

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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CONTENTS

The Truth About Sin	3
The Body, the Church	7
Especially for Young People	14
Isn't One Religion as Good as Another?	15
The Leaven of the Pharisees	19
Radio Log	23
Old Loudmouth Was Saved	24

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Guest Editorial

The Four Beasts and the Truth Concerning the Great Tribulation

Daniel 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

6 After this I beheld, and to another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

In this passage of Scripture, we can see that the Prophet Daniel, according to verse 1, had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed. As he described this occurrence, he said that he saw four great beasts. It is needful that we properly identify and understand those beasts, because a proper understanding of them and viewing them as they are in truth clarifies a point of great confusion in the realms of religion. As we study those beasts and correctly identify them by the

Bible, they reveal to us when the tribulation occurred.

Sad to say, those of the dispensational persuasion do as the Apostle Peter declared in 2 Peter 3:16: they do not teach them in the proper manner. Peter said they "wrest [or twist], as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." Millenarians teach that the Great Tribulation will immediately follow the closing of the dispensation of grace. Those of the dispensational persuasion believe that this dispensation of grace will be followed by a tribulation period that they denote as the Great Tribulation. One dispensational writer penned these words: "Be ready to go in the rapture and avoid being here for the time of Jacob's trouble." These types of teachings saturate our airwaves and fill religious periodicals over our land today. Sad to say, they fill the minds of the masses in our society with false doctrine.

By the help of God, we want to examine this prophetic text to see what truth this Scripture reveals to us, thereby laying to rest the confusing teaching that millenarians advocate concerning the Great Tribulation. Daniel received what he denoted in our Scripture text in verse 2 as a "vision by night." Verse 1 tells us that it was in the first year of Belshazzar. This was the year B.C. 462. Sixty-two years after that Nebuchadnezzar had his dream where he saw an image portrayed. Nebuchadnezzar received his dream and saw the image in B.C. 524. Therefore, between Daniel, Chapter 2, and Daniel, Chapter 7, sixty-two years of time elapsed. Nebuchadnezzar saw his dream in B.C. 524, and Daniel received this dream in B.C. 462, or sixty-two years later.

I want you to notice an obvious distinction between the two dreams. In Daniel, Chapter 2, when Nebuchadnezzar received his dream, he was a worldly man and an idol worshiper, so he saw kingdoms as a very precious thing. Therefore, they were revealed to him through the vehicle of precious metals. He saw what he could relate to. God always deals with man on a level that he can understand.

[continued on page 25]

John 8:30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.

31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

32 And ye shall know the truth, and

the truth shall make you free.

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever

committeth sin is the servant of sin.

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The Truth About Sin



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Way of the Flesh

Sin is in many people's lives, yet they are so deceived that they play church and want to be numbered among the saints. In these days of modern theology and many false doctrines, sin has been watered down so that it has lost its dreadfulness and terribleness. Its awfulness has been replaced with glitter. Some say, "Oh, you shouldn't say anything about what people are doing. You shouldn't judge others." Instead of calling sin what it really is, they water it down. For example, instead of adultery, people call it having an affair, or having a girlfriend on the side.

The Bible has much to say about sin. First of all, we know that God is opposed to it. What is the Bible definition of sin? The Bible says in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." He was not speaking of the law of man, but the revealed will of God

through the conscience or through the Word and the Spirit. The things revealed by God that you overstep are the things that get you into trouble. Sin is a willful violation of that which God has revealed as wrong, or that which His Spirit condemns; to violate that is sin. Sin is lawlessness, and it violates the holy revealed will of God.

Sin is not something to take lightly, but it is something very serious, because of the consequences that follow sin in this life and in the hereafter. Sin is not something to laugh or joke about; it is serious, and its consequences are not to be taken lightly. Sin will destroy you here, and it will seal your doom in the hereafter.

Sin works against God and His divine will. It works against Christ and the Holy Spirit. Sin refuses to submit to divine authority. When a pastor starts having problems in a congregation, the culprit is sin. Oh, it may not become known right away, but it is working somewhere.

Sin causes people to rebel against the government of the church, the Kingdom of God. It works against that which is right, and it is always wrong, never right.

When sin takes control of an individual, it causes that person to waste his life. Often a person living in sin works hard at making a living, having a family, and doing some good things; nevertheless, all that work and effort will be lost. Some people are faithful in church attendance and church work all their lives. They give their money, and they are always there when someone needs a helping hand; yet they get so carried away with works that they lay salvation on the shelf. You might as well sit at home as to spend your whole life in religion without salvation.

Some have said, "Come on over to our congregation. If you come here, you can have your televisions, you sisters can cut your hair, and you don't have to worry about having to wear modest apparel."

Why put on a big front and do that? There is no sense in playing church. Some individuals once stood for the Truth, but some deceiver came along and showed them another way. What way was that? The way of the flesh. The flesh works stronger than what you think it does.

"Now Is the Accepted Time"

Time is precious; it is valuable. Sin will cause you to lose track of the importance and the value of time, until there is no more. Days follow months, and months follow years, and all the while, sin is doing a work on you. Have you forgotten that there is an eternity out ahead? Have you forgotten that Jesus Christ could come at any moment? The Bible speaks much of the importance of time. We read in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

James 4:14 says, "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." In the Old Testament the Psalmist said in Psalm 90:12: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:14-16: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. [What does that tell you? You must do some things in salvation. He said to 'arise from the dead.' What will Christ do? He will give you light.] See then that ye walk circumspectly [the word *circumspectly* means 'exactly,' or to walk exact], not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

This is what the Bible teaches about time. Paul said to redeem it, or to rescue it from being lost. He told the Corinthians that we are living in the day of God's salvation. James said your life is as a vapor. We do not know whether we will see the dawn of another day. The Psalmist said to number our days, or take each day into account.

Sin will cause you to lose track of time. You can get so carried away in sin that it may seem as if time has stood still. Sin will cause the sinner to channel his energies the wrong way and for a lost cause. Saul, before conversion, was out to waste the Church of God. He was channeling his energy for a lost cause. In Galatians 1:13-14 Paul said: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."

Are you working against what is right, channeling all your energy in the wrong direction? Remember, you cannot do anything against the Truth, only for it. All you are doing is fulfilling God's Word. You are going the way of the transgressor. Sin destroys opportunities. Many could have good jobs if it were not for sin. They indulge themselves in gambling, drinking, drugs, or partying all the time. Some could have really made something out of themselves, but they walk around looking like hobos, or drunks. What has caused them to do that? Sin.

There is a move in the world to dress sloppily, and that can rub off on the saints. Nothing looks any better than to see a young person dressed up. A white shirt and a tie look sharp and commendable. Sloppy dress includes long tee shirts, baggy trousers that are worn way down on the hips, dragging the floor. The saints of God should not fashion their children with the styles of Hollywood. The Bible standard is

modest apparel, despite what Paris or Hollywood says is in. Modest apparel is decent dress, not sloppy dress. You should wear your best to the house of God. God deserves the best. You are going to worship God; you are not going to a ball game or to mow the lawn. You should wear your best, act your best, and be your best when you go to the house of God. We should dress according to the Word of God.

Becoming a Slave to Sin

Sin destroys happiness. Some could be happily married if it were not for sin. They could be enjoying their children, building a future together, and serving God together. God has many good things they could do, but sin is a destroyer. Today many people would rather live together than to be married. Living together outside of wedlock is sin. Also, adultery is sin. Being promiscuous before marriage is sin. It is not a mistake or a slip-up; it is sin. The young ladies can control much of their courtship themselves. A couple has to work at marriage and put forth great effort. Your home cannot be happy if there is sin in it. Sin will destroy the home; it destroys the joy and the happiness that ones could be enjoying. Proverbs 16:20 says, "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he." Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." I repeat, sin will destroy happiness.

Sin will mar your reputation. A good reputation can be ruined quickly. One sinful action can ruin years of confidence. Sin will also destroy your health. You are going to pay the price as you get a little older. The tobacco and the alcohol that you thought you would try will work on you. The drugs that you thought you would give a whirl, you will find that you cannot just lay them aside. Those things will affect your thinking and will

eventually destroy you.

Sin will deceive you into thinking that you can mistreat your body, and then when you are ready to turn to Christ, He is going to take care of it, without consequence. However, that is not so. Sin makes one old before his time. Sin will leave ugly scars, things that you wish you could erase from your memory. Because of sin, you must battle thoughts that you would not have to battle. God will forgive you, and then it will be under the blood, but sometimes thoughts of the old life will come through. What do you have to do? You have to pray and rebuke the devil to get rid of evil thoughts.

Sin will leave physical scars as a reminder of what alcohol will do. Sin brings physical scars and spiritual scars, and those scars are reminders of what you did when you got out of the will of God. You have to carry scars with you. Oh, God will forgive you, but occasionally those thoughts will go through your mind.

Habits of life have a small beginning, but in time they have one bound. Perhaps you started sneaking a puff on a cigarette around the back of a building; then each time it got easier. The next thing you knew, you could not lay it down. Tobacco smoking is a filthy habit. It causes your clothes, your car, your house, and your breath to smell; but you only started out with a harmless puff on a cigarette.

Perhaps you took just one drink to be "one of the guys" or to show others that you were not afraid to take a drink; often that is how it starts. Alcoholics do not start out drinking a fifth of whiskey. They start drinking a shot, then another shot or two, and then they start drinking doubles, and next they buy their own fifth. It becomes a bondage to them. Then they have to go away somewhere to get dried out. Even one president's wife became an alcoholic. How did she do it? By entertaining celebrities and just taking a little drink, not an

awful lot, and then the habit increased until it got out of control. There is great bondage in smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, gambling, and viewing pornography. Pornography and pictures of filth bring unclean thoughts. Sin puts you in a merciless prison house, and it takes the Gospel to bring you out. Isaiah 61:1 says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

If you are fooling around with sin in your life, you need to flee from it, and get away from it quickly. Sin will make you a slave. If you fool around with bitterness, it will make you a bitter person, and you cannot just shake it. Oh, you can get saved, but many times you are going to have to do a lot of praying and much denying of self. When ones hold grudges and become bitter, along with that comes a spirit of revenge, or wanting to get even.

The Awful Consequences of Sin

Sin causes one to be selfish, always thinking only of himself, not considering others. It causes covetousness. In the Old Testament you can read of how Achan's covetousness caused the loss of thirty-six men and also the loss of his own possessions and his family. King David had his own wives, but he took the wife of Uriah, and then he turned around and signed papers to have him killed. Sin causes one to be selfish, to be self-willed, to live a self-life, and to have self-interests. Consider Judas, who for thirty pieces of silver betrayed his Lord and Savior.

Sin is an intruder. It will tempt you; it comes right into your home to tempt you without an invitation. Sin is a robber: it will take away your rights, rob you of your

strength, and take you to an early grave. Ecclesiastes 7:17 says, "Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?" Why should you rush death? If you go out and party and drink, and then drive down the highway at a high rate of speed, you are tempting God, or rushing death. It is only the mercy of God if you do that and you do not leave this life early.

Sin will rob you of peace. Isaiah 48:22 says, "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked." It will rob you of fellowship. Second Corinthians 6:14 says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" Sin will rob you of your soul, and it will rob you of hope. Ephesians 2:12 says, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Finally, sin will lead you to a lost eternity, with no way to get out. There is no purgatory. Sinner friend, once you leave this life, your doom is sealed. Once death overtakes you, you are ushered to one place or the other. You will go to either paradise or hades to await the Judgment. Sin will lead you to a lost eternity.

Sin will take you to a merciless judgment, without One to plead your case. It would be terrible to kneel down before Jesus on the Judgment Day and see Him with no mercy. That is not the Jesus that you know now. The Jesus you know now is always merciful. Songwriters have written many songs about His mercy, and His mercy has been applied to the hearts of many. How ever, on Judgment Day there is not going to be any mercy for the lost. It will be too late to ask for forgiveness. You are going to see Christ as a Judge.

On Judgment Day the Books will

be opened. Those who died before Christ came will be judged out of the Old Testament, and those who died after Christ came will be judged out of the New. Still, all must give account for the deeds done in the body, whether good or bad. That does not mean the good will outweigh the bad, or the bad will outweigh the good. If you have one bad deed, then you have no good. There is not a good word to be said about sin.

In closing, I would not want to describe to you the awfulness of sin without telling you there is a cure for it. God made a way that you can be set free from sin. He gave us Jesus Christ, His unspeakable gift.

He can forgive you for your sins and lift you up out of sin. You do not have to live in sin any longer. Isn't that great? The only one that would not like that is one who loves to sin. If you do not want to sin, your sin can be removed, taken away, blotted out. No longer must sin have dominion over you. Sin's power can be broken. Oh, you will be tempted, but there is no sin in temptation. It is yielding to temptation that brings sin. Romans 6:14 says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace [or under strength to live free from sin]." If sin is in your heart, you are lost now, and you are in great

danger of being lost forever. The good news is that it does not have to be that way. What can you do? You must bring your sin and lay it right down at the feet of Jesus, by faith, and leave it there. Let Jesus put it away from you so that it has no more power or influence in your life. God can do that for you. His Word is true. You can stand on it. Do not believe the devil, but believe God. If you are sick of the way that you have been living, tired of the sinful things in your life, come to Jesus. You will be so glad you did. He is the only One to whom you can bring your sin to be free from it.

(Cassette C-4471E)

Don't Quit

When things go wrong, as they sometimes will,
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill,
When the funds are low and the debts are high
And you want to smile but you have to sigh;
Trust in the Lord, and just don't quit.

Life is strange with its twists and turns,
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a person turns about
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up, though the pace seems slow—
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the struggler has given up
When he might have captured the victor's cup,
And he learned too late when the night came down
How close he was to the golden crown.

Remember this truth when you start to doubt;
Success is failure turned inside out;
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit—
It's when things seem worst that you mustn't quit.

Author Unknow

Colossians 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

The Body, the Church



Brother Daniel Webster

A People United In One Body

I am glad God has a church that is alive and well. One song that we sing says "We need each other." It has always been the burden of my heart to see people recognize the church as a body, as a unit that works together. God has a church, and His church is a body. Paul went to great extent in Romans and also in 1 Corinthians to explain that so people might better understand how God works. God can only work through His body. One meaning of the word body is "a group; a number of individuals related by a common factor, such as a physical association or a community of interests or blood." What makes a particular group is the fact that it comprises many individuals related by some common factor.

What brings the people of God together is the common factor of having a knowledge of Jesus Christ as a personal Lord and Savior, having been washed by the blood; that is what makes the Church of God. It is not an association of

people who have merely gotten together and decided to call themselves the Church of God. When the blood of Jesus Christ is applied, it changes people, causing them to live to the glory of God and magnify God in everything they do. The body of Christ is a people whose sole purpose in life is to glorify God; that is the reason we are alive.

Before I was saved, I searched for an answer to some hard questions such as, What was the reason for my living? When I found Jesus, I found all the answers to my questions. Suddenly I had a reason for living. The body of Christ is a people or a group who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb and who have one purpose in mind, and that is to glorify God. If God gets the glory, then He has accomplished His job, and that glory goes out into the world and reaches other souls.

In times past when people were persecuted, the glory seen in their lives affected other people's lives and caused them to come to the

same Savior that those who were persecuted loved so dearly. That is still the way it is yet today. You and I must have a vision of the true Church of the Living God. It is not just a little group here and there, but it is the body of Christ. It is a group of people who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb, who are living holy lives, and who are being led by the Holy Spirit.

God places a person into the body. I cannot put you in, and I cannot take you out. I am glad for that. There is no membership to join and nothing to sign that says, "You are now an official member of the Church of God." Only One can put you in, and only One can put you out, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Acts we can see the morning-time church. Acts 2:41-47 says: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of

bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

That happened because people were united into one body. They were in one accord, living for one purpose, and that was to see the salvation of other souls. He said that they were steadfast. That word *steadfast* means "firmly fixed in one place and not subject to change." If we ever needed to be steadfast, it is now. We need to be steadfast and not subject to change that which we are standing for. What is that? We are standing for the Truth of God's eternal Word. One should not mix the Word with his own ideas or preach something that he believes or thinks, because that would not necessarily be the Truth of God's Word. We must make sure that what we preach and what we teach and what we live is according to the Truth of God's eternal Word, from the beginning to the end.

God Sets the Members in the Body

The Bible lets us know that we each have a soul. The soul is really who we are, but we must have some way to get around in this world, so we have a body. God works through all the people who have been washed by the blood of the Lamb. They are the vehicles, or the instruments, that allow Him to work and reach hearts. You see, God does not just necessarily speak out of nowhere, but He speaks through the lives of His people as

we come in contact with neighbors and the people with whom we work every day. The Spirit of God witnesses through each of our lives and lets people know that they need to be saved.

Ephesians 1:22-23 says: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." In 1 Corinthians 12:18 we read, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." This body is the Church of God. God sets every member in the church in the particular place where He wants him. The saints who are members of a congregation have been placed there because God wants to use them there. I am in the congregation where I am because that is where God saved me, and until He shows me otherwise, that is where I will stay. God wants to use me in that community. The Christian cannot say, "Lord, I want to move down to this place and go over there to church." He ought to wait and make sure God is in it if he is thinking of moving. God sets every member in the body where it pleases Him. You and I have a human body that we work with, live with, and wrestle with daily, and it has many members. Paul was showing us that the body of Christ is very much like the human body, in that it has hundreds of members. Each member has a special job, and nothing else in the body will ever replace it.

You have a right hand and a left hand. If a doctor could take the right hand and put it on your left side and take the left hand and put it on your right side, you would still have both hands, but they would not be where they belong. Your thumb would be on the wrong side of your hand, and you would be unable to do the things that you could normally do. When you compare that with the members in the body of Christ, you can see how important it is that we are in the

right place in the body of Christ. That is the reason God sets the members in the body as it pleases Him. He knew where to put each member in the human body, and He knows what the purpose of each member is. Doctors still do not have any idea what some parts of the body are for, but God knows; He had a purpose for putting them there.

Christian friend, when you went to God for salvation, you did not bargain with God and say, "All right, Lord, You can save me, but here is what I want to do." No, God does not work that way. When you went to Him, you should have gone to Him with the attitude, "Lord, whatever You want me to do, that's what I am willing to do." If you went to Him that way, then God set you in the body.

God does not move people around in the body for the fun of it. He has a reason for each member being where he or she is, and until He moves them from that place, then they ought to stay. That is how the human body works, and the body of Christ is very much like the human body.

If you are willing to do whatever little part God wants you to do, then in time He may move you to another position in the body. You should never try to push your way in. You should not want to do anything that God would not have you to do. Be faithful in the little things, and He will take care of all of that for you.

"Members in Particular"

First Corinthians 12:11-13 says: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to

drink into one Spirit." I am thankful that each of us has only one spirit in the body (I am talking about the human spirit in us). First Corinthians 2:11 says, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"

We have been placed in one body by one Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. In Ephesians 4:4 we read, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Many people have the idea that God has all kinds of different spirits that are all part of this body, but it is not that way. God has one Spirit, and He has one body. As we have read already, the body is the church; therefore, that means He has only one church.

The church is not just one congregation, but it is the complete body of Christ. It is all the people who have been washed by the blood and have found true, heart-changing salvation for their souls. Those are the members of the body of Christ; that is the one church, and that is the only church that will make it to Heaven. There is no other church that the Bible even talks about that can make Heaven its home except the body of Christ, the Church of the Living God.

Church of God, we all are members of the body of Christ, and we each have our own special jobs to do. It is such an important thought to recognize that I do not have the grace to do what you can do, and you do not have the grace to do what I can do. God gives each of us grace for the particular job that we have. We sometimes look at our pastors and think, "How can they carry the load that they have?" Well, they cannot do it themselves, but God gives each one grace for his particular office. That is one way that you can tell that someone has been called to a particular position: that person has the grace for that position and can stand when the persecution comes. He can hold right there, stand by the grace of God, and have the same testimony

that he had earlier. Acts 4:33 tells us that "great grace was upon them all." In other words, others who looked on them could see the grace of God. How did that occur? They were in the right place in the body. If a person is not in the right place, he will not have the grace to stand. Again, Ephesians tells us there is only one body, and that is the Church of the Living God. Going back to 1 Corinthians 12:27, we read, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." You see, we each have a special job. Just as I cannot change my right hand and my left hand around and get the same job done, neither can any of us expect to try to do someone else's job when it is not our place. The important concerns to think about are these: What is my position in the body? What am I supposed to be doing in the body? Each of us can learn and know our place in the body of Christ, and if each individual is in his place, then the body can work the way it is supposed to, souls can be saved, and people can be brought to the Truth.

Working Together in Unity

People pay great sums of money to watch famous symphony orchestras. Watching large orchestras play is beautiful. Also, it is an awesome sight to watch different groups marching in perfect uniformity. Each participant has to be in his exact spot. When people are looking on, they can see right away if someone is out of step. In the spiritual sense, that is not what God wants at all. People like to see unity in marching bands. The Olympics are such a great attraction to the world. One reason that people watch the Olympics is to see these perfectly fit human beings perform as they do. It is an amazing sight, and people pay large amounts of money to go and see those athletes because they like to see the things that strong, athletic bodies perform in perfect unity.

Bringing that over into the spiritual aspect, God likes to see His people working together in perfect unity.

Nothing is more frustrating to me than to get hold of a tool, especially a brand-new tool, that does not work. That happens because man messed up somewhere along the line. On the other hand, nothing is more rewarding than to build something, and after it is put together, find that it works as it should. I do that quite a bit in my line of work.

God's body is that way. If every member is in the body where he or she belongs, things will work as God has ordained them to. The pastor will not have to oil anything or push anything. Each member will be right where he belongs to do the job that needs to be done. I enjoy working with the saints of God, because we all work together in unity. That is how the body of Christ is. In your own body, to move one finger, many members have to work together for that to happen. It cannot do that on its own, but other members are involved in getting your finger to move. Likewise, the body of Christ is that way. Every member must be in place so that the whole body can work and God can move the way He needs to move.

Sometimes God moves in a special way in our services. I am sure that the reason He does is that the body of Christ has been praying and the members are where God needs them to be. If you have the Spirit of God and I have the Spirit of God, when we get together, then the Spirit of God will be there. Those who come in who do not have the Spirit of God and need salvation will be able to feel that and recognize that they need something they do not have. When the saints are rejoicing, sometimes the unsaved sit wondering what is going on. They miss the blessing that God pours out on His people.

As I thought of how the body of Christ works, with each member in the right place, I also thought about

how we cannot afford to lose one member. In your own human body, you cannot afford to say to one member, "I don't need that body part," and then cut it off. Not only would that cause much pain, but eventually you would miss it because you need it. If you were to cut off your big toe, you could not stand as well; you would not have the balance that you need. You need your big toe. Although it is covered most of the time, and people rarely see it; nevertheless, it is an important member in the body.

That was the point that Paul was making in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12. He said in verses 19-24: "And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked."

God tempers or brings the whole body together. We sing a song in our hymnals that says, "How sweet this bond of perfectness." It is the love of God working through each member's heart that bonds, or tempers, the body of Christ and causes it to be bonded in such a way that nothing can separate or divide it if we each stay in the place where God wants us to be. God has placed every one of us in the body and has given each of us a special job to do.

Little Is Much When God Is in It

As I have already mentioned, Jesus said if you are faithful in the

little things, God will increase your talents and bless you in greater things. As a member of the body of Christ, you need to learn that one of your first jobs is to be a good, attentive listener. In other words, you should be a good person sitting in the pew whenever there are services. Just sitting in a seat while the preacher preaches the Word of God or the singers sing is a necessary job. That affects the preacher while he is preaching and the singers while they are singing. They are doing it to the glory of God, and hopefully it is encouraging and helping the listeners. If someone were singing and everyone else was fiddling with something and not paying attention at all, then that would be discouraging to those who were singing.

It is the same with the preaching of God's Word. When the preacher is preaching and looking at the people, if he should see some are balancing their checkbooks and others are figuring out their grocery bills, and occasionally they look up just to see if the preacher is looking, that does not encourage him in the preaching of God's Word. On the other hand, if he is preaching and he hears an amen now and then and sees some heads nodding here and there and some smiles, then he feels that maybe something is getting through. So, as you can see, just sitting in the pew and being a good listener is a good start in being a good helper in the things of God.

As members of the body of Christ, not all of us are going to be in a place where we are being seen, just as many members in the human body are unseen, yet they are in use all the time. They are a necessary part of the body. Likewise, not every member in the body of Christ is seen. Many people may not even know that you are there, but you are in your place and God is blessing and using you. One song says, "Little is much when God is in it." How encouraging that is when we realize that! You might not have a big job to do, but if you

can sit in the pew and smile at the preacher, smile at the song leader, or smile at the singer, that is a big encouragement, and that is a help in the things of God. We should encourage one another. As Paul said, in so many words, "If I discourage you, who is going to encourage me?" That is found in 1 Corinthians. We need to recognize that each of us as a member of the body of Christ is responsible for encouraging one another, helping one another, and doing everything we can in the work of God. We need one another, and we need to strengthen one another. Every member in your body works for one purpose. What is the main function of all the members in your body? Every member in your body has one desire, and that is to keep the rest of the body alive. Because if it dies, then the other members will eventually die with it. Saint, you and I are members of the body of Christ. Our spirits and our hearts should want to keep each member alive. We do not want to lose one member in the body of Christ.

I believe that many people have lost their vision of how this body functions, and they run off and do whatever they please, not realizing that many members are being cut apart and hurt. Many members in the body of Christ are being affected by the things they do. They have lost their spiritual vision. Jesus came to establish a body of people for the glory of God. His whole mission to this world was to save the lost and reunite a people to the glory of God.

Gifts Differing According to the Grace Given

We read in Genesis 1:26, "And God said, Let us make man in our image . . ." In other words, He was saying, "Let us make something that when they and all creation look, they can see the glory of God and see Our image." After sin came in, it wiped all of that out. God had to come to reestablish that, to make a people who could glorify Him

with all their deeds and actions. When the world looks upon me, they should see God, not just Brother Webster. They should see God working in each of our lives. The whole mission of the body of Christ is to glorify God. God has given each member the abilities to do that which he or she has been called to do. I am so glad for that.

Paul wrote in Romans 12:5-8 along the same lines concerning the body: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

We each have been given grace for the particular position that we hold in the body of Christ. A pastor has a pastor's grace, a song leader has a song leader's grace. Sunday school teachers need grace. Each member in the body needs grace for his particular position. The one who cleans the rest rooms needs grace for that job. Every one of us needs grace for whatever job we have. At times the devil will try to get you to complain about the position you are in. If you have enough grace, you will be able to take it and go on through and do whatever God would have you to do. Every member is given grace, so when God tells that person to do something, he should not say, "I can't do it." Why? Because God gives the grace for that which He calls one to do.

If the Lord calls you to be a preacher, you can't say, "Well, I can't do that," because if God says so, then He will give you the grace to do that. He may lay it on your heart to sing a song. Now, I understand that some people cannot sing. Unless God lays a song

on your heart, you should not sing, because you will not have the grace for it. People need to know their place, and they need to know what God wants them to do. Just as it is on a good team, in the body of Christ God shows each member exactly what he has to do, and he is concerned about his position. If each one fills his spot, the body is going to do what it needs to do.

In sports each team member has a position with a particular function. For example, on a football team, when the team has a certain play they want to make, every man had better be in the position as planned if that play is going to be carried out. The body of Christ works very similar to that. God has plans: He has things He wants to get done, and He has certain ways that He wants things done. Unless you and I are where He has placed us to do that, then it is not going to happen. If you recognize that you have a particular job in the body, then you will see that doing that job and carrying out that particular position is important.

Filling Our Place to See the Work of God Go Forward

We each have an important position. Do not let the devil tell you that your particular place is not important. Even if you just sit and pay attention to the services and pray, that is an important position in the body of Christ. Someone that your life has affected may decide to come into the services, and that person will look for you. He may not know anyone else, but he knows who you are. We each have our place to fill to see the work of God go forward.

Paul said that he was given grace for his job, and each of us has the grace for our jobs. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:10, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth there-

upon." God gives each of us grace for our particular place. Every member in the body is an important member and has an important job to do to see the functioning of God's body work the way it needs to work.

Paul made a similar statement in Ephesians 4:7 where he stated, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We each have grace for our particular job. Too often it seems that people do not want to do anything because they think that they cannot. Well, if God has laid it on your heart to do something, then God is going to give you the grace for that particular task.

We each have been given grace for our particular calling. Mothers have grace to be a mother. A father cannot be a mother, because he does not have the grace for it. Sometimes I help my wife and think, "How can she do it?" I would much rather go out and sweat all day long and work than to spend two or three hours trying to keep the children quiet and doing the things that need to be done with them. God gives godly mothers grace to do what they need to do, and they just take things so quietly and patiently. How do they do that? God gives them grace.

You may look on others and say, "I wish I could do that" Well, not necessarily. That is not where your grace is; that is not your position. We must be willing to stay humble to stay in the place that God has ordained. We read that God has set every member as it pleases Him. He has put each of us in the place where we need to be, and He gives us the grace for it. He does not just put you there and say, "You can handle it on your own." No, He gives you the grace and the power to carry out that which He wants you to do, and that is wonderful

"All Things Common"

I am so glad that we each can be a part of the body of Christ. There is

no higher calling than to be called into the body of Christ. There is no greater honor than to be a part of the body of Christ. When we recognize that we are members in particular of this one great body of the Church of the Living God, it ought to cause us to shout in our souls. It ought to cause us to rejoice to think that somehow God saw fit to call us out of this world and bring us into a place where we could be joined heart to heart through the Spirit of God. It is a wonderful blessing to be able to enjoy that and to recognize that.

Some people are religious folks, but there is no fellowship. You cannot discuss the things of God with them because it just falls on deaf ears, so to speak. God's Spirit tries to witness to them, but they do not want to hear it. Nevertheless, the saints of God can gather together and have a good time, because we all are members of the same body, the body of Christ.

We have some things in common, and one of them is salvation. Jude, verse 3, tells us, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." This is a common salvation. We all have the same experience. That is what brings us together as a group, having something common to us.

I believe there are people out in Babylon who have gotten saved and are walking in all the understanding they have. It ought to cheer their hearts to recognize that there is a people who has one thing in common, and that is salvation, not church membership somewhere, but old-time salvation. Acts, Chapter 2, tells us that they had all things common. Verse 44 says, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common." I am so glad that is the way God has ordained the body of Christ to be. Every child of God is a

member of the body of Christ. If you have this common experience of salvation, then you are a member of the body of Christ, and the body has a job that it needs to do. It has to function, and to get those jobs done, every member must be in his place. I cannot move my left hand to the right arm and get the job done.

Every member has his own particular job. The greatest job that we have, as Paul wrote in Hebrews 10:25, is "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Paul said to exhort one another, and we are to encourage one another. The Spirit of God will always lead you to encourage others. If something comes into your mind, and you recognize that it might discourage someone, then God's Spirit is not prompting you to say that. He is not a spirit to discourage. He wants us to exhort and encourage one another, to strengthen one another, and to help one another. Every member in your own natural body works to keep the body alive. The heart pumps to keep the blood flowing through to keep the rest of the body alive; every member in the human body is connected. The same is true of the spiritual body.

Operating According to His Will

Every member is connected to the Head, and Christ is the Head. God has divine order in the way that He runs this body, and He wants us to make sure that we operate according to His will. If we are connected to the Head, then we are going to work right. Just as in the natural body, the only reason a member does not work right is that something has happened to the connection between that member and the head. As long as everything is connected to the head, everything works fine, because that is the way God ordained it.

Chiropractors tell you that if

your vertebrae are aligned properly so that all the nerves can function as they need to, then the signals can go where they need to go, and your body stays healthy, because God ordained it that way. God set it up so that your body is designed to live and keep itself alive until He says it is time to go home. The members in the body of Christ are the same way. Our purpose in life should be to help other members to stay alive. When members of the human body start dying off, it will bring death to the whole body in time. Likewise, in the body of Christ, each member must be kept alive in order for us to do the job that God needs to get done. We all should be in one accord, working together in harmony.

I hope you will think on these thoughts, and I pray that God will help you to recognize that we all need one another, because we all are members of the same body. I cannot afford to hurt you, and you cannot afford to hurt me. When it comes to your own body, you would not think of hurting one of your members. The rest of the body would not like it, because that is unnatural. Paul was saying the church is just like the human body. Every member has feelings, and we should not want to hurt one another. We ought to encourage and strengthen one another. In doing so, we can help one another.

If you have discouraging thoughts on your mind, first, you need to pray and ask God to help you to get rid of those thoughts, because they are going to bring you down. The more discouraged you get, the more likely you are to bring others down with you. You will affect the whole body, so do not let the devil discourage you. If he is discouraging you, then you need to pray and ask God to encourage you to where you need to be so that you can fill your position in the body of being an encouragement to others. If I were to come to you discouraged, how could I encourage you? You need to recognize that you

have a special place in the body of Christ. We all have feelings, and we all need to be encouraged. You should not allow yourself to think on discouraging things or talk about discouraging things. There are lots of things going on that we could talk about that could discourage us. It would not change a thing, except to discourage us. God is in control, so the best thing to do is to think on good things. The Proverb writer

said if there is no wood on the fire, the fire is going to go out; so quit feeding the fire. If you quit feeding discouragement, soon you will be discouraged again.

Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good

report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." If we will do that, then we can work and get the job done that God wants us to get done. I pray that you will mind the Lord and ask Him to help you. Be encouraged, and do what God wants you to do.

(Cassette C-3891M)

One Verse and One Song

This is the story of Paul Bell, whose field of labor was among the Mexicans in Texas. One Saturday afternoon, taking with him a Mexican deacon, he mingled among the Mexican woodcutters and mine workers who came to town on Saturday afternoons.

Mr. Bell and his deacon engaged an old man in conversation and found him a ready listener to the sweetest story ever told. This man, in his sixties, was happily converted and then said, "Since I can neither read nor write, I want you to help me to memorize John 3:16, the verse that you have used to win me to Jesus. Also, since our people love to sing, I would appreciate your teaching me a Gospel song."

With painstaking care, Paul Bell taught the old man the verse that he had requested and the first verse of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Then, carefully instructing the old man about baptism, Mr. Bell had him promise to come to the church soon to take a public stand and to be baptized. Three weeks went by and he did not appear at the church. However, on the fourth Sunday, in the midst of the morning preaching service, this man walked in, accompanied by five other Mexican men. He did not stop to be seated, but walked down the aisle with his companions and said, "We all are here to be baptized." In that brief time, he had brought five trophies of the grace of God as the firstfruits of his Christian life!

During the following two years, this old man often brought men to church with him—men whom he had won to Jesus Christ—until the total was

approximately fifty.

One day Mr. Bell answered a knock at his front door and a man said to him, "There is an old Mexican woodcutter at the point of death in the woods nearby who is calling for you."

When Mr. Bell arrived at the woodcutter's home, he found his friend near death, but fully conscious. The old man's face lighted up at the sight of Mr. Bell, and he whispered, "I am so glad to see you. Will you quote my Scripture for me?" As Mr. Bell began quoting from John 3:16, the lips of the old Mexican man followed, and when that was done, the old man said, "Please sing my song for me also."

Lifting up his voice in song, Mr. Bell began singing in Spanish, "*What a Friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer!*"

As he sang, he noticed the lips of the old man moving for a while, and gradually they ceased. At the end of the verse, he turned to find that the soul of the aged Christian had slipped away on the wings of the song. But in two short years, this illiterate old man had won fifty souls to Christ with one verse of Scripture, one verse of a song, and a great knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Selected



They were singing, "Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed . . ." and into the mission burst a young man. Down the aisle he pounded without slowing a step—down to the altar and to his knees before God. He was breathless and calling for Heaven's mercy.

It was Easter night, and Allen Bayer (not his real name) had run two miles to keep this date with God. It sounded like a silly thing to do, but as he looks back on it, he feels that it was the smartest thing he had ever done—when he found peace with God.

Allen had been born in a tough part of Chicago, but two loves had kept him out of more than an average amount of trouble. One was music—he was a good piano player—the other was pool, which kept him in pocket money. When he was "in the money," he lived it up in a first class hotel room; when he was broke, he stayed at the "Y" until his luck changed.

It was a crazy way to live, but Allen thought he had the world by the tail, until he wandered into a group of singers on the street. Their enthusiasm caught his musician's ear, and he soon found himself at the mission listening to their music and testimonies.

He heard one man say, "I

want to tell anyone who will listen that I would be a dead man right now if I hadn't wandered into this mission one night in a drunken stupor . . . and went out singing."

Another man said, "My problem wasn't booze or dope, but it was self. I was the meanest, grouchiest man that anyone ever saw. But God gave me a new disposition." However, Allen was not easily convinced. He said to himself, "If that guy had a mean streak before, he's still got it, and I aim to find out." When the meeting was over, he followed the man to find out where he lived. It turned out to be a seven mile hike.

The next day he went back with a dictionary under his arm. Posing as a salesman, he made every attempt to prove that "Grouchy" could still be made to lose his temper. He didn't sell the dictionary, and their conversation ended on a different note, the man giving a ringing testimony to the saving grace of God.

A few nights later Allen was back at the mission again. This time a woman who had been "just plain lazy" in her household duties was telling of how God had straightened out her life. Allen followed her home too. This time it was a long bus ride.

The next day he was at her back steps asking for a handout. The mud he tracked onto her

spotless floor stood out in sharp contrast to her flawless housekeeping. Again, the conversation took a sudden twist. "Young man, are you a Christian?" The evidence was plain and her testimony was true. Her house was clean, she was not stingy, and she was willing to talk to a stranger about his lost soul. He was almost convinced! Yet he put off salvation.

A short time later, he was invited to play the piano in church. His sense of righteousness in playing the piano in a church did not last long, for he realized that he was living a lie. Then Easter Sunday, as he was playing for the sixth service that day, he suddenly realized that soon the invitation at the mission would be given, and he would not be there! That thought struck him hard! He felt compelled to leave. Out the door he went into the street—no cab in sight—and no street car. So he started running. It was two miles to mission, but he never stopped until he cried out before the altar, "Lord, be merciful and save me for Jesus' sake." When Allen Bayer stands on eternity's shores, he will never regret the night "he ran all the way."

Selected

James 1:19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own

selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be

blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Isn't One Religion as Good as Another?



Brother E. David Stegmeier

Pure, Wholesome Religion

I read a story once of a situation in the country of England many years ago. A latecomer arrived at the house of worship, and a very great man of God was preaching. The latecomer was disheartened that he had missed the sermon. As he was entering the house of worship, he said, "Is the sermon finished?" One who was leaving said, "No, the sermon remains to be lived."

I appreciate the Church of God and its teachings. There is no more beautiful institution in the world than the Church of God, the true body of Christ. She has a divine builder, and she operates according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit. There is no greater architect than Jesus Christ. The Bible says He is

building His church, and I am so glad that I am a part.

Thank God, of all people in the world, we have liberty and great freedom. We are free to live as God intended for us to live. We are not in bondage to sin, self, or the devil. We are free to live for God in this sinful world and to be everything He intends us to be. I was reading something recently that said the reason America is such a blessed nation is that our forefathers came to this land seeking a place to worship God. I thank God for America. God's grace has been shed on her, and we are responsible. I would like to answer some questions often asked by people today. One is, "Isn't any religion good enough?" Another is, "Aren't all religions the same if you are serious?" No. There is one true,

genuine religion. We are going to study in the Book of James, Chapter 1. The Book of James is a book of faith. If we have true faith, it will inspire us to action. There are some important truths in the Book of James. The faith of God in a person helps him to control his tongue. This kind of faith chooses the wisdom of God, and that wisdom causes a person to separate from the world and draw closer to God and wait patiently for the coming of Christ. Since James speaks of pure religion, he was implying that some religions are not pure and wholesome. False doctrines and false teachings of all kinds taint them.

Most religions are not wholesome. The religion of the Church of God is a wholesome religion. It makes good husbands and fathers, good wives and

mothers, good, obedient, respectful children, good citizens, and good employees. Our Scripture text says in verse 27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Other religions are not wholesome, but they are tainted and corrupted with false teachings of all kinds. This is one reason that you should not go out and get books on false religion and try to study all the false teachings. You need to stay with the Book. False religions are dangerous and misleading. A young couple once decided to purchase books on Mormonism, the Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, and so on. They became extremely confused. None of these religions is right. They oppose one another and fight against the Truth.

There is one pure religion, and it is the religion of Jesus Christ. It is taught, practiced, and propagated by the Church of God. We are so blessed. I could be out in confusion today, but praise God, I am not confused. I know where I have been, I know where I am, and I know where I am going. I am walking in the light as He is in the light. When we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another. If there is no fellowship, someone is not walking in the light. I love fellowship, and I love God's people.

How Is Satan Deceiving the Nations?

People have philosophies of all kinds today. One of them is the notion that one religion is as good as the other. I do not want to take the opinions of men. I want to take the Word of God, because it is the ultimate Book. It is the Book of books and the ultimate authority. There is no authority greater than the Word of God. I thank God for His Word. You must weigh

everything by the ultimate Book, the Bible.

When my mother came to the Church of God in the fall of 1947, she had a Bible with footnotes in it. Those footnotes are dangerous and misleading. All you need is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. He will lead you, teach you, and guide you into all Truth.

In Revelation 20:7 John wrote, "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." You have to be spiritually ignorant not to realize that the devil is loose. He is loose in false religion. Only the saints of God have power to bind him. He has no power over the saints of God unless God gives it to him; then if he works on us, it is for our good. It helps us to build bigger biceps, spiritually speaking. The devil cannot hurt you; he can only help you.

Revelation 20:7-8 states: "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations . . ." How is he deceiving the nations? He is causing men to propagate all kinds of false religion. Men have come up with thousands of different kinds. One main difference between the religion of Jesus Christ, which is the Church of God, and all other institutions is that the Church of God is pure and holy; she lives without sin. There is nothing like the Church of God. She is the only one of her mother. She has pure religion, which makes men and women pure, holy, and godly.

Verses 8-9 continue: "And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle [against the Church of God]: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea [What a number! I was taught as a little boy that it is a remnant worshipping God. In almost every situation, the majority is on the side of that which is wrong. So do not be fooled by numbers.] And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and

compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." That is exactly what is coming out of every true minister's mouth: fire. We need to bum up Babylon.

The devil is going around as an angel of light. That is the reason you need to have a good understanding and a knowledge of the Word of God. You must read it, study it, and apply it to your life. As you live the Word of God, you will gain a better understanding. You cannot say, "I am not going to do this or that," and expect to progress. You must apply everything you read in the Word to your life. As you do, you will grow in spiritual insight, in understanding, and in the grace of God.

Paul, writing to the Church of God at Corinth, said in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, [They come around in sheep's clothing, in all kinds of numbers, and dressed in many different ways, usually immodestly. The Bible says to reprove the works of darkness and to have no fellowship with the works of darkness.] transforming themselves [God does not do it; they transform themselves] into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light [false religion is doing a more destructive work than any other thing in the world]. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

Be Steadfast and Unmovable

I want the best religion, don't you? When it comes to clothing, an automobile, or food, I am not that particular; but I want the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. I want the Truth more than I want fellowship with certain individuals.

In a recent article published by an American newspaper, a prominent U.S. author accused the

Pope of deliberate falsehood. He said, "Priests lie in a shadowy underworld of secrecy and evasion and misrepresentation." He went on to say, "The Roman Catholic system is built on structures of deceit." That is true of all other religions except the Church of God. I want the best. I want only that which produces victory in my life. Pure religion produces victory over sin, victory over self, and victory over the old devil. Friend, you need the power of God. You cannot live the way you should without God. Pure religion gives you power to say, "No, devil. I don't have to do that." Life can be so blessed and so beautiful. Sometimes people can have everything and yet be so negative. I really enjoy living, and it is because of Jesus Christ.

It is possible, although you sit under the sound of the pure Gospel, to be led away into a false religious situation. Down through the annals of history, multitudes have been misled. My prayer is, "God, help me not to be misled." Self is the one you really need to watch. You should not give yourself any leeway for anything contrary to the will of God, and do not flirt with sin in your mind. Some people are here today and gone tomorrow. Friend, you need to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the things of God. I often pray, "Lord, help me to keep my relationship with You clean and pure."

Paul, writing to the church of the Galatians, said in Galatians 1:6, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel." All kinds of gospels are out there, but if you take what they offer, you will destroy your soul. If you take the true Gospel, it will enable you to enjoy life to the fullest. If you want to get a high, take this "gos-pill." Jesus said in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." No one lives as rich, rewarding, and

fulfilling a life as the Church of God, walking in the light. D. S. Warner said, "I've found it, Lord, in thee." I love the Truth more than anything else, because I am convinced that if we are going to make it to Heaven, we have to go by the way of the Truth.

Paul went on to say in verses 7-8: "Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you [some people say there is another way, another gospel], and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven [no matter who the person is, if he preaches another gospel, do not give ear to what he has to say], preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Paul said, "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words" (Colossians 2:4). Many people would like to mislead you with sweet, alluring words. They may say things such as, "You are so talented. Why are you wasting that awesome voice at church when you could be on the stage?"

Only One True Way

In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 we read: "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one [there is only one faith, one God, one Lord, and one Church of God kept in His name]. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Since we know there is only one God, and God is very particular about how we approach Him, there is only one religion. If there were two, that would be confusion. God is not the author of confusion. Some

people study to find out what automobile they are going to buy, what home they should build, and so on. We each should spend as much time as possible in the Word of God. The deeper we get into the Word, the more blessed it becomes. I say, "God, help me to go deeper and higher in the things of God." Nothing is more worthwhile than spending time with Jesus Christ and spending time in His Word, in the prayer closet, and in the house of worship. It is time well spent.

Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The word *the* is an article, and it means "one." Christ is the only way. Jesus said in John 10:9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." There is only one door, one way, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one religion. Our Scripture Webster's dictionary says the word *pure* means "clean, uncontaminated, unadulterated, unpolluted, and untainted." When you want water, you want it to be pure. In other words, you want all the qualities of pure water, and you do not want anything impure mixed with it. That is the way it is with pure religion. You should want everything God has for you, with nothing added. Water has two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen. If anything else is in it, it is contaminated. I want pure religion, do you?

Fully Obey God's Word

Other religions add to and take away from the Word of God. You may ask, "How do you know the Bible is the inspired Word of God?" I know it is inspired of God because it inspires me; it is exciting. Moses said in Deuteronomy 4:1, "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live" I am not looking to see what I can take away

from the Bible. I am looking for more than I can practice. You may hear people say, "Do we have to do that? Is that really necessary?" Not many people say, "What else would help me live a better life? Is there anything else I can measure up on?" That is the way I want to be. When you fully obey God, you are living. My, what a time we can have with the Lord!

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 reads: "... go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word [we are admonished repeatedly not to add to the Word] which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

In Deuteronomy 12:32 Moses said, "What thing soever I command you, observe [or be very careful] to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." Feet washing is one ordinance that is debated. One minister told me, "Well, I don't think we need to observe feet washing. If we bake a loaf of bread for our brother or help him change the oil in his vehicle, that is sufficient." However, Jesus did not say that. He said to wash your brother's feet, and you will be happy. If you got a pan of water and washed your brother's feet, you might get excited about serving God and not be so miserable.

In Revelation 22:18-19 John said: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." You had better leave the Word of God as it is. You ought to read it, believe it, practice it, and live it. Then you will not need any kind of substance or drug, and you

will really enjoy living. This is the standard we can place on all religions. Jesus said in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." The Word of God is the authority.

What else does the Bible say about pure religion? John said we have passed from death unto life. True religion causes a change. Have you had a change in your life? Have you had a spiritual resurrection? Are you a new creature? Can you point to a time when you were born again? True religion will give you love for your brethren, and even for your enemies. Do you love everyone? I can truthfully say that I love every man, woman, boy, and girl in this world, and I hold nothing against anyone. I love people. I hate what some have done, but I love them. Do you have love?

Power to Live Holy

Another mark of true religion is having power to live above sin. The Bible speaks about false religion in 2 Timothy 3:5. It says they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of God. The power of God keeps us from sin. The angel said to Mary, announcing the birth of Christ, in Matthew 1:21, ". . . and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." If you look up the word from in an unabridged dictionary, you would find that it is a spatial word; it is a preposition showing detachment. If you were to save your child from a burning house, that would mean that you took him out, because those burning flames would destroy him. Jesus saves you from sin, not in your sin. Once you are saved, between you and sin is a space, and it is called the grace of God.

Once a woman came to my wife wanting to know about the Church of God, so my wife told her all about it. Then she said, "Aren't you

kind of proud and arrogant, to have the audacity to think that you could live without sin?" My wife said, "No, it's the grace of God. We are weak, but God keeps us from sin." Paul said in Romans 5:20, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

In closing, I want to ask you a few questions. Are you living free from sin? Do you love everyone? How is your home? Is it a place of peace, tranquility, and love? This religion will make you a beautiful person at work, in your home, or wherever you are. It will make you godly. One great Christian leader said, "The grave danger with modern Christendom is that through it millions have been exposed to such a mild form of religion that they have now become immune to the real thing."

Do you have pure religion? Are you living a wonderful life? If you are not, then you need to be honest. A man of God does not preach to hurt or condemn people, and God does not send a message to condemn people. He wants to help people. You are missing the best of life if you do not have this religion. The very best life that you can possibly have is getting this pure religion. Do you have it? Have you come short of what you could have?

(Cassette C-4695M)

YOUR PLACE

Is your place a small place?
Tend it with care;
God set you there.

Is your place a large place?
Guard it with care!
He set you there.

What'er your place, it is
Not yours alone, but His
Who set you there.

Selected

Luke 12:1 In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3 Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

4 And I say unto you my friends, Be

not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

6 Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

7 But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the

angels of God:

9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

10 And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

The Leaven of the Pharisees



Brother Allen Polston

Redeemed From Vain Conversation

We find in the Scripture text that Jesus began speaking to His disciples by warning them. He sent forth a warning to them and said in verse 1, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." God does not do things without a reason. He has a purpose and a time for the things that He works in our lives. God in Heaven is planning things, and He is looking down the road in behalf of His children and for all mankind, because He is not willing that any should perish He is working and doing things so that

people might yield themselves to Him.

This warning was not placed in Luke 12:1 without a reason. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter, Chapter 1, that we are delivered from vain things. Verse 18 reads, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." Child of God, Peter let us know that we are redeemed. One thing that he said we are redeemed from is vain conversation. In other words, we are delivered from behaviors in our lives that do not have a godly,

edifying purpose, things that are not pleasing in the sight of God. We are living in a time when there is much vanity in our world, but God has redeemed us from vain things. The word *conversation* in that verse includes that which we speak and our behavior. Often we learn vain behaviors from family members and others whom we have been around. We all have done things that are vain, but God delivers us from vain ways of living and changes our lives around to where we now have a purpose and a reason to live.

Some people have acquired many earthly goods and

accomplished many things in this life, but their lives will come to an end after awhile, and then what? They are going to have nothing. I thank God that there is a reason to live. God delivers us from vain conversation, or vain, useless behavior; then He puts within us a reason to live. What is that reason? He wants us to serve Him and please Him; then our heavenly reward will continue to build up by our witnessing, testifying, and reaching out to souls.

Young person, you need to be careful that you do not follow the youth of this world and end up wasting your youth in things that are vain, things that really have no purpose to God. It can happen very easily. Now, nothing is wrong with activities such as ball playing, exercising, or other clean, enjoyable activities. However, those activities should not take up the greater part of your days. We, even young people, need to work and labor for God to see other individuals learn about Jesus Christ. When we do that, we are building rewards in Heaven.

Saint, you need to be careful that you do not allow yourself to get into a vain lifestyle, where you do not glorify God. God's people ought to set aside time to serve God, to pray, to witness to lost souls, to write letters of encouragement, and to study God's Word. With so much to do for God, we should not live our lives in vain, but if we are not careful, that is what we will do.

"There Is Nothing Covered"

Jesus put the warning in our Scripture lesson because it is something of which we need to be careful. The Bible warns that hypocrisy is something about which we need to be cautious and concerned. Hypocrisy can begin to inch its way into your heart and life. Jesus warned, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Notice how He termed

this and described it. He described it as leaven, something that starts very small, and before long the whole lump is leavened. This condition works like many other things the devil has. It does not happen overnight. It begins to take a little hold on a person, and then it multiplies until eventually it has worked such a devastating work that one wonders if there is much hope.

Jesus spoke very sternly to hypocrites. In Matthew, Chapter 23, Jesus said several times, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He called them out, and He mentioned some really serious things that they were doing. He said in verse 2 of our Scripture lesson, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." Notice that he said that nothing in our lives is covered. Sometimes people think they have covered things, or securely hidden them from view, so they feel everything is okay. Jesus was sending out the warning that not a thing in your life is covered or hidden from God.

Many people do not like to come around the Church of God where the Truth is preached because the Word of God uncovers things in their lives. The Word of God is powerful; it is sharper than any twoedged sword, and it is dividing. The Word goes right down into the joints and marrow and divides between the spirit and the soul. It gets where no other thing in the world can get to. The Word of God goes down deep and begins to sort things out and pull out things that people feel they have hidden. I thank God for that, because it gives us an opportunity to deal with wrongs before we meet God at the judgment.

Friend, you ought to thank God when He deals with your heart and reveals something in your life that needs attention. You ought to praise God for His goodness, because He is being merciful in showing you things you need to take care of now

instead of waiting and revealing those things to you at the Judgment. When you get to the judgment, it will be too late to address situations. Then one must take the punishment or the reward that he has coming for his deeds. Again, Jesus said, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." We are living in a time when government officials sometimes conceal things from the general population, but God in Heaven knows all things. Daniel 2:28 says, "But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets." There is a God in Heaven who knows exactly where you are. Nothing escapes His knowledge. No matter what extreme measures you may employ to cover something, God knows all about it.

Our Scripture text tells us in verse 3, "Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." If someone were to go to the trouble to hide something by getting right up in someone's ear in a closet to speak of it, he would think that it was well covered. Today many people think the things they are doing and the ways they are dealing with things are well covered and that things will never come out. Jesus had something to say about the things spoken in the closet: He said they were going to be sounded from the housetop and the things spoken in darkness were going to be heard in the light. In other words, there is no hiding place.

Saint, your life must be as an open book. You must be honest before God with nothing hidden or put aside with which you have not dealt. It is a shame that people want to hide things, and it is sad that the devil convinces individuals to cover things, because there is a remedy for every situation, and it is a very simple one. Thank God, one does not have to go to great extremes. Just do what the Bible says: repent

and let the blood of Jesus Christ wash it away. Friend, you do not have to go to the trouble of concealing something. You can just bring it to God and let Him take care of it.

The Bible says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). A person may seem to get by for quite a while, but he will not prosper before God. It behooves each of us to allow God to search our hearts and take inventory of our lives. As He makes things known to you, give it to Him and let Him take care of the situation. No matter what means or methods one may employ to cover something or to avoid something, God will bring it to light eventually.

The Fear of What Others Might Think

In the next few verses of our Scripture lesson, Jesus helps us to understand why people think about concealing things. He lets us see why we are tempted, and sometimes people yield to the temptation to hide things that they know quite well ought not to be there. Jesus went on to say in verses 4-5: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

The reason that people try to hide things is that they have a fear within them. I do not know of anyone who likes to be under fear; it is not a very comfortable feeling. Some people's idea of fear may be different from others, but genuine fear is not something that we invite. When Jesus said, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do," He was releasing us from a certain kind of fear, because we all are tempted to be moved by this fear

that He was talking about. He was not talking about large, ferocious dogs, but He was telling us that we need not allow man to be a fearful influence upon our lives. That is the very thing that causes many people to refuse to do what God wants them to do. They fear what others will think if they do what they know they need to do, but Jesus said in the Scripture lesson not to be afraid of them. The worst that someone can do (and it is not likely that it would happen) is kill your body. After that, they can do nothing more to hurt you. But there is a God in Heaven who can destroy both the body and the soul in hell if you do not obey Him. If you go up to the judgment bar of God unprepared to meet Him, your soul will be doomed for eternity. Your life will be destroyed, and it will be great devastation.

Jesus was telling us, "I am going to release you from the fear of man. I will release you from the fear of what others will think if you shed the worldly adornment that you have been wearing. I will release you from the fear of what others might think if you obey God." Oh, it probably will not change their thinking, but you do not need to fear them or worry about what they think. Why? Because there is a God in Heaven that you need to fear more. He has more power than they do. God has life-giving ability, and He is more satisfying, so do not fear what others think or might do. This tempts many young people to a great degree.

I can remember God dealing with my heart as a young teenager. Part of the reason I delayed doing anything about my soul was that I was afraid of what my friends at school would think if I told them that I was a born-again Christian. I was fearful of what they would think if I went back and refused to puff on a cigarette or slip a little tobacco in my mouth. I had to go through many terrible things and suffer many regrets before I finally realized they were not really my

friends anyway. They could not supply what I really needed.

No Greater Friend

Jesus said in verse 4, "And I say unto you my friends. . . ." Who needs the friends of the world when we have God for our best friend and all that He can do for us? God can release you from the fear of what your mama or daddy, your grandma or grandpa, your close friend, or your companion might think. Sometimes getting saved does cause people never to want anything to do with you again.

God wants you to see that He can give you more than what the world can give you. He can give you joy, peace, and more of the blessed things of life than this world can give you. God wants you to realize that you can be free from the fear of what others think because you are walking hand in hand with Him Who needs the friends of the world when you can have God and the saints of God? The friends of the world will forsake you when you are out of money. They will forsake you when you go through difficult times.

Before God saved me, I had several drinking buddies and others with whom I kept company. Not one of them has called or come over to my house in a long time, but that does not bother me. God is with me. Every night when I pillow my head, God is right there. Every morning when I awaken, God is right there. He does not leave me or forsake me. In sickness He is there; when I am well in body, He is there; and in rough times He is there. He sticks closer than a brother. He is a friend if there was ever a friend. He is the true definition of a friend. You need a friend like God.

You might have had best friends that have left you or wronged you. You need a friend like God. He will never do you wrong. Often worldly friends are there only when you have something to offer them, but God will stick closer than a brother.

He is a true friend. Worldly friends have limitations upon them concerning how far they can go, but God can do exceedingly abundantly above that which we can think or ask.

Friend, you should not refuse to obey God because of what others may think. They are not going to stand at the judgment bar of God with you. It will be you and God.

Jesus said in verse 5 of our Scripture text, "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear." Notice how He stated this. In other words, He was telling us in advance that we are going to face some adverse situations in life. The devil knows that the fear of man is a powerful tool that he can use, so Jesus forewarned us. You may say, "That would never happen to me." Have you ever been talking to someone and wanted to tell that person about Jesus, but you were a little reluctant, because you were afraid of what he or she might think? You were afraid of how that person might respond if you told him or her that Jesus is your Savior and friend. This fear that Jesus forewarned of covers many other areas as well.

Allowing Little Things to Go Unattended

Jesus went on to instruct us to fear God who can destroy both body and soul and cast them into hell. In other words, you should let your life be under the influence of the fear of God. He was not speaking of a kind of fear that causes you to run around scared to death all the time, in a state of paranoia, but a fear that causes you to be careful, because you want to please God. You do not want to displease Him. You want to be very sensitive to His tugging on your heart. You should not worry about what the world might think. This world is going to be gone one day. Do not worry about what your friends might think. If they never repent, they are going to go to the

same hell that the adulterer, the murderer, and the fornicator will go to. Friend, you need to get yourself in a position where you fear God. Do not worry about what your companion and your peers will say. Fear what God will think if you do or do not do certain things.

Jesus let us know that one primary reason people give in to the leaven of the Pharisees is that they allow little things to go unattended. That is a very dangerous thing to do. The devil uses fear because he knows if he can get just a little hypocrisy in your heart and life, it is like leaven, and it will start growing. If you allow a little hypocrisy to work, it will not be long until those things will destroy you, your children, and others around you. Friend, you must not allow this condition to work, and you should not allow little things to go unattended.

If you have a problem and do not deal with it, it will only get worse. If you profess to be saved and sanctified and in good standing with God, yet God's Spirit has pointed out a spiritual need in your life, you will not prosper. That condition will only get worse and become more difficult to deal with as time goes on. Eventually, it will snowball into something even bigger. Down the road somewhere you will realize, "O God, I shouldn't have done that." You may get right, but what about all the people and your own children that you have influenced during that time? What about those who have been affected by the things that you have allowed to work in your life?

Friend, you need to stand against the fear of man, and do not allow what others think and say to influence you. You must obey God when you realize that He has definitely put His hand upon you and shown you something. You should not walk away from that, because the results will be devastating. The devil is a liar. As time goes on, he will try to minimize things, but they are not

minimized in the sight of Almighty God.

If God has dealt with you about something, then it is not going to change. You must take care of it to prosper with God and to make Heaven your home. You must go right back to that and deal with it or you will never make it, friend. That is the reason Jesus warned us to beware. This could happen to you if you become careless. This is a serious warning. If you want to have joy that will cause you to shout and praise God, you must be obedient to the Lord. You cannot allow anything wrong to linger in your heart and life and not do anything about it. Some say, "Oh, yes, I am in good standing with God," but they know they need to confess and forsake some things in their lives and ask God for grace never to return to that condition.

You Are of More Value Than Many Sparrows

Jesus brought forth another point in our Scripture lesson. He asked the question in verse 6, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" Notice that He said "five sparrows," not five eagles or another beautiful, dynamic bird. Sparrows are not something that people value. They are kind of at the bottom of the bird category. Why did He say five? Because the five were sold for only two farthings. He wanted us to see that they did not even bring one farthing apiece. God has given them a place, but they do not have much value. Nevertheless, not one of them is forgotten before God; He does not overlook one.

Jesus said in the first part of verse 7 in our Scripture text, "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." When you comb your hair and some fall out while others are growing in, God adjusts the records. A God with that kind of power and ability can supply any need that would ever surface in

your life. He knows the activities and the involvement of every sparrow. God takes into account and knows all about things that we might consider worthless or very minor. You will never face a problem or a situation that God cannot help you with. Some fail to obey God because they are afraid of what might come upon them, but God can help with any situation. He even knows the number of the hairs on their heads.

Jesus went on to say in verse 7, "Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." Do not worry about what family, friends, and relatives will do when they say, "What prompted you to make these changes in your life?"

Friend, you should not fear that. God in Heaven knows the number of hairs on your head and knows where every sparrow is. If you have a need in your heart and life, He

will be glad to supply it. He will be glad to offer you peace in the times of trouble. God will give you peace in the midst of the storm. He can bring calmness and sweet joy when everything else falls apart. He can bring happiness and satisfaction when the different efforts in your life have failed. When you have suffered setback after setback, God will be there. He knows what you are experiencing, and He can give you joy that no one else can give. He knows what you need.

Is there something in your life that God has been troubling you about? Whether you need to be born again or you are a child of God who has allowed something to work in your heart, God can amply supply your need. How can you go out to your lost loved ones and friends and testify to them about being straight, clean, and pure when something is lacking in your own

heart and life? How can you get down on your knees and pray, "God, bring my children, my parents, and my friends in?" How can you honestly get down before the Lord and expect anything to happen when you know He has dealt with you concerning something in your life, something you need to deal with?

Sometimes people end up leaving the Church of God because they allow little things to linger. Little things got started in their lives and just snowballed. As God deals with your heart, you need to be honest. You have no reason to fear or hold back on the Lord. You need to fear the One who is holding the Book of Life. One day you are going to stand before Him individually, and you must answer for every idle word. How is it with you?

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Old Loudmouth Was Saved

Many people for whom the church had been praying for a long time were being saved in the revival meeting that I was conducting. So when the pastor received a note from one of the city's tough guys, saying he wanted me to come to see him, the pastor naturally supposed the man was under conviction and wanted me to talk to him about the Lord. We rejoiced that at last this man was going to be saved!

However, it soon became obvious that he had sent for me to embarrass me so he could repeat it to his friends. I interrupted to say that he was playing the fool and that he would go to hell as sure as he was a foot high. To him it was a big joke. Him go to hell? Never! He was nobody's fool! After he had gotten too old to enjoy the lust of the flesh, he was going to be saved! Until then, he was going to "live it up."

In my message that night, I took an old pocket watch and held it up for all to see. I said that even an old pocket watch could be of real value, and I wanted to give it to a boy there who did not have one. As I had hoped, Old Loudmouth's son came forward to receive the watch. He reached out for the watch saying, "Thanks . . ." but I interrupted him.

"Don't be in such a rush, young fellow, I told you I would give you this watch and I will. But first, I

would like to play with it for a while. I want to have some fun with it before I give it to you."

First, I wanted to see if it had an unbreakable crystal. I smashed it-hard-against the corner of the pulpit and it broke into a thousand pieces, the hands were knocked off and the face caved in! The audience gasped and the young fellow's mouth opened in consternation. I pried off the back and dug inside with a car key. Several of the inner parts jiggled onto the pulpit. Then I dropped it on the floor and ground it into the floor with my heel! Then I picked up all the pieces-it was one sorry mess-and I said, "Now, young fellow, I told you I would give you the watch, and here it is." I dumped it all into his pocket.

It is a thousand wonders that the crowd did not lynch me right then and there. I have never seen any crowd so down right angry. There was not one friendly face in the whole audience. Cuss words boomed out over the crowd-it was Old Loudmouth, the boy's father. Mob violence threatened, so I took "the bull by the horns." I said in a loud voice, "My, you hate me, don't you? But don't get mad at me, you hypocrites. Many of you have done something far worse tonight than I have. I promised a boy a watch-and then I wrecked it first. But how many of you have intended to be saved someday-after you have

wrecked your life? You are living in sin and shame and are no good to yourself, no good to your loved ones, and no good to God. Then when your life is completely ruined and your days are just about gone, you think you'll turn to God and say, 'Now, dear Lord, I want to give my heart and life to You.'

"Now, I want to tell you two things: first, you are not fit to live, and second, you are a fool! You cannot get by with it, and you are a fool for thinking you can deceive God. The Bible says, 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'"

Then I brought the boy back to the platform and gave him a beautiful, new golden wristwatch. "This one," I said, "is far more valuable than the one I ruined." I went on to say that if he or anyone else lived a life of sin, he would ruin himself just as I had ruined the other watch, but any person who would give his life to Jesus would have a golden life that would be of real value to himself and to his friends and his neighbors. At the close of the service, there were many conversions-this boy among them as well as his father, Old Loudmouth.

Selected

[Guest Editorial- continued from page 2]

Daniel was a spiritual man. He was a prophet of God, and he saw those kingdoms by their true nature: he saw them as wild, savage beasts. Also, he saw the spirit that motivated those kingdoms. A heathen king saw them as something precious, but a true man of God saw them as wild and savage: the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the fourth dreadful beast.

What did Daniel see? Verse 3 of our Scripture text says, "And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." He said that he saw four great beasts. What do those four beasts represent? Daniel 7:17 gives us insight: "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings [or kingdoms; the word kings and kingdoms are used interchangeably in this text], shall arise out of the earth." So these four great beasts of verse 3 represent four kings, kingdoms, or world empires, according to verse 17.

Daniel 7:23 reads, "Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms." By identifying and understanding the truth concerning those kingdoms, we can lay another dispensational falsity to rest: the false teaching of a future great tribulation.

Again, we read in verse 3 of our Scripture lesson, "And four great beasts [which we found in verse 17 are four kings or kingdoms] came up from the sea." Notice that they rose from the sea. Biblically, what does the sea represent? Isaiah 57:20 tells us that "the wicked [speaking of people] are like the troubled sea." Webster's Dictionary says the definition of the word sea is "a mass of water; a large body of water."

Let us see by the Bible what the waters represent. Revelation 17:15 says, "And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." When we read of water in these Scriptures, it represents people. Therefore, when the Scripture says those beasts came up out of the sea (a great mass of water), it is letting us know that this was a massive move of people. It was not a small occurrence, but it was a massive

move that involved great multitudes of people. Even a noted dispensationalist said this: "The sea in Scripture imagery stands for the populace." Even he had enough insight to recognize that sea represented the populace, or the people.

Each of those four kingdoms rose from the minds of people. They were not of divine origin. This is in contrast to when John received a revelation. In Revelation 21:2 he wrote, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven." In contrast to this divine origin from whence the true kingdom and the church came, each of those beasts came up from the sea, or the minds of men.

Each of those kingdoms were humanly devised, and their natures were that of man; in other words, they were fleshly. This was the reason the figure of wild beasts were employed, because they represent uncontrolled passions, wild appetites, and insatiable desires that unregenerate flesh has. When a group of people such as that comes together with a common bond and a common cause, the result is wild, savage beasts. Those kingdoms were dictated and operated under the auspices of unregenerate, deeply degenerated minds of men who were satisfying their lustful, sinful passions and natures.

As we begin to study about the beasts that Daniel enumerated in Chapter 7, it is very noticeable that the Lord gave Daniel more explicit detail than He gave Nebuchadnezzar, and rightly so. Titus 2:11 states, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." God in His faithfulness appears to all men, but He does not appear to the ungodly as He appears to the godly.

In verse 4 of our Scripture text we are introduced to the first beast: "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a mans heart was given to it" This lion-like beast had the wings of an eagle. What do those figures or symbolic expressions represent to us? They are not literal representations, because he let us

know those beasts represent kingdoms; so they are figurative expressions.

What do they convey to us? The first beast, which was like a lion, represents ancient Babylon. The lion is considered to be the king of beasts, and Babylon, that city of gold, was known as the kingdom of kingdoms. The Scriptures associate lions with kings. Proverbs 19:12 states, "The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion." Proverbs 20:2 reads, "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion." So we can see a connection between a king or kingdom and this lion. This is not the only identifying factor; it gets clearer.

Although this lion represents Babylon, the Scripture gives us a further identifying factor. Verse 4 says it had eagle's wings. Just as the lion is the king of beasts, the eagle is the king of birds. This dearly represents the Babylonian empire, because that kingdom was depicted as the first and the greatest of earthly empires.

In Habakkuk 1:6,8, God, speaking through the Prophet, declared: "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat." He said in verse 6 that he raised up the Chaldeans, and then in verse 8 He said "they shall fly as the eagle."

Babylon and the Chaldeans refer to the same people. The distinction is that Babylon was the locality and the Chaldeans were the type of people they were. Daniel 7:1 declares, "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon . . ." Daniel 5:30 says, "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." These two verses are speaking of the same Belshazzar, the king of Babylon. The Chaldeans were the people over which he ruled.

How else do we know that this lion-like beast with wings of an eagle

represents Babylon? Again, our Scripture lesson says in verse 4, ". . . I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a mans heart was given to it."

In Daniel, Chapter 4, you will find that Nebuchadnezzar took the glory to himself for great Babylon, and he was warned. Yet, even in the face of divine warning, Daniel 4:30 tells us, "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" He was exalted because the empire was as fierce as a lion, a ruthless kingdom that conquered all the then-known world. They were as an eagle: they soared to great heights and reached levels that no others could reach just as an eagle can fly where no other creatures can fly.

Although Nebuchadnezzar was warned about his brash pride, in the face of warning he still boasted and said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" What happened? Daniel 4:33 says, "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." He had the eagles' feathers and nails like birds' claws, but the wings were plucked, of dipped. He did not soar too high when he was down on all fours eating grass like an animal and having the dew land upon him. God plucked the wings of that eagle, King Nebuchadnezzar, and Babylon no longer soared so high.

What is the second beast? Verse 5 of our Scripture text states, "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side." That second beast was in direct chronological succession to the first beast. There were no splits, gaps, or postponements. The second beast was as a bear. Notice that it says "it raised up itself on one side." In other words, it had two sides, but one side became more dominant. The bear represents the Medo-Persian empire. It was a dual kingdom of the Medes and the Persians, but the Persian side raised up and became more dominant.

We also see this substantiated in

Daniel 8:3 in another type of vision: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last." This ram had two horns, but one was higher, just as it said of the bear in Daniel 7:5. This reiterates that one portion of the empire became more dominant. Daniel 8:20 states, "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." Here we can clearly see that the ram with the two horns represents the Medo-Persian empire. This corresponds with Daniel 7:5, where it raised itself up on one side.

Notice in verse 5 that the bear had three ribs in its mouth. A bear crushes its prey in its mouth. The three ribs reference the fact that the Medo-Persian empire crushed the three provinces that made up the Babylonian empire: Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. Those three provinces were the three portions that made up the Babylonian empire. Just as a bear crushes its prey in its mouth, so the second beast crushed those three provinces to succeed Babylon as the world empire. So this second beast represents the Medo-Persian empire.

Our Scripture text tells us in verse 6, "After this I beheld, and to another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it." This leopard-like beast had four heads and four wings, and they were diverse from one another. Notice that it mentions another like a leopard with four wings and four heads. That represents the third kingdom in direct succession, or the Grecian empire, with its king, Alexander the Great

Why is the third beast represented as a leopard? The leopard is known for quick movements and remarkable swiftness. Alexander conquered all the then-known world in five years: at thirty-two years of age. That was a feat that has never yet been equaled in history.

Notice, though, that verse 6 denotes it as having "four wings of a fowl." Grecia had four wings, and Babylon had eagle's wings. An eagle has only two wings, but this creature

had four. This lets us know that the rapidity with which Alexander the Great conquered the then-known world was much quicker than anything that had ever been seen in history and has been unequalled, even to this date.

Also, notice in verse 6 that the beast had the wings of a fowl, but in verse 4 we see that Babylon had eagle's wings. What does that teach us? Fowls' wings are not near the quality of an eagle's wings. Babylon soared to a zenith and a height for a prolonged period of time that Grecia would never know. Those wings of a fowl rather than an eagle's wings indicate that it would neither soar as high, as long, or as far as Babylon had.

How else do we know that this beast represents the Grecian empire? It says the leopard-like beast had four heads. Isaiah 9:6 reads, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." What is upon the shoulders? The head. In the Scriptures heads denote government. Daniel 8:21-22, in the form of another vision, gives clarity: "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn [or power] that is between his eyes is the first king [the first king was Alexander the Great]. Now that being broken whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." When Alexander the Great conquered all the then-known world at age thirty-two, he sat down and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer, and he died a drunkard's death at the age of thirty-three. Before he died, he took his four generals and divided his empire into four different political powers. They became four separate heads of government, thus the four heads. So it did not continue. Daniel 8:22 tells us, ". . . being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation." What nation was it? According to verse 21, it was Grecia.

In the next article we will identify the fourth beast and prove biblically when the Great Tribulation occurred.

Brother Earl R. Borders