get along without earthly heads and boards?" Yes, we can. The Church of God is so different to the world and those involved in worldly religions that they can scarcely believe that a church can be run that way; but it can, and it is practical. To find out what God wants me to preach, I spend an hour or two or three or four on my knees and in the Word, pleading with God, "What do those people need?" The Truth is practical. You can

practice it, and God's true people are practicing it. That is what makes it powerful.

First Timothy 6:1-12 reads: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words [the words of this message are wholesome words: admonition on taking a definite, clear, decided, wholehearted stand for Truth, but doing it in the right spirit and with the right attitude], even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the

doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of

God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

Dear one, whether it is in the home, at school, or at work, you ought to take a definite stand for what is right. If you take a definite stand, it is much easier to ward off the devil and temptation. If people know where you stand, they will know what they can or cannot talk to you about. They will know that they cannot run down the pastor in front of you. You should not accept to run down any man or woman, boy or girl, or the work of God. Won't you take a definite, clear-cut stand for what is right?

*(Cassette C-4228E)*

## Effective Witnessing

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

The person witnessing must have:

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

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

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

Selected

*[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]*

golden table where a golden image of the god Bel, or Merodach, stood. It is said that the golden table and image weighed fifty thousand pounds. Golden lions and figures of gold were also found in fifty-three other temples of Bel and the one hundred eighty altars of Ishtar. No wonder it was called the city of gold.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, known as the father of history, said this: "In the shrine is a great sitting figure of Bel, all of gold on a golden throne, supported on a golden base with a golden tablet standing beside it. I was told by the Chaldeans that to make all of this, it took more than twenty-two tons of gold. Outside the temple is a golden altar, and there is another one, not of gold, but of great size, on which full-grown sheep are sacrificed. The golden altar is reserved for the sacrifice of sucklings only. On the larger altar, the Chaldeans also offer something like two-and-a-half tons of frankincense every year at the festival of Bel. In the time of Cyrus, there was also in the sacred building, a solid gold statue of a man, fifteen feet high. Bel and his throne were constructed with twenty-two tons of solid gold. No doubt, you have heard of the golden cup, the bowl at the temple held 2500 gallons, and was three inches thick. One gold lion weighed five hundred fifty pounds."

We can see why it was referred to as the city of gold and why Babylon and that empire was referred to as the head of gold. After this fine gold that was the head, Daniel 2:32 says, "his breast and his arms of silver." What do these denote? Verse 39 says, "And after thee [speaking of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire] shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee . . ." What do "his breast and his arms of silver" represent? The two arms and the silver represented the succeeding empire, the Medo-Persian empire. The reason it had two arms was that the kingdom was a dual

kingdom with two aspects. It was made up of the Medes and the Persians, yet they had one breast, signifying that one thing united them in their hearts and purpose. The Medo-Persian empire was in direct succession to the Babylonian empire. Notice that the head was not severed from the breast and the arms, but they were connected, just as they were chronologically and historically, because the Lord was using this image as a time line to get us from Daniel's day to the advent of the stone, Jesus Christ. Verse 39 tells us, "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee," which was the Medo-Persian empire.

In Daniel 5:28-30 we can read of the handwriting that appeared on the wall to Belshazzar to let him know that the Babylonian empire was going to swiftly and severely come to an end. Verses 28 and 30-31 read: "PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." The Medo-Persian empire immediately succeeded the Babylonian empire. Daniel 6:15 says, "Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed." Here we find that it was the successive empire. The two arms symbolize the duality of that kingdom, made of two diverse components, the Medes and the Persians, under Darius and Cyrus. Again, the joint breast shows that they came together and shared a common purpose.

To summarize what we have studied thus far, notice that the image's head was of fine gold. Daniel told the king of Babylon in verse 38, "Thou art this head of gold," representing the Babylonian empire. Next, he said that the image's breast and his arms were of silver. Then, in

verse 39 he stated, "And after thee shall arise another kingdom," which was the Medo-Persian empire. In verse 32 he mentioned "his belly and his thighs of brass." Verse 39 says, "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." This tells us of a third kingdom, in chronological succession. This was the next world empire that occurred consecutively. Daniel, Chapter 10, gives us a glimpse of what it is. Verse 20 reads, "Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come." The Grecian empire succeeded the Medo-Persian empire.

Daniel 11:1-4 reads: "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those."

These verses of Scripture are a very lengthy prophetic passage, but let us look at it in overview. When Daniel was given understanding of this prophecy, verse 1 says this was in the first year of Darius the Mede. Verse 2 says, "And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all . . ." Here we find there were yet four more Persian kings after Darius. History tells us that the three he spoke of were

Cyrus II, Cambyses, and Darius Hystaspes. When he spoke in verse 4 of the fourth, who would be richer than them all, he was speaking of Xerxes, which gives us a total of six Medo-Persian kings. Xerxes made an expedition against Greece and was disastrously defeated by what verse 3 calls "a mighty king." Who was this mighty king that defeated Xerxes? He was Alexander the Great, the famous Grecian king. It only took him five years to conquer the then-known world. When he was thirty-two years old, he sat down and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. He died with a broken heart, as a drunken sot, at the age of thirty-three. Thus, fulfilling Proverbs 16:32, which states, "He that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city." He could take the world, but he could not control his own passions. On his deathbed (this is historically verifiable), he divided his kingdom into four major divisions, to his four generals, just as the prophecy declared. This fulfilled Daniel 11:4, which reads, "And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven."

After this, Daniel 2:32 tells us that another transition occurred. We are coming right down sequentially in historical time, without any breaks, pauses, gaps, or postponements, from the very day when Daniel revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the Babylonian empire was the head of gold. We read where the handwriting appeared on the wall, and that night Belshazzar (Nebuchadnezzar's grandson) was slain, and the Medo-Persian empire (denoted by the two arms and the common breast) succeeded Babylon as the succeeding world empire. Then we found that Xerxes, the last Medo-Persian king, made a disastrous incursion against Alexander the Great and was disastrously defeated, and this third kingdom of brass defeated the Medo-Persians. However, because the man could not control his own spirit, when the

mighty king arose, it was but a short time, and he divided it among his four generals. That was the third kingdom, the Grecian empire.

In Daniel 2:33 we see something else represented: "His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." This verse portrays the fourth set of elements. The image went from gold to silver, to brass, and then to iron and clay, the fourth set of substances. This fourth set of substances represents a fourth kingdom. Daniel 2:40 says, "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." This verse talks about a fourth kingdom that successively followed the Grecian empire, which was the Roman empire. The empire that was in control at the time of Christ's first advent. One way that we know this, is that it was the last empire enumerated before the stone appeared, and the stone appeared when these legs and feet were still in power.

When did the stone, Christ Jesus, appear and make His advent? What world empire was in control? Luke 2:1 tells us, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, [Who was he? The Roman emperor, the ruler of the Roman empire.] that all the world should be taxed." Now, one could not levy something of that nature against all the world if he was not the world ruler. Rome was at its zenith under Augustus Caesar. Rome still has lasting influence today. The calendars we use are Roman calendars. July is derived from the name Julius, August is derived from the name Augustus, and October is derived from the name Octavius. All these names were the names of caesars. Augustus ruled over three hundred million people.

We read in verse 33 that there were two legs, and the reason there were two legs was that it was an identifying factor, because Rome later became known as an eastern division and a western division. So

he was giving us a prophetic symbol for identification. The two legs were the eastern and western divisions of the empire, and the ten toes were the ten minor kingdoms that made up the Roman empire. These identifying factors establish beyond any doubt that he was speaking of the Roman empire.

I want you to notice our text in Daniel 2:43, which says, "And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." What does this mean? Although "they shall mingle themselves," it also says "they shall not cleave." What does this tell us? Although they had political agreements and alliances and intermarriages of agreement, they never lost their ethnic differences; therefore, they were not a united or strong empire, just as iron is far inferior to brass, silver, and gold. Notice that there is a deterioration of fineness in the quality of the metals, yet there is an increase in fierce, brute strength. Iron is much stronger than gold in the sense of endurance and brute strength. Then we find a deterioration of this fourth kingdom in the quality of strength that it enjoyed. How did it lose its strength? The deterioration came by division. The kingdom was divided into two legs: the eastern and the western empires. In A.D. 270 the kingdoms were divided further into ten minor kingdoms.

Notice that verse 41 states that "the kingdom shall be divided," speaking of the Roman kingdom. Now that we have established what the various components of what this image represents, we can see that these kingdoms were in direct chronological succession to bring us to the point in history when the Kingdom of God was established. In the next article, we will look at the establishment of the kingdom as portrayed in this prophetic passage.

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