

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER

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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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Spring 2003 Camp Meeting

When I began to think of ways to describe the recently held camp meeting here at God's Acres, I was literally deluged with various thoughts. Psalm 133:1 immediately came my to mind, where the Psalmist proclaimed, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" The words of Jesus also came to my mind, where He declared, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). The admonition of the Apostle Paul was evident in this meeting as well. He said in Philippians 1:27 to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

The lyrics of the beautiful song entitled, "The Bond of Perfectness" is descriptive of the spirit of the meeting. It reads, "*How sweet this bond of perfectness, The wondrous love of Jesus; A pure foretaste of heaven's bliss, Oh, fellowship so precious! O brethren, how this perfect love Unites us all in Jesus! One heart, and soul, and mind we prove The union heaven gave us.*" Each of these Scripture passages, as well as the song lyrics, speaks of the beautiful unity that we have as the body of Christ and the love exhibited that promotes such unity. This love and unity were the foremost attributes displayed in the recent camp meeting. There was such a true spirit of love permeating the midst that souls who had not been on the grounds in decades broke into weeping merely upon arriving upon the campgrounds and feeling the sweet Spirit that saturated the midst. There was such love, harmony, and unity among the brethren that it served as such a convicting force to the lost that on one occasion while the saints were showing their love to one another, conviction seized hearts and the altars became filled with souls seeking salvation and help. We were truly privileged to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

The meeting began Sunday morning with a rousing message from Brother David Stegmeier of Canby, Oregon, posing the question, "Can God Count on Us to Be Faithful?" The host pastor, Brother Roger L. Decker, preached a stirring message Sunday evening entitled, "Truth—Buy It and Sell It Not."

Brother Esau Brooks from the Republic of Honduras served as the evening evangelist. He preached some very sobering and thought-provoking messages such as, "Can We Consider God Today?" "The High Cost of Living Wrong," and "The Way To Life." The Lord certainly used our brother to bring great solemnity to wayward souls. Other ministerial brethren filled the pulpit for the other services: Brother C. H. Dickerson of Medina, Ohio; Brother Allen Polston of Mechanicsburg, Indiana; Brother Wayne Hafley of Minerva, Ohio; Brother Ula Bland of Chicago, Illinois; and Brother Calvin Foster of Kensett, Arkansas. Also, numerous other ministerial brethren who were in attendance labored in other capacities to help make the meeting a success. We are certainly appreciative of each one.

The young people took a burden and initiated a prayer service each afternoon. Friday the Lord moved in response to their cries when several young people wept their way into the kingdom. Also, Saturday evening the Spirit of God moved in such a way in the song service that many pressed their way and gained an experience of salvation.

Saturday morning the children and the young people participated in the song service. It was indeed a blessing to see the good number that had been in the children's services throughout the week learning the good things of God.

Time and space would fail me to tell of all the glorious things that occurred during the meeting. If you were unable to be in the spring meeting, I would heartily encourage you to "Come and see" (Revelation 6:1) in our August meeting. The dates for this meeting are August 3-10. Please put it in your plans to be here. I am confident that you will be richly repaid when we once again "sit together in heavenly places" (Ephesians 2:6).

Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Luke 10:30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

A SOUL GOING AWAY FROM GOD



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Downward Road to Jericho

Our Scripture text in Proverbs 16:25 tells us, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Our Scripture text says in Luke, Chapter 10, that a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves who stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and left him half dead. After a while, along came a certain priest, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Next, along came a Levite who came closer, looked on

him, and passed by on the other side. Then along came a Samaritan who saw him and had compassion on him.

The road to Jericho was only about twenty miles long, but that road was considered treacherous, narrow, curvy, and rocky. It was often called "the bloody way." Normally, individuals did not travel the Jericho Road alone if they were carrying anything of value. Most people traveled in caravans or convoys because they knew there was safety in numbers.

Look at the difference in eleva-

tion of the two cities. Jerusalem was approximately 2,300 feet above sea level, a drop of approximately 3,040 feet in about twenty miles. Also, Jericho was located near the Dead Sea, where no marine life could live. The surface of that sea is about 1,292 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. At its deepest point, it is about 1,300 feet deep. The main source of water to the Dead Sea is the Jordan River, which empties about six million tons of water into the sea every twenty-four hours. Despite this fact, the sea has no outlet. Water comes in, but it

does not flow out, yet that sea never rises more than ten to fifteen feet. The reason was that the water evaporates; therefore, that sea has five times the content of salt than an ocean. That is the reason no marine life can live there.

The way to Jericho was a downward road, and next to Jericho was the Dead Sea. This parable reminds me of so many today who feel they can leave the church and still prosper with God. When one left Jerusalem and headed toward Jericho, there was a quick loss of elevation. This illustrates how quickly one goes down when he leaves the church and starts down the road that "seemeth right," to head down to Jericho. The elevation drops when one leaves the body of Christ. Things begin to happen quickly when one starts down the "Jericho Road."

How the Enemy Works

I would liken the city of Jerusalem to a place of spiritual victory and Jericho as a place of defeat. Many today have traveled the Jericho Road, spiritually speaking, and as the Scripture says, they are left half dead. They have left Jerusalem (the church) and started down the winding, treacherous, curvy road of sin, getting involved in things they thought they would never do.

All along the Jericho Road were thieves and robbers lying in wait to destroy, to leave one wounded and half dead. How quickly things change when one leaves the safety of the church! That person's soul becomes fair game for the devil. He is no longer inside the wall of protection.

When a lion or a leopard attacks antelope or some other animal, it does not run right in next to the herd. It singles one out and gets it off by itself. If that animal would run back into the flock, it would find safety. If a lion or a leopard gets an animal out alone, it is fair game. Friend, that is what the devil wants to do to you. He schemes to

get you away from the church and to get you alone, and then you become fair game for him.

A leopard might study a flock for a while and look for one that is wounded or feeble and not quite as fast. It looks for one that is wandering around by itself. Next, it will sneak up as close as it can, and then it will spring upon its prey suddenly and devour it. That is the way Satan works.

Many individuals think they can make it in life without help. The man who was attacked on the Jericho Road thought he could travel alone. Apparently he thought he could handle all the pitfalls that lay ahead of him. No doubt, he knew the road was curvy, rocky, and treacherous. Undoubtedly, he knew of its reputation of thieves and robbers lying in wait, but he probably thought, "I can handle it. It is only twenty miles. I can take care of myself. Usually there are enough people traveling along the road that someone would help me should I need assistance."

As the man traveled down the road to Jericho, he was robbed and beaten and left half dead. After a while, a priest came along, and a little while later a Levite came close by, but they could not give him any help. Why? There was no help in the Law or in the prophets. It takes Christ. The prophets came close, but there was nothing that could bind up the wounds and put an individual on his feet. It takes the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

From Jerusalem to Jericho, it was approximately twenty miles, but the elevation dropped 3,400 feet. How quickly one drops in his morals when he leaves the church. One's personality changes, his character changes, and he is unpleasant to be around. You cannot leave the church and yet keep the good, sweet personality you once had. You cannot leave the church and stay in the same position that you were before. You are going to go down.

You should not try to go against the Word of God, friend. Some peo-

ple thought they would never do the things they are doing. When they were in the church, they might have had a tendency to look down on those who were out in sin and involved in certain things. No doubt, they might have said, "I would never do anything like that." Well, when one leaves the church, there is a great drop in elevation. One does not know how low he will end up.

Too many people are running around thinking, "I will go over to this congregation. If I don't like it there, I will go to that congregation." If that is what you are doing, you are doing a destructive work on your soul, friend. Remember this, if you are out of sorts in one congregation, you will be out of sorts in any congregation you should attend. It is too late in the Gospel Day to play around. It is time to tell it as it is and make it really plain, just as John did when he wrote First, Second, and Third John. He wrote in 1 John 3:8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." That is still true yet today; it has never changed.

Individuals have left the victory they once had, and the enemy of souls has convinced them to settle for something less. They were at a great height when they were in Jerusalem, but now they have settled for a lower elevation. Some have left the Church of God and gone down to Babylon, settling for a lower elevation than they had at the church. A change must take place before one settles for less. You cannot get any higher than heavenly places in Christ Jesus in the Kingdom of God, and you cannot get any lower than that and still be in the Kingdom of God. Some have settled for something less, and instead of making things right, they continue downward on the road to Jericho.

The Glitter and Glamour of Sin

What was at Jericho? There was rich soil, constant sunshine, and a pleasant climate. Jericho was an

attractive place to settle down in the Jordan valley. It was called "The City of Palms." Jericho was situated in the Jordan valley. Its well-watered plains attracted Lot when he separated from Abraham, and it has attracted many a soul yet today.

To what do we liken Jericho? It is something less than real holiness. Also, we liken Jericho to the world. James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." If you can be among people in the world and never trouble them, there is something wrong in your soul. If you have spent quite a bit of time with them and never troubled them, it could be that you look and act the same way they do, and they think you are one of their own. If you are in the Church of God, you do not look the same as the world does. You become a new creature. You get clean on the inside first, and then you clean up the outside. The earrings and the finger rings come off. The brother gets a haircut, the sister allows her hair to grow long, and she wears her skirts down where they belong. One becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Praise God!

Someone may say, "Well, I go to church where I can wear whatever I want to wear." You can stay home and wear whatever you want to. When you become a part of the Kingdom of God, you will do some old-fashioned cleaning up. You can go down to Jericho and live any way you want to, and the preacher will not bother you, but that move will cost you your soul. If you get around the new Jerusalem that came down from God out of Heaven, God holds the standard in the church. If you do not like the Bible standard of the church, the city of Jericho will welcome you with open arms: "Come on, brother, sister. We are going to have a soup supper tomorrow night." Well, God has a supper, but it is not a soup supper; it is the Word of God.

Everyone who is hungry can get up to the table and eat the good things of God, spiritually speaking.

I like the old-fashioned way. I was saved the old-fashioned way, and I have been kept the old-fashioned way. I am against compromise and Babylon. People have let down on the Bible standard are trying to play church. The only time they get moved is possibly through a song service. They might even cry and weep, but they do not get moved over the Word. Why? There is no Word preached, and they go on in their sins. On the other hand, if you get around the Kingdom of God where Jesus Christ is and the Word is going forth, it will cause something to happen down inside you. There will be a stir, and you will either say "amen" or "I am the man." Praise God for His goodness!

Some have left the church to seek another way, only to find that the well-watered plains are not all that they thought they would be. Some have thought, "I will just go down there and retire and go down to that old Babylonian church and take it easy." Well, that is fine until you have a real trial and try to contact someone who can get hold of God. Doctors of Divinity do not even know who Divinity really is. Divinity does not need a doctor. He has never been sick and never will be sick. However, there are some things that make Him sick. What is that? The Bible tells us that lukewarmness makes Him sick.

The world has its glitter and glamour, but it also has many heartaches and sadnesses. You may ask, "How do you know?" I was out there, and I know what the world is like. It is similar to a mirage: you are thirsty, so you run for a drink of water, and it disappears. Nothing is there to quench the thirsting of your soul. You cannot satisfy the soul with alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs. You cannot satisfy the soul with the world. Why? The soul did not come from the world; it came from God! Ecclesiastes 12:7 states, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it

was: [Where does the spirit go?] and the spirit shall return unto [a just] God who gave it." Something is in every one of us that belongs to God, and it is going back to God.

A Treacherous Road to Travel

The billboards of the world propagate, "Pleasures are found here." However, you will find that if you partake of the world's allurements, its pleasures are only seasonal, and then you are going to reap corruption. No doubt, you have seen the picture on billboards of the man riding through "Marlboro Country." Had he been smart, he would not have partaken of a one of them, because "Marlboro Country" leads a person to a cancer ward with his or her lungs eaten out. Pictures on the billboards advertise individuals partaking of alcoholic beverages. Often you can find those people who partook down in an alley somewhere, lying around like old bums. They have left premium whiskey, and now they are down to wine or whatever they can get. That is the reaping of sin, but the billboards do not show that.

The road to "Jericho" is a treacherous road, and signs are all around there, trying to allure you to try this and that. If cigarettes could satisfy, you would only have to smoke one; but they cannot satisfy. Therefore, one who smokes has to light up another, and then another. Friend, when you partake of God, you partake of Him only once, and you will be satisfied forever. The world has its time of pleasure, but it is only seasonal; then it is filled with sorrow and discontentment.

You may ask, "What is your advice?" You need to get into Jerusalem, the city of the free, and stay there. Jerusalem, which is from above, is free, and she is the mother of us all. Do you want real freedom, so that you can say no to the devil and yes to God? You cannot do that out in the world. You must get in the new Jerusalem and stay there.

There are four things the world

will do to you, just as it did to the certain man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. First, it will strip you of your raiment. Second, it will wound you. Third, it will rob you of your possessions. Fourth, it will leave you half dead. What a picture of an individual leaving the church, going away from God! The world is as a thief: it will rob you of your spiritual garments and change your mind about things you were once convinced of. If you hang around some people in the world long enough, they will cause you to change your mind about many things. They may say, "You don't have to dress modestly." In the world you do not, but in the new Jerusalem you do.

The world will strip away every good characteristic about you. It will wound you instead of helping you. Life will be continually filled with disappointments. What is one big disappointment out in the world? The disappointment that you cannot do what you really want to do. Some people would like to serve God and quit this or that habit, but they cannot do it. Why? They are bound, and it is a disappointment to them.

Many have tried to quit smoking. Before I was saved, often I would get so disgusted with the cigarette habit, because it had me bound. Many times I threw the cigarettes in the trash and said, "I am not going to touch another one." Oh, what disappointment came when later I would sneak over when no one was looking and pick them out of the trash and put them back into my pocket. Friend, you do not have to do that in the new Jerusalem. The only smoke you will find is the incense (your prayers) that you offer up to God. It will not destroy you; that will build you up and help you.

I wonder how many people, if they would be honest, would say that they would to God that they had never left the Church of God? If they would be honest, they would say, "That is when I had it really

good and life was worth living. That is when I was really enjoying myself."

Are You Wasting Your Substance?

The world will bankrupt you spiritually, materially, and physically. We read in Luke 15:11-18: "A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine [sin will really humiliate you]. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee."

The prodigal son started out being his own master, but he wound up being a servant, working down in a hogpen. He started out spending his money freely, but he ended up being a beggar. The world will applaud you as long as you are a free spender. They will go out of their way to make you feel welcome. However, when you have spent all, you will end up as a beggar. The saints of God have it good at Father's house.

What did the thieves do to the man traveling the Jericho Road? They robbed him, beat him, and left him half dead. The world will give to you as long as you can give to it; but when you have wasted all, there will not be outstretched arms to help you. You will find that the

saints of God are truly concerned about you. You will not find that to be so out in the world. There is no concern for your soul out in the world, and there will be no mercy like you experience in the church. Worldly friends will leave you half dead when you have spent all. In other words, you will be alive physically but dead spiritually.

In our Scripture text there was no help for the poor, wounded man in the Law and the prophets. All the Law did was expose sin. Today there is no help for people from false religion: there is no help in dead, formal teachings of Babylon. If you are in a Babylonian church, you would do well to make haste and get out of there. The priests and the Levites traveled that road all the time, but they lacked the mercy and compassion that one finds in Jerusalem. You cannot find mercy and compassion on the "Jericho Road."

Friend, is your spirit in tune with God's Spirit? Some just have a form of religion, but their hearts are not right with God. If that is your condition, there is hope for you. There is always hope in the Gospel. Also, there is hope for the one who has drifted away, following the downward current of this world, going down in his morals and character. Though the devil has beaten and stripped you of all righteousness and left you wounded and half dead, there is still hope for you. The Gospel always has hope.

Steps to Recovery

Consider the steps to recovery. The good Samaritan bound up the man's wounds, poured in the oil and the wine, set him upon his beast, took him to an inn, and gave the innkeeper two pence to take care of him until he could return. The Gospel will bind up the wounds that you have received at the hands of the devil. The Lord will pour in the oil and the wine, or the Word and the Spirit. Then He will set you on His beast and take you to an inn and take care of you until He comes

again.

Isaiah, an Old Testament Prophet, wrote about the prophecy concerning the Gospel Day and Jesus Christ. He wrote in Isaiah 61:1-3: "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified."

Trees of righteousness are planted by the Lord. They are not wild trees. Where are they planted? Right by the water of life. This is what Jesus can do for you. He can bind up the wounds and the many sorrows that sin has caused and put a healing salve on the wounds. Jeremiah 8:22 reads, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" The answer is, they did not *want* to recover. However, if you want to be recovered, there is a healing balm in Gilead that God has given for the healing of the nations. What is that healing balm? Jesus Christ. What a healing balm! He knows more about you than you will ever know.

Psalm 139:2 reads, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." The darkness and the light are alike to Him. He knows everything that is trying to work in your heart. How does He know so much about you? He is God, and beside Him there is no other. He is your Creator. He created your soul and formed your body from the dust of the earth. One of these days we each are going to lay the body down and return to the dust, and

the spirit is going to find its way back to God who gave it.

When I came to Jesus Christ, I did not know anything about serving God. I had been dabbling around false religion a little, but I did not know anything about being born again. I heard the Gospel preached, I got under conviction and came to God wounded and brokenhearted. He then poured in the oil and the wine (the Word and the Spirit). What happened? When the Word and the Spirit get into one's soul, he will stand for Jesus Christ. He becomes a part of an exceeding great army, going forth conquering and to conquer.

Cast Your Burden Upon the Lord

Our Scripture text tells us the good Samaritan poured in oil and wine and set him on his own beast. What does that mean? Jesus took our burdens. Matthew 11:28 reads, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We read in Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."

When I came to Jesus Christ, I came burdened down. I did not know how I was going to get rid of those burdens; but confession, repentance, and forsaking those burdens seemed to be a light thing. I cast my burdens upon the Lord and walked away a free man with victory in my soul. The night I got saved, above the sun visor of my automobile was a pack of cigarettes. After the Lord saved me, they went from there to the trash, and I have never had one since. I did not do it in my own strength, because I had tried unsuccessfully to quit smoking in my own strength many times, but the power of God freed me from that habit. He can do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can think or ask. My burdens were lifted at Calvary.

Our Scripture lesson tells us the good Samaritan took him to an inn

to take care of him. Who was at that inn to take care of him? The pastors, teachers, evangelists, and the gifts of helps. All of these were at the inn waiting for me, by one Spirit, to be baptized into the one body, the body of Christ. What is the inn? The Church of God. God does not take you to any other church but the Church of God. He has never put a soul in a Babylonian church. He puts you in the body of Christ, the Church of the Living God. There is only one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one God, and one baptism. First Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "For God is not the author of confusion." If there were two churches, you would be confused, so God made only one. Jesus said, "I will build my church [notice that is singular]. . . ."

Someone may say, "I don't like the preaching that close." Then you could not have taken Jesus' preaching. There was not a closer preacher ever to walk on this earth than Jesus Christ. I am talking about a church that came down from God out of Heaven. It did not come out of Roman Catholicism or the minds of men. It came from God out of Heaven. The church is the new Jerusalem; that is the reason you have to become a new Jew to get in it. The old Jews had to become new Jews to get in this new Jerusalem. God is a million miles away from old Jerusalem, but He is just a step away from the repentant heart. Praise God for His goodness!

The church is the body of Christ, and it is the only place qualified to look after the saints until Jesus comes. He gave pastors, evangelists, and teachers in the church, not down in Babylon. There is no help in Babylon. There are no trumpeters or musicians there. God has placed them in the church. He gave gifts to men who were born again, to those who have been born in the Church of God. Through those gifts, the church functions and will continue to function until Jesus comes.

The church is not falling apart. You might know of some people who have fallen, but the gates of

hell cannot prevail against the church that Jesus built. He is going to have a kingdom to deliver up to the Father. The question is, are you going to be a part of it?

God Cares for You

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Jesus does not bring one to the inn and then just turn him loose. Our Scripture tells us that the good Samaritan took out two pence and gave them to the host and instructed him to take care of the man. First Peter 5:7 reads, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Where does He care for you? He cares for you right in the church. Do not go outside the walls of the church and start down

the "Jericho Road." Jerusalem had a wall, and that is the reason God called Nehemiah to build it up again. What is it? The wall of salvation. It will protect you, it will keep you from the world, and it will keep you from your enemy. If you lose your salvation and start down the Jericho Road, you will lose your protection and become open game for the enemy.

Some have left the new Jerusalem, and when they left, they were surprised at how fast they went down. They thought they could just step out a little around the edges, but suddenly there was a great elevation drop, and down they went. They thought they were going to go to Jericho, and they ended up in the Dead Sea. They started for that fertile land, the well-watered plains where the climate is pleasant. In other words, they wanted to go where the heat of the Gospel was not preached. Then, as they started

down toward Jericho, they ended up in the Dead Sea, where there is no life. Dear one, if this is your condition, God has help for you.

Many have left the victory they once had and have gone on their journey to defeat. If you have been wounded because of your journey, it is time to lean on His everlasting arms and the compassion and the mercy of Almighty God. He can pour in the oil and the wine, put you on His beast, put you in the church, and you will be taken care of until He comes again. You might be that certain individual who started the journey toward Jericho. If you are, you need to remember that thieves and robbers have climbed up another way and are waiting to rob you, and your soul will become destitute. You need to come to Jesus Christ. You will be so glad that you did.

(Cassette C-3911E)

THE CONSCIENCE TELLS PEOPLE WHAT THEY SHOULD NOT DO—BUT IT DOES NOT KEEP THEM FROM DOING IT.

Radio Log



LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Wellston, Ohio	WAJB-FM 92.5	Thursday	8:05 a.m.-8:35 a.m.
Little Rock, Arkansas	KMTL-AM 760	Saturday	2:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.
Newark, Ohio	WCLT-AM 1430	Sunday	7:15 a.m.-8:00 a.m.
Anderson, Indiana	WQME-FM 98.7	Sunday	8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m.
Okaloosa Iowa	KBOE-AM 740	Sunday	10:00 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

Tune in to the radio station nearest you to hear an inspiring message from the Word of God. If you enjoy the broadcast, let us hear from you!

Isaiah 41:21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob.

22 Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come.

23 Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

Facing an Uncertain Future



Brother E. David Stegmeier

Follow Him With Rejoicing

Brother C. W. Naylor wrote many songs that we sing today in the Evening Light hymnals. He was an invalid for most of his life. When he was a young man, in his early twenties, he was helping in an evangelistic effort in the state of Florida. When he and others were putting up a tent to hold a meeting in, a support post fell, and it broke Brother Naylor's back. He was confined to bed for the rest of his life.

We had an older minister in our congregation, a very dear man by the name of Brother Croker, who knew C. W. Naylor. Brother Croker said that when the accident first happened to Brother Naylor, he really struggled. Bitterness was knocking at the door of his heart, but he refused to succumb to bitterness against God. Brother Naylor became a giant of a man spiritually, and Brother Croker sometimes visited him. Brother Naylor wrote a song entitled "I'll Follow With Re-

joicing." The first verse of the song reads,

*The future lies unseen ahead,
It holds I know not what;
But still I know I need not dread,
For Jesus faileth not.*

Praise God, I love life, and I love serving the Lord. It is an exciting and thrilling life! Church of God services are unique. We do not have bulletins or printed programs. The

Holy Spirit is the program director, and He makes the services very unique and very beautiful. He orders the services to meet the needs of those who are present. We do not always know what the needs are, but God does. Therefore, we do our very best to listen to the Spirit of God. The chorus of that song says,

*I'll follow him with rejoicing,
With rejoicing, rejoicing;
I know he safely will lead me
To my eternal home.*

If you are not a rejoicing, happy person, you are not going to attract anyone to this Christian way. How attractive are you making this Christian life? You should be making it so attractive that people at work ask you questions. The Church of God has a glorious hope. I am happy because I know the One who knows the future. As long as I hold His hand, He will work things out well. Verse 2 of the song reads,

*Doth he not know what I shall meet
Upon life's rugged way?
Will he not guide my halting feet,
Lest from the path I stray?*

I do not want to stray, do you? I have a fear that I might be led astray. Therefore, I am very wary of the enemy's approach. I want to be alert, spiritually speaking. As we face an uncertain future, we need to be alert. Sometimes things have looked, oh, so dark, but I have a hope that God will lead us through. I have often said that light is like a maze: it is confusing as you look at it, but God can help you work through it so that you can get to the end safely. Verses 3-4 read:

*No matter how things look to me,
Nor if they threaten sore;
I know my way prepared shall be,
For Christ leads on before.*

*The glory of eternal dawn
Shines from his smiling face;
So trusting him I follow on,
With heart made strong by grace.*

Knowledge of the Future Belongs to God Alone

Our text is a very unfamiliar passage of Scripture, but it is one that tells us, in essence, that only God knows the future. The Prophet Isaiah denounced the foolishness of people trusting in idols, crystal balls, and such. Today people use Ouija boards and go to palm readers. I would be absolutely afraid to go to one of those people, because I would be afraid that God would strike me dead. It is foolishness to go to anyone and ask them to predict your future.

In Isaiah's challenge to the people to bring forth their arguments concerning why they would give praise and glory and honor to anyone but God, verses 21-22 read: "Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen. . . ." King Saul went to the witch of Endor. To me that is one of the darkest pictures. Sometimes I have thought upon decisions that people have made and what it will be like in the end for them: how dark, hopeless, and utterly lost they are going to be. Saul sought help from the old witch of Endor.

Only God knows the future. No one in this world knows what the future holds. Isaiah 41:2 from *The Living Bible* asks the question, "Can your idols make such claims as these?" Before that, God was making His claims concerning the things that He can do. As the Church of God, we know what God can do. He saved us from sin, and He keeps us daily without sin. He heals our bodies, gives us hope, peace, joy, and a rich fulfilling life. It is awesome!

Isaiah 41:21-24 from *The Living Bible* states: "Can your isles make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do, says God, the King of Israel. Let them try to tell us what occurred in years gone by, or what the future holds. Yes, that's it! If you are gods, tell

what will happen in the days ahead! Or do some mighty miracle that makes us stare, amazed. But no! You are less than nothing and can do nothing at all, Anyone who chooses you needs to have his head examined!" Anyone who serves anything else but the God of the Church of God needs to have his head examined. That is what *The Living Bible* says.

When it comes to a vehicle to drive, a suit of clothing, or a house, I really do not care whether or not I have the best. However, when it comes to religion, I want the best. If you have a sinning religion, you can have it. God saved me from sin, and He keeps me from sin. He gives me wonderful peace, wonderful joy, and a full, rich, rewarding life. He directs my path and makes life exciting! I stand back in amazement at the way God plans our lives. We are talking about the future. God has a plan for every one of us. I want to fit into His plan, don't you?

Knowledge of the future belongs only to God. Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 46:9-10: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Predicting the future is absolutely futile for anyone. No one knows for sure what will happen. You could meet with tragedy. Because of that, you should want to get as close to God as you possibly can, because He is your only hope and assurance.

Living in Perilous Times

So many people are looking at the signs, the signs of the times. Nevertheless, the most important concerns are these: Are you saved? Do you know what being born again is? Are you living without sin? Do you dress as a good, wholesome, godly saint of God ought to dress? The Bible says that you are to

look godly and modest. If you do not, then shame on you!

The Bible tells us a little about the times. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:1-2: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come [the word *perilous* means 'subject to the possibility of destruction or hazardous times,' spiritually speaking]. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, [In other words, they care more about themselves than the body of Christ. People ought to consider how their moves will affect the congregation and how it will affect the body of Christ as a whole. Will it put a stumbling block in someone's way? Men shall be lovers of themselves more than lovers of God.] covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." Do we see these things going on today? Yes, we do. When people become unthankful of God's blessings, then we know that we are living in very perilous times. I think of our country and how God has blessed us. Yet our nation has legalized abortions, which is the killing of innocent children. Our nation has perverted marriages, and homes are disintegrating. We are being plagued by much evil in our country.

In verses 3-5 Paul wrote: "Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers [people accusing one another; it is grievous], incontinent [or having no control], fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." There is a difference between having a form of godliness and having the power of godliness. Almost all religions have a form. The power of godliness will give you the power, the strength, the grace, and the ability to live without sin, to love your neighbor, and to say no to the devil.

Paul went on to warn Timothy of seducers. We are living in a day

when such a seductive work is going on. False ministers tell people, "That is not necessary." Friend, it is a narrow way. There are people who are zealous to make converts, to bring them to themselves. They want them to desert the true Church of the Living God. The Bible says to stay away from them.

Throughout history false religious leaders have pinned the label of "antichrist" on hundreds of personalities, such as Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and others. Antichrists come closer than that. John said in 1 John 2:18-19: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." One of the most hurtful things that I have experienced in my life was when someone with whom I had worked and worshiped turned against me.

Live Cautiously

A few years ago a Pentecostal minister predicted that Portland, Oregon, was going to be destroyed with a coming earthquake. His prophecy was widely known in the greater Portland area. A number of people were concerned. I said, "Don't be concerned. He is a false prophet." Today Portland is still standing. According to the Bible, that man is a false prophet, and they stoned them in the Old Testament. You should be very wary of people predicting things.

I know very little about what will happen in the future, but the Bible does let us know that we are living in dangerous times, and times are going to become more dangerous. I do not know about tomorrow. I live each day as though it were going to be my last, because we are facing an uncertain future.

When you meet someone, you should treat them as though it will be the last time you will ever see them. You should be careful of what you say to them, because you may not be able to turn back to make things right. I believe we should live very cautiously.

I do a lot of traveling, and I meet many people in the airports, bus stations, and other places. I believe that I am responsible for my contact with them, even though I may never see them again. I like to carry tracts or *The Gospel Trumpeter*, because I like to enter conversations about God. I do not know if I will ever see that person again. My concern is that I am pleasing God, because He holds the future. One songwriter wrote,

*I don't know about tomorrow,
I just live from day to day;
I don't borrow from its sunshine,
For its skies may turn to gray;
I don't worry o'er the future,
For I know what Jesus said,
And today I'll walk beside Him,
For He knows what is ahead.*

We do not always know what God is doing, but He is going to work good for the people of God. The song continues:

*Many things about tomorrow
I don't seem to understand;
But I know who holds tomorrow,
And I know who holds my hand.*

*I don't know about tomorrow,
It may bring me poverty;
But the one who feeds the sparrow
Is the one who stands by me;
And the path that be my portion,
May be thru the flame or flood,
But His presence goes before me,
And I'm covered with His blood.*

Signs That People Seek

What about sign seekers? There are a few signs that many people want. What are some of these signs? Tongues is one very prominent sign that millions of people seek. When I

was a child, one large Pentecostal group set a goal for one million people in their organization by a certain date. They reached a million people, and they probably have more now, but some of their leaders said, "We have forfeited the holiness of our people for numbers." They came to that conclusion themselves. God is looking for quality and obedience. I believe there is such a thing as Bible tongues, and God will give that gift when it is needed. We are serving a God of wisdom, a God of intelligence, a God of order, and a God of reason. If that gift is needed, He will give the gift.

What is another sign that people are seeking? People are looking at current events. When events occur in Israel, people always want to tie them to prophecy. People are more religious about keeping abreast of current events than they are about what goes on at the house of God.

Another sign that people are seeking is healing. I believe in divine physical healing. I was raised on divine healing. We never had medicines in our home. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. There is no failure on God's part. The failure is on our part in appropriating these wonderful blessings.

I remember some time ago of a faith healer who was deceiving the masses. People later found out that it was all rigged. When a person walked in with a disease or another physical affliction, the faith healer's wife talked to that person, and then she would call her husband on a cellular phone to tell him all about the person. Next, he would walk out in front of the audience as if he had never known anything about the person and tell that person's history to deceive the masses. Many deceptive works are being done in false religion. People are looking for signs.

What did Jesus say about people who look for signs? We read in Matthew 12:38, "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would

see a sign from thee." My wife and I, in our early ministry, were holding a meeting in Phoenix, Arizona. After the service, a sister came up and said, "I want to tell you something that I witnessed. I was raised in the state of Pennsylvania, and I was around when Katherine Kuhlman got her start. She preached in a large warehouse. If a person needed a little extra cash, he could go early, and she told that person what his condition was to be. For example, she might tell one that he was to pretend to be crippled and give him a pair of crutches. Then he walked through the tabernacle, she prayed for him, and he was to drop the crutches and go out and collect twenty-five dollars on the other side."

The wonderful gifts of healing, tongues, and prophetic things are being exploited. In other words, they are being used falsely to make money. Religion is big business.

I thank God that I have not been deceived. I want the best. I want the Truth. I am convinced beyond the least little doubt that we are in the Truth. The Lord means more to me than anything else. In Matthew 12:39-40 Jesus said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Are You Prepared to Meet God?

Your faith needs to take hold of the Book and what Jesus can do for you. If you take hold of that by faith, it will change your life and you will not need a sign. The greatest evidence that one is a child of God is his changed life. He does not go to the places he used to go. He no longer keeps company with the same people. The music he listens to is different, the books he reads are different, and what he does for entertainment is different.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:36-37: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." In Noah's day not many people were interested in God's message. Do you think Noah's children ever said, "Dad, all the talk is that you are crazy. Everyone is making fun of us. You are the only one, Dad"? Have you ever felt alone? I have.

Jesus said in verses 38-44: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, [Those things are not wrong, but people are just living to please the flesh. Everything is geared toward satisfying the flesh. How about the Spirit?] until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field [there are only two: the saint and the sinner; the saved and the lost; Church of God and Babylon]; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill [the Church of God and the old harlot]; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore [we need to be a watchful people]: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

We are to be watchful, ready, alert, and earnest. Each of our lives will one day come to an end. The Bible says that today is the day of salvation. The Jews were warned that they were going to be encompassed by the Roman army and that they needed to be ready. We read in Matthew 24:17-18 that Jesus told them: "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither

let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." In other words, Jesus was warning them to be ready. The Jews were willingly ignorant.

Friend, should death overtake you, you cannot go back and make things right. If you are still living when Jesus splits the clouds, it will be too late to change anything then. It is dangerous not to provide for that time. One Scripture speaks of a rich man who thought he had plenty of time left. You may think that you have plenty of time, but that might not be so. Therefore, it is necessary that you make proper provi-

sion. I ask you, are you prepared to meet God?

We are facing an uncertain future. You do not know what will happen tomorrow. Things can happen so suddenly. The doctrine of the Lord's return requires that there is a balance between our waiting and our working. We should not just give up and sit down. We are to continue to work, yet we are to be prepared to meet God. We are to be alert, obedient, watchful, earnest, and diligent. Are you? Are you very earnest about serving God? Is everything right between you and your husband or your wife? Family

living is important, as well as godly living in the community. Do your neighbors know where you go to church? Do you know that you are saved?

The future is uncertain, but I know that if I keep my hand in His, it is going to be wonderful. Serving God is wonderful, and I am thrilled! I love to serve God. I have never been more encouraged in my entire life. We are serving a great God! How is it with your soul? Are you troubled? If so, while the waters are troubled, won't you enter in?

(Cassette C-4788E)

Upcoming Meeting

KENSETT, AR

Aug. 29-Sept. 1

REVIVAL: Kensett Church of God, 409 Southeast 2nd Street, Kensett, Arkansas 72082

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Newark, Ohio. Revelation Meeting.

Service times: Fri. & Sat. 7:00 p.m.; Sun. & Mon. 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

For more information contact: Pastor Calvin L. Foster

Telephone: (Home) 501-742-3961 or (Church) 501-281-5072

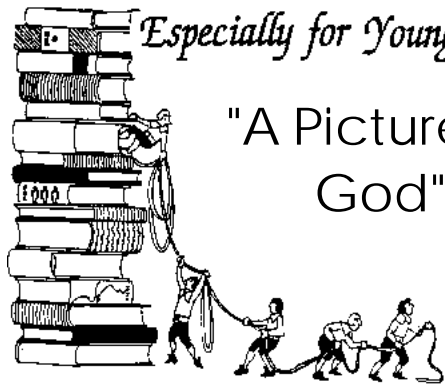
A Father's Prayer

*Dear God, my little boy of three
Has said his nightly prayer to Thee;
Before his eyes were closed to sleep,
He asked that Thou his soul wouldst keep
And I, still kneeling at his bed,
My hand upon his tousled head,
Do ask with deep humility,
That Thou, dear Lord, remember me.
Make me, kind Lord, a worthy Dad,
That I may lead this little lad
In pathways ever fair and bright,
That I may keep his steps aright.
O God, his trust must never be
Destroyed or even marred by me.
So, for the simple things he prayed
With childish voice so unafraid,
I, trembling, ask the same from Thee.
Dear Lord, kind Lord, remember me.*

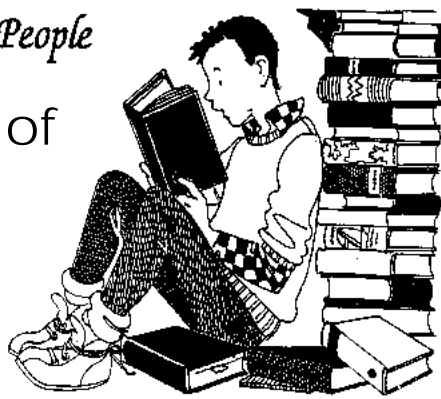
Selected



Especially for Young People



"A Picture of God"



It is fairly pathetic what a stranger God is in His own world. He comes to His own, and they who are His own kinsfolk keep Him standing outside the door while they peer suspiciously at Him through the crack at the hinges.

To know God really, truly, is the beginning of a normal life. One of the best pictures of God that I ever saw came to me in a simple story. It was of a man, a minister, who lived in a New England town, who had a son about fourteen years of age going to school.

One afternoon the boy's teacher called at the home and asked for the father. He said, "Is your boy sick?"

"No. Why?"

He was not at school today."

"Is that so?"

"Nor yesterday."

"You don't mean it!"

"Nor the day before."

"Well!"

"And I supposed he was sick."

"No. He's not sick."

"Well, I thought I should tell you."

The father said, "Thank you," and the teacher left.

The father sat thinking. By and by, he heard a click at the gate, and he knew the boy was coming, so he went to open the door. The boy knew as he looked up that his father knew about those three days.

The father said, "Come into the library, Phil." Phil went, and the door was shut. The father said, "Phil, your teacher was here this afternoon. He tells me that you were not at school today, yesterday, nor the day before. We supposed you were. You let us think you were. And you don't know how bad I feel. I have always trusted you. I have always said, 'I can trust my son Phil.' And here you have been living a lie for three whole days. I can't tell you how badly I feel about it."

Well, that was hard on Phil to be talked to quietly like that. If his father had spoken to him roughly, or —had asked him out to the wood shed for a confidential interview, it would not have been nearly so hard. Then, after a moment's

pause, the father said, "Phil, we'll get down and pray." The thing was getting harder for Phil all the time. He did not want to pray just then. They got down, and the father poured out his heart in prayer. The boy knew as he listened how bad his father felt over his conduct. Somehow he saw himself in the mirror on his knees as he had not before. It's queer about the mirror of the knee joints. It does show so many things. Many folks don't like it.

They got up, and the father's eyes were wet. And Phil's eyes were not dry. Then the father said: "My boy, there's a law of life that where there is sin, there is suffering. You can't detach those two things. Now," he went on, "you have done wrong. And I am in this home like God is in the world. So we will do this. You go up to the attic. I'll make a pallet for you there. We'll take your meals up to you at the regular times, and you stay up there as long as you've been a living lie—three days and three nights."

Phil did not say a word. They went up the stairs, the pallet was made, and the father kissed his boy and left him alone with his thoughts. Supper time came, and the father and mother sat down to eat. But they could not eat for thinking about the boy. The longer they chewed upon the food, and bigger and dryer it got in their mouths. And swallowing it was clear out of the question. Then they went into the sitting room for the evening. He picked up the evening paper to read, and she sat down to sew. Well, his eyes weren't very good. He wore glasses, and this evening he couldn't seem to see distinctly—the glasses seemed blurred. It must have been the glasses, of course. So he took them off and cleaned them very deliberately and then found that he had been holding the paper upside down. And she tried to sew, but the thread broke, and she couldn't seem to get the needle threaded again. You could see they were both bothered. How we do reveal ourselves in the details!

By and by the clock struck nine, and then ten, their usual hour for retiring, but they made no

move toward retiring. She said, "Aren't you going to bed?"

He said, "I think I'll not go yet; you go."

"No, I guess I'll wait a while too."

The clock struck eleven, and the hands worked around toward twelve. Then they arose, and locked up, and went to bed, but—not to sleep. Each one made pretense to be asleep. By and by she said (women are always the keener), "Why don't you sleep?"

He said gently, "How did you know I wasn't sleeping? Why don't you sleep?"

"Well, I just can't for thinking of the boy up in the attic."

"That's the bother with me," he replied. And the clock in the hall struck twelve, and one, and two. Still no sleep came.

At last, he said, "Mother, I can't stand this any longer; I'm going upstairs with Phil." He took his pillow and went softly out of the room, up the attic stairs, and pressed the latch key softly, so as not to wake the boy if he were asleep, and tiptoed across the attic floor to the corner by the window, and looked—there Phil lay wide awake, with something glistening in his eyes, and what looked like stains on his checks. The father got down in between the sheets with his boy, and they got their arms around each other's necks, for they had always been the best of friends, father and boy, and their tears got mixed up on each other's cheeks. Then they slept. The next night when the time came for sleep, the father said, "Goodnight, Mother, I'm going upstairs with Phil." And the second night he slept in the attic with his boy. The third night, again, he said, Mother, goodnight, I'm going up with the boy again." The third night he slept in the place of punishment with his son.

You are not surprised to know that today that boy, a man grown, is telling the story of Jesus with tongue and life of flame in the heart of China.

Do you know, I think that father is the best picture of God I ever saw. God could not take away the suffering for sin out of kindness to man. For suffering is sin's index finger, saying, "There is something wrong." So He came down in the person of His Son and dwelt among men. Then Jesus gave His life on Calvary, and after three days He arose victoriously over the tomb. That's God—our God. Beyond that, He comes and puts His life alongside yours and mine and makes us hate the bad and long to be pure. To be on intimate terms with Him, to live in the atmosphere of His presence, to spend the day with Him—that is the true, normal life.

Selected

James 5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Effectual Fervent Prayer



Brother E. A. Wilson

Getting a Real Burden

There never has been any great move of God among His people until someone started praying and getting a real burden. We can go right on, as many are, looking for and expecting things to come to pass, but I have learned from experience that when we do not really get burdened and really get down to business praying, it just does not happen. God is ready to work. He has the power and the ability, and He is waiting for us, as the people of God, to take the burden as we ought.

The writer of our Scripture text made a statement that should challenge each of us and stir our hearts. If prayer is not effectual, there is no need to pray. The words "availeth much" stirred my heart. The Amplified version says, "The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available—dynamic in its working."

In the Greek translation, the words "availeth much" have deep meaning. It does not mean there will

be just a small stir. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man brings a big stir and causes God to move. Effectual prayer affects God, and when it affects God, it will cause many people to become affected.

We are living in a day and time when the enemy will make you feel that it does not do much good to pray. You do not get to the place where the enemy does not talk to you. When a sick person dies that I had been praying for, the minute I get the word, the devil is right there to say, "Why do you want to go on praying for the sick?" I tell him, "Everyone I pray for does not get saved, but I keep praying." I thank God that some do get saved and some also get healed.

Satan is ever working to put down your prayer life. He knows the power there is in prayer; that is the reason he gives you such a wrestle over it. He does not get excited over things that do not matter much.

Prayer is the mightiest instrument we have in our armor to war against the powers of darkness. More people

have been affected by prayer than any other one thing that you can read about in the Bible. May God help us to see it and to lay hold of it as never before.

The battle of Armageddon is a battle of Truth against error. Error has moved in on many who claim to be God's people. Their thinking is not straight, and God is bringing Truth right to the forefront. The battle is hot, and we are into it, but I can let you in on a little something else: God's people are winning. When you stand by Truth, declare the Truth, and live the Truth, you cannot lose; you will win every time.

The enemy is moving in most deceptive ways to fill people's minds, even too many of God's people, with thoughts that do not line up with the Truth. God is sending the Truth clearly so that we can draw a battle line and know where we need to stand in these closing days of time.

I thank God for the instrument of prayer. Oh, how God has encouraged us to use it! He wants men to pray always and pray everywhere. Wheth-

er you think prayer holds a high place or not, God does; it is in His plan. Thank God, you can always be in an attitude of prayer no matter where you are, and you can pray everywhere by staying away from anywhere you cannot pray. If you cannot pray somewhere, then you should not go there. This is a good test on what you bring into your home, what you watch, and what you do. If you cannot truly pray in earnest while something is going on, you have no business being there, because the Bible tells us to stay in an attitude of prayer all the time everywhere.

Prevailing Prayer

Prayer is a great instrument, and if we are going to use it as God has encouraged us to use it, we must do everything in our power to bring it into exercise. When we think of the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man, we can look multiple places in the Scriptures and prove that effectual, fervent prayer prevailed.

You can read about Abraham, Moses, and Elijah. James even mentioned Elijah and wrote how, through prayer, Elijah caused it not to rain, and then he prayed again and it rained. You can read how prayer prevailed when Elijah raised a child from the dead. I could go on and on and tell of different Bible characters, definitely proving that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous individual avails much.

Since many are praying for revival, we want to study about Ezra. He was a righteous man that fervently prayed for revival, or reformation, and he got it. As we study his situation, we find that he was a governor and a priest. He prayed in a special way for a mighty revival, or a reformation, among a people who had slipped far away from God. His prayers so prevailed that the next move was for God to send Nehemiah to build the walls and bring the city back into the condition God had ordained her to

be.

We want to study how much prayer can avail, in studying about Ezra the priest, whose prayer brought great revival. In Ezra 10:1-4 we read: "Now when Ezra had prayed [for the next ten verses, everything imaginable happened because Ezra prayed], and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.

"And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it."

Failure to Separate From the World

Israel had been carried away, to a great extent, into Babylonian captivity. The seventy years that God had said they would be in captivity had passed, and to the surprise of the people, God began to move on the king, Artaxerxes, to hunt someone who was sound in the Law of God and would teach it right. So the king found Ezra and began to send him to Jerusalem to see what the conditions really were there.

The point I want you to get right here is this: God will first correct conditions in the church before He looses other people to come in. The first thing the king did was to send Ezra to Jerusalem to see what conditions were among Israel that remained there. He sent him with the Law of God to straighten them out.

When Ezra got to the city, he found it in a sad and dreadful condition.

Ezra 9:1-4 reads: "Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

"For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the (hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard [those are signs of excessive grief], and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished [or stunned] until the evening sacrifice." As soon as Ezra arrived at Jerusalem, the princes of Israel let him know that, from the leaders (even the Levites) right on down, they had disobeyed God and overstepped His laws. They had not separated themselves from the world as God had commanded them. They had gone so far as to marry strange wives and mix the seed of Israel.

When Ezra saw this, he was very troubled. Summing it up, it was a very sad state of affairs in which Ezra found the church. I call it the church because that is exactly what it was, the church of the Old Testament. He found them almost hopelessly involved with the world. They had failed to separate themselves from the world; therefore, they lost their position, their power, and their influence.

God has demanded the church in all ages to be separate from the world, such a separation that it amounts to antagonism. Some say that we should not be antagonistic;

however, when preaching about God's people being separate from the world, it moves us to a place of antagonism. God will not put up with playing around with the world, and we need to get that straight.

Someone may say, "That was back then." God has had this trouble with His people in every age. Movement after movement of people have fallen and lost their power, their position, and their influence by trifling and mixing too much with the world. God has always had a separate people. I know that we are living in a day and time when people get mighty stirred because we hold ourselves separate. Nevertheless, it is Bible truth for God's people to be separate from the world.

Going back to a type, when God brought His people out of Egypt, He had one place in mind for them, and that was Canaan. Why did He want them there? It was a land full of blessings, flowing with milk and honey, as well as a place cut off from other nations by mountains, deserts, and seas. When God took them there, He told them not to have any affairs or business dealings with other nations. That is how strict God was in the Old Testament. Also, they were not to intermarry with other people. He brought them to a position where they could be separate from the world around them.

In every age people have always gotten what I call *borderline anemia*: they want to get just as close to the world as they can and still be the people of God. That very desire and principle will cause you to be cut off from the people of God.

When Ezra went up to Jerusalem, he found the church paralyzed in a hopeless condition, prostrated by a violation of divine principle: not keeping separate from the world. This was the thing that stirred God.

Prayer That Avails Much

In Ezra, Chapter 10, when Ezra cast himself down before the house of God, he was not in the house, he was in the street in front of the

house. Instead of standing and holding up his hands as the priests and the governors did, he was down on his face in the street weeping, praying, and confessing before God the condition that the people were in.

I want you to see the effect of an effectual, fervent prayer. In Ezra 9:4 you can read that very few people trembled at the Word of God and were distressed over the condition; but after he got down and prayed, a very great congregation of men, women, and children assembled, and the people wept sore.

You do not need an interpreter to tell you that prayer had broken down the hard hearts of those who were determined to go their own way. When Ezra first went there, he tried to preach, but they hounded him and tried to run him out of the city. The only instrument he had left was prayer. So he got down in the street before the house of God and held on to God in prayer, and God went to work. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails very much. No doubt, it was to his surprise when a very great congregation showed up.

The more I study God's Word, the more I believe that you can pray people into an experience with God. Certainly, we need to do everything that we can do, but our weakness is in praying. Someone may say, "You do not know the condition of my children." You do not know much about prayer. You are defeated before you start when you say that. You may pray for certain cases, and since some of them are hard, you lay that burden aside and start praying for someone else. You need to take a new, fresh look at what God can do. I am preaching to you on the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man and what it can avail.

What was the first thing that prayer availed when Ezra prayed? Most of the people had lost the fear of God, just as people have today, but when this dear man of God got down to business praying, a very great congregation came weeping and crying in a humble position. They

had lost all their stiffness and hardness. The old-fashioned fear of God was on them, and they were under deep conviction even before he preached.

We can do more than we are doing. Too many people come into the services with hard hearts, and they go out untouched. Too many times the message does not move them. Where is the trouble? We are not praying as fervently as we ought before God.

Do not forget the words in Ezra 10:1, which reads, "Now when Ezra had prayed. . . ." He had not gotten much done before, but after he prayed, they were broken up and wanted to hear what God had to say. His complete self-abasement on account of their sins touched their consciences, and they began to be troubled.

The lesson for us is this: if we ever see people get troubled over their sins, we will have to get troubled over them. None of us is troubled enough over the sins of the people. We know what sin is, but some do not, and many are deceived. The devil has made them feel that they are really living.

Whenever we have gotten under a deep burden for certain individuals and felt the condition they were in (they might have been blinded to their condition) and got down to business with God, it was no time at all until they came in. I have never seen it fail. I am not asking you to get out in the road and pray, but God has promised us that if we will get disturbed deeply enough, then He will move on the hearts of people.

Jerusalem was a big city, and the people were not near the temple. They had other things on their minds, but when Ezra got down and effectually, fervently prayed, they made their way to the house of God, weeping and crying. People who have been prayed in will come humbly.

There is no real conversion without old-time conviction, and that is the thing that is lacking today. Too many people want to argue about

their sins; they want you to show them this, that, and the other. When old-time conviction strikes your soul, you will want free no matter what the cost, and that is the way the people of Israel came. The Bible tells us that they wept "very sore"; in other words, they wept in their weeping.

We are going to have to feel bad before we can feel good. A burden for the lost is not resting heavily enough on the people of God. Our Scripture text is a promise. If you look at the lesson found in the Book of Ezra, you will see that prayer can avail much. The very distress that Ezra manifested was contagious. Why isn't contrition and deep feeling for the guilt of sin more contagious? We, as saints, must have it before others feel it.

Hope Brought to a Hopeless Condition

Ezra had no idea what was going to befall him when he got to Jerusalem. When he saw the condition they were in, he was stunned. He could not believe that God's people had become so mingled with the world. They had broken law after law and still kept professing to be the people of God. As I mentioned earlier in the message, they would not let him preach. They were ready to run him out of town, but thank God, he had an instrument that they could not war against.

I want you to see that prayer is just as real and just as powerful yet today. Someone may say, "I can't even talk to my relatives." You have another instrument that is much greater and more effective than your talk ever will be—effectual, fervent prayer. God has ordained that every one of His people have this great instrument of prayer, and it avails much every time it is used. Too many times people come into the services and get stirred and then go away unchanged. People who are doing wrong do not want a preacher to stand up and tell them about it. They already know that they are doing wrong. However, effectual, fervent

prayer will cause people to change their minds completely about the message.

There was only one weapon that Ezra could use to win this battle, and he was wise enough to use it—the weapon of prayer. You ought to take the time to read the whole chapter. One thing after another happened when Ezra prayed. Because of Ezra's prayers, people who had been hard and unrelenting were not just moved, they were very much moved. When they heard and saw Ezra, a good, righteous man, praying and weeping over their condition, they wept sore.

When Ezra prayed, what else happened? People in a hopeless condition began to see hope. My friend, you can mingle with the world and play around with sin to the place where the enemy will make you feel there is no way out.

Those people in Ezra's day were certainly in that shape. There had not been hope before. They thought they were doomed, but when Ezra prayed and God moved on their hearts, one of the men stood right up in the congregation and, in so many words, said, "We have trespassed against God. We have broken His law and taken strange wives; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing."

Nothing except the people of God getting down to business praying will ever bring hope to many who are hopeless around us. Someone may say, "Oh, hope comes through preaching." No, Ezra had not preached yet. Praying brought hope.

I want to say again, many are in a hopeless condition. They feel it, and they are under the power of it. It will never be lifted until the people of God pray fervently. One of the things prayer avails is that it breaks the hopelessness and brings hope to the lost. There are many in a hopeless condition who do not need to be if we would get down to business and pray.

Another thing prayer brought was confession. Ezra still had not preached yet. Oh, I cannot make this strong enough. The enemy of our

souls is causing us to minimize the greatest and strongest weapon we have. By prayer, they were moved to confession and repentance.

Prayer Brings Old-Time Contrition

In verse 3 we read, "Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives. . . ." In their case, it was the wives, but today people need to put away anything that has caused them to fail God, or anything that they have failed to separate themselves from. You see, confession is no good without repentance. After Shechaniah stood up and confessed that they had trespassed before God, then they were ready to put away the things wherein they had failed God. What brought about their repentance? Ezra prayed.

A disease has to be discovered before it can be remedied, and through real prayer, they were made to see their condition. The sin must be perceived and acknowledged before it can be forgiven and removed. Ezra had not done any preaching, yet the wrong was brought to the forefront and confessed. Without any personal persuading, prayer caused God to move on their hearts to the place that they saw their sin and openly confessed it. Did you ever see conversions like that? Brother, they are the most precious ones you can ever witness.

When old-time conviction strikes the soul to the place that a person starts telling you all about what he is guilty of before anything is ever mentioned, that is truly God working in the heart of an individual. Prayer brought confession and repentance, and the same thing can happen yet today through prayer. When Ezra prayed, not only did they confess and repent, but they were ready to make restitution, and no one had preached yet.

Israel was going to take their strange wives back where they had gotten them, and they were also going to leave any children who had been born to them. I am merely tak-

ing a spiritual lesson from this Old Testament setting to deal with prayer. I do not want anyone to misunderstand me. We are in a different dispensation of time. As a Christian, you may be married to an unbeliever, and nowhere in New Testament light will it tell you to put away your wife. We are under a different law to that extent.

If you read 1 Corinthians, Chapter 7, it will tell you what to do if you are married to an unbeliever now. Verses 12-15 let you know that if your wife is an unbeliever and she is pleased to dwell with you, you are to stay with her, and because of your experience, the children will be sanctified. If you have an unbelieving husband, the same principle holds true.

Certainly, under the old Law, God had told them back in Exodus that they were not to marry any people of any other nation. Since that was the law back then, Israel had to put away their stange wives. Someone may ask, "Who should I marry?" The only biblical answer I can give you is, marry in the Lord. It is somewhat the same now as it was back in old Israel, in the sense that a Christian should marry in the Lord and should not mix the seed.

With prayer restitution also came. True repentance will always lead to restitution. I know we are in a time when many do not believe in restitution, but it is still necessary. What has been unjustly received cannot be justly kept. When old-time contrition and real conviction moves upon your soul, you will be ready to take back anything that is not rightfully yours.

The Fear of God Returned

When Ezra prayed, the people humbled themselves and trembled at the commandments of God. The saints of God do not have enough of the fear of God upon their hearts. I would be afraid to do what some people do. A man can preach the Word of God, and some are so far off from God that they quickly settle it in their minds that, "Those are his

thoughts. I've got my thoughts." You had better be careful of rising up against God! You need to study what blasphemy is.

The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man brought fear and trembling back upon the people of Israel. They not only confessed, repented, and were ready to make restitution, but in Ezra 10:3 Shechaniah said, ". . . let it be done according to the law." They had broken the Law, but through prayer, God had so gotten hold of them that they no longer wanted things their own way; they wanted their lives to be gauged according to God's Law.

In verse 4 he said to Ezra, "Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it." When Ezra's prayer got through, they told the very preacher they had hounded and wanted to run out of town that if they ever knew the law of God and knew what they needed to do, it was going to rest in him. They humbled themselves, and they were ready to hear what the preacher had to say to them; in addition, they had a real desire for service.

We read in Verse 5, "Then arose Ezra . . ." This was after he had prayed. I want to say kindly to everyone who claims to be a preacher: unless you have prayed through, you had better not get up from prayer. Much of the effectiveness of your work for God is going to rest on whether you have really prayed through. Ezra's prayer had availed much; it had changed the people's attitude.

Verse 5 continues, "Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware." He moved the whole church after he prayed.

Verse 9 reads, "Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It was the ninth month [December], on the twentieth day of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and

for the great rain."

On the twentieth day of December, when the temperature was low in Palestine, they stood before the house in the rain and trembled for hours while Ezra preached. They had been moved to the place where they really wanted to hear what God had to say. Everything has to be just about right for people today. If it rains too much, they can hardly get out of their houses to go to a dry building and sit on soft seats.

There were literally thousands of people who stood in the street. Ezra stood up and said that so many of them had failed God that the work could not be done in a day or two. It was going to take three days to hold that invitation. I do not know whether you can see the picture, but I see a beautiful picture there. Every strain of it runs back to the fact that Ezra prayed and humbled himself before God.

Oh, the power there is in the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous individual. God is waiting on us, church. God is waiting on every righteous individual to sense the awfulness of having lost children and lost loved ones. Friend, they never will feel it until you do. When you get down before God and really feel their lost condition, they will begin to feel it. There has never been a mother yet who prayed fervently for a lost son or daughter but what that one felt it, though they were thousands of miles apart. That son or daughter will feel the weight of his or her condition even as the one who is praying.

Time and space do not allow me to go on and say what all prayer can avail. James did not say how much it availed, but he said that it "availeth much." If we really believe that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, then we need to pray much so that we can see much accomplished through prayer. These things happened to them for our ensamples and our learning.

Ezra got away from his own human thinking. Who would think that you could go alone into a city

that had failed God and move thousands of people? Well, it is right here before you. I can just about see Ezra's eyes after he had prayed that morning and afternoon. The people came by the thousands. There were no haughty spirits; they all broke down and wept sore. Prayer did it, not prayer and something else. Ezra told them, in so many words, "You have to put away those things that have drawn you away. Clean yourselves up, get yourselves clear and straight, and separate yourselves from the world on every level."

Jesus prayed that we would not be taken out of the world. We have to work and live in the world. We are here to win the world, but the things from which we have to stay separate are the principles and aims of the world, many of the pleasures of the world, and the ways of the world.

Israel had such a desire for service after Ezra prayed that they would go to the house of God and stay for hours. You can read in the Book of Nehemiah about when they were digging through the rubbish and rebuilding the walls. Ezra found the whole book of the Law, and when the word went out that he had found it, a large crowd of people showed up and wanted Ezra to read it. He read for hours while they stood and listened and rejoiced to be able to hear the Law of God again.

Prayer changes things, and prayer changes people's attitudes, feelings, and desires. Prayer affected Israel's attitude and obedience. When Ezra stood up and told them that they must do things according to the Word, they all said that they would do it. The people pledged to stand by Ezra and his work in effecting the great revival that was to follow.

A Little Space to Repent

Ezra 9:4-8 reads: "Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished [or stunned] until the evening sacrifice. And at the

evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle [he had two garments on: the mantle was an outer garment, and he tore both of them], I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face [Ezra himself had not done anything wrong.] to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

"Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as it is this day [those are things to which flirting around with the world will lead you]. And now for a little space grace hath been showed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage."

Thank God for that little space. God does not just bring judgment and destruction on people; He gives them a little space to repent. God so loves people that He even gave Jezebel a space to repent. Dear one, I pray that you will take this message to heart.

When Ezra stood up and preached, his message was accepted by the priests, the princes, and the Levites. Those with the greatest influence submitted and swore that they would stand behind Ezra. All Israel said they would do according to the Law.

Ezra 10:7-8 reads: "And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; And that whosoever would not come within three days, [That was the little space God gave them. How would you like to have a preacher like that? Honest-hearted people like things nailed down. Only hypocrites rise up

against stances.] according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation [in other words, he would be excommunicated from the Church of God]. . . ."

God has not changed. You may think that you can play around and get straightened out when you get ready, but you may never have a chance. Read the Book of Leviticus. God's Law was that if anyone rebelled against it and refused to do what God said, they were to confiscate all his property and give it to the Lord, and then he was to be excommunicated and no longer a part of God's people. You see, God is more rigid than you think He is. If you listen to most people today, you would think that God is just a God of love. However, God is also severe.

Ezra said, in so many words, in his message, "You have three days to straighten this up. If you do not straighten it up in that time, all that you own will be taken from you, and you are going to be excommunicated."

I could go on and on, but the greatest point is this: When Ezra prayed, he prayed a prayer that affected God. If you can get God to move, He will move the people. It does not make any difference how hard their hearts may be, how little of the fear of God is on their lives, or what their condition may be, nothing is too hard for God. Prayer is the only thing that will put God to work.

As you read this message, has the Holy Spirit pointed out that you have not separated yourself from the world as you should? Are you too entangled with the things of this life? If you are so entangled that you do not have time to pray, read the Bible, and meditate, then you are too busy.

When Jimmy Davis was governor of the state of Louisiana, from Thursday on, he usually could not be found in the office in the afternoons. The politicians questioned him concerning his whereabouts on the weekends, and he said, "I am home praying, and then I am out some-

where singing for the Lord."

They said, "Well, you are the governor of the state. You are too busy. You have too much to do to sing and pray."

He replied, "Whenever I have too much to do to sing and pray, I am too busy."

We can get entangled. Too many people do not understand that getting entangled in things of the world

is more than putting on jewelry, getting their hair bobbed, and wearing the wrong kinds of clothes. You can get entangled with things that are not sinful and not have time to pray, seek God's face, and have communion with Him.

My question is, have you gotten so taken up with things and not separated yourself from the world and the things of the world to the extent

that you ought, and because of it, you know that you do not really pray an effectual, fervent prayer? Have you sold out to something cheaper, just going through the form of saying a few words of prayer? If you have, then you need to confess it, forsake it, and lay aside some things so you can give God His rightful place in your life.

Spring 2003 Camp Meeting Tape List

TAPE NO.	DATE	MESSAGE TITLE	MINISTER	COST
C-5041M C-5042E	6-15-03	Can God Count on You to Be Faithful? Truth—Buy It and Sell It Not	Bro. E. David Stegmeier Bro. Roger Decker	2.50 2.50
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C-5045M C-5046E	6-17-03	This Hope Can We Consider God Today?	Bro. Allen Polston Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5047M C-5048E	6-18-03	God Makes a Way The High Cost of Living Wrong	Bro. Wayne Hafley Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5049M C-5050E	6-19-03	The Righteousness of God The Way of Life	Bro. Ula Bland Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
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Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now

murderers.

22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.



"How Is the Faithful City Become an Harlot!"

Brother Esau Brooks

"Learn to Do Well"

What a message! To think that this message was preached centuries ago, it would cause one to wonder. As I read these verses, it seemed to me as if the Prophet were living right in our times. If there was ever a time when people needed to learn to do well, this is it. People are not doing as well as they can. You may believe that you are, claim that you are, or even pretend that you are; nevertheless, there is just something about it—when you do not have it, you do not have it.

God is demanding of us today as He did back in the days of the Prophet Isaiah: *learn to do well*. Do not just go along with everything that is on the surface. Do not just bow to everything that comes along. The only way you can learn to do well is to learn to know what it is to

do well. I am glad for the day God revealed the church to me, for that has enabled me in these terrible, critical times in which we are living to see what is happening to people, not to the church. She is still going strong, but that is not so with many people.

People are so mixed up anymore that they do not even know what it is to do well. The worst part of it is, they are refusing to learn. If you try to show them, through the inspiration of the Spirit of God, they think you are being critical. On the contrary, it is not criticism; it is a call to reckon with facts. When God, through the Prophet Isaiah, called on those people back then to learn to do well, He further instructed them to seek judgment.

If you want to do well, first you must seek judgment. This generation today is running from judg-

ment. No one wants to stick around where there is the least little bit of strictness. Often people's attitude is, "You are not going to tell me how long I must keep my hair or how I must wear my clothes or how I must live. It's my life; I will live it as I please." Well, you may, but the consequences of such actions will be yours. Judgment needs to be laid to the line. People will *never* out live the need of judgment. The quicker they fall in love with judgment, the better it will be for everyone around.

Second, if you want to do well, you must relieve the oppressed. Who are they? The same that Jesus was addressing when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). These are days when this generation is more oppressed with wickedness

than any other generation.

Have you ever stopped and tried to observe the depths of wickedness today? Instead of people dedicating their time and talents to relieve the oppressed, they are attempting to bring more oppression. Do you know that some people would tell you that when you go to church, you are in bondage? Those who say such things have never had a vision of the Lord.

Have You Lost Your Vision?

Saint of God, we need to reach out in a greater measure after the souls of men who are oppressed by sinful habits. Someone once said, "Had Peter been in jail today depending on the prayers of people to bring him out, he would rot in jail." Instead of people being able to pray "Peter out of jail," they pray against one another. Have you ever seen a time such as this? Supposedly brethren are fighting against brethren. It has to be the end. Yet, in the midst of it all, thank God, God still has a church—not *churches*, a church, one church. Praise God, she is standing clear of these conditions. The reason is that she retains the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God is not a spirit of disunity, but rather a Spirit that brings people together to serve the Lord. Today many who are wearing the name Church of God have lost their vision of the necessity of these things or they have never seen the Church of God or they have lost what little they saw of her. The church is a distinct class of people. Not everyone who attends a Church of God congregation is *in* the church. Folks who are hanging around only for the advantages are not working for the church.

We have never seen more covetousness among professing people than we have today. If you are not careful, about every conversation that you get into today borders covetousness. There are people around the church today who have absolutely no relationship to God. They

do not look like God's people, they do not act as God's people act, they do not live as God's people live, and they do not behave as God's people behave.

My wife and I have five children: three girls and two boys. Not long ago someone said, "Brother Brooks, that boy really looks like you." I said, "Who else should he look like?" If he did not look like me, he would look like someone else, and that would be trouble. How could he look like someone else and belong to me?

Back in the days of the Prophet Hosea, God denounced Israel through Hosea. In essence, He said, "You are bringing forth strange children unto Me. They do not look like Me, they do not act as I do, and they do not even walk as I do." As a parent, you know you would not settle for that in your own home. If you are going to be Church of God, you must act like the Church of God, live like the Church of God, and talk like the Church of God. You must behave yourself in the house of God, which is the Church of the Living God, the pillar and the ground of the Truth.

The fact is that many who claim to be Church of God are not related to God. Instead of praying, "Our Father, which art in Heaven," they should be praying, "Our father, which is down in hell." Jesus had to tell some people in His earthly ministry: "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). Some do not even know who they are from. They claim to be children of God and act like children of the devil. If I happen to be mashing your toes, so to speak, I am not going to move; you must move. There is too much backing away from things that make people feel bad. Making bad people feel good is wrong. If you are wrong, you are bad, and you need to start feeling bad about your wrong doings. It stirs my soul to see what people are loving in that which is called the Church of God. Much of our young and rising generation has nothing to look forward

to; they have no godly examples.

"Come Now, and Let Us Reason Together"

Again, verse 17 of our Scripture reading states, "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed [this is speaking of getting sinners saved: as soon as Zion travails, she will bring forth children]; judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." The church is as a widow with a live husband. He is preparing a place for her. Do you remember the parable that Jesus gave in Luke, Chapter 18? He said there was a certain judge and a widow, and she went to this judge who feared not God nor regarded man, to avenge her of her adversary. He would not at first, but he decided that he had better do it, lest she weary him. She was not going to give up. Friend, where is that agonizing, prevailing spirit that once characterized men and women who were in touch with God? We still need to agonize before God; we still need to prevail before God. You may ask, "For what?" For changes.

Notice in verse 18 of our Scripture text that God said, "Come now [not tomorrow or next month], and let us reason together." In other words, He was saying, "Let us talk this thing over. No matter how far you have drifted, no matter how far you have wandered, though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Verse 19 reads, "If ye [not God] be willing and obedient. . . ." It is not God that you have to make willing; you must be willing. These are not days to slack up; these are days to tighten up.

The Lord, through the Prophet Isaiah, stated in verses 19-20 of our Scripture text: "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword [the Word of God]: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." Then, He uttered the words, "How is the

faithful city become an harlot!" How could this have happened? It was once full of judgment. Here is the cause: "it *was* full of judgment." Whenever a people stop laying judgment to the line, there is nothing to follow but the making of another harlot daughter of mystery Babylon.

We see in these words a dreadful possibility that although people have been faithful for years, they can let down until they lose their faithfulness to God. The people may still sing the songs of Zion and wave their hands, but "it *was* full of judgment." Righteousness once abode in her, but what is taking place now? She is full of murderers. "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" She stopped laying judgment to the line and taking pleasure in righteousness. She allowed a spirit to come in that began to destroy and murder souls. Look around in our surroundings. What is it that we are seeing? The utmost fear that is prevailing among many groups of religious professors is not a spirit that enhances spiritual life, but rather spiritual death. It is no wonder that people are becoming cold and formal.

"Back to the Blessed Old Bible"

Our Scripture reading was preached by a prophet of God to a people who were claiming to be the people of God. History is repeating itself, and God has gone back and revived the message. Look at the many who used to stand up and sing, "O Church of God, I love thy courts," yet they have gone back to the wearing of jewelry and the clipping of the hair. If it was not for the fact that the dress styles today are long dresses, many would be wearing the mini skirts as well. The reason people are wearing long dresses today is that wearing them is popular. They are not wearing them because dressing modestly is a requirement from God, but because so many others are doing it.

The Scripture text says, "How is

the faithful city become an harlot!" This is only to say, "How can a faithful people lose out to such an extent to become as denominations are?" The shouts of praise are vanishing and the lifting up of the standard has been replaced with fault finding and fussing and bickering, telling the people, "Don't go there. You will get in bondage if you go there. I am free. I can do as I please." The Bible has already forewarned, "Use not [your] liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13).

You may say, "The sisters' salvation is not in long hair." I know that. However, sister, if you have salvation, you will let your hair grow as God would have it. I am not going to say long hair, because some sisters' hair will not grow long, but God made them that way. Today some sisters are buying wigs and putting on long hair, and those who have long hair are cutting it off to have short hair.

The job of the ministry today is to save people from going back to that which God has saved and delivered them from. I preach this way to save you from this untoward generation. Let us get "*Back to the blessed old Bible, Back to the city of God, Back to the oneness of heaven, Back where the faithful have trod.*" Unless you do, you are not going to survive spiritually. The church will, but you will not. You cannot hurt God's church. She is destined to win, but you can get hurt in the course of time if you do not follow close to the church and her standard and her ways.

The standard of the church that was preached in the days past is still the standard of the church, and it still stands. When we get people who learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, and judge the fatherless, we will again have and see what people once had and revealed.

Everywhere we turn, we hear of new camp meetings. Is it making the situation any better? No, it is making things worse, because there has been more disunity than there

has ever been. These so-called camp meetings across the country are not to unify God's people, to beautify the church, to relieve the oppressed, or to seek judgment; but they are for self-aggrandizement. Everyone wants to say, "I've got a camp meeting." For what good? For what help? Souls are going to hell more than they have ever been. Young people are growing more bewildered, and people are more depressed than they have ever been. About all you hear of today is depression. It is time to relieve the oppressed of their oppression and depression.

Who Will Stand Up for God?

Many people have almost reached the place where they cannot even stand an old-fashioned Church of God message. I saw the house in her first glory, and by the help of God, before I die, I would like to see that glory restored to the house. The Word of God tells us, "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment" (Isaiah 1:27). If that is what it takes, that is what we are going to have to do. Sinner, if you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart.

The Psalmist David wrote in Psalm 94:16, "Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?" Doing this will not make you popular down here. Popularity here is too short-lived to be bothered about it. You must get that which comes from above. You need to dig a little deeper and get filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God. Had it not been for a few who have been standing by their duty and responsibility, it would be darker than it is now. Saint, do not get discouraged or depressed.

We read in Jeremiah 12:5, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" That is the complaint you

hear all around. No one wants to do it anymore. Well, it does not matter whether they do or not, it needs to be preached, and the line needs to be held where it belongs. Instead of becoming more slack as time goes on, it should be getting tighter so that when Jesus comes, He will find us as part of His church.

One songwriter wrote, "Lord, don't you have ninety and nine in the fold? Why would you go after that one? Let him be, let him perish. One of my sheep has gone astray, and I must find that lost sheep." I am glad that He went after that one lost sheep, for that lost sheep was me. That is what God is striving to do yet today. He is striving to help us find the freedom in God that we are entitled to. However, it can only come if we are willing and obedient.

Paul, writing to the church in Ephesians, Chapter 6, admonished them, "Children." He was addressing a congregation, and you can believe me, that congregation was not comprised of just young people, yet he was addressing them as if they were. Why? Because that is where it starts. Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." If you want to do right, this is right. You cannot be right until you *do* right.

Again, our Scripture text states in verse 21, "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" We have far too many people today trying to convert the faithful city into a harlot. I pray that all of us who have Church of God blood flowing through our veins will unite to stand against it. We are going to keep her as long as God keeps us, and we live to keep her from becoming a harlot. Have you read Chapter 17 of the Book of the Revelation? When that woman appeared before John, he began to marvel at her, at the power she was swaying over the earth. That spirit has been revived.

It Pays to Serve the Lord

Not long ago a Honduran newspaper published that the Catholic church is going to rise against Protestantism in Honduras. Well, that enemy does not bother me, because I am not a Protestant. I am a child of God, but for fear they would throw me in with the rest, I want to do my part to keep that thing down. All the trips that the Pope is making across the land is not for anything good.

Instead of people having a vision to see what is taking place, many are allowing the devil to rock them to sleep, fussing that "This one does not like me," or "That one won't shake my hand." We have to guard against hatred coming into our hearts for anyone, for love is of God. If any man is born of God, he is going to love the brethren.

I thank God for salvation. It is what mankind needs. If you think you have to get a little marijuana or ecstasy or another drug to put some thrill into your life, it is because you have never met the Lord. I am glad that I did not wait until I was ready to walk with a cane to start thinking about the Lord. I am glad that God found me when He did so that I grew up with Him, from a stripling to where I am today. My life has been spent in the service of the Lord. I have never seen anything yet that appeals to me more than Jesus has.

I want to invite you to put your all into the service of the Lord. There is no way to get what you need out of serving God unless you do. When God saved me as a boy in my teens, I did not have to attend parties or picnics to help me along. I found enough pleasure and joy in serving the Lord to satisfy my soul. It is sad to look around and see this vanishing in many places. Many people are settling for being a "has been" rather than being what they could be for God. That is the reason the devil is fighting the Church of God so much.

Some people wonder, "Why is it that you all are having trouble all

the time?" It is the devil. He wants to give you the wrong idea about serving God. He wants you to think that about all the family of God knows to do is to bicker with one another. That is rubbish! God's true people get along. If you are one who is not getting along with the body, something is wrong with you, not the body. I learned years ago that the church is always right. Had I not been convinced of that, I would not try to get you into something that does not pay. I want to persuade you to be altogether for God, because I know it pays. It pays to serve the Lord. Sin, like crime, does not pay off in happiness or joy or pleasure; it brings sadness.

I remember holding my first prison meeting with some inmates in a maximum security block, and they were so sad, so distressed, and so down in the dumps. As I walked in, I said, "Boys, do you know what's wrong with you? You went with wrong, and wrong has done you wrong." Wrong will always do you wrong. It is only right that makes you right! Joining a church or shaking a preacher's hands does not make you right. You have to be right with God to be right. The devil is fighting hard today to confuse the issue and let people believe that what was right is not right anymore, but right is still right and wrong is still wrong! It does not matter who is doing wrong and how many are falling for it, wrong is still wrong. You can label wrong with whatever name you want, but it is still wrong. It is time to get your eyes open to this. By the living grace of God, I will labor on to be found true and faithful to God.

Again, God, through the Prophet Isaiah said in verses 17 and 21 of our Scripture reading: Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. . . . How is the faithful city become an harlot!" Think about it. God bless you.

(Cassette C-4709E)

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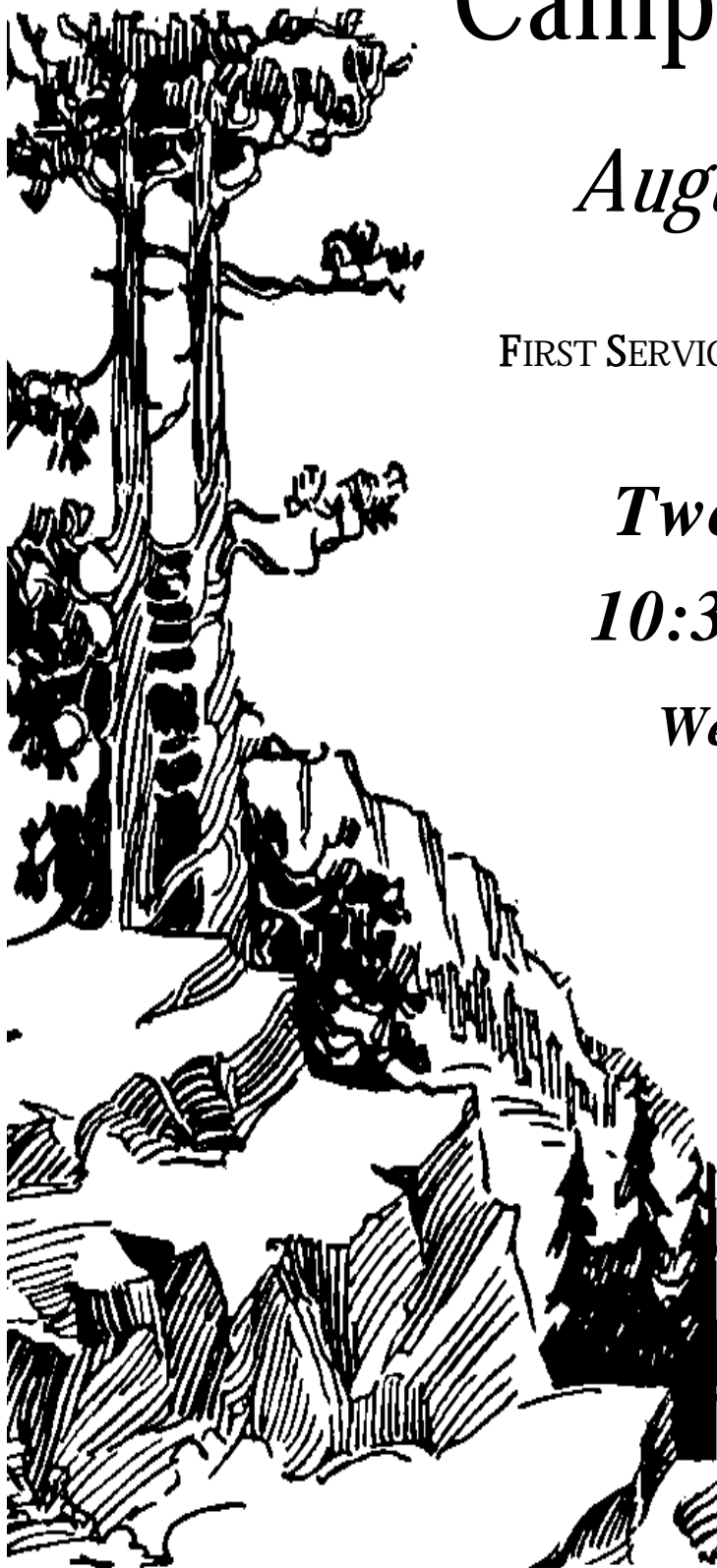
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