

"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.

PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:

Roger Decker, Pastor
83 Decrow Ave.
Newark, OH 43055

Email: pastor@church-of-god-online.com
Phone: 740-344-2543 or 1-888-730-0461
Fax: 740-344-4737
Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

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 November 2003 No. 11

Guest Editorial

The Truth Concerning the One Thousand Year Reign

Identifying the Thousand Years

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.

We have been examining this passage of Scripture to see when the thousand years spoken of in these verses actually occurred and what transpired during that time. We have seen that this passage portrays a lesson in symbolic expressions. It

is a portrayal of the morning time ministry equipped with the Spirit, and it tells of how they overcame the powers of paganism. But the question remains, when was this one thousand year period. We found it was a period after the dragon (paganism) was bound. So, what about the thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20:2? It must chronologically succeed pagan Rome, and we found that what chronologically succeeded pagan Rome was Papal Rome. What about the thousand years? The rule of Catholicism ended in A.D. 1530 with the rise of Protestantism. The first Protestant creed was formulated in Germany in A.D. 1530. Our Scripture lesson speaks of a thousand years. When we go back a thousand years from that date, we arrive at A.D. 530.

Did something occur in A.D. 530? Fisher's History of the Christian Church, page 98, says this: "It was around two hundred years after Constantine, the first supposed Christian Emperor of the Roman Empire, that paganism had vanished." Constantine's reign was A.D. 322 to A.D. 330. Constantine's reign ended in A.D. 330, and paganism vanished about 200 years after Constantine. If you add 200 years to 330, it brings you right up to A.D. 530, when paganism had vanished. This is just what our lesson text says. The dragon was bound and cast into the bottomless pit.

Fisher's History of the Christian Church, page 138, reads, "In A.D. 530 the decisions of the many synods was approved by the Roman Bishop Boniface II." In A.D. 530 paganism had vanished. It was, as our Scripture lesson states in verse 2, "cast into the bottomless pit." The Roman Bishop Boniface II was regarded as the first universal Bishop, thus the date A.D. 530.

The thousand years spoken of in Revelation 20:2 is not a time symbol. You cannot use years to symbolize years. Any time less than a year can be used as a symbol: you

[continued on page 25]

John 18:15 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

16 But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other

disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

17 Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

18 And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

Warming Near the Enemy's Fire



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Danger of Becoming Overconfident

All four of the Gospel writers tell of the account of Peter's denial, and each one gives a little different view. Upon reading each account, we can see that some steps took place before Peter denied the Lord. We want to consider some reasons why Peter got caught up in that which Jesus said he would. Peter got involved in some things that caused him to deny Christ.

Remember that Peter was one of Jesus' disciples. You could become as Peter was. You could follow the same steps that Peter took and end up doing the same thing. What

were some steps that led to Peter's denial of Christ? One was overconfidence. Peter was very confident in himself. It is one thing to be confident in the Lord, but it is another thing to be overconfident in yourself. Your confidence must be in God. When David went before Goliath, he went in the name of the Lord. That is how he won the victory, and that is the only way you can have victory from day to day. You can become overconfident if you are not careful.

Overconfidence has taken down many who were once staunch for the Truth. At one time, you would have thought that they would never be swayed to the contrary. Sad to

say, today some of those people are either living in sin or sitting in some Babylonian institution with hypocrisy in their lives.

Matthew wrote in Matthew 26:33-35: "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. [What did Jesus say?] Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise [that inspired the rest of them] also said all the disciples." That was quite a statement to make. In our Scripture text, in essence, Jesus was telling

Peter, "You are not going to the Cross with Me, Peter, but you are going to deny Me." Peter was very overconfident.

Overconfidence has taken down many who thought they could stand up against anything. First Corinthians 10:12 states, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Those who think they can stand need to take heed. To think that you are secure is dangerous. We stand only by the grace of the Living God. We cannot stand in our own strength. We were not saved in our own strength, and we cannot overcome in our own strength. It took the grace of God to deliver us from sin, and it takes the grace of God to keep us from sin.

To be overconfident is to be strong in oneself. For example, one may boast, "Had I been there, I would have taken care of it" or "Had I been there with Jesus, I would not have denied Him." Had you faced what Peter faced, you might have been in the same condition. For one to say that he was a disciple of Jesus, who was coming up before a trial, would have meant that he would have gotten the same sentence.

Why Was Israel Defeated at Ai?

To be overconfident is to flirt with disaster. Joshua 7:1-5 reads: "But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel. And Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Bethaven, on the east side of Bethel, and spake unto them, saying, Go up and view the country. And the men went up and viewed Ai. And they returned to Joshua, and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither;

for they are but few.

"So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted [or became discouraged], and became as water." It is always the little foxes that spoil the vine. Often the little things take people down, such as a little jealousy, a little envy, a little strife, or a little attitude.

Ai was a small city. Why was Israel defeated? There were at least three reasons: first was self-confidence, second was neglect of prayer, and third was disobedience. People cannot stand when those things are active in their lives. Israel had just come from a tremendous victory at Jericho. Joshua had never known defeat, and he did not know defeat after Ai. Israel was confident that since they took Jericho, they could surely take Ai. They forgot one thing: they did not take Jericho; God took Jericho. All they did was obey God. It was God who brought down the walls of Jericho.

Saint, it is God who delivers you. It was God who delivered you out of sin and delivered you from the alcohol, the tobacco, and the drugs. It was God who took you out of Babylon. You may stand up and toot your horn, so to speak, and say, "I did this, and I did that," but you did not do anything but wander around in the wilderness of sin. That was the best you could do. If you are anything at all today, it was God who made you what you are.

What did God tell Joshua when he got down in prayer? In essence, He said, "Get up. You should have prayed before the battle, not after the battle. It is not time for prayer now; it is time for action." Had Joshua prayed before the battle, he would have been sensitive to sin in the camp, but he did not. He sent a few men to spy out the city of Ai. You do not read anywhere that he

sought the face of God, but he did after they were defeated. Had he prayed before the battle, Israel would not have suffered defeat. Overconfidence, neglect of prayer, and disobedience cost men their lives. Friend, you cannot disobey and get by.

Following Christ Afar Off

What else led to Peter's downfall? He followed Jesus afar off. To have victory, you need to stay in step with Jesus Christ. Mark 14:54 tells us, "And Peter followed him [Jesus] afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire." To follow someone afar off is to follow at a distance. Some want to follow Jesus, but only at a distance. Some people never want to get involved in the work of God. They are satisfied to sit along the sidelines. Friend, if you are going to serve Jesus Christ, you need to get involved in the work of God. What is the work of God? Primarily, it is working to see souls saved.

If you follow Christ from a distance, you cannot feel the warmth of the Holy Spirit. If you follow from afar, you are going to feel the chilling breezes of lukewarmness, hypocrisy, indifference, and spiritual drowsiness. Only when you are close to Christ will you wax bold in the battle. You become spiritually weak and unable to stand when you follow from afar. Those who drag behind are open prey to the enemy of souls. Whenever an animal follows behind the rest of the herd, a predator will go after the one that is straggling behind. The predator will circle the animal off to get it out by itself, and then attack it. Similarly, if you follow afar off, you become an open prey to the enemy of your soul.

If you follow Christ afar off, you will leave your soul wide open to gossip. John 18:18 reads, "And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed them-

selves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself." You cannot stand with those who are in opposition without being affected. Peter could not do it. Luke's Gospel says that Peter sat with them.

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 1:1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." The Word of God covers all the actions of one's life: the walking, the standing, and the sitting. Psalm 139:2 reads, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising." To be blessed, there are places where you cannot walk, places where you cannot stand, and places where you cannot sit. The Scripture says in John 18:18 that "Peter stood with them." The other Gospel writers say that he sat with them. Nevertheless, Peter was with those who opposed Christ.

You are not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. The ungodly are not necessarily dressed in ungodly apparel, but their spirit is ungodly. Often you can feel a negative reaction from them. When you have finished sitting, standing, or walking with them, you feel discouraged after receiving their counsel. You may even feel like giving up after conversing with them. You might have the thought, "What's the use? No one is serving God." Friend, that is a lie. There are people serving God. Could it be that you have gotten yourself in that position by giving audience to the ungodly? Peter followed afar off, and he followed with the disgruntles. Do you think those people were standing around the fire not saying anything? No. That which is in a person's heart has to come out once in a while. They were not standing around the fire toasting marshmallows. They were around the fire getting ready to crucify Christ.

Ways the Enemy Works

How does the enemy work through the ungodly? One may say

to you, "Let's take a little walk" or "Why don't you sit down here? There's something I want to talk to you about" or "No one can see us right now. Let's talk a little about this situation." If you want to be blessed of God, do not stand with the ungodly, do not walk with them, and do not sit with them. If you do, your soul will gradually become weaker and weaker, until finally you come to the same place that Peter did: you will turn your back on that which is right. Today many people follow what a certain group does instead of praying and fasting and really getting hold of God. Instead of finding out what God wants them to do, they find that following others is much easier.

Peter sat among those who hated Jesus and were ready to crucify Him. Those Jews hated Jesus with a passion. Had it not been for the Roman law that required that they had to bring Him to trial, they would have killed Him right then. They had strong hatred down in their hearts, just as many people do yet today. They try to cover it up, but it is just a matter of time until their hatred is manifested.

Have you been walking, standing, or sitting with the ungodly, or the wicked? The blessed man will not take their counsel; he will not take their direction for his life. He will not stand in the way of the sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful, or those who miss the mark. If you sit in the seat of the scornful, in that position they will consider you to be one of them. A man may be standing where they venture, but when he sits with them, he becomes numbered among them.

There are those who mock, show disrespect, and constantly attack a man of God or the message. Some people run down pastors and work to destroy their influence. The Bible lets us know that David behaved himself wisely. He could have taken Saul out of this life very easily, but he would not touch God's anointed. In fact, when he cut off a piece of Saul's garment, his heart smote him.

At that time, Saul was completely backslidden. Friend, you had better be careful with your words and be careful of whom you speak against. The thrashing going on against men of God today is not anything new. Jesus told of it in Luke 13:34, where He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

Carried Away by the Enemy's Influence

Peter started out very overconfident, and then he got with the wrong council. What else did Peter do? He warmed himself by the enemy's fire. The heat of the enemy's fire warms up the flesh, but it does not do a thing for the soul. Peter warmed himself by a fire made by those who opposed Christ. The Bible lets us know it was cold there. It is always cold when you are around those who oppose Christ.

What keeps the enemy's fire burning? The enemy burns trash. In essence, the enemy will say, "Come on over to the fire and throw on some trash. Let's build that fire up a little." It will warm your flesh, and it will even get you to turn against the pastor. Peter was a man just as you are. Do not say that he did not love God, because he did; however, he got off track. You, too, can get off track if you are not careful.

Proverbs 26:20 tells us, "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." The place where Peter was standing left his soul wide open to accusations, strife, anger, fighting, and even destruction. He was not in the right place to be able to stand for Jesus. He was standing with those who opposed Christ. He was not in a good atmosphere. Today some have a struggle serving God because they keep company with those who oppose the pastor or the congregation, and

they have a hard time trying to live for God. Friend, if that is your condition, you are not going to get out of that condition until you come out from among them. Peter could not do it, and you cannot do it either.

Why is it that some good people get affected? They can become carried away by the influence of others. After the Day of Pentecost, Peter was guilty of hypocrisy. When the Jews came down, he would not eat with the Gentiles anymore. Peter separated himself, and he affected Barnabas. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost, but he got up and walked over with Peter. Paul had to set the situation straight, because Peter was guilty of dissimulation. What is dissimulation? It is hypocrisy. Good people can become affected, but many times good people will come out of it. There is hope. Good people usually get their eyes opened, just as Peter and Barnabas did, and they came out of it.

If people would get out of the enemy's camp, then they would be able to wax bold for the Truth. What keeps the enemy's fire blazing? Gossip, trash, and everything but what is right. If you have been living for God any time at all, you have seen those who gossip and cause problems. Some people are always involved where there are problems; that is their weakness.

Another translation of Proverbs 16:27 says, "A scoundrel plots evil, but his speech is like a scorching fire." A scoundrel is constantly conniving, trying to plan evil. Often those who are always involved where there are problems never seem to get victory over that condition, and it becomes their downfall. When ones get weak, who do they call? They call those who are against the work or against the pastor. Friend, you are not going to get any help by calling upon someone who is working division in a congregation. You need to stay away from fleshly fires and get the real fire of God down in your soul. When you have the real fire, you do not mess

around with the fleshly fire. If you have the real fire, you are too hot for the enemy's fire.

What Is Your Safety?

Peter was in such a weakened state that when he listened to the enemy's crowd, it was nearly impossible for him to stand for what was right. He started out being overconfident, next he followed afar off, and then he joined himself with a group of people who hated Jesus Christ. He actually sat among them. I can assure you that they did not keep their mouths shut. By the time the enemy got through with him, he was in no shape to stand. He even fell to the place where he cursed.

Despite Peter's downfall, one thing stood out about him: he loved God supremely, although he often ventured in the way of trouble. He went bitterly because he failed the Lord.

What comes out of man-made fires? We read in Acts 28:3, "And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand." (Around those fleshly fires are all kinds of spirits that are ready to latch onto you. They might get you in your mind or in your heart.) A poisonous viper latched onto Paul's hand, and he shook it off in the fire. The people there expected him to fall dead, but he had much work to do for God yet, and God healed him.

Quite often by those man-made fires, spirits are gathered together. Remember this: the Sadducees and the Pharisees hated one another, but they rallied together to crucify Jesus Christ; then they went their separate ways again. Oftentimes certain groups rally together today for a common cause. All kinds of spirits are gathering. You need to realize that it is a spiritual battle, and the enemy is encompassing the camp of the saints. I want to be on the inside looking out. I do not want to be on the outside looking in. Why? Thank God, there

is safety inside the walls of salvation.

Ungodly spirits are working as never before. Many of those spirits are embodied by those who carry Bibles under their arms, those who stand in pulpits, those who lead song services, those who sing specials, and even those who testify. Those spirits are ready to latch onto you. What is your safety? You must be filled with the Holy Spirit. If you will get the real fire of God down in your soul, you will be too hot to get around their fleshly fires. Furthermore, they will not want you around their fires. Why? The fire of the Holy Ghost will put out their fires. No more wood will be thrown on the fire, and the talebearing will cease. God can help you and protect you.

I thank God for His Word! The Lord told people in the Old Testament to build a rail around the top of their houses so that when people went up there, they would not fall off. Thank God, the Word of God surrounds you as a hedge that will keep you from falling.

When Paul gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, his presence stirred up that viper. When the viper fastened itself on Paul's hand, he shook it off and went on serving God. All kinds of spirits will attack you, trouble your mind, and try to confuse you. If you allow them to work on you, you will not think that you or anyone else is right. The answer is that you must *do* what is right, and then you will know *who* is right.

What Kind of Fire Do You Need?

Matthew 3:11 tells you, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." What is this fire symbolic of? It represents the presence of God. Many have lost step with God because they have warmed them-

selves at the wrong fire. The Bible says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."

You may ask, "How do I know whether I have been doing that?" Well, how does your soul feel? How does your spirit feel when you walk away after talking to some people? I had an outstanding pastor, and when people came around and wanted to dump trash in my ears about him, I did not listen to them. He has gone on to Glory, and some of them are down in Babylon or sitting at home. They have let down the standard. I thank God that I am still serving God by the grace of God in a Church of God congregation. It pays to keep yourself clean and to stay away from the ungodly, because they have no respect for souls. They could care less about your soul or anyone else's. All they care about is numbers!

False prophets fill football stadiums all the time, but there are no changes in the people's lives. Multitudes go forward and say they have received Jesus in their hearts, yet they look the same, act the same, talk the same, and go to the same places. Friend, if you get the Spirit of God in you, a change will take place. You will look differently, act differently, talk differently, and go to different places. Before I got saved, I did not want to be in the congregation of the righteous; but after I was converted, there was no place I would rather be.

The only way you can be victorious in living for God is to stay away from the enemy's fire. The ungodly have no concern for your soul. They are always trying to prove a point. Peter could not handle it. He started out being boastful and overconfident, next he followed Christ afar off, and then he actually warmed

himself in the wrong camp. What happened? He denied the Lord. That is what the devil is trying to get you to do—deny your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. If he can get you to do that, he has done a destructive work upon your soul.

Is God speaking to your heart? Have you been in the wrong camp? Have you been warming yourself around the wrong fire? Maybe you have become overconfident or you are following the Lord afar off. Won't you come to Jesus Christ and meet His conditions? Jesus did not cast Peter out. Peter became a mighty man for God, insomuch that people were healed when they passed by his shadow. After Peter denied the Lord, he wept bitterly, and God was right there to help him. God is no respecter of persons, and He will do the same for you.

(Cassette C-3914E)

A religion that *costs nothing* does **NOTHING**.

Radio Log



LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Wellston, Ohio	WAJB-FM 92.5	Thursday	8:05 a.m.-8:35 a.m.
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Newark, Ohio	WCLT-AM 1430	Sunday	7:15 a.m.-8:00 a.m.
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Matthew 25:1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:

4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.

7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Is Your Lamp Burning?



Brother Allen Polston

Living the Christian Life

When John the Baptist was in prison, he was in a hard place. He called some of his disciples and told them to go and ask Jesus if He was the One who should come or should they look for another? Just as back then, the devil is trying to use many things to work against God's people. I am glad there is a positive message that God sends. Jesus told John's disciples to go and show John again the things of God. Much of

the preaching that God's ministry does is just that—showing the saints again what the Scriptures say.

In 2 Peter, in essence, Peter told the people, "I am reminding you and stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance." In another place he said, "As long as I am in this tabernacle, I am not going to be negligent to stir you up." Friend, in this message there may be things that you have heard before, but I want to remind you of God's way. It is the only way that will clean up

your life, help you to be the light of the world that the Bible talks about, and get you to Heaven.

In our Scripture text we find a group of individuals who were on the right track in the beginning. They were not filthy and vile. They had begun to move in the direction that pleased God. However, there is more to being a Christian than just making a start. Having in your remembrance a definite time in life when old things passed away and all things became new is important.

Knowing that you are saved is important. You may not remember the day, the month, or the year, and you may not know exactly what age you were. What is important is that you know there was a time when a dramatic change occurred in your life, a time when an experience began that changed you from head to toe and caused you to be different than you were before.

Being born again is a requirement. Jesus let Nicodemus know there was no other way. In Nicodemus' nighttime visitation with Jesus, he inquired about this Christian life, and Jesus let him know that he had to be born again. Friend, you must be born of the Spirit of God, because there is no other way to begin your journey toward Heaven. Paul wrote in Romans 8:9, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Without the Spirit of Christ you are none of His.

Some people teach that ones are predestinated to be saved or lost. They say that though some have committed sin and lived ungodly lives for a period of time, they were saved all along. Dear one, nothing could be further from the truth. Without the Spirit of God you are none of His. Being born of God's Spirit is a requirement. You must come to a place in your life when you step away from the life of sin and put your faith in Jesus Christ. When that takes place, the experience of salvation begins.

Though a starting place is required, there is more to living the Christian life than just that one occasion. It is more than going to an altar once or twice. You must be willing to live for God every day until He calls you home. The Hebrew writer expressed this thought in Hebrews 3:14. He wrote, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." You must hold the beginning of your confidence steadfastly. In other words, you have to keep the faith right down to the end of your life.

While you are going to encounter many attacks by the enemy of your soul to get you to surrender that faith, the message is to hold fast the faith! You must keep the faith right to the end of life's journey.

Paul's testimony was that he had fought a good fight and kept the faith. He said in 2 Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Saint, there is a crown laid up for you. God has an inheritance for you if you will fight the good fight of faith and not let the devil take what God has started. There is a wonderful inheritance and a wonderful reward just ahead, but you must remain faithful.

Being Cleansed by the Blood of Christ

In our Scripture lesson we see a people who started right, but they failed to remain faithful. In this lesson we see a unique characteristic of each one who starts in this Christian way. Everyone who truly surrenders his life to God and asks Him to come in experiences a similarity: each one is cleansed from the life of sin and becomes pure and holy. Sinner friend, if you genuinely repent of the sinful life that you have been living, God will come in. He sent His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for sin. He wants to do a cleansing work in your heart and life. He can remove the sin that is hopelessly attached to you. He will clean you up and make you pure and holy so there is nothing between you and God.

Jesus was our Sacrifice. He was allotted for this purpose. There is no way that sinful man could come into the presence of God. God is a holy God. The Scripture says, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). There is only one way to have fellowship with God. For example, one does not have fellowship with God because he has brown hair and he thinks God has brown hair. We can have some things in common with people in

this world. Because you live on the same street that your neighbor lives on, you have some things in common that you can talk about. However, when it comes to communing with God, there is only one way. He is holy and pure, without fault, and without sin and darkness; therefore, the only means by which you can come into fellowship with Him is to be holy.

When I was in Kenya, Africa, on one trip, some people came to the hotel where we were staying and spoke our language. Because of that, there was a common bond between us. Having others there who spoke the same language was special. However, one does not have fellowship with God because he understands English. Also, attending a place that has the name "Church of God" over the door does not guarantee fellowship with God. The only way one can have fellowship and communion with God is through holiness, through living a life that has been made free from all sin.

In studying this parable, we see a symbol of purity represented as ten virgins. Jesus said in verse 1 of our Scripture text, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." I repeat, they got off to a good start on their journey toward Heaven. A good start does not have to be at an altar inside a place of worship. You can get saved in a remote location, wherever you meet God's conditions. Wherever you become willing to meet His conditions, no matter where you are, He will save you.

Many people in our world come to a place in their lives where they feel remorseful for their actions, knowing the things they have engaged in were improper and unacceptable to God. We can be encouraged as we read of the thief on the cross who, in his very last breaths, asked for forgiveness. When a person gets saved, one thing is definite: a common trait of

being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ begins.

"Let the Wicked Forsake His Way"

First Corinthians 6:9-11 states: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Friend, you can be cleansed of all sinful things. There is a list of things in this text that are quite ungodly, yet Paul said, "Such were some of you." He was speaking to some who were once caught up in those things. Paul did not say, "I am going to hold these things against you for the rest of your life." He said, "But ye are washed." Thank God, when you are washed, those things are no longer a part of your life. When you have been washed, you are sanctified, or set apart, from those things. Then you are justified and made free of those things, and your name is clear before God.

I am glad that God cleared me of the things in which I was involved. Thank God, He does not say, "I am going to hold it against you." God does not operate that way. Saint, when He washes and cleanses you from sin, it is gone, never to be remembered against you again. He buries it in the sea of forgetfulness and makes you pure and holy.

The Bible says in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God has made that proposition to all men and women. Though you might have been involved in many terrible things, things that were a

reproach and were definitely a bad mark upon your character, you can be made white as snow, free from all those things.

Isaiah 55:7 reads, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." When a person who is unsaved comes to God and forsakes his ways and his thoughts, God will abundantly pardon him and set him free.

When God sets a person free, he is free indeed. Since God works in this manner, we, too, ought to follow the course of God and never mention it against that person again. We should never let it come into conversation again. You may ask, "What if it begins to come into my mind?" You should resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

You have to resist thoughts from time to time. Not every thought that comes into your mind is one that you ought to let stay. You should not allow your mind to dwell on some things. If the devil can get you to focus long enough on wrong thoughts, he will begin to do a work upon you. When wrong thoughts get into your heart, they will cause you to become bitter or arrogant and proud. That is the reason we each have to live as God would have us to live and resist the thoughts that are not of God.

Once I heard a man bring a prayer request and say, "I want you to pray that God will help me to discern quickly the good thoughts that I should allow to stay and the thoughts that are not good that I should send on their way." That was a good prayer request. That thought stuck with me. God help each of us to discern when thoughts ought to be allowed room to operate and when thoughts should be quickly stamped out, because the enemy works on our thoughts.

Thank God, the wicked can forsake his way. He can surrender his thoughts and return to the Lord.

If he will do that, God will pardon him and wash away his ungodliness.

Titus wrote in Titus 1:15, "Unto the pure all things are pure." When God sets you free from sin and cleans you up, He gives you a pure mind, a pure heart, and a pure soul. You are free of all impurities. That is the only way you can have fellowship with God. Friend, whenever you meet God's conditions and you are made pure, that will be where you begin to live for God. Until you are made pure, you cannot have fellowship with God. God is light, and He will not have anything to do with darkness, or that which is unholy.

Many start along this way, but sin has gotten them down. Paul said that sin is a deceiver: it makes things look attractive, but it never fulfills its promises.

Beware of Counterfeit Religion

In our Scripture text some started out in the right direction, but they failed along the way. The longer people are saved, sometimes they tend to think, "Well, when I am saved for five or ten years, the devil will not come against me so strong." Dear one, it is not that way. The devil will still attack you after you have been saved for many years. No doubt, he will attack you in an even greater way, because he knows you are getting closer to completing your journey. The devil will attack you all the way through life. God wants you to know more than just how to start this journey. He wants you to have an understanding of the journey along the way.

In our Scripture lesson Jesus said, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." In this verse Jesus began to talk about the Kingdom of Heaven. Someone may ask, "What is the Kingdom of Heaven?" It is the Church of God. Jesus was giving insight concerning the Church of God. He was giving

understanding in this parable so that you might be able to identify God's people and know what you must do to be God's child. After you have studied this parable, you can have an assurance of what God is requiring of you to continue to enjoy His blessings and to make Heaven your home.

Jesus was giving a detailed look at the characteristics of the church that He is someday coming back for. Many people claim to be Christians that God is not going to take to Heaven. Also, there are many counterfeit religions in our world. God does not have any sympathy for counterfeit religion, or religion that tells people things that are false and causes them to get off track. It interferes with God's work and His family.

I daresay, if you have children, you love them, and you would not let someone come in and molest them and carry on with them. Parents have a God-given responsibility to protect their families and their homes. They would not allow someone to come in and injure members of the family. So it is with God. When it comes to the preaching of the Gospel, sometimes people think, "He is getting really plain. He should not say those things." God does not have any sympathy for the counterfeit religions of this world that are telling His family of false ways that are going to cause them to be lost. He is going to raise up some men who are determined to stand for the Truth. If God has to search the world over, He will find some people who will protect His family. There may be some who have decided they are not going to protect it anymore, but God has a ministry that will be faithful.

I remember when I first heard a brother preach from Isaiah 6:8. In this verse God said, "Whom shall I send?" The Prophet Isaiah said, "Here am I; send me." As I heard that, God began to deal with my heart. God can still deal with hearts and begin to raise up consecrated, devoted brethren who will put God

ahead of everything else, men who will put God first and foremost and let Him work out the details. The Bible way is the path of victory. I thank God for victory!

God wants His family to be protected, so He gave us a vision of His church so that we might gain understanding. Friend, if you do not understand that there is a difference between nominal religion and those who are really God's people, this parable can help you. There are some people who have never seen the difference. They feel that as long as they attend a church, that is enough to get them to Heaven, and they are comfortable with that. Church of God, we should not rest until they are in the Church of God, until they are in the church that is going to Heaven, the church that Paul wrote about in the Ephesian letter: a glorious church, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. She is clean! We can be happy when they are in His church.

With a mind to show us His church, Christ let us see some individuals who had started in the right direction. They got saved and began to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, but a short distance down the road, something hindered them. Often I have noticed that when someone makes a profession of Christianity, it seems that many others begin to pull at them to come to their church. I remember when I first got saved and people tried to pull me in from every direction to try to get me to attend this place and that place.

The devil does not like it when someone gets saved and gives his heart to God and his life is cleansed. He begins to work through whatever means he can to put some kind of damper on that person's experience. Why? Because the more that person testifies to people, the more the light of God shines out.

It Pays to Be Ready

Verses 2-4 of our Scripture text read: "And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that

were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." We know from reading verses 10-12 of the Scripture lesson that the end result was that some were ready when the Bridegroom came and some were not ready.

It goes without saying that you should want to be ready, as was the group that went in with the Bridegroom. It pays to be ready every hour of every day. We never know when death will come. No doubt, that is the reason Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26). In other words, do not go to bed with something out of order. In that same verse he said, "Be ye angry, and sin not." Do not let things work that ought not to work. You need to take care of matters quickly by getting down before God and talking to Him about those things. He has grace for every situation. He can give you grace to overcome whatever there is to overcome.

It pays to be ready, because you do not want to be found in the same position in which the five foolish virgins were found. They got down to the last moments of time and were unable to go in. As we study this parable, notice that each of those virgins had a profession, just as many people do today. Many people claim to be Christians, but all they have is a profession. When a man of God preaches the Gospel, you need to ask yourself these questions: "What am I basing my profession on? Am I merely basing it on some past occurrence and that is all?"

Sometime back, a lady told me that her grandson and his wife had just had a little baby boy. I said, "Oh, that's really wonderful." She said, "Yes, and he is going to be baptized this Sunday." I could not go along and say, "That's wonderful." Why? Because people follow that tradition or custom, and then the rest of their lives they think they are saved because they were baptized as a baby. As far as they are

concerned, they are Christians. Friend, having a little water sprinkled on you can never cleanse you from the life of sin. You must have the blood of Jesus Christ applied to your heart and life. Too many people base their Christian profession on some occurrence that took place in their past, and they feel that is sufficient. Do you know why? Many counterfeit religions teach that very thing.

I do not think God has finished thrashing Babylon yet, because Babylon is still teaching deceptive, damnable doctrines. Babylon needs to be exposed so that people who have been duped by those false teachings can realize that they need to do something before it is too late. The five foolish virgins found themselves unprepared to meet God. That is the reason God's man needs to preach the Truth.

Many people think because they have joined a church, all they need to do is show up from time to time, be faithful to that organization, and everything will be all right. Friend, if that is what you are basing your hopes of making Heaven upon, you need to go further than that. That is not sufficient. In fact, joining a church is not even necessary. What *is* necessary is repenting of your sins, turning your life over to God, and letting the Holy Spirit fill your heart with the presence of God as the ungodliness is cleansed and taken away.

False teachings are causing men and women to end up without God as the five foolish virgins were. I do not know what kind of actions were taken by them, other than they left and returned, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us" (verse 11). It is hard to imagine what a person must feel when he or she comes to the "river of death" and is not ready to go. There that person is faced with an awareness of the reality that all the years of professing were in vain.

Friend, you need to realize there is more to being a child of God and making Heaven your home than just a good start or some great oc-

currence in your past. You must live a holy life on a daily basis. You must live close to God if you are going to make it through. There is a danger in thinking that because you are accepted in a Church of God congregation, that is sufficient. That type of thinking will cause you to allow things to take place in your life that you should not allow.

I am fearful of some things that some professing Christians are allowing in their lives today. Many used to stand against wasting time with the entertainment of Hollywood and spending time subjecting themselves to immorality in their living rooms on the screen. I am still standing against it. Others might have let down on the message, but Church of God, we ought to stand against things that are not leading people to a closer walk with God. There is a song that says, "Just a closer walk with Thee." Saint, you are not going to have a closer walk with God if you fill your mind with ungodliness.

Hearing and Obeying His Voice

This Christian life requires that you walk daily with Jesus Christ. First John 1:7 says, "Walk in the light, as he is in the light." In our Scripture lesson we see those who apparently did not follow that course, because when it was all said and done, they were not ready to meet God.

Another example of people who were wise and people who were foolish is found in Matthew, Chapter 7. Verse 24 says, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." Notice that Jesus likened a person who heard and did to a wise man. Verses 25-27 read: "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened

unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

The wise person was the one who not only heard and read what the Bible has to say but also practiced it in his own personal life. On the other hand, the foolish heard what the Bible says but did nothing. He did not say, "God, I need help, because I see where I need to move closer to You." He simply heard it but did not embrace it; he did not put it into practice in his life.

Friend, you need to be as the wise man. Living for God is more than just getting a start; it is continuing to hear and do what God says as the Spirit of God speaks to you. The Spirit of God, Jesus Christ embodied in the Spirit, speaks to remind you of right and wrong. You may not retain everything you hear in a church service, but a few weeks later you may be in a certain situation, and the Spirit of God will bring that message back to you. He teaches you, and then He reminds you.

The wise man was the one who obeyed when God spoke. He heard the Word of God, and he put it into practice. The foolish man also heard, but he blocked it out. You can do things to try to block out God, but you had better be careful! You can push Him out one too many times. Jesus, speaking in Revelation 3:20 said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." I do not know about you, but when I go to a door and knock, I will not stand there all day long and knock. I will knock a few times, and then wait a few minutes. If I think there is a chance that someone did not hear me, I will knock again, but I am not going to stand there and knock indefinitely. After awhile, I am going to go on my way.

Jesus continued to say in verse 20, ". . . if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him." I do

not know of anyone better to sup with through the course of the day than Jesus. I do not know of any sweeter way to spend the day. One songwriter penned the words, "He's sweet I know, oh, He's sweet I know." Praise God, He is sweet! God is wonderful! I do not know of any better way to spend a life and

go into eternity than living for Him.

In closing, I trust that you can see that you need to do more than just start to live for God. You need to be wise, have a keen ear to hear what the Spirit has to say to you, and then practice it in your daily living.

Dear one, won't you be wise? You do not want to be found with a

mere profession and yet not really be ready to meet God. If you hear God's voice, you need to obey Him. You need to be ready to meet God. Do not allow anything to get between your soul and the Savior.

(Cassette C-4965M)

What Can the Bible Do?



The Bible is a book that you can recommend. It is really a wonderful Book that has accomplished great things, and it is still working miracles in the lives of those who read it. Here are some facts of what it did in a prison.

There was in one of the cells a man who had been five times convicted of burglary. He was most troublesome, and the prison punishment and the chaplain's warnings and persuasions seemed to have no effect whatsoever on his hardened conscience. On one occasion the chaplain was going round the cells, and when he came to this one, he was wondering what he would say.

Opening the door, he greeted him by name, and in a cherry tone said, "I'll tell you what is the matter with you, you want making new inside."

The remark seemed to strike the prisoner as a good joke, and he answered, "Well, sir, I think you are about right."

The chaplain was rather surprised at this answer and asked him if he knew how it could be done.

"Not likely," he replied.

The chaplain said, "But you could. Listen to this," and he read to him the verse in Ezekiel 36:26, which says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh."

The prisoner admitted that would be making a new inside, but that it was not possible for him.

"You are wrong, my lad," answered the chaplain. Then he told the prisoner that he knew men who had been so changed and reminded him that the words were God's words. Next, the chaplain handed him his own Bible and, turning down the leaf at the third chapter of John's Gospel, left it with him to read for himself.

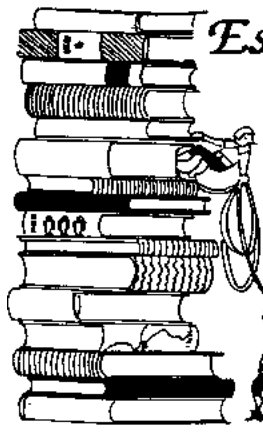
Three days later, he saw the prisoner again and was struck with the change in his face and manner. "What is it?" he asked.

The prisoner replied, "What is it? It is the Book!" Then he told how he had read the verses over and over, and every time they seemed to be more wonderful than before. Then there came back to him recollections of what he had heard when he was a boy, and his bitter, hard heart was broken. With prayers and tears he cried for mercy, and he soon found forgiveness through the blood of Christ.

Now for the change—the harvest of the little seed. Whereas he had been a hopeless case and a constant anxiety to the officials, now he was willing to do anything for anyone. One day he remarked, "I'm glad that my sentence is a long one, because the prison is the happiest place I have found on earth."

Jeremiah 23:29 states, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

Selected



Especially for Young People

Peter's Thanksgiving



The boys had to pass old Peter's place on their way to Lake Manualla, and because some of the crowd had fallen into the habit of teasing Peter, Glen almost hated to go with them. Glen himself was not any sissy. He was the best swimmer, so much so that some of the mothers did not want their boys to go unless Glen was along. But as much as Glen was adored by his pals, they would not take his good advice about old Peter, and when they passed his place, they delighted in "starting something" in one way or another. They would throw sticks or clods of dirt to knock the green apples off his best apple tree. Or they would tease Star, Peter's old black shaggy dog with a white star on his chest. Or they would reach through the fence to pull Peter's carrots and cabbages. Glen would plead, "Aw, fellas, leave Peter alone. What's the big idea?" But the boys would only laugh the louder and suggest some new prank.

One day Peter, with old Star at his heels, had gone in after such an attack. "I wonder what I can do to keep those tormenting boys from destroying all I've got?" he sighed. "Maybe I haven't handled the situation just right. I never see that biggest fellow do anything. It appears to me that he is the only decent one among them. There's some way out, and I've got to find it! Well, well, I know!" and old Star, who lay in the doorway, jumped as Peter slapped his hand sharply on his knee. "I know! The early peaches are fully ripe, and no better peaches ever

grew. I'll carry a box of them out by the gate, and when the boys come back, I'll walk out and, no matter what they do, Peter Stevenson, you give those peaches to those boys. Fill their pockets full, and don't you say a cross word! There is a verse in the Bible that says, 'Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; . . . for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.'"

Peter carefully picked the peaches and placed them by the gate. He waited. He heard the boys coming down the road. The boys laughed. Someone said, "There he comes." *Whiz* came a stone right past Peter's ear. Another voice was heard, "Quit, John, quit or I won't come swimming with you again!"

They were all surprised that Peter was not saying anything. Several stones flew dangerously near the old man, and they were even more surprised when, in an unruffled tone, he invited, "Have some peaches, boys? Come, help yourselves. Fill your pockets; they are fine ones."

"What is your name?" he asked the tallest boy, the one he had always admired.

"Glen Riley, sir," came the reply.

"Well, Glen, do you like fixing things? I've got an old Ford out here by the barn, and if someone was handy at fixing it up, it might run. If you want it, you may have it."

Glen's eyes beamed. Of all things, Glen's heart longed for, and never expected to have, was a little run-about. The repairing of it would be fun! It was only a few days until he

was rattling along all over town. He soon had a job delivering for Adam's Grocery and was running errands or delivering for others whenever he could. Frequently, Glen took the boys along. When they drove by old Peter's place on their way to the lake, they all waved a hand instead of throwing stones. In fact, now they threw smiles. Peter breathed a happy sigh of contentment. Often Glen would drive up for him to take him to town or wherever he wished to go.

At last summer was past. October came, and then November, and Peter had put the last of his apples, potatoes, and pumpkins in the cellar. Thanksgiving was just like any other day to him. He had forgotten about it entirely until Glen and the boys drove up.

Glen invited Peter to go with them for a ride in the country to buy some honey for his mother. The old man enjoyed these little trips as much as the boys did. It was a long way, the air was crisp and cold, but aside from one flat tire, they got back safe about two o'clock in the afternoon.

Smoke was ascending from Peter's chimney. He was surprised and said he thought his fire was low when he left it, but invited them all in to warm their hands and have some apples.

Peter opened the door, with the boys following closely. Of all things! There stood Glen's mother and Wallace's mother and John's mother and Micky and Bob's mother in big

aprons. The fathers stood nearby, with their hammers and saws, as though they were caught in the act of repairing something. The table had been lengthened, covered with a white cloth, and laden with a most beautiful Thanksgiving dinner. Mrs. Riley was just cutting the big, round chocolate cake.

"Happy Thanksgiving, Peter!" shouted everyone at once. Old Peter sank limply down upon a chair, and exclaimed, "Of all things!"

That night, after Peter's guests had gone home, he sat by the fire,

talking to himself and Star. "It wasn't just the dinner that made me so happy, though the dinner was sure wonderful. It wasn't because it was Thanksgiving. It wasn't because I had a long ride and was better than hungry. It wasn't because I was as thankful as I ought to be. I think it was because there was peace and harmony and love, and if that makes folks happy and thankful, why not have a little more of it all the year round? Maybe, though, it is good to have Thanksgiving once a year to remind folks that forget, like me,

and maybe those coals of fire did some good too." Star looked up and wagged his tail.

Glen, Wallace, John, Harold, Micky, and Bob all thought about it that night too, each in his own way. Each decided, as Peter did, that happiness comes from kindness and good cheer, and one does not really have to wait for Thanksgiving Day to be kind or thankful.

Selected

Thanksgiving Street

A story has been told of two Christian men at a meeting. One of them got up to speak, and most of what he said stressed the difficult conditions in which he lived. After he had sat down, the other man rose to his feet and said: "I hear that our brother who has just spoken lives on Grumbling Street. I lived there myself for a time and never enjoyed life. The air was bad, the houses were bad, and the water was bad. The birds never came and sang in the street, and I was gloomy and sad every day.

"Then I moved to Thanksgiving Street. Ever since, I have had good days, and so has my family. The air is good, the water is good, and the houses are good. The sun shines all day, the birds are always singing, and I am as happy as I can be. I recommend our brother to move. There are plenty of houses to rent on Thanksgiving Street."

Are we grateful enough for the amazing gift whereby we have been enabled to become the sons of God?

How can we show our gratitude? First, let us love the Lord our God with all our hearts and minds. Next, we must love our neighbors as ourselves.

Selected



God's Comprehensive Plan for Man

Brother E. David Stegmeier

God Cares for His People

In this message I would like to explain the many conditions, benefits, and terms that God's people have in His comprehensive plan. God is concerned about every part of your life. He is your Heavenly Father, and just as an earthly father really cares for his children, God cares for you. He wants you to be healthy, holy, and happy.

Psalm 103:1-7 reads: "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: [God cautioned the children of Israel that when they were dwelling in goodly homes and had all kinds of good food to eat that they might forget what God had done for them. Today there is also a danger that one might forget the blessings of God. You need to pause and consider some blessings that come from serving the Lord.]

"Who forgiveth all thine iniqui-

ties; [When God has forgiven all your sins, He will never bring them up against you again. If they are brought up, it is by the devil or someone who is working for the devil.] who healeth all thy diseases; [Sometimes God may allow a light affliction to work on you to help your soul. The health of your soul is far more important than the health of your body. God may allow you to suffer some things because He is working on you spiritually and you need to learn a lesson. Sometimes a child of God needs to be corrected. An affliction may be sent to correct you and to help you. God wants you to be temperate. Hezekiah was greatly afflicted, but God extended healing to him, and he lived fifteen more years. However, the Bible says he did not truly thank God and praise Him according to the benefits he received.]

"Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; [Many of us were heading down the path of destruction. We were out to destroy ourselves,

but God intervened. I believe that many diseases today are the results of man's sin and disobedience.] who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies [over God's people is a shroud of mercy and lovingkindness; that is beautiful]; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. [Saint, the Lord renews your strength. Church of God people seem to age more slowly. Faith in God is good for the body as well as the soul. God's people are kept from many diseases that the world contracts.] The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. [God will do right by His people. These Scriptures are so absolutely profound. God will take care of His people. He will vindicate His justice. I often wonder about certain things, but then I read Psalm 73. It is good for problems, dark days, and depression.]

"He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of

Israel." Saints of God are to make God's ways known to others and to their children. Child of God, if you meet someone who does not know anything about God or His way, you should tell that person what God has done for you. Tell that one how He saved you, cleaned up your life, and gave you a reason for living. One songwriter said, "Oh, tell what He's done for you, others may need Him too." We had better thank God and praise Him according to the benefits that we have received.

Verses 8-22 read: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

"For he knoweth our frame; [He knows how frail we are. To stand up against God and defy Him reminds me of the story of the ant and the elephant. That is absolutely ridiculous! Let us fear him, honor Him, and respect Him. Also, we should respect the man of God, respect the Word of God, and respect the Church of God.] he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. [Man may flourish for a while, but one of these days we all will be gone. Let us do all that we can possibly do for God while we are here.] For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. The LORD hath prepared his throne in

the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

"Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul."

God's Plan Is All-inclusive

Child of God, God is concerned about you physically as well as spiritually. The Church of God preaches a full, all-inclusive, comprehensive Gospel. Comprehensive means that it covers a matter. What matter does it cover? God's plan covers man's welfare. *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* defines the word *comprehensive* as "covering a matter under consideration completely." In this message I want you to consider the matter of man's welfare. The Gospel covers our welfare completely. God's comprehensive "insurance" plan covers everything that pertains to man. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 8:4, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Man is the very top of God's creative work, and there are more blessings and benefits recorded for man than for any of His creatures. One of man's benefits is a home in Heaven. At some time, in some way, each of our bodies will cease to function, but those who do the will of God are promised an eternal Heaven.

God has been man's physician throughout the annals of history. You can trace it way back, from the beginning to the present time. In Exodus 15:26 God said, "I will put none of these diseases upon thee." Hezekiah was healed. God even went outside the realm of Israel to heal Naaman.

I read a story once of a family who took a trip. This family purchased tickets for a cruise, but before they left, they packed sardines,

cheese, and crackers to take along. Out on the ocean whenever it was mealtime, they went into their berth and had crackers, cheese, and sardines. One day the father was overcome with the pleasant aroma from the kitchen and the dining room. He asked a member of the crew, "How much would I have to pay to be able to go to the dining room and enjoy a meal there?" The crewman answered, "Sir, didn't anyone tell you that it is included in the fare?" The meals were all-inclusive. The family wondered, "Oh, why did we bring these sardines, stale crackers, and cheese that is collecting mold?" They threw it all away and went to the dining room.

Our Heavenly Father is offering a comprehensive plan. Friend, God cares about you. He loves you, and He wants to heal you. It is His will. Jesus had a will, but His will was to do the will of the Father. Jesus' words were, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). God wants to heal you. If He has not healed you yet, He is working something far greater. The health of your soul is far more important than the health of your body. God is working to bless you spiritually. Through your illness, you become kinder, more patient, and more sympathetic toward others. It is working for your good.

Jesus healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases. What is the hindrance today? Unbelief is working. It is probably one of the greatest enemies we have. God's Word tells us of the many times Jesus was touched with compassion when He saw the infirmities and the afflictions of the people. Afflicted one, He is touched with compassion toward you.

Healing Is a Tangible Benefit

Jesus asked the question, in so many words, "Which is easier, the healing of the body or the saving of the soul?" The answer is, both are easy for God. I have heard this

message my entire life, and divine healing is still in the Bible. I was raised on divine healing. My wife and I have raised our children on divine healing.

In June of 2001 I was extremely afflicted. Before my family and I went to camp meeting at God's Acres, God had the timing and the place and everything preordained. The closer it came to our departure time, the sicker I became. However, I was scheduled to preach at the camp meeting at that Sunday morning, so I thought, "I *have* to go." Then a sister in my congregation called and said, "Your flight is still scheduled to fly, but you can reschedule because of terrible storms in the Midwest." I said to my wife, "I think that is an answer to prayer, to just give me one more night at home. You go on with the children." I stayed home thinking that I would feel better the next day, but I got worse. The next day I had a real problem walking and even keeping my balance. My son Ronnie took me to the airport and helped me to carry my luggage. When he saw me staggering around, he said, "Dad, are you okay?" I said, "I'm okay," but the farther I went, the more I felt I was losing consciousness. I do not remember getting to God's Acres, and I do not remember what happened the next few days. I only vaguely remember a few things that happened that week.

No doubt one reason that God allowed me to get to God's Acres was that many praying people are there. My condition worsened until the saints had a day of fasting and prayer. My wife said she noticed a remarkable reverse on that day. My condition began to look hopeful from then on. After I returned home, I sat in a chair most of the day. At night I would get up at one or two o'clock in the morning and walk the floor and cry and pray and read God's Word. My wife would talk to me to see if she could help, and I said to her, "I'm thinking about going home. I'm just really tired, and I want to go home." For weeks my

body felt as if it were still sleeping. I woke up each morning, but my body felt as though it was still asleep. However, God came on the scene, and I am as healthy today as I have ever been. I thank God for what He has done!

I was absolutely too sick to call for the elders, but Brother Decker came often to pray for me, and I appreciated that. Brother Dickerson came, and I appreciated it so very much.

James 5:13 says, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." One reason you need to do some praying is that you might have a fault. Thankfully, during my illness God brought nothing to my mind. I was very calm and not at all anxious about eternity. However, sometimes you need to search your heart to see if you have a fault or need to correct something, to be sure that you are clear.

Healing Is the Children's Bread

I understand that false preachers and all kinds of ungodly people have put divine physical healing in a very poor light, but they have done that to nearly every aspect of serving God. The Bible lets us know that healing is the children's bread. James 5:13-14 states: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call [the Bible says to call] for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

The woman who had the affliction for ten years said, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole" (Matthew 9:21). It helps our faith to have something tangible. The late Sister Faye Green had a handkerchief that Brother E. E. Byrum had anointed for her healing as a small child. The Lord healed her completely, and she carried that handkerchief with her for the rest of her life.

Years ago, I witnessed a very

beautiful healing when we came out of the Anderson movement. My Sunday school teacher, a very dear friend who is now gone, had always wrapped her leg with a dressing, because for years she had a running sore that had not healed. After I moved to Oregon to pastor, she wrote to me. Her son was gloriously saved, and he came to our congregation. God put his home back together. He said, "Mother is asking that we send her an anointed handkerchief." We have an example of that in the Bible in Acts, Chapter 19. People sent handkerchiefs to the Apostle Paul, and he anointed them. So we had the brethren gather to anoint a handkerchief. We prayed over it and sent it to her. The outcome was that God gloriously healed her of that running sore.

Sometimes we need something tangible. The Scripture says; ". . . anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him [if they are confessed and forsaken; that is all part of it]. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:14-16).

I trust that you have gotten the message that God has a comprehensive plan. Afflicted one, God wants to heal you. If you are not healed, I repeat, God is working something far more important. He might be using your affliction as a witness for your lost loved ones. Did God heal Fanny Crosby? No. She was blind from about three or four months of age for the rest of her life. Yet she is the greatest songwriter of all times, having written more than eight thousand hymns. God can use an affliction, but it is usually His will to heal. If your faith has been encouraged, ask the Lord to heal your body.

(Cassette C-4746M)

James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save

the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

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

17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.



Effectual Fervent Prayer

Brother E. A. Wilson

Great Tidings Bring Great Joy

The Apostle James spoke of some divine truths that we need to consider. God's Word sets forth some dominant characteristics of the morning-time church. We see a picture of the church that Jesus built in action. We find in God's Word that the true Church of God is a singing church.

One of the earmarks of the true church is that she is made up of singing people who have a definite song. In Ephesians 5:19 we read,

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Colossians 5:16 tells us, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord." Out of the heart wherein the Word of God dwells richly comes songs of real praise.

I believe God wants His Word to dwell in us in a richer manner than

we are allowing it. The Apostle Paul said to let the Word of God dwell in you richly. That means to let it work in abundant effort and bring forth everything God wants it to. If you do that, you will begin to have a merry heart, and you will begin to feel like singing and praising God.

Real salvation came to bring great joy. This is the message the angels brought to the shepherds. There are great tidings throughout the Gospel that will bring you great joy. One of those is the tiding of salvation: that a man can be deliv-

ered from the quagmire of sin and not made over, but made completely new, having every sin removed as far as the east is from the west, with the filth of sin cleansed from his life and the guilt of sin gone. What good tidings!

Moreover, there are many other good tidings, such as the good tiding of divine healing. Our Savior is the Great Physician. He bore the stripes to heal our bodies as well as to save our souls. These good tidings go on and on. The morning-time church was the apostolic church in the beginning of the Gospel Day and a singing church, and she was also a healing church; the record declares it.

"The Prayer of Faith Shall Save the Sick"

The Bible tells the sick to call for the elders of the church, and they will anoint him with oil and pray the prayer of faith. I have studied the anointing with oil because I wanted to know why it was used. Using the oil was a tradition carried over from Judaism. If you study history, you will find that when a Jew was ill, he never went to a doctor. He went to the Rabbi, and the Rabbi anointed him with oil and prayed for him.

Even during the second century, Justin Ireneus made the statement that the sick were healed by the laying on of hands and the anointing of oil by the Christians. History declares this to be true. An emperor named Alexander Severus was healed instantly when a Christian anointed him with oil, laid hands on him, and prayed the prayer of faith. In gratitude, he kept that Christian in his palace until he died. The emperor's testimony was that it was beyond anything he had ever seen when the Christians laid hands on people, anointed them with oil, and prayed, and they were healed.

This biblical practice continued right on through the falling away from Truth and the rise of papalism, a time when spiritual darkness cov-

ered the earth. God's mode of healing people was, and still is, by hands being laid on the sick, anointing them with oil, and praying the prayer of faith. If you follow history right down through, you can see how far the devil has led people away from this truth.

Our Scripture text states that the elders are to anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord and pray for them, and the Lord will raise them up. By A.D. 852, Roman Catholicism had raised up with its counter doctrine. The anointing oil was no longer put on a man and prayer lifted to cure him; but the anointing with oil and praying was done when a man was dying, and it is still done yet today. When a Roman Catholic is ready to die, the priest is called in to anoint him with oil and get him ready to die.

When God has ordained that we anoint the sick with oil and pray over them so that they can be healed, it is hard to think that the devil could work such a work and cause religious people to use it for just the opposite of that. Instead of calling the priest to get anointed so they can get well, they call the priest to get anointed so they can die. That is 100 percent contrary to the truth. You may think that is ridiculous, but that is what is going on. The anointing with oil is to raise up the sick and make them well.

I merely brought that forth to show you how the devil can twist the truth. You and I are just as human as the people in any past age. There is only one way to hold to any truth, and that is to practice it just as it is. When people cease to practice it, it will become cloudy in their minds; next, they will become confused, and then they will come forth with some other idea.

Truth is not slippery, but it can slip away from us. The only truth any of us really has hold of is what we practice. Whenever one ceases to be a doer of the Word, deception begins to work. God's ordained plan is to anoint the sick with oil and pray the prayer of faith. History lets

you know that this was carried out. Today we are serving the same God who healed in days gone by. God has not changed His mind or His plan.

The Law of Prayer

The morning church was a healing church and a praying church. Prayer is so vital, yet it seems to be a mystery to many people. Some people have asked, "Why did God ordain that we must pray?" I may not be able to fully explain why, but I can tell you that God has ordained that it is through prayer that we receive anything from Him.

God taught in the Old Testament and Jesus taught in the New Testament that you must ask to receive. Although God already knows what you need and it is available, you still must ask. It is God's law. The sooner you realize this in a greater way, the better off you will be. God has, with His own motion, placed Himself under the law of prayer. He has obligated Himself to answer the prayers of the righteous. Prayer is the interlink between the divine promise and actually getting the answer to that promise.

In 2 Peter 1:4 Peter said that God has "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," meaning that His promises are far beyond great. It would have been good enough for God to have given us great promises, but these are "exceeding great and precious promises." God has given them to us because He wants us to enjoy them, and He wants them to become actual realities in our lives.

Peter started in verse 1 of the same chapter by saying that it was "to them that have obtained like precious faith." In other words, these promises are to everyone who is born again. If you are going to lay hold of these exceeding great and precious promises, you have to add to your faith virtue. As great as these promises are (and I cannot begin to tell you how great they are), they will never bring fruit to a

perilous heart except through prayer. This is the only ordained means of bringing them to actualization.

Peter instructed us to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge. There are greater promises than we are getting hold of. The devil, through unbelief, will tell you that they are not there, but he is a liar. The promises are there; however, many are not getting hold of them because they are neither praying nor exercising faith as they ought.

The promises of God are golden fruit that can only be picked by the hand of prayer. We can tell others what great promises God has given us, and even sing about our Father being great, and yet not be affected by them. There is no other way to receive the promises of God except through prayer.

In our Scripture text James mentioned how Elijah prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain. I want you to see how prayer fits in. Elijah did not pray that it would not rain until God told him that He was not going to let it rain; however, God would not do it until Elijah prayed. Had Elijah not prayed, the rain would not have been shut off. The promise was linked to fulfillment through prayer. After three years and six months, God let Elijah know that it was time to pray for rain; so he prayed, and it rained. God never let it rain until Elijah prayed.

God has chosen to work through human instrumentality. God put the scales on the Apostle Paul's eyes, and He could have removed them, but He did not do it until He told Ananias to go and pray. When Ananias prayed, God removed them. Jesus told His disciples before He went back to Heaven to wait for the promise of the Father. The promise was there, but they had to pray to be endued with power from on high.

In Ezekiel God told His people that when seven years were up, He was going to bring them out

of Babylon; yet they had to seek His face and pray for deliverance. Every promise God makes is there for us to enjoy, but prayer is the interlink between the promise and its fulfillment.

One way the devil works on people is to make them feel that it is useless and fruitless to pray. The devil will cause you to think, "If God wants me to have it, He will send it." However, God will not send it if you do not pray. The promise is to you, and He wants you to have it, but you must first ask. Jesus said, "... ask, and ye shall receive..." (John 16:24). Then James 4:2 says, "... ye have not, because ye ask not."

God's law is not a hard law. Just as Elijah prayed, you must also pray to see fulfillment. You may understand the promise, but you have to pray just as Elijah did. Had Elijah been as many people are today, when God told him that He was going to turn off the rain, he might have thought, "Well, there is no need to pray. God already said He was not going to let it rain."

Effectual Prayer

Verse 17 of our Scripture text says, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not. . . ." Elijah understood prayer. He understood where we, as humans, fit into this picture. We have to use the same principle in praying for our personal needs, and also in our anxiety and burden for revival. God definitely wants revival, and He has promised it. You can read in His Word where God said that He would save your sons and daughters and your whole household, but He has ordained to work through prayer.

According to the Scriptures, Elijah's prayer was a prayer of faith. This troubles many people; but it is very simple. How could Elijah pray the prayer of faith? He had an argument in prayer. His argument was,

"God, you said . . ." Romans 10:17 tells us, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith comes by God speaking to you through His Word.

God had spoken to Elijah, so he could pray the prayer of faith because he had God's promise. He boldly held the shield of faith right in front of God's face; the prayer of faith is just that simple yet. When we get a promise from God, we need to pray, "God, you said so. I believe your Word, and I refuse to give up."

Elijah could not have prayed the prayer of faith had God not told him that He would shut off the rain. He would have had nothing on which to build faith. He had faith because he had already heard from God. This was put in the Bible for our ensample and for our learning.

The prayer of faith, or the effectual prayer, is a prayer wherein one takes God at His Word and hangs on to it. Numbers 23:19 tells us, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

If you want to have an effectual prayer, you must pray believing just what God said. Right in this world of unbelief, there is nothing that will affect God any more or any quicker than one of His children fully believing from the heart that He will do what He said He would do and holding right to the promise. The prayer of faith is simply believing that God will be true to what He has promised. The devil has made people feel that the prayer of faith is something that they cannot attain.

Elijah's prayer was effectual because it came from a consecrated heart. He was sold out to divine service. He was a man who had given up to God, and he proved his righteousness by his obedience. He could boldly pray right in front of a whole crowd of people, including four hundred fifty prophets of Baal, four hundred prophets of the

groves, and King Ahab. When he started praying, he said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant . . ." (1 Kings 18:36).

When you do not live right, you are afraid to put yourself in the prayer; you cannot pray boldly. Paul said in Hebrews 4:16, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." When you really pray the prayer of faith, you can come boldly.

Persevering Faith

If Elijah had not been righteous, he could not have done what he did. In the face of dark religion and the devil's doctrines, Elijah was out to prove God true, and he was not afraid to put his God to the test and put his life on the line. This is what is needed in a greater way today.

There is too much slipping around and living in the shadows today. Elijah put his own life in the prayer. In essence, he said, "These people do not think I am Your servant. Lord, prove to them that You are the God of Israel and that I am Your servant." His prayer came from a consecrated heart, and it was specific and untiring. Too many times, we think that when we pray the prayer of faith, the answer will come immediately; however, there are times when you show greater faith when you hang on and hang on and hang on.

Elijah told Ahab that it was going to rain, and then he went up to the top of Mount Carmel and got down with his head between his knees and prayed. He told his servant to go up and look toward the sky to see if anything had happened. He told him to go again seven times; that is what faith will do.

The reason many people do not receive anything today is that they do not hold on in prayer. They get prayed for, but they already have

other arrangements made just in case nothing happens. If you do that, you are wasting your time praying. The prayer of faith will hang on. If you really believe from the heart that God is going to do what He said, you will not give on it. The prayer of faith does not always bring results the minute you pray. The prayer of faith will be prayed just as effectual the seventh time as it was the first time.

When Elijah's servant came back the seventh time, he said that he saw a cloud about the size of a man's hand. Elijah did not say, "It looks like we might have a storm in a couple of hours." He said, in so many words, "Hurry! Let's get off this mountain. There is going to be a downpour!" Who ever heard of a downpour out of a cloud the size of a man's hand? Faith does not have to have a very big sign. When it is real faith, it does not take a big move to bring great encouragement.

In Luke 18:8b Jesus asked the question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" He was talking about persevering faith, not nominal faith. There is too much nominal faith.

Elijah's prayer of faith was an expectant prayer. He was on the outlook for the answer, and he knew it had to come. Every time the servant came back, he told him to go again. It would not have made any difference to Elijah how many trips it would have taken. He knew that if he kept praying, the servant was eventually going to see something.

The Bible tells us that Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. The Bible does not say that he had like passions, but that he was *subject* to them, just as you and I are; he was just as human. Some people do not get more from God because they try to deify the prophets, thinking they were extraordinary. On the contrary, they were just ordinary men filled with God's Spirit, and they obeyed God and believed His Word.

Elijah was troubled with a corrupt world just as we are, although probably in a greater way. He had to stand up against more than eight hundred false prophets, go before the king and take a stand, and many other things. When he went and told the king that it was not going to rain, God told him to. That is where the Word of God became Elijah's word. This is what Jesus meant when He said that His Word abides in you. When His Word abides in you, it becomes your word; you can control it.

First Kings, Chapter 18, tells about when Elijah met with Ahab, the false prophets, and the people of Israel up on Mount Carmel. After Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, he had them pour twelve barrels of water on the sacrifice and the wood. He really put it to the test, and when he finished praying, the fire fell, and the people said, "The Lord, he is God."

You have to be willing to let your faith be put to the test in front of the eyes of the people if you ever magnify God and cause people to see what God can do. How is the world going to believe in the Church of God unless we can call some power down from Heaven in the time of need and show them what God can do.

Confessing Your Faults One to Another

Verse 16 of our Scripture text says, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The Bible tells you to confess your faults one to another. One has well said that the hardest words in the English language to say to another person are, "I was wrong. It was my fault." Then, I will state right behind that, it is much easier to confess to God than to one another. Human pride works in a great way.

It is not hard to confess to God because you know that God is

greater than you are, but it is hard to confess to a brother or a sister in the Lord. Nevertheless, confessing your faults is the only way to be healed of them. If you carry your faults, they are just going to fester into more problems in your life; but if you will confess them and get them out, you can be healed. I believe there is more power and greater victory for us. We can obtain more promises than we are getting. I long to see more gifts of the Spirit working in the church. They are for us.

Many talk about the power of John Wesley's day and of how God did use him in England and the United States in upturning revivals. Back in the beginning of his ministry, every Wednesday he had the church come together and openly confess their faults to one another, and, my, what power those people had with God.

Today we would be willing to raise thousands of dollars if it could buy a manifestation of that power, yet we are not willing to confess our faults. I am preaching from a verse of Scripture that says to confess your faults, not just to God, but one to another. The more you carry your faults, the more you will find fault with everyone else.

I do not suppose there was a better person than Daniel. Your life may be as clear as his, but I doubt if you go beyond it. How would you like to test whether your obedience has been right by spending the night in a den of lions? He knew that he was right; he kept his prayer life up. Praying got him thrown in a den of lions. Do not tell me that the devil is not against prayer!

Daniel was one of God's great ones. God mentions him in the Book. Yet, how did he pray when he prayed for deliverance for his people? In so many words, the first part of his prayer was, "Lord, You know my faults. Forgive my failures, and forgive the failures of the people," and God heard him. He was a man of prayer, and when he prayed, he was not afraid to confess any fault

in his life. That old Pharisaical spirit never got hold of him.

The devil will get you to do wrong, and then what does he tell you? "No one is perfect." Then on you go, and you add another fault, and another fault; all the while it is moving you from a righteous position, and it is hindering you and putting you in a place where you cannot pray the prayer of faith. If you do not acknowledge your faults, you will never correct them, and you will never be healed of them. A fault will infest the whole character. Many times men will confess great sins but not their faults, and they are not healed.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another. If you would do more praying for one another, you would blame one another much less, and you would also be more tolerant. Moreover, if you would be more awake to your own faults, you would be easier on others; but when you overlook your faults, you will be hard on others.

Energizing Your Prayers

The effectual fervent prayer means an energized prayer. The Greek version actually says "the energized prayer." It is a prayer that the Holy Spirit words, directs, and imparts fervency. Paul told the church to pray with the Spirit and to pray with the understanding. For a prayer to be energized, you must be energized by the Holy Spirit, and you must put yourself into it.

First Kings 18:42 tells how Elijah prayed with his face between his knees. You must put your feelings into your prayers. If you want God to hear your prayers for others, and if you want your prayers to have an effect on others, it has to have an effect on you first.

It is mere mockery to pray for those whom you love to be brought to Christ while you never move a finger to bring them. There is no need to pray for God to bless unless you energize your prayers by doing what you can do. If you are not

careful, you will go right on thinking that you have really done your duty if you have made your way to the house of God and prayed for your neighbors and loved ones to be saved. God cannot believe that you are brokenhearted over the lost condition of your neighbors when you never make a move to get them in to hear the Gospel; that is mockery to God.

It is foolish for a man to sit down amidst building materials and then pray for a house to be built. He would still be praying fifty years from now. We have to pray, but there are some pains that go along with real prayer. You would not pray for your little boy to be a good Greek scholar and never teach him Greek. It would do well for you to pray, but you would also have some moves to make. The same principle applies if you want your child to be a good Christian: you have some moves to make. You must put yourself into your prayers in a greater way.

In 1 Kings 18:42 you can read that Ahab went to eat and drink when Elijah went to pray. Which way are you going? Ahab was as unconcerned as people are today. Elijah had proved God true. Ahab admitted that God was the true God and that all must serve Him, yet he went to eat and drink while Elijah went to pray.

If praying does not work, then you need to fast. It is not that fasting moves God. Fasting does not change God; it changes you. You are tied to the things of this earth more than you think you are. It is through fasting that you begin to cut the cords.

You may be an individual who likes to go shopping. Well, someday instead of going shopping, fast and pray. You may be an individual who really likes to eat. Take a day or two to fast and pray, and get yourself completely cut off from everything else. The more you get cut off from this world and the earthly things of this life, the closer you can get to God and the more

fervently you can pray.

There are people waiting to be saved. God wants you to take hold of the promises of His Word, but He wants you to take hold of them by prayer and faith. Prayer and faith will bring the actual promise into your life. Down through the years, we have claimed things by faith before they ever happened, and God brought them to pass. God is unlimited: anything you can believe, He will do.

Too many times, we just pray

and throw words into the air. We need to nail it down by faith in His promises. You may say, "I am afraid I will not pray according to the will of God." It is God's will for all men everywhere to be saved. You do not need to say, "If it is Your will, Lord, save them." It is His will to save all men; you are praying according to the will of God.

Jesus said in Mark 11:24, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." There are

no more positive words to be used than those. You need to open your heart before God and let Him check you out. Won't you be like David and ask the Lord to search you and try you and see if there is any evil way in you? You need to ask God if you have a fault that hinders you in your praying. If there is, you cannot pray an effectual fervent prayer as you ought. Do you really desire to be able to pray an effectual fervent prayer?

Prayer Changes Things

The following is a true story of a man who had pastored in the same church for more than thirty years. When the roads were impassable, he walked over hill and dale to pray for the sick. At last, the time came when he was no longer physically able, because of age, to walk miles to visit homes that were located off the main roads, across mountains, or back on the muddy flats. Early one winter he heard of an isolated, elderly saint who was afflicted with a cancer. He considered walking to the old gentleman's home, but his good wife advised him of the distance involved and that he was no longer young. As the winter weeks passed by, he fretted more and more because he was unable to visit the sick man.

One morning after a hard freeze, a brother called at the preacher's house and informed him that because of the freeze he believed his car could reach the home of the aged man. While the preacher sat at the bedside of the aged patient, the following conversation took place. The sick man in a weak voice said, "Pastor, I want you to ask God to take me home; I am old and tired. I have suffered so much, and I can no longer bear the pain."

The pastor replied, "Do you have confidence in my prayers to believe God will grant me what I ask for?"

The reply was, "Yes. I have for so many years seen things happen when you pray."

Again, in great love and compassion, the old preacher asked, "Do you actually believe that God will take your spirit when I pray?"

The answer was, "Yes."

"Then if you have this confidence in my prayers," said the pastor, "why not ask God to stop the pain and smite this cancer?" and so he prayed and with great vehemence commanded the cancer to let go. The patient dropped off to sleep, and the pastor returned to his home. The winter passed, the summer came, yet there was no word from the backwood.

At the state camp meeting, the old pastor walked slowly through the gates. The first to greet him was the cancer patient—the man who a few months before had wanted to die. God had done just what the pastor had asked Him to do. The cancer ceased to cause pain, withered up, and dropped out. This is an example of how prayer changes things.

Selected

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

can use days, weeks, and months, but you cannot use a year to symbolize a year, so this is not a time symbol. The thousand years in verse 2 is actually a thousand years of time, and it was that period of papalism from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530.

The only place where the word *years* in the plural appears in the Revelation is in Chapter 20. Nowhere is the word *years* employed in the Revelation other than in this chapter, and it is used six times: in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Just as the number seven is the biblical number that represents perfection, the number six represents imperfection. This dark night of papal rule was the most imperfect era to which the church had been subjected.

The last phrase of Revelation 20:4 says, ". . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Who are *they*? The earlier portion of verse 4 gives insight: "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."

When you read of "the souls of them that were beheaded," immediately one thinks of the martyrs, but remember that this is symbolic. Who are these souls? The souls do not always represent only the spiritual portion of man. We read in Genesis 12:5, "And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan." The word *souls* often refers to people.

If "they" were disembodied spirits, or disembodied souls, their reign would not be a thousand years; it would be eternal. This text is speaking of a people "who lived and reigned." They were as Romans 6:11 says: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." They were

alive unto God.

Revelation 20:6 says they had experienced the first resurrection, which is the one that makes you blessed and holy: "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." Nothing in any literal resurrection changes one's spiritual state, but this resurrection made the participants blessed and holy. What type of resurrection was it? Ephesians 2:1 tells us, "And you hath he quickened [or made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins." These are they who had a spiritual resurrection. They were alive unto God; they lived and reigned.

What does it mean when it says they were beheaded? Remember, this is symbolic. Who is ordained to be the head of the saints, or the head of the church? Colossians 1:18 says, "And he [the antecedent of *he* is found in verse 13: 'his dear Son'] is the head of the body, the church." Christ is the Head of the church. During this time from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530 (the thousand years), the prevailing condition was according to verse 4: they were beheaded, or cut off from the Head; in other words, Christ was not allowed to be the head during this dark papal night.

Who was regarded as the head of the church during this period? *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, page 23, says, "Who is the visible head of the church? Our holy father, the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the vicar of Christ on earth and the visible head of the church." This is how those saints were beheaded: the Headship of Christ was denied during this period of time. There was no public message and no visible church during this dark age. The church in this era was in the catacombs and caves, hidden from public view. They lived and died in catacombs and caves.

No doubt, you have heard the saying, "He has found his niche." Do

you know how that saying developed? When one died, the saints made a little place in the side of the cave's wall, which they called a *niche*, and that is where they buried that one. They lived and died underground in the catacombs and caves. When a saint died, he or she was buried in a niche.

Revelation 12:6 says, "And the woman [which we know is the church spoken of in verse 1] fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days." In the same 1,260 years, from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530, she had to be hidden. Who fed the church during this period of seclusion. Revelation 11:3 states, "And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days." This same period of time, from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530, the Word and the Spirit kept these people alive so they could live and reign with Christ.

Someone may say, "I don't think they had anyone living and reigning during that period." Who were the martyrs? It was the people who had victory. Verse 3 mentions the two witnesses. Who are the two witnesses? Jesus let people know in Matthew 24:14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness." What is one of the witnesses? The Gospel, or the Word. What is the other witness? Hebrews 10:15 tells us, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness." The two witnesses that fed the church were the Word and the Spirit.

Though the church was underground in catacombs and caves, Revelation 20:6 says, "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign." Right in the midst of this terrible time in history, in the midst of this dark age, there was still a people who had victory.

Revelation 1:5-6 reads: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings

of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests." Those who had been washed by His blood and saved are the ones who are the kings and the priests. Revelation 5:10 states, "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

Revelation 20:6 says, and [they] shall reign with him." Did they? In Romans 5:17 the Apostle Paul said, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:14 says, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

Even in this time known as the Dark Ages, God still had a victorious people. Their understanding might have been meager, but Titus

2:11-12 teaches: "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." They had enough understanding from the two witnesses (the Word and Spirit) that God preserved a remnant in the catacombs and caves, and they lived and reigned with Christ during this thousand years, from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530.

Though the prevailing conditions were that they lived in a day when the headship of Christ was denied and discarded, verse 4 says they were on thrones. They were still reigning; in other words, they still had victory in their hearts and lives. God is always faithful. I trust that you can see that this passage has nothing to do with some future supposed millennial reign, but rather portrays the victory of the saints

and the faithfulness of God during a period of time of the Gospel Day known as the Dark Ages, from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530.

We have endeavored to show the falsity of this false dispensational teaching called the millennium. Dispensational teachers want to take this text and put it out into the future, but the Scriptures are very clear. God is not the author of confusion, and we do not need to be in confusion concerning these truths. I trust that you can see from the historic scheme when this actually occurred and that you can see the faithfulness of God to His people in every era of time. He was faithful to a people in those eras that suffered such great things, and thank God, He has an ample amount of grace and strength for us to triumph in the period of time in which we live.

Brother Earl R. Borders

One of the devil's snares is to occupy us with the past and future so as to take away our peace for the present.

Meeting Announcement

DETROIT, MI
Nov. 23-30

REVIVAL: Bible Standard Church of God, 9600 Woodlawn, Detroit, MI 48213
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, OH
Service times: Mon-Sat 7:00 p.m., Sun 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For information contact: Pastor Samuel Oree, 18822 Buffalo, MI 48214.
Telephone: (313) 891-5270 or 921-9741



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