

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Newark, Ohio 43055.

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price; however, it is partially maintained through the gifts and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the expenses being paid by the local congregation.

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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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Website: www.godsacres.org

Vol. 33 July 2003 No. 7

Guest Editorial

The Truth Concerning the One Thousand Year Reign

The Binding of the Dragon

Revelation 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

In the last article we found that we are viewing a symbolic text, one that Revelation 1:1 says is "signified," or revealed by signs or symbols. This text is not describing a supposed millennial reign, but rather portraying the work wrought by "an angel," or a representation of the ministry in the morning time of this Christian dispensation. We found that he was

equipped with a "key" and a "great chain" (verse 1), a picture of the Word and the Spirit.

What did the angel do once he was equipped? Verse 2 of our Scripture lesson says, "And he laid hold on the dragon." This is the same character or the same dragon, that we are introduced to in Revelation 12:3, which states, "And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads." What is this great red dragon that we see portrayed? Remember that we are dealing in symbolic expressions. Revelation 20:2 reads, "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan." Revelation 12:9 says, "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan."

Those who are of the literal persuasion run off with the thought that this great red dragon must be Satan personified, but you need to remember that we are dealing with symbolic expressions. This dragon is not the devil personified. In both texts the Emphatic Greek Diaglott renders it as an accuser and an adversary. These words are not used to portray the devil personally, but they are symbolic of a system through which the enemy worked.

Let us look at other places where these words are used. We read in John 6:70, "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" The next verse says that "He spake of Judas Iscariot." The word *devil* in this verse is the same word employed in the Revelation, and the Greek renders the word "accuser." What was Judas Iscariot? He was an accuser or a betrayer, not the devil personified. Judas Iscariot was being used as an accuser or betrayer by the enemy.

Matthew 16:23 states, "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan." This was the same person to whom Jesus said in verse 17, "Blessed art thou," and it was in the same setting. Was Peter personally Satan? Certainly not. The Greek word is "adversary." Therefore, Jesus was saying, "Get behind me, you adversary."

[continued on page 26]

Ezekiel 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will

bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

12 Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

The Power of the Word of God



Brother Roger L. Decker

A Picture of Lost Humanity

The Bible says that Ezekiel was set down in the midst of the open valley full of bones. There were very many, and they were very dry. The condition was not hidden; it was very evident. As far as man was concerned, that was a picture of a hopeless, pitiful condition. Man could do nothing but look at them.

The devil wants to get you in a hopeless, pitiful condition. He wants to get you to the place where

you are in despair and feeling that there is no way out for you, but I say under the unction of the Spirit of God, you can find hope in the Lord. There is power in His Word. His spoken Word created this old world.

The valley full of very dry bones is a picture of lost humanity. Most people are following the course of this old world. Not everyone is going to Heaven who says they are. Many are on the broad way, and the broad way leads to destruction.

Though many sing about the Kingdom of God, they will not enter it.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23: Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me [Who are the "many" that He was talking about? He was speaking of the many who go the broad way that leads to destruction.] in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have

cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Today many religious people are heading down the broad way crying, "Lord, Lord." They profess to know Jesus Christ, but they are very dry, spiritually speaking, like the vision Ezekiel got down in the valley of dry bones. Why? They do not have the Spirit of God. The sinner is not going around saying, "Lord, Lord." It is those who have a religious profession. Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? . . . And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Ezekiel was set right down in the midst of the valley of very dry bones. The true Church of God is in the midst of professing Christians who have no life in them at all. Nevertheless, God still has a church without spot or wrinkle. There is no sin in the church. God has a holy church that lives the Bible standard.

"Whited Sepulchres"

Without the Spirit of God, a person is very dry. That is the reason some people repel your spirit no matter how much of the Word they know. Though one cannot lay a finger on their lives and they have the doctrine straight, if they do not have the Spirit of God, they are very dry. Jesus called them "whited sepulchres." The Spirit of God will draw brethren together. In Matthew 23:27, to whom was Jesus speaking? He was speaking to religious people, not down-and-out sinners who did not profess anything. What did He say to them? He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

Jesus was likening them to the tombs along the side of the roads of Palestine. The Jewish practice was to whitewash them to make them stand out so that no one would accidentally come in contact with them and be rendered unclean. Those tombs glistened in the sun, but they were full of dead men's bones. When Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees were "like unto whited sepulchres," He was portraying the outward religion of the Pharisees. Their hearts were full of bad attitudes, envy, strife, murder, and malice; yet outwardly they walked with bowed heads, reverent steps, and folded hands to show a posture of humility. Inwardly they were bound with sin. People today are walking the same way. Outwardly they appear to be saintly, but on the inside they have bitterness, hatred, malice, and strife. They are like whited sepulchres. They are alive physically, but they are dead spiritually.

Why did Jesus say "woe unto you" to the scribes and Pharisees? Because they affected the lost. They appeared righteous to men, but they were giving a false impression to those who were weak and lacked spiritual discernment. God help us to have spiritual discernment today; that is still a gift of the Spirit.

Romans 16:17-18 states: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. [Who? Those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine that you have learned.] For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly [or self]; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

You may ask, "Who are the simple in that verse of Scripture?" The Greek word for *simple* is **akakus**, which means "those who are innocent." Those with fair speeches and who walk contrary to the doctrine always affect those who are innocent. The fair speeches de-

ceive them. Jesus said "woe" unto them because they affected the innocent. They knew how to talk religion, but they had no power in their lives—no unction, no spiritual strength, and no life-giving words.

Those who keep company with those who have a profession but are dead spiritually are going to become deceived. You are not strong enough to stand against fair speeches, or fair words. Paul said to "mark them which cause divisions." In other words, you need to watch them, or keep your eye on them. They will deceive the hearts of the simple, or the innocent. Numbers 19:11 says, "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days." There was a law against touching the body of one who was dead physically. The same applies when you keep company with one who is dead spiritually: you become unclean.

Numbers 19:16 says not to touch "one that is slain with a sword in the open fields." The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. You need to stay away from those who have been slain by the Word of God. You may ask, "What is the battle over?" The battle is over the faith. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight . . . I have kept the faith."

God's Answer to a Fallen Condition

In our Scripture text Ezekiel was in the valley, a place where there were many very dry bones. What caused the dryness? A lack of the Spirit of God and a lack of spiritual life. Verses 2-3 of our Scripture text read: "And [He] caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest."

The Lord caused Ezekiel to pass by them round about so that he could take a good look at them. So

Ezekiel walked around them and saw that not just a few were dry, but they were all very dry. He did not see any bones with any life in them at all. God wanted Ezekiel to check them all to see the hopeless condition they were in. Not one bone had any life in it.

After Ezekiel looked around all of them, the Lord asked him the question, "Can these bones live?" As far as man was concerned, they could not live. How could those bones live? There was no flesh on any of the bones. What a hopeless condition they were in! Read verses 2-3 of the Scripture text again: "And [He] caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold [or stop and think about it], there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest."

Can those who have lost the Spirit of God live again? Can those who have gone back into sin be brought back to life again? Can people who have gotten themselves in a hopeless condition be delivered? Luke 18:27 states, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." When the Lord asked Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel answered, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest." Ezekiel knew that he did not have anything to give them. He realized that he could not bring them back to life.

Verse 4 of our Scripture text states, "Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." There is great delivering power in the Word of the Lord. It can bring people out of hopeless conditions. People may be hemmed in on every side, but the Word of the Lord can deliver them. You might feel that you are going to be swallowed up by your circumstances, but then a man of God gets up and prophesies, and you hear the Word of the Lord. God's answer to your fallen condition is for you to hear the Word of God. The Lord

told Ezekiel to prophesy to the valley of dry bones. In other words, He was telling Ezekiel to preach the Word of the Lord to them.

"They That Hear Shall Live"

I can remember when I was in a condition that looked hopeless. I had gone as far as I could go, but that was not good enough. I had done all I knew to do, yet I still needed help. I was in despair. I was as those dry bones. Man could not help me. Why? He was dry himself. My neighbor could not help me. Then I heard the Word of the Lord: someone prophesied to me. Can those bones live? Yes, they can live again! No condition is too hard for the Lord. If you will take faith in God, no condition that you have gotten into is too hard for Him to reach down and lift you out. His arm is not shortened. God can reach down to fallen man if man will look up. He can do as the Psalmist said in Psalm 40:2. He can lift you up out of a horrible pit. If you are caught in a snare of the enemy and feel that you are almost to your limit, bound in sin, can you live again? Yes! You can live.

Ezekiel was in a valley with many bones, and they were very dry. The Lord told Ezekiel to preach to those who were dead. Jesus said in John 5:25, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." Can these bones live? Yes, those who will take faith in the Word of God can live. There is power in the Word of God. That is the reason the devil is battling the Word so hard. He will battle you when you try to read or study the Word. Why? He knows there is power in the Word of God. In Romans 1:16 Paul let us know that the Gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

God told Ezekiel to preach. He did not tell Ezekiel to use philoso-

phy or politics to try to coax them back to life. The Lord did not tell him to try to socialize them back to life. Man has many ways to try to give life. He will socialize with them, dine with them, coax them, pet them, and sympathize with their problems. However, these methods are powerless to bring the necessary change. Ezekiel did not use any of the means that men use. He prophesied and preached the Word of God. Can these bones live? They cannot live if God does not give them life. They can if God has mercy.

Our Scripture text states in verse 7, "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." In verse 4 of our Scripture text the Lord commanded Ezekiel, "Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." The Word of the Lord is still the cure for spiritually dead people, or those who are living in sin.

In the midst of a seemingly hopeless, discouraging, depressing atmosphere, God told Ezekiel to preach the Word of the Lord. How hopeless could a condition get? The bones were very many and very dry: they had no breath, no spirit, and no movement; they laid dead and hopeless. The Lord said in verse 5 of our text, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live." There are wonderful effects in preaching the Word. We do not have to worry about success. The Word will not return void, or empty. It will accomplish that which God pleases and prosper in the things whereunto God has sent it.

God's Word Is Unchanging

One's rejection of the Word of God does not change it. Because men arise and say, "I am not going to do it," that does not change the Word. God will not change it for someone and say, "Here is a Word

for you" and "I see your condition, so there is another Word for you." No, it is the same Word, or the same Gospel, for everyone. Though a man rejects it, it will not change. Since Creation men have disobeyed God's Word; nevertheless, His Word has not changed.

First Peter 1:24-25 states: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." Psalm 119:89 reads, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." The Word does not change. That which was wrong years ago is still wrong today. Wrong is wrong. Your rejection of the Word does not alter it.

Second Kings 5:11-14 reads: "But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

Though Naaman went away in a rage, that did not change the message. It was Jordan when he left in a rage and Jordan when he came back. His thoughts were that Abana and Pharpar were better, but God knew Abana and Pharpar would not work on his pride. He was a man of valor, a captain, a mighty man. In essence, God said, through the Prophet Elijah, "Go dip in the

old muddy Jordan. It will do the work." If you obey the Word of God, it will do the work that needs to be done. Whatever God tells you to do, do it. If He tells you to do it, it will be right.

Pride was Naaman's problem. Verse 1 reads, "Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper." Did it work on his pride? Verse 11 tells us, "But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Verse 15 says, "And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him." Naaman no longer had the attitude, "You come out and stand before me." Why? His pride was gone. He no longer had an air of self-importance about him. He was humble before the man of God. After he dipped in the Jordan River, he came and stood before the man of God.

God knows what each of us needs. He knows the condition you are in, and He knows exactly what you need to do to get out of that condition. Some have quenched and grieved the Spirit of God so much that they can hardly tell when the Spirit of God is moving. Other people can get blessed and rejoice, but they do not feel anything, so they cast it off as emotion. Our only hope and our only help are in obeying the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

The Effects of the Word

Going back to our Scripture text, look at the effects of the Word upon the dry bones. Verse 7 says, "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise." Ezekiel heard a little rattling going on, and then it got a little

stronger, until there was a shaking going on. Next, the bones came together. Verses 8-10 tell us: "And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them [they still did not have the Spirit of God; they still were not ready to be an exceeding great army]."

"Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (The Church of the Living God is an exceeding great army.) Notice that first they heard the Word. This is the first step for a man or a woman coming to Christ. Once they hear the Word of God, faith takes hold and they believe. The Word will do something to you.

Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Those who hear the Word of God will confess. There will be some noise going on and some shaking, or trembling. You can read in Acts 24:25 that the Word caused Felix to tremble. There is still a shaking that goes on when old-time conviction comes on a person. People have quit many things under conviction that some people who profess to be saved have fought.

Next, there will be a uniting of man with His God, and He will unite man one to another. Also, there will be a covering: the blood of Jesus Christ will cover his sins. Psalm 32:1 says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Your sin is not covered if it is not under the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the propitiation for your sins. There will be life when you hear the Word. First John 5:12 states, "He that hath

the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." God will cause you to stand on your feet, and you will become a part of an exceeding great army. You will be fit for service and effective for God. You will be a new creature in Christ Jesus. There is power in the Word of God. There is help for every one of us in the Word.

God took Ezekiel down into the valley of dry bones and showed him a hopeless condition, a condition that would have caused you and me to walk away and say, "Look at those bones! Isn't that awful? I wonder how they died?" and just keep walking. The condition was so hopeless, pitiful, and terrible that we probably would not have even thought about helping the condition. This is the same type of condition some people have gotten themselves in today. Some people are in such a sad condition that it almost looks hopeless. They are in despair, and it looks as if they are going under. Dear one, if that is your condition, be encouraged. Your help and hope are in the Word of God.

God took Ezekiel to see the most hopeless condition man could ever encounter. He gave Ezekiel a firsthand look at the pitiful plight of Israel. Although to man hope was gone, with God all things are possible. Friend, if you will believe the Word that is preached, it will do for you what it did for the valley of dry bones. It will bring you out of your hopeless condition. God wants to help you. He does not want you to stay in that hopeless condition. You need to put your faith in God. He can turn things around for you and cause you to stand on your feet and become a part of an exceeding great army.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? No! Some are in the valley of depression, and it may look as if there is no way out. Others are in the valley of discouragement. They feel so low that it seems there is no hope. They feel as if it is just about over for them. Friend, if you will

believe the Word of God, it will do for you what it did for the valley of dry bones. It will bring you out of your hopeless condition, and you will be able to rise to your feet. God will bring you up out of that horrible pit and set your feet upon the Rock, Jesus Christ, and He will put a new song in your mouth. You will no longer sing the blues, but you will be singing, "Thank God, I am a child of God."

Take Faith in the Word of God

Nothing is too hard for the Lord. You may say, "You don't know my condition." Is it any worse than the dry bones in the valley? I doubt it. That was a condition without any hope at all, as far as man was concerned. Man could do nothing to change it. However, there is help from the Lord. Oh, how God wants to help you, but you have to take faith in His Word and believe it. If you will believe the preached Word of God and take faith in it, then God will work. God can turn situations around that are hopeless, and you will be so amazed that you will wonder, "How did God ever work that out? I had tried this way and that way, and every time it seemed as if I ran into a wall. Then all I did was believe the Word of God, and the next thing I knew, God brought things together and worked out situations." There is power in the Word of God.

We are always going to have problems as long as man is living on earth. The morning-time church had problems, and all the way up through the church age there were problems. Thanks be unto God, if we will believe His Word and hold steady, He can work them out.

If you are in a pitiful condition, God can help you. He did not give up on those dry bones. No doubt, many would have given up and said, "Forget it; they are beyond help." Ezekiel said, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest." Some might look as if they are going down for the last time, but the Word of God can de-

liver them. If your condition needs changed, if you will receive God's Word, He will change it. You do not have to live in that valley any longer. God can bring you out of it.

If you study Chapter 11 of the Book of Hebrews, you will find that God took man through many adverse conditions and stretched them as far as they would stretch to show that if one will have faith in God, he can be delivered. There is help for everyone. He allowed men to be put in the fire, thrown in a den of lions, and torn asunder. God is God of all. You need to study the word *faith*. If you will believe God and see Him bigger than your situation, bigger than your problem, and take faith in Him, He will turn the situation around.

Hebrews 11:6 reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." God wants to help you, but you must take faith in His Word.

The Lord told Ezekiel to go down into the valley of dry bones and take a good look at the pitiful, hopeless condition down there. Then he told him to prophesy to them, or to preach the Word of God. When Ezekiel did, things began to happen. Friend, if you will take faith in the Word of God, things will begin to happen in your life. God will turn things around for you. No condition is too hard for the Lord. You may wonder, "How am I going to get out of this?" If you will hold steady and keep faith in the Word of God, He can deliver you.

How is your condition? Do you feel that it is hopeless? If so, you need to talk to the Lord. There is hope, if you will take faith in God and believe His Word. He can deliver you from whatever the problem might be. Do you need to pray? Take faith in the Word of God. God can help you if you will take faith in His Word.

(Cassette C-1469E)

Proverbs 6:6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

8 Provideth her meat in the sum-

mer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,

a little folding of the hands to sleep:

11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

The Ant—Consider Its Ability



Brother C. H. Dickerson

A Great Work to Do

In this text of Scripture the writer said, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard [one who is idle]." I want you to see that when God saves a person, He gives him a work to do. When a person does the work that God has called him to do, then Heaven is the reward. The Proverb writer said to go to the ant and consider, or study, her ways. The dictionary tells us that a sluggard is one who is idle. The ant has no guide, overseer, or ruler; nevertheless, she provides her meat in summer and gathers food in the harvest so that her needs can be supplied when the weather gets bad and she cannot work.

The Proverb writer said you need to consider these things, because if you are idle, your want is going to come. Just as a man who travels, no matter how fast or how slow he goes, if he stays on the road,

he will end up at his destination, regardless of where he goes. This is the way it is when a person is idle in the things of God. He is going to end up in poverty, and his want will be as an armed man.

As you consider this text of Scripture, I want you to realize that God made a law from the beginning that one must work to accomplish anything. Genesis 2:2 tells us, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." The word *work* is used in the Word of God four hundred nineteen times, and the word *labor* is used about eighty-nine times. As you can see, the Bible teaches work.

We are living in a casual age. The word *casual* means "careless." We are living in a careless age, and the Word lets us know that all the way through. We are living in a

time when people want to be casual in their dress, in their appearance, and in their attitude. Because of this casualness, many carry that same careless attitude in their Christian experience. If you find someone who is not particular concerning his appearance and how he conducts himself, you will find someone who is careless in his spiritual experience.

I want you to realize that we are coming down to the end of time, so the devil is doing everything he possibly can to defeat us. If he can get us to become careless, he will. You see, we are living in a lukewarm age, or a careless age. God has warned us of this throughout His Word so that we do not have to be caught up in it. He let us know that we could save ourselves from this lukewarmness.

The reason people are succumbing to this lukewarm age is that

they have let down and gotten to the place where they are not working as they should for the cause of the Kingdom of God. We need to work, because the night is coming when no work can be done. Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 8:20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." There is a great work to do, and there is no place to let down, spiritually speaking. Many souls are lost—your neighbors, your families, and perhaps even your own companion. They need help. They need someone to light up the pathway so they can see. If you get careless and do not work, then they might be lost simply because you failed to meet the requirements that God expects of you.

"Be Not Slothful"

When one is slothful concerning material things, he is usually slothful with spiritual things. Judges 18:9-10 reads: "And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth."

We are living in a time when people are slothful, which means they are idle, or lazy. The Scripture says to "be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land." I want to look at this from a spiritual standpoint. God has shown us the church. If you get into the church, all your needs will be supplied. If you get into the Kingdom of God, He promised that He would heal your body and work out your problems. He promised you that He would be a God to you if you will be His child and that He would be everything you need. God has shown us what He will do for His people.

In Judges, Chapter 18, the Lord encouraged the people not to stand

and be idle, but to go and possess the land so that they could have all the benefits that God had for them. I want you to see that God's people are a blessed people. God has given us everything we need. Child of God, should you awaken in the middle of the night in pain, you can get hold of God and He will move on the scene. It pays to serve Jesus. When you have problems and burdens, you can go to God in prayer when no one else can help you. The time will come when the preacher cannot help you, the doctors cannot help you, and no one else can help you. However, you can lay your burden down before God and He can help you. He can do what no one else can do. Friend, it is not always going to be easy. When you serve God, you must battle the devil. People will want you to join a man-made religious organization where the Spirit of God does not dwell. If you get where the Spirit of God is, it is going to be a battle, but it will be worth it, because you are coming to a land that has everything to offer you that can possibly be offered.

The Bible tells us that Moses was a sheep tender, and God used him in a great way to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. We read in Exodus 3:1-4: "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." When God got Moses' attention, Moses went to inquire about what was going on, and God used him in a great way. David also tended sheep, and God

used him in a great way to deliver Israel.

Consider Lazarus. When he died, the Scripture tells us he was carried away to Abraham's bosom, yet he was a beggar. God never used him as a prophet. Nevertheless, I want you to realize that when one labors for God, he will be rewarded. If you work for God, friend, a reward is coming to you. If you do not work for God, you will not receive a reward. You get paid for what you do. Peter, Andrew, and James were fishermen, and God used them.

Be Fervent in Spirit

Romans 12:11 says, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." In other words, this is simply telling you to give your employer a good, fair, full day's work and to do it with enthusiasm. You may ask, "Why should I do it with enthusiasm?" You ought to thank God that someone has employed you, because no one had to hire you. Now I want you to consider some examples concerning physical labor to see what God has for us. Romans 12:11 mentions three things that I want you to consider, and then we are going to get into the spiritual side of this. This verse says to be fervent in spirit, or on fire for God. Why should you be fervent in spirit? Because any one who worships God must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. God will not accept worship that is cold or lukewarm. If you are going to serve God, you must serve Him wholeheartedly and be on fire for Him.

God hates this thing of people claiming to be children of God, yet they have no praise for Him. Christian friend, God has been good to you. He picked you up out of the quagmire of sin, turned your life around, and set you free. You need to appreciate that and get on fire for God and serve Him from the depths of your heart. He made you a new creature and changed your desires. That is something to praise Him for. Friend, you cannot be fervent in

spirit unless you live close to God and keep a prayerful attitude and pray and be at the house of God every time you can possibly get there.

Romans 12:12 reads, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." Too many times people fluctuate in their experiences. One time you see them and they are on fire for God and praising God, but the next time you see them, they are pressed down and do not have any praise for God whatsoever. This ought not to be. The reason people are doing this is simply because they have their eyes on the wrong values.

It is not what God does or does not do for us that causes us to praise Him. Friend, God will not give you everything you *want*. He never has, and He never will. As a parent, if you were to give your children everything they wanted, you would have nothing but spoiled brats. Sometimes you need to tell them that they cannot have something, because if you give them everything they want, you are going to spoil them. The same thing is true with God. He does not give you everything you want, and He did not promise that He would. He said He would supply your needs.

When things are going well, it is easy to rejoice and be happy and praise God. So many times when things do not turn out as people want them to turn out, then people are in a sad place. This is exactly what Jesus witnessed, and He gave people the answer for it. He sent out the seventy disciples, and they came back happy as they could be and, in essence, said, "Master, even the devils are subject to us!" Jesus said, in so many words, "Hold it, brethren. Do not rejoice because the devils are subject to you, because there will be a day when you will tell them to scat and they will not leave. You need to rejoice that your name is written in the Book of Heaven where man cannot change it."

Friend, if you will look at your experience that way, that your

name is written in Heaven and that man has no control over it whatsoever, your joy will be on a level keel all the time. Many times things do not go as you want them to go, but down on the inside you can still feel the peace of God and you can still hum a little melody in your heart. Why? Because your name is written in Heaven, and man cannot control that. If man could control the Book of Life, many names would not be there that ought to be and other names would be on there that should come off. It is not man that writes your name in the Book of Life, but God Himself.

"The Pulling Down of Strong Holds"

We read in Psalm 87:5-6: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." When you meet God's condition, He puts your name in the Book. If you will work and do what God wants you to do, your name will stay there. If you do not, He will remove it.

Physical labor is necessary. Whenever a person works for someone, if every time the boss turns his back, that person goofs off and will not work, then he would probably do the same thing spiritually. God sees you all the time, and He knows whether you are putting your heart into serving Him. If you do not put your heart into it, then your name will come off the roll.

Spiritual labor is even more important than physical labor. I want you to see how important it is to have your name written in the Book of Life. Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 10:4, "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.)" Not many strong holds of the devil will be pulled down without a long, bitter conflict. The devil does not flee every time you tell him to do so. James

wrote in James 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." My friend, he did not say how long it would take for him to flee.

When Paul said our weapons are not carnal, he was letting you know that in this spiritual warfare we do not use guns and ammunition, bow and arrows, or clubs. If you are going to pull down strong holds, you must have the Spirit of God and the grace of God. Those are our weapons. It takes divine influence in man to make him morally pure and strong. Then when he gets into a battle, he can be victorious. When you are serving God, your work for God is to try to win souls for Him. Some plant the seed of the Gospel and others water it, but God gives the increase.

In Psalm 126:1 the Psalmist wrote, "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." When people were down in bondage and they were freed to go back to their homeland, it was like a dream to them. Bondage is a type of sin. When people are out in sin and they do not want to be, they are ready to quit the sin business.

When I was living in sin, I was bound by many habits. One of them was the cigarette habit. The last thing I did before I went to bed was smoke a cigarette. Then if I woke up in the night, sometimes I lit up a cigarette and smoked it. The first thing in the morning, I smoked another cigarette, and I continued to smoke all day long. I longed for the day when I did not have to do that. Then one day God saved my soul. I tried many times to break the cigarette habit on my own, but when God saved my soul, He broke the power of the cigarette habit and set me free. It was just like a dream. Why? Because I had tried to do it myself and just could not do it.

Many people are bound by habits of life. They are bound by drugs, alcohol, lying tongues, and many other things. Some would like to change, but they cannot do it. If they will come to Christ and meet His

conditions, He will break the fetters of sin, every one of them, and set them free. It will be just like a dream. This is what God can do for you.

Filled With Praise and Laughter

Psalm 126:2 reads, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them." God has not changed. Christian friend, He saved you because He wants you to give Him praise for what He has done for you. He wants you to have joy and not to be weighted down, or burdened down.

You will not be burdened down if you get genuine salvation. It will set you free, and you will not have to be afraid to go out and tell others what God has done for you. You will not have to slip around and say, "I quit this and that." You will go out and tell people that God saved you and gave you victory over things. He can do the same thing for others. You will be filled with praise and laughter. You will be so happy over what God has done for you, and you will want others to know about it. Psalm 126:3 says, "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad."

In verse 6 we read, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." This seed he was talking about is the Word of God. You need to go out and spread God's Word. However, you should not go out and spread the Word unless you are living a holy life to back it up. If you have the life to back it up, then you should go out and tell others about the Lord.

I have heard many people say that some gave them a little of that seed, and it did not take effect right then, but later when they heard the Gospel preached, they remembered that seed that had been sown. Another watered that seed, and they got saved. Now they are living for

God and being what He would have them to be. That is what God wants you and me to do. He wants us to go out and bear that precious seed; in other words, He wants us to carry the Gospel with us. When we carry that precious seed with us and people see it, we will come again rejoicing and bringing the sheaves with us at the harvesttime. The Psalmist was trying to say that it is a guaranteed experience that if you will sow or water seed, then you will bring in sheaves. In other words, you will win someone for God.

The Word of God lets you know that when you get this experience, the devil has set out to overthrow you, and he will stop at nothing to do it. When you go to the house of God, the devil goes along also. In Job, Chapter 1, you can read that when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, the devil goes along also. God asked him where he had come from and he answered, "From going to and fro in the earth" (verse 7). You will find this to be true in your own Christian experience.

My friend, no matter how deep you are in sin, God can save you. Salvation is not just for the "goody-goodies." It is also for those who are bound by the habits of life. It is the only thing that can change your life. When you come to God, He can break those old habits as fast as lightning shoots across the heavens and set you free! Heaven is a holy place; it has always been, and it will always be. Sin can never enter there. If you ever get into His kingdom, you must get rid of the sin business here. This world is a dressing room for eternity, to get your life straightened up so that you can make Heaven your home. If things are not well for you in your experience, then God wants you to give particular attention to your life. Maybe you are not giving Him the proper praise that He deserves.

In Psalm 126 we can see that Israel had been in bondage. When the time came for them to be set free

from the bondage, they began to praise God for what He had done for them. Today there may be times when things are not going well. It might be God pointing out the fact that you are failing to give your testimony and full praise for what He has delivered you from. Occasionally you need to stop and think of where you once were and where you are today. I am sure that if you did, you would find that you have more praise for God.

Laboring in the Work of God

God expects something of us. He does not just give these gifts for nothing. There is a price to pay for salvation. Although salvation is a gift, He said in Isaiah's prophecy, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). God, through the Prophet Isaiah, was simply letting us know that this salvation cannot be purchased with money. There is not enough money in the whole world to buy salvation. The only price is to give your heart and life to God. You must live for God and serve Him.

After you get salvation, you will have victory every day. However, it is not you that does it, God is the One who gives you the victory. Therefore, He wants you to praise Him for that. It is God who works out your problems. They do not work out automatically. He wants praise for that. If you do not praise Him, He might call your attention to that by letting things happen to awaken you that you need to give Him the praise.

God requires His followers to carry their cross. This cross is a place not only to die out to the flesh, or self, but also to work where God has placed you. Psalm 126:6 lets you know two things. First, you must sow the precious seed. Second, if you will do that, you will reap. He guarantees results. Again, that seed is the Word of God.

You may ask, "Why is there all the fuss about working?" Well, let us consider whom Christ chose for discipleship. Christ chose those who were willing to give their lives to the work of God instead of wanting to receive something all the time for themselves.

We read in Acts 20:34-35: "Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." My friend, God is calling those who are willing to give something to this lost and dying world. He does not save a person just so that individual can be on the receptive end of taking and making Heaven his home. He saves one to do a work for Him. Brother, sister, if you will do the work that God has called you to do, then you will receive a reward for it. On the other hand, if you just sit back and remain idle, you are going to end up in poverty, spiritually speaking. If you will do the work that He has called you to do, He has guaranteed results. You will win someone for God. You might not realize it, but you need to go out and live the Christian life. When you do, you will be sowing the seed or watering it, but God will give the increase.

Called to a Labor of Love

In Matthew, Chapter 4, when Jesus was calling His disciples, we find that James and John were willing to forsake all. In verses 21-22 we find that they were mending their nets, and Jesus called them to come and follow Him. They immediately left their ship and their father and followed Him. Jesus called them because He saw they were workers, and that is who God is calling yet today. Friend, if you do not work in your secular job and do as God would have you to do, by giving

your employer a full day's work, He is not going to use you in the things of God. God wants people who are willing to work, and certainly He will reward them if they will do the work.

In Hebrews 6:10 we read, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." He said the Lord is not unrighteous to forget your work of love. In other words, you are going to reap a benefit from it. Verses 11-12 read: "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

God is not unrighteous. Every work that you do toward ministering to the saints, and if you keep on ministering, He will never forget, and you will always receive that reward. There is a payday for everything that you do for God. Every man is going to receive according to his work, or according to what he has done. If you do not do anything, then you will have nothing coming to you. You may claim to be a child of God and just sit and fold your hands and wait for the Lord to take you to Heaven, but you are not going to get there, because this all depends upon your working for Him. When you work for Him, you will get paid for exactly what you do.

If you sit back and let others do it, then you are not doing what God would have you to do. Someone may say, "They are more capable." God has placed each of us in the body. He has called some to be apostles, some prophets, and some teachers, and some helpers. Those helpers are just as important as those who stand behind the sacred desk or the one who plays an instrument or the one who leads the song service. Every helper is just as important. My friend, if you do not do your job of helping, then you will

have no reward coming to you whatsoever.

God has placed every one of us in the body as it pleases Him, not as it pleases you or me. You may say, "I would like to be this or that." Wherever the Lord places you, that is where you need to work. When you do that, a reward will be coming to you; but if you do not, you will not receive a reward.

Too many people feel that the job they have is unimportant. Some time ago in a grocery store I heard three women talking. I heard one say, "What do you do?" She said that she held an executive position. Another woman held a prominent position in society. The first two women turned to the third woman, expecting her to tell of her accomplishments, and she put down her head and said, "I'm just a housewife." I thought, "Sister, you have the most important job and the hardest job of any of them." Being a housewife and a mother is a very important job. When you take care of the house, keep it clean, cook the meals, and care for the children, your work is never done. You no more than get some of it done until the children come in and mess it up, and then you have to begin again. Being a housewife and mother is nothing to be ashamed of. Also, being a helper in the house of God is nothing to be ashamed of. If you pray for the people, you have an important job.

Can the Lord Count on You?

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:18, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Then he named some of those positions in verses 28-31: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak

with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way."

You could not put the helpers, the apostles, and the prophets all as number one, so he just named them on down the line. However, that does not mean there is less responsibility on a helper than on an apostle. Helpers are necessary. Preachers need help. Also, when you pray for the preacher, the song leader, and the instrument players, you are filling your job. If you feel that you are merely a helper and can just go to sleep or run in and out of the services or that no one would miss you if you do not attend the church services, you are missing your calling, and you will lose out in the end. God only rewards you for what you do. If you do not do anything, then there will be no payday for you.

Someone may say, "I don't sin, I don't drink, and I don't cuss." That does not make any difference. The fact is, if you do not do any work, you will not receive any pay. I would like to see the job out there where you get paid if you do not work. No employer anywhere would give you a job and the benefits that the rest of the workers receive if you had nothing to do. Friend, God calls you to be His child. He places each member in the body as He sees fit, and every member is important in the body. Moreover, He pays each one full scale. You see, you are making your own payday.

If you were to go to your boss and tell him you would like to have a certain amount of pay for your labors, then certainly you would feel indebted to earn them. The same is true with God. There is no place where you can get the benefits there are in serving God. If you will serve Him, He has promised you that He will give you a land that will supply everything. However, God will never choose you for service until you meet His conditions. He has clearly defined His requirements throughout the Word of God.

I repeat, if you do not meet His conditions, then you will not have anything coming. This is the essence of it.

Our Scripture text states in verse 6, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." The ant does not have any overseer or one there to drive it to do what it does. It simply goes out and does what it is supposed to do. That is exactly what God is trying to get you to do.

God will not be satisfied unless you work where He places you in the body. Can He count on you to do your work? Can He count on you to carry your cross? This is serious. One of these days He is going to declare that time will be no more, and He will gather His kingdom, the people who have worked where He placed them in the body. He is going to catch us up to meet Him in the air to be with the Lord forever.

Are you doing what the Lord

wants you to do? Are you praying? Are you praying for the pastor? Do you pray for the song leader? Do you pray for the choir director? Do you pray for the special singers? Do you pray that God will bless them?

In Exodus, Chapter 17, you can read that Israel was in a battle with the Amalekites. Moses stood on the top of the hill with his arms raised and the rod of God in his hand. When Moses let down his hands, Amalek prevailed; therefore, Aaron and Hur held up his hands and Israel prevailed. Had they not held up his hands, Israel's army would have been defeated. Pastors are carrying great burdens. They need you to lift up their hands through the avenue of prayer. Can God count on you? May God bless you and help you.

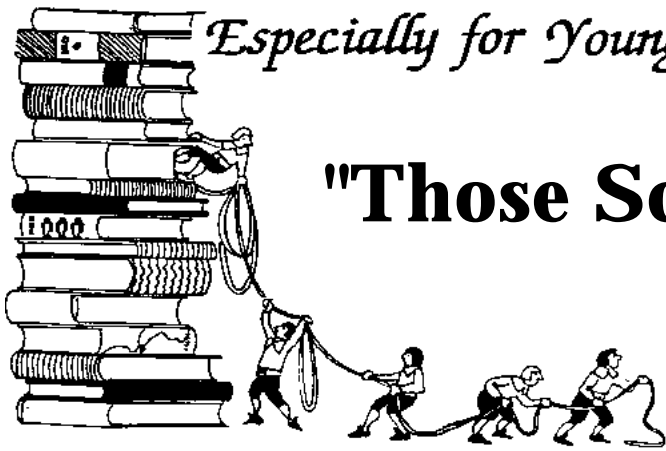
(Cassette C-4712M)

A careful man I ought to be,
A little fellow follows me.
I do not dare to go astray,
For fear he'll go the selfsame
way.

Not once can I escape his eyes;
Whate'er he sees me do he tries.
Like me he says he's going to be,
That little chap who follows me.
I must remember as I go
Through summer sun and winter
snow,
I'm molding for the years to be—
That little chap who follows me.

Especially for Young People

"Those Scars"



"What are those scars?" questioned Mary Lanman of her father as she sat in his lap, holding his hand in her own little ones.

"Those scars, my dear? If I were to tell you the history of them, it would make a long story."

"But do tell me, Papa," said Mary, "I should like to hear a long story."

These scars, my child, are more than forty years old. For forty years they have every day reminded me of my disobedience to my parents and my violation of the law of God."

"Do tell me all about it, Father," pleaded Mary.

"When I was about twelve years old," he began, "my father sent me one pleasant autumn day into the woods to cut a pole to be used in beating apples off the trees. It was wanted immediately to fill the place of one that had been broken.

"I took my little hatchet and hastened to the woods as I had been bidden. I looked in every direction for a tall, slender tree that would answer the purpose; and every time I stopped to examine a young tree, a taller straighter sapling caught my eye farther on.

"What seemed most surprising to me was that the little trees that looked so trim and upright in the distance, grew deformed and crooked as I approached them. Frequently disappointed, I was led from tree to tree, till I traversed the entire grove and made no choice.

"My path opened in to a clearing, and near the fence stood a young cherry tree loaded with fruit. Here

was a strong temptation. I knew very well to whom this tree belonged, and that it bore valuable fruit. I knew, too, that I had no right to touch a single cherry. No house was near, no person was in sight. None but God could see me, and I forgot that His eye looked down upon me.

I resolved to taste the tempting fruit. I climbed the tree and began to pick the rich, ripe cherries. But I found no pleasure in the taste of them; I was so fearful of surprise and detection. Someone might come and find me in the tree. I therefore resolved to break off some richly-loaded boughs, and feast upon the cherries as I hastened home.

"The top of the tree was bowed with the weight of its fruit. I climbed as high as I could, and bending down the top, attempted to cut it off with my knife. In my eagerness to secure my prize, I did not guard my left hand, which held down the top of the tree. My knife slipped from the yielding wood to my fingers, and passed with unspent force across all the fingers of my left hand, cutting the flesh to the bone.

"I never could look at fresh blood without fainting. My eye caught sight of the red drops that oozed from every finger, and my heart began to die within me. I slipped through the limbs of the tree to the ground. The shock of the fall drove away the faintness, and I soon stood upon my feet.

"I wrapped my handkerchief about my bleeding fingers, and hurried home. My mission was worse

than useless; I had not accomplished the purpose for which I was sent. I had committed a crime and disabled myself for work, for how could I pick apples in my present condition.

"I found no sympathy from anyone. My father reproved me and threatened chastisement when my wounds healed. My mother, who dressed my aching fingers, looked sorrowfully upon me, and I knew that I had grieved her deeply by my disobedience.

"I assisted in picking the apples, but I was compelled to work with one hand, while the other hung in a sling. That was a sad day for me.

"It required some weeks to heal the deep gashes made by my knife, and the scars are as bright, after forty years, as they were when the wounds were first closed.

"But if the scars in the flesh were all, it would have been comparatively a trifle. But the soul was wounded as well as the body. The conscience was defiled with guilt. Tears of repentance could not wipe away the stain. Nothing but the blood of Christ could give health to the wounded spirit.

"As wounds leave scars, so, my dear child, youthful sins leave the traces of their existence. Like the scars of the healed wound, they disfigure and weaken the soul. The follies of youth may be overcome, but they are always sure to leave their mark. Every sin of childhood hangs like a weight upon the neck of manhood. The blood of Jesus Christ alone cleanseth from all sin."

Selected

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

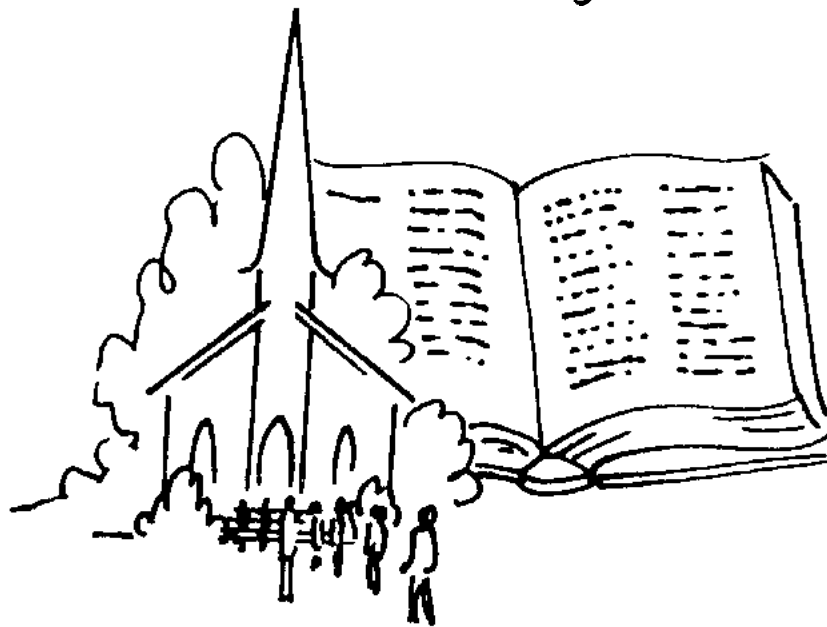
17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will

build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

"The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail Against It"



Brother Allen Polston

Individual Responsibility Before God

In this Scripture lesson we find there were many different opinions among men in the days of Jesus Christ concerning His identity. No doubt, each person or group felt that they had supporting evidence to back up why they believed as they did. When Jesus asked the question, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Peter responded by saying what he had

heard others say concerning who they thought Jesus was. Then Jesus asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" Jesus asked those questions as He did for a certain reason.

Today people would give many different responses if they were asked who Jesus Christ really is. Some people believe He is One who overlooks sin and that people can just go on in their sinful conditions. Some people believe there are no guidelines that God has established. They think it is just a matter of con-

fessing and professing.

I would like for you to consider why Jesus did not first ask, "But whom say we that I am?" We read in verse 15 that He did ask that question, but only after He had put forth the inquiry, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" After asking that question, then He brought it down to an individual basis and asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" Salvation comes down to an individual responsibility before God. One day each of us is going to

stand before God. No one will stand with you, and no one will stand with me. Neither your mother nor your father will stand there with you. On that day you will stand before God alone.

You need to let that thought sink into your mind. For a while, you need to brush aside all the things that you have planned, all the things that you need to accomplish, and all the things that the devil would like to fill your mind with and consider this thought. It is very serious to think that in just a short time you will be standing before God.

In James 4:14 James said, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Just a little ways down the road, each of us will stand before Almighty God to give an account for the way that we have lived our lives. We live in a day and time when our lives are filled to capacity with things to do, and if we are not careful, we will not take time to be holy. We will get in such a rush that the cares of life will choke out the ability to keep things right with God. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:10 to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure." Saint, you have a responsibility to make your calling and election sure. God has given you a span of time, and you are responsible to get ready to meet Him. One songwriter wrote, "Oh, prepare to meet thy God."

A Dangerous Inclination

We are making very serious decisions daily. Life is more than just gathering together to have fun, although there are times that we can enjoy life. Friend, it is a time to think very seriously. The devil is laboring diligently for your soul. Therefore, you must be diligent in this matter if you are going to please God.

When Jesus asked the question, "But whom say ye that I am?" He wanted Peter to realize there is a dangerous inclination that pre-

vails in this world, and that is to do as others are doing. Even if you have lived for God for a number of years and have had victory in your soul, this inclination can be detrimental to your soul.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:11, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." God's people preach the Gospel and have special services and other outreaches because we know the terror of the Lord. We know that when Judgment Day comes, there will not be any more time for repentance or time to go back and change things. It will be too late. God is giving people that opportunity now. Sinner, God is giving you the opportunity to change your condition.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Too often people get very defensive when someone starts to talk about changing and measuring to God's Word, but the Bible says that is exactly what God has set out to do. He does not want you to be a worldly person. God wants to change you and make you a blessing to Him, to others, and to yourself.

Friend, God has the recipe for success. You should not be offended and upset when the Word of God gets really close and the Spirit of God begins to tug on your heart. You should not turn Him away, but you ought to respond to Him. God has something wonderful in store for every individual who will serve Him as He would have them to do.

In the Scripture text we can see a hindrance that works, even on those who have been around the Truth for years. The hindrance is the things that others are doing around us. Friend, God wants you to understand something. Just because many others are doing a certain thing does not make it right. Just because a great number of people are doing something does not make it pleas-

ing in the sight of God. Many people may be doing things that seem attractive or enticing, but that does not make it right with God. As children of God, we still have a flesh that longs for the easy way. We are going to have a flesh to keep under until we leave this world. Because of that, we must be careful when we see others do things that God's Word instructs them not to do. Just because others do something does not mean that it is right.

In 2 Corinthians 10:12 we read, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." It is unwise to compare yourself with others and say, "Well, they are getting away with it, so why can't I? They have done it and have not been arrested or killed or taken out into eternity. Why can't I do it? They seem to be getting along just fine." Friend, it is unwise to compare yourself with others and let that be the determining factor concerning how you live.

When you realize that God's Word says a certain thing, it would be foolish to live your life in such a way that you look to others to determine how you should live. If you do that, you will get in trouble with God. In fact, you could end up being cut off and isolated from God.

Yielding Your Members as Instruments of Righteousness

John 15:2 says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." When you are doing things that are unacceptable with God, then you cannot bear fruit. Bearing fruit, as Jesus said that you ought to do, is a matter of yielding your members as instruments of righteousness. He wants you to yield your body—your hands, your ears, your eyes, your tongue, your feet, and your legs—as instruments of righteousness. We have musical instruments that we use to bring

forth beautiful harmony and melodies. Similarly, God wants you to use your life as an instrument of righteousness. When you do what is right, you are producing, or yielding, fruit. Otherwise, you will be as John 15:2 states: "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." You will be cut off from God for not doing that which is right.

Another thought that we should take into consideration is that others may not have the light on the things that God has shown you. James made this clear when he wrote in James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." When you know to do good and do not do it, then the Bible says it is sin. While you may know something is wrong, others may not yet know that it is wrong. Therefore, if you do it, you are committing sin.

Friend, when you commit sin, it cuts off the grace that you must have to stay saved. It takes grace to save you. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." To stay saved, you must have the grace of God. Paul said in Romans 6:1-2: "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." God forbids you to commit sin, to do those things that you know are not right. If you sin, the saving and keeping grace of God comes to an end. If you do not have God's grace, you cannot stay saved. Titus 2:11-12 states: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." God's grace does all these things.

We need His grace. To continue doing things that are wrong brings an end to God's grace. That is the reason you must be careful and watch that you do not begin to do things just because others are doing them. Others may slack off in their

prayer lives, but you need to stay on the firing line. Friend, you need to stay on your knees before God. Others may stop reading the Scriptures as they once did or cease to study God's Word, but you must not allow that to happen to you. You need to keep reading and studying God's Word and getting your soul fed. Others may slack off in their church attendance, but you cannot allow that to affect you. You need to stay right where God would have you to be.

If you yield to that which is wrong, James 1:15 tells of your end: "... sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." If you yield to sin, you will lose out with God. Spiritual life is gone when you yield to something that is wrong. Dear one, you cannot allow others to be your guide and lead you into error. James said in James 1:16, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." You need to watch and be careful.

"If Any Man Be in Christ"

In the light of our Scripture verses, we could apply James' admonition of "do not err" and say, "Do not follow the crowd. Do not do what others are doing." Young person, as you come to the age of going out on your own and working in the workplace, you should not begin to do what other young people are doing. You ought to do what God has shown you is right, regardless of what others are doing. Do what the Scriptures have taught you is right.

You may say, "Well, So-and-So is doing it, and he seems to get along fine." Friend, that is no excuse. Again, 2 Corinthians 10:12 reads, "But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

In our Scripture text Jesus clearly showed the difference between how the world operates and how God's people function. God's people do not live as the world does. If you are going to be a child of God, you must

be willing to live differently than the world does.

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if any man [no matter who he is, what family he came from, what his skin color is, and what country he came from] be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This verse begins with the word "Therefore," which means it is connected with something that has already been said. This lets you know that you need to look back to see what led up to this verse. Verses 15-16 read: "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."

One thing we can see in these verses is that one is a new creature when he is in Christ, because he no longer lives to please self or others. That is the way one lives before he comes to Jesus. God makes one a new creature when He changes him and he no longer lives as he used to live. He has a new life in Jesus. No longer does the individual live with the motto of "Whatever will profit self is the thing that is kept at the top of the agenda."

The reason many people have such a hard time accepting when someone invites them to church is that they think, "I could be doing so many other things." Attending a church service is not doing much for the flesh. They are living to serve self. That is the reason it is sometimes difficult to get people to go with you to church.

Living to Please the Flesh

We read of this very thing in the Scriptures. Ephesians 2:1-3 mentions some characteristics of the life one lives before he is saved: "And you hath he quickened, who were

dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." We all once had behavior along these lines that Paul was writing about. We were living for self, or living to benefit self.

Another verse of Scripture that says this same thing is found in 1 Peter 4:1-3: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries." That is a description of the life people live before coming to Christ.

Before one finds Christ, he lives after the flesh, or in a manner that causes him to be accepted or exalted by others. When a person is living after the flesh, or living to please himself, often he tries to get on the good side of people, because that is how he gets exaltation. One does this by embracing the things that others embrace. To fit in with others, all he has to do is observe what they are doing and copy it. He watches how others dress and buys the same style of clothing to fit in. He allows others to influence him. Friend, if you do that, you are living to please self. Many times people get into certain conditions because they are trying to impress people, trying to lift up the flesh so that self can get some recognition.

When I was a young person, just getting to the age of working and

being on my own, I began to see others do things that I had never seen my father or mother do. My mother and father were very good parents. They taught me right from wrong, but I began to hear others say things that I had never heard my parents say. I began to see things I had never witnessed in the home. I can remember as a child seeing some of my relatives smoke cigarettes, and I shunned that and got after them for smoking. However, as I grew older, I started living to please self so that I could be accepted. Soon I was putting cigarettes to my lips.

Giving in to Peer Pressure

When young people are living to please self and see others do things that are wrong, things they have been taught not to do, often because they want to fit in, they will do what the crowd is doing. When I was younger and began to get into some things, I thought to myself, "I have gone away from Mom and Dad's teachings a little, but I'm never going to take drugs. I'm not going to get in that condition." Nevertheless, I gave in to peer pressure and got into taking drugs.

Friend, if you live to please self, you will do whatever is necessary to build up the flesh. You will give in to peer pressure and do things that you once stood firmly against, things that your family, your pastor, and your congregation have stood firmly against and declared, "Do not give in to these vices; they will destroy you." Although you know that is true and you have seen others succumb to those things, you will yield to those things because you are living to please self.

There is a danger in wanting to be a part of the crowd. You will begin to embrace the things that others are doing and you will pick up nasty habits. When one does not go along with the crowd, he is branded as an outsider, so what does the flesh want to do? It wants to try to find some way to fit in. It

may be completely changing your wardrobe, becoming immodest in the way you dress, or covering your body with tattoos.

It is terrible what people are doing today in an effort to fit in with the crowd. This is a dangerous thing. Living to please the flesh is like being a puppet on a string. If you go along with whatever the world is doing so that you can fit in, it will lead you down a winding road to destruction. Friend, that road will lead you to a lost eternity, because God is not the One who is directing your life. You are being moved by a controlling power, and it will cause you great sorrow and sadness.

Young person, I plead with you not to live to please yourself. You need to get serious about serving God. If you have been doing things that are wrong, do not let another day pass without doing something about it. It is very important! Your life may seem to be happy right now, but the further you go away from God, the more sorrow and sadness you will reap. You may end up doing things that you thought you would never do. Unless you live close to God, you do not know where you will end up. I could tell you story after story of people whom I would have never imagined being in the condition that they are in today. Sin will take you further than you want to go, it will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you want to pay. I plead with you, young person, not to continue to do the things that you know are not right. This is a very serious matter. When Satan gets hold of your soul and the power of hell ensnares you, it is difficult to get loose. You must be careful.

The Love of Christ Constrains Us

The Bible lets you know that it is not worth it to live to please the flesh. That is the reason Jesus instructed in Luke 14:26, "If any man

come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Jesus was not saying that you have to cut off your parents, your brother, and your sister and never speak to them and never fulfill your God-given responsibilities and obligations. What He was saying was that you must not allow them to keep you from doing what is right. You must allow God to influence and direct the way you live. You must not allow anything in this world to keep you from serving God. The Lord must reign in your life.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Child of God, you must not allow things or people to lead you astray. You have to let God be the determining factor in your life, regardless of what others do.

There is a song that says, "If my dad won't accept soul salvation, Lord, I will . . . Though mother fails to carry the cross through temptation. Lord, I will. Lord, I will." Regardless of what others do, you must be determined to live for God. Your attitude should be "I'm going to live for God and let Him lead my life." Rather than being affected by those who would have a negative influence upon you, you should let God be your guide in life.

Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." God's people are to be led by the Spirit of God, not by what others are doing or by the popular majority. This message is declared in the Evening Light hymnal in a song entitled, "The Church's Jubilee." Verse 2 tells us, "*The Bible is our rule of faith and Christ alone is Lord, All we are equal in his sight when we obey his word; No earthly master do we know, to man-rule will not bow, But to each other and to God eternal trueness vow.*"

The Bible is our rule of faith, not others. Jesus spoke to Peter along these lines. You must let God lead and direct you. He is still gath-

ering people who have left all the world to follow Jesus and who are letting Him be their guide. God is still gathering those individuals who have decided not to live to please self. Revelation 14:4 says, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." Letting God lead and direct you is the only way to have victory over sin.

A Better Way to Live

Friend, rather than living as others live, there is a better way. I was bound by sinful ways in days gone by, but I am so glad that I have found a better way. I found the Gospel way that changes one's life! When I lived in the old sinful way, I was doing what my worldly friends did. Many times my heart was filled with sorrow because of the decisions that I made as a result of the influences of others. The Revelation writer said there would be no more weeping, no more crying, and no more sorrow. Why? Because the saint of God is not living that way anymore. God is our King and our Guide. He is the one who directs the way we live our days. This thing is not merely a Sunday religion, but we let God direct us every day, in every way and in every place. He directs us not only in the church services but also on our jobs and in our homes. We must live to please God in our homes and wherever we go, doing what He bids us to do.

Revelation 11:1 says, "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." Here we read that something different was used. He did not say that to measure the temple of God we must take a vote to see what the general consensus is. We have something better than other people's opinions and what others are doing. We have the Holy Word of God to lead us to victory. Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, leads us from glory to glory, from

victory unto victory.

We read in Isaiah 58:1, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." God wants His people to stand and cry aloud and spare not and declare the Word of God so that individuals who want God to lead them can see the right way to go. They will see the right choice to make when the man of God stands and declares the Gospel message and spares not. Church of God minister, you have the responsibility to cry aloud and spare not. Sometimes that is difficult, but Isaiah said to "spare not." You must preach the Word, all of it. The Bible instructs you to sound the trumpet.

You may say, "Oh, but it is going to step on people's toes." Nevertheless, you are to sound the trumpet and spare not. Why? Because there are individuals who want to live according to the Word, and they need to know what direction to go. One song says, "Sound the trumpet loud and long." That is what God wants His ministry to do. The Church of God may preach a little longer than sectarian churches preach, but that is so that people will know the right way to go. You must sound the trumpet so that people can make decisions that are guided by God. Friend, that is the way to live. What peace there is when you live each day as God would have you to live, not doing what others want you to do!

Power Over the Enemy

In our Scripture text Peter recited what others were saying. Then Jesus said, in essence, "Yes, Peter. But whom say ye that I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus told him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). Why did Jesus say that? Because when you are living what God has divinely revealed to you, you are blessed.

God still wants people who will live His way. My question to you is, are you living God's way or have you allowed others to move you in your stand for God? Have you allowed others to keep you from really selling out and serving God? The devil works through many devices and seductions, and if you give in to those ways, you will pay more than you could ever imagine. Many times doing what the majority is doing seems exciting for a while, but the day will come when you will no longer find pleasure in sin and unrighteousness. The things that used to bring you pleasure will leave you feeling empty. If you will live as God directs you to live, according to the Word and the Spirit of God, the Bible says He will never leave you nor forsake you. He is One who sticks closer than a brother. He will hold your hand, even when you come to death's door, where no one else can go.

The powers of Satan work to destroy people by telling them to live as everyone else is living. This

causes terrible results. They will reap that for the rest of their lives. Friend, if you will turn your life over to God and live for Him, forsaking all others, you will avoid much heartache. Many times it is hard for people to get past the influences of friends or family members. However, if you will get beyond their influences and get down to business with God, you will never be sorry. If you will sell out to God, you will never regret it. God will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus. If you had to go into the world without God in your soul, it would be hard to go against the majority. When you give your heart to God, He will fill your soul with His Holy Spirit, and instead of being ashamed, you can tell people, "I am not going that way any more. I am living for God. I have found a better way. I have found something wonderful!" You can be a witness, and you might even win people to God.

Sinner friend, you know there are things that are not right in your life. You can get help. The devil

might have you doing things and living in such a way that you never dreamed you would. You do not know what he is holding for tomorrow if you do not get serious about your soul. You never know what he might bring about. That is the reason it is so important for you to get serious about serving God now.

Serving God is the best way to live, and it is the most precious way to live. If you will surrender your life to God, you will be as Peter when Jesus said to him, "Blessed art thou. Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Jesus went on in the next verse and said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. God will give you power over the enemy to prevent him from prevailing in your life. Won't you be diligent in this matter of serving God? He can give you the power to do that. May God bless you.

(Cassette C-4871E)

Radio Log



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

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!

James 4:14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.



God Will Make a Way

Brother Irwin Seshier

Are You Neglecting the Most Important Part of Your Life?

Today we are living in such perilous times. Many things happen so quickly that often our minds have difficulty adjusting. Terrible things are happening in the city streets, in the schools, and in politics. Often men try to straighten things out. However, when men try to devise methods to help, usually the problems become worse; then it creates problems on top of problems. God has a remedy, but one must come back to the very beginning. God can make a way; however, in order for God to make a way, one has to be in the strait and narrow way. God requires that His children be in complete obedience to Him and to His Word.

Today, at times, sitting on your front porch or walking down a

street is not even safe. It seems that many people have fearful attitudes. They do not know what to do or where to turn. Many people are afraid of the foods they eat, the water they drink, and the different pesticides and chemicals sprayed on foods, yet they neglect the most important part of their lives: their eternity-bound souls. They fail to consider where they will spend eternity.

Most people live as though they are planning to live on this earth forever. They have made plans for twenty or thirty years down the road to go here and there, but they do not mention one thing about God. That is so sad. Friend, we are only here on this earth for a short time. We were not made to live on this earth forever. We do not know what we are going to be doing two or three years down the road, and

we do not even know what we are going to do tomorrow. However, we do know that God knows our end. So many things are going on in the world. The mercies of God allow us to have the right use of our minds. It is the goodness of God that lets us hear the Word and comprehend it.

Psalm 95:1-11 reads: "O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

"For he is our God; and we are

the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

The Lord Is a Waymaker

When things look dark and bleak, when the impossible is before you, the Lord will make a way. He made a way for Abraham. Genesis 22:5-13 states: "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And

Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

The Lord provided for Abraham. Think of that! Who are we to doubt God? Who are we to think that we have a better way? God is in control, not man. Man gets everything messed up and out of order. When man starts dabbling with God's church, it brings confusion. The Church of God is not built upon man, and it was not built from the ground up. It came down from above. We read in Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I like it when God is in control. When God is in control, there is no confusion, because God is not the author of confusion.

With God you can know exactly where you stand and what you ought to be. Everything will be just fine when He is in control. You need to be patient, saint. God will make a way. All you have to do is follow Him and obey Him.

When man starts to follow his own ideas, it is easy to be led into confusion. We must let the Lord lead. We are not in this Christian race just to follow this one or that one. When people start doing that, they are not following God. When things are in confusion, they become unclear and uncertain.

Have you ever gone into a dark room and could not find the light switch? You take a few little steps, and *boom*, you run into a table. Then you take a few more short steps, and *boom*, you run into a chair. When the light is out, you cannot see.

When one starts doing things just because of what he thinks or believes, he is going to get in trouble with God. When there is confusion, nothing is definite. You need to wait upon the Lord. He does not move in jerky motions. He is patient, and He

will make things clear to you. You will not be saying, "I think so" or "I believe so." You will know so.

Life is full of uncertainties, but with Jesus you can know exactly what you see is what you get. Today people are latching onto things that seem certain to the natural eye. Something might appear to be the real thing or appear to be Truth, but that is not necessarily so. You may think, "It's certainly according to what I think should be happening and according to what others say." Is it really Truth when you put it through the test? In school a teacher tries to measure a child's ability and skill level by giving him a test to determine how much he is actually learning. Teachers utilize different methods to find out what a child can do and to help him overcome any learning obstacles that he might have. If a child has difficulties in reading or mathematics, a teacher can present the material so that the child can learn utilizing the learning style that works best for him. If a teacher strictly adheres to only one certain teaching style, that child might have greater difficulty learning.

When the Lord sees that you have an honest heart and sees that you are obedient to His Word, He will make a way. If you buck up against His Word and say, "Well, I don't believe it that way," the Lord cannot work with you. Friend, that is not the right attitude to take. You need to be receptive to His Word and line up with His guidance and His counseling.

Are You Deeply Rooted in the Things of God?

We are living in a world of so much "pick and choose" when it comes to religion that it is just as if one is going to a smorgasbord. You need to be careful, dear one. You need to watch what you take in. You see, things can begin to work in a subtle way. Someone may say to you, "Come over and try our services." Another may say, "Come

on over here and see our moving of the Holy Spirit." Then others may say, "Oh, you had better stay away from that group of people. They don't know what they're talking about. Here, try some of our manna." Someone in a weak spiritual condition could get caught up in that.

One may begin to think, "Well, there is some good here. That's not so bad." Before long, they are bouncing back and forth and do not know which way is up and which way is down. Christian friend, the Lord does not want you to be confused that way. He does not want you to be in that condition. He wants you to be established in Truth. You need to be rooted and grounded in the things of God. You should be more deeply rooted today than you were yesterday. The devil is stockpiling his ammunition to come after the saint full bore. If you are not deeply rooted spiritually, you will become uprooted. In Isaiah 37:31 we read, "And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." Becoming deeply rooted is where your strength is.

Have you ever gone out to pull weeds in your garden and came across some deep-rooted weeds? Those are hard to get out. You have to dig and pull and really work hard to remove them. You need to take a lesson from the deep-rooted weeds. If you do not get out and pull the weeds, what will happen to your garden? The weeds will overtake it.

In studying about certain plants, you will learn that some of their root systems are remarkable. The roots of some plants extend far below the ground in search of water and minerals to help them to survive. Then from the main roots, some plants have secondary roots that branch off the main root system, and off the secondary roots they have capillaries. Capillaries are smaller roots that are always working in the soil, looking for water and

minerals. Now, that is one type of root system. As a Christian, you need to be deeply rooted in the things of God. If you are not, you will die spiritually. What is your spiritual root system looking for?

The Effects of Having a Shallow Root System

The cactus plant has another type of root system. Its roots are near the surface of the ground. Why? There is a rapid rate of evaporation in the desert, and there is very little rain. The rain is necessary to bring life to plants, just as the Word of God is necessary to bring life to the Christian. When the rain comes, the plants soak it up right away, because when the water hits the soil in the desert, it evaporates rapidly. Some cactus roots extend far away from the cactus, just lying on the surface of the ground.

Having a shallow root system can lead to problems for the plant. First, when the roots are close to the surface, it does not take much for the plant's stability to be affected. We can relate this to the life of a Christian. When troubled times come, you need to be deeply rooted, otherwise you will become uprooted when things come your way that might affect your Christian experience. Living too close to the surface, you will have a tendency to take in just anything.

The second problem that can occur with plants having a shallow root system is that anything can enter its root system. The same principle is true spiritually. You may say, "Oh, it looks good and sounds good. It must be just what I need for spiritual growth." Friend, you need to be careful. Everything that looks or sounds good might not be good. You need the Lord to direct you in the right path for your spiritual growth. John 4:24 reads, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit

searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

When your Christian experience is too shallow, you can come in contact with "surface water." When you think of unclean water, what do you think of? You think of water filled with mud, silt, rocks, dirt, grass, insects, and everything imaginable. These things are not good for the development of a healthy root system.

As a Christian, if your spiritual root system is shallow, you might tend to take in some impure water to try to survive. What are some examples of that? You might hear gossip that some want to spread to others. Some people say, "If you heard it from that individual, it must be true." Gossip can damage your root system and kill your spiritual growth. Being critical and pointing out faults in others is a sure way to stunt your spiritual growth. We each have too much to take care of in ourselves to worry about the faults of others. If you are genuinely concerned about other people, pray for them. That is the best thing you can do. You should not try to meddle in their business. Pray for them if you are concerned, and then leave them with the Lord. He knows more about their situations and circumstances than you will ever know. Too many people want to make other people's business their own business.

Another thing that can happen when individuals have shallow root systems is that they can pick up dirt. Some seem to take pleasure in spreading rumors about others: They say, "Let's try to find out some things on that brother" or "Let's see if we can find out some things on that sister" or "Let's see if we can dig up something about the pastor to kill his influence." You had better watch that! You should not mess with God's man. One never knows where that type of attitude might lead. Church of God, the Lord puts the pastor in that position, and when He sees fit to remove him, He will take care of it.

Many people think the Lord needs help in making moves: "Oh, I have to go over here and help Him. I will show Him what I can do." They treat the Lord the way some treat the boss at work. They think, "He doesn't know what He's doing, so I am going to give Him my two-cents worth." The Church of God does not operate that way. We have the Holy Spirit to lead us and direct us. When you do not have the Holy Spirit, you might as well shut the doors and go home.

Making Eternal Decisions

Too many people merely go through a religious form. They are religious but lost. Everywhere you turn there is some form of false religion such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islamic, and so on. How sad it is that people get so involved and taken up with false religion.

I thank the Lord that He showed me Truth. I am thankful that I am not wrapped up in one of those other types of "isms." I thank the Lord for the Church of God. When you are free, you are free indeed. You do not have to worry about being in bondage.

The Holy Spirit must have His right of way. Some try to direct the Holy Spirit their way. Friend, He does not work that way. The Holy Spirit does not have a steering wheel on Him. You cannot direct Him the way you want Him to go.

As a child growing up, my parents went to a place that called itself Church of God, but it was not *the* Church of God. When they found the true church, they could have said, "Oh, driving to church approximately one hundred thirty miles is too far to drive." The Lord was leading them. They were talked about and scorned by others. Even family members had things to say about them, but they were determined and deeply rooted in the things of God. The Lord can see further down the road than you or I can see. You need to consider more than how something is going to benefit you

right now. That is human reasoning. You need to consider, "How is this move going to affect me spiritually? How is it going to affect my spiritual growth?" Friend, you need to remember that you are making eternal decisions.

People today are making eternal decisions as lightly as if they were at a restaurant ordering something from a menu. These are not decisions that one should make spontaneously. Dear one, you need to pray and get definite direction from the Lord before you make moves. You should not rely on your feelings. Too many are doing that. If you are obedient to God and His Word, He will guide you.

We are living in a world where people use many propaganda techniques. For example, advertisers say: "More people use this brand of toothpaste than any other brand" or "This automobile is the choice of three out of every ten Americans. Shouldn't you be driving one too?" If you are not careful, that way of thinking can carry over to spiritual things. Some people say, "We are doing this over here. Why don't you come over and join our group? Everyone else is." You had better be careful. Others say, "Hey, this group is doing a soup supper. Don't you think your church ought to do that too?" I thank the Lord that the Church of God does not have to go to the level of having soup suppers, rummage sales, and car washes. The Lord always provides a way for the true Church of God. He is the supplier in time of need. Psalm 72:12 reads, "For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

A Well of Living Water Springing Up

Getting back to the root system, it is important that your spiritual roots are deep. Why? Because that is where good water is found. The water near the surface can become murky and stagnant; it is a breeding place for harmful bacteria.

When that kind of water gets into the root system of the Christian, he will be affected. Within the molecules of this water you will find parasites. Parasites attach themselves to living things and zap the life from their hosts. Saint of God, you need to be careful who you are around and what you listen to. You do not want parasites in your spiritual life. Little parasites can attach themselves to you and affect you.

The secret of having depth is digging deep. Psalm 85:11 says, "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven." In John 4:14 Jesus said, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Aren't you glad that you partook of that spring, Christian friend? I am so glad that in the Church of God we know exactly where our water supply is located.

Sorry to say, across our land countless numbers of people are making their way to give worship, but they have no spring of Living Water inside. They do not know the One who can give them exactly what they need. False prophets are not sounding forth the trumpet of Truth to warn men and women about eternity. Many think that if they live a good moral life, they will make it into Heaven. False prophets tell people that they cannot live above sin. They tell men and women, "Just do the best you can in this world, and God will overlook the rest." God does not overlook sin. He knows the very intents of the heart. He knows your thoughts even before they become thoughts. Why? Because He is God.

David wrote in Psalm 34:1-4: "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and deliv-

ered me from all my fears."

As humans, we are going to have fears. That is just the human part of us, but thank the Lord, we can trust Him to calm our fears. We need to trust Him more than we ever have. We need to lean on Him even more today than we did yesterday. We are going to have struggles and go through conflicts, but the main thing is that we go through them with God. He said He would never leave us nor forsake us. This is a promise that He gave us.

"All Things Are Possible to Him That Believeth"

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." What a compassionate, caring Savior we serve! Friend, He did it all for you and me. These are words from an unselfish Savior, One who wants to give and let others know about the goodness of the Lord. Nothing in these verses of Scripture show anything about self-centeredness, pride, or jealousy.

As Christians, we should be in the same frame of mind and Spirit. We all are in this race together; therefore, we need to be patient, kind, and willing to help one another. Today dependability is almost unheard of. That should not be. Around the Church of God, people should not have to say, "I can't depend upon them for that." Ones might say, "Well, I can't do this." God will make a way. The Lord knows your limitations and your weaknesses. He might have other things in store for you. If you buck up and say no, you might miss one of the biggest blessings that could ever come your way.

Situations and trials sometimes look dark and dreary, but the Lord will make a way. Why do people

question God? Why do people think that He will not hear their pleas? First, they are battling the spirit of unbelief. The devil really uses this tool against the Christian. As Christians, we must believe. In Mark, Chapter 9, we can read of a man who brought his son before Jesus. In verse 23 Jesus said to him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." As a Christian, you have the tools and the spiritual weapons you need to combat unbelief. However, they will not benefit you if you do not use them.

Sinner friend, God has provided a way for you to avoid destruction. He gave His Son for you. John 3:16 reads, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What a Savior! You do not need to go down the road that leads to destruction any longer, friend. You do not have to be in sin's bondage any longer.

There is bondage in sin. It may seem to be pleasurable in the beginning, but after a while it will become bondage to you. After it becomes bondage to you, it will become an uncontrollable force in your life. You will wish that you had never taken up those ungodly habits. Those things will keep drawing you back again. People often say, "Oh, I can quit the cigarette habit anytime." Then when they try, they become nervous and fidgety. They throw them away, and later they go back and dig them out of the trash can, all the while the devil is standing back, laughing at their calamity.

Friend, there is power in sin. The only way to break that power is to come to the higher power in Jesus Christ. He will make a way, thank the Lord. Are you tired of living in sin? If you are, you need to get down to business with God. Friend, one day it will be too late. The devil promotes procrastination. He will tell you, "Now is not the right time. You're not ready. Enjoy yourself just a little longer. Don't worry; you're

not hooked. Besides, what will people think?"

The devil will use any trick he can to get people to put off salvation, yet people lend an ear to him. You need to call upon the Lord. He is willing to listen. Isaiah 49:8 reads, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." The Bible says that now is the acceptable time.

Sinner, do not harden your heart. You should not look at things through the natural eye and say, "There is just no way." God will make a way. Won't you take advantage of His offer of mercy? You will be so glad that you did. When you take the first step and make your way to God, you will realize that you have made the right decision.

The world has nothing to offer you. It might show you a little glitter and a little fireworks, but it will give you a false hope. You need to think seriously about your condition. The Lord will make a way for you, but you need to take the first step toward God. When you take the first step, He will help you. If you are not on the highway of holiness, I trust and pray that you will obey the Lord.

(Cassette C-4137A)

The Word of God

**For feelings come and
feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of
God
Nought else is worth
believing.
I'll trust in God's unchanging
Word
Till soul and body sever;
For, though all things shall
pass away,**

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

What does the dragon in Revelation 20:2 represent? Revelation 12:3 gives some identifying factors: the seven heads and the ten horns. In Isaiah 9:6 the Prophet penned, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder." The head is upon His shoulder, so the head or heads represent government. Rome in its pagan form had seven different heads, or types of government. The horns denote political powers.

Daniel 8:20 reads, "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings [or kingdoms] of Media and Persia." These horns represent political powers. Rome was comprised of ten minor political entities. This dragon symbolizes the pagan Roman Empire. In fact, on the shields that the Roman soldiers bore was the insignia of a great red dragon. Pagan Rome was the first opposing force to the morning-time church.

When the church came on the scene on the Day of Pentecost, Revelation 12:1 says, "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." This describes the morning-time church in her pristine glory. As soon as she came on the scene, Revelation 12:3 says "there appeared another wonder." There was an opposing force.

Revelation 12:7 tells us there was war. The war was between Michael (Christ) and His angels (His ministry) and the dragon (paganism) and the teachers of false paganistic religion. Revelation 12:11 says that "they overcame him." In our lesson text in Revelation, Chapter 20, we can see how they overcame him. They overcame him with the key and the chain—the Word and Spirit.

How could the dragon be bound? Revelation 20:2-3 reads: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan [or accuser and adversary], and bound him a thousand years. And cast him into the bottomless pit." That is not as literalists describe. We are not going to take a log chain and chain the devil to the bottom of a bottomless pit. In Mark, Chapter 5, you can read of a man named Legion who had demons in him. Verse 3 tells us that "no man could bind him, no, not with chains" Now, if men could not bind a man possessed of the devil, how could you begin to bind the

devil himself with a literal chain? Again, we are dealing in figurative expressions.

When the Scripture speaks of the bottomless pit, it means that it has no foundation. Through the preaching of the Word under the anointing of the Spirit, the ministry showed people that the paganistic religions of Rome had no basis in Truth and no Bible foundation for men or organizations to build their lives upon. First Corinthians 3:11 declares, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ is the only acceptable foundation.

When the morning-time brethren came forth in A.D. 33 and began preaching God's eternal Word under the unction of the Spirit of God, they exposed the fact that the paganistic religion had no Bible foundation. In Acts, Chapter 19, we can see how this dragon was cast down into the bottomless pit, or shown as not having any biblical base of truth. Acts 19:18-20 says: "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." They prevailed because of the Word preached under the unction of the Spirit, and the key and the chain revealed that the false system had no Bible foundation and bound it up.

Again, Revelation 20:2-3 reads: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan [the accuser and adversary], and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more."

What is this seal? Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:13, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, [Paul was writing to the Ephesians, the same people who were in the pagan strong hold of the goddess Diana, a multiple-breasted black idol that supposedly dropped down from Jupiter (Acts 19:35), which they worshiped and revered. When Truth came in, the worship of the goddess Diana was shown to be false and the Ephesians trusted and believed after they heard the Word of Truth.] The gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

How did they set a seal? The seal is

the Holy Spirit. As long as the people had the seal (the Holy Spirit) to give them understanding concerning the falsity of paganism, he stayed bound and could deceive them no longer.

Let us look at this thousand years in Revelation 20:2. It reads, "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." Although the dragon was bound, the enemy was very much loose. When was this thousand years verse 2 speaks of? It had to be subsequent to the time of the dragon, or pagan Rome, because the day of pagan Rome's free operation had passed. It had to succeed pagan Rome; in other words, it had to come in chronological succession to pagan Rome, because pagan Rome had been bound and cast into the bottomless pit and had a seal set upon him so that he should deceive the nations no more. Therefore, it must be a period of time subsequent to the era of pagan Rome.

What succeeded pagan Rome? In Revelation, Chapter 12, we saw a description of the dragon, the warfare that commenced, and the overcoming of that dragon in Revelation 12:11. In direct succession, in Revelation, Chapter 13, we see what succeeded the dragon. Revelation 13:1 tells us, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." Here we see several indicators. First, we see the same identifying factors: the seven heads of government and the ten horns, or the ten minor kingdoms from which it derived its political power. It stands as an identifying factor and lets us know that we are dealing with something of a Roman nature, but notice that the crowns moved. The crowns were on the heads in its pagan form (Revelation 12:3), but in Revelation 13:1 the crowns were moved to the horns, or the ten minor kingdoms. Thus, the centralized power of the Imperial Caesars had been broken. The power of paganism was broken and replaced by another type of power.

Power is a system best identified by a man. Revelation 13:18 tells us, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; [The number of the beast is the number of a man. What is that number?]

and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."

Every student of history knows that before they devised numerical systems, alphabetical systems doubled as numerical systems. The Romans used a system that we call Roman numerals. On the miter of the popes of Rome is a Latin inscription, "Vicarius Filii Dei," which means, "Vicar of the Son of God." If you give a numerical expression to that (V = 5, I = 1, C = 100, A = 0, R = 0, I = 1, U = 5, S = 0, F = 0, I = 1, L = 50, I = 1, I = 1, D = 500, E = 0, I = 1), you come up with a numerical expression of 666. This lets us know that the number of that man reveals to us who that beast is. The man who bears that inscription and number is the man who fills the office of the popes of Rome, letting us know that this beast that has a Roman nature is Roman

Catholicism, or papalism.

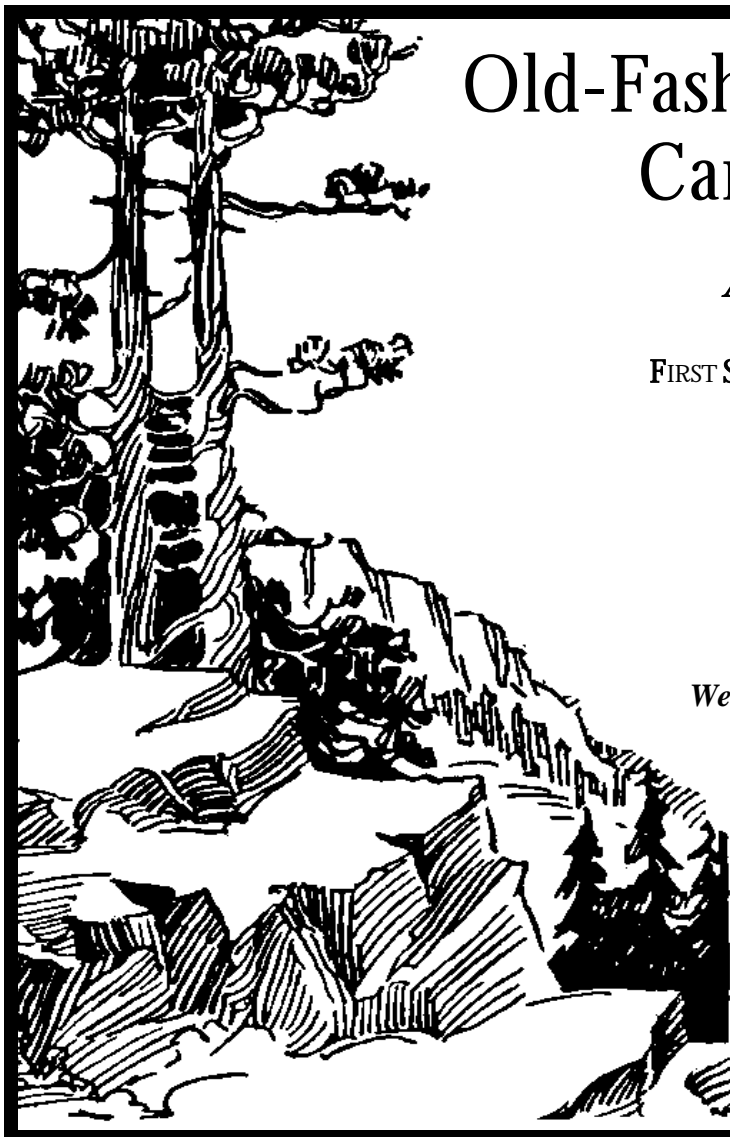
Notice the time frame for this beast. Revelation 13:5 states, "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months." Again, we are dealing in symbolic, or prophetic, time. If you take forty and two months, with thirty days to a Jewish calendar month, you get 1,260 days. According to prophetic time reckoning given in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, where it says, "I have appointed thee each day for a year," a day represents a year. Therefore, you have 42 months, and 42 times 30 days to a Jewish calendar is 1,260 days, each day for a year equals 1,260 years. If you take from A.D. 270 when this system began to be formed, until A.D. 1530, when the first Protestant

sect was organized, and subtract 270 from 1530, you get 1,260 years, or the period in its entirety in which this beast had sway and rule.

How do we know that the dates are accurate? Wickersham's The History of the Church tells us that the decline and division of the Roman Empire occurred in A.D. 270. Also, in A.D. 1530 the first Protestant articles of faith were drawn up at the Diet of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany, creating the first Protestant sect. As you can see, both dates are historically verifiable. Papal Rome began to rise in A.D. 270.

In the next article we will identify when this one thousand years (Revelation 20:1) actually occurred.

Brother Earl R. Borders



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