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

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## THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER

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

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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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Vol. 33 October 2003 No. 10

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# Oregon 2003 Camp Meeting Report

Psalm 133:1 states, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" This Scripture comes to mind when describing the camp meeting in Canby, Oregon.

The meeting opened Monday evening with Brother Esau Brooks, pastor from the Republic of Honduras, preaching a wonderful message entitled, "The Grace of God Given at Corinth." He continued throughout the week as the evening evangelist with other soul-searching messages such as: "Salvation—a Work of God," "The True Meaning of Being Born Again," "Loved, Lacking, and Lost," dealing with the rich, young ruler's life, "Three Steps to Find Rest for Your Soul," "The Binding Power of Sin," and "What Shall I Do?"

The theme song for the week was "*From Babel to Zion*." The first verse reads, "Now to the holy city the faithful gather home; To Zion's mount of glory with songs of joy they come. Jerusalem the golden, Jerusalem the free. With joyful hearts and voices the ransomed come to thee." There was much singing by people of all ages, starting with the children's choir, the junior choir, the youth choir, and then the adult choir.

Many brethren filled the pulpit in the morning services. Tuesday morning Brother Patrick Brower of Hamilton, Montana, spoke on "Why Do Men Preach?" Brother Wayne Hafley of Minerva, Ohio, preached Wednesday morning's message, entitled, "The Disciple Most Valuable." Thursday morning Brother C. H. Ferguson of Phoenix, Arizona, preached concerning "The Standard." Friday morning Brother Adam Wolfe of Pennsylvania preached an inspiring message entitled, "Passing the Torch."

The Saturday morning service was devoted to the youth, with many songs from various young people and the youth choir. Brother Reggie Stegmeier from Canby, Oregon, spoke and posed the question, "How Will You Respond to God's Call?"

Many souls moved to an altar of prayer throughout the week. Some made new starts, while others rededicated their lives to Christ. Sunday morning Brother Roger L. Decker of Newark, Ohio, delivered a sobering message entitled, "Set Thine House in Order." Sunday afternoon was a baptismal service, and approximately ten people were baptized.

During the meeting, many people testified of God's healing power in their lives. Both Brother and Sister Brooks gave their personal testimonies. Brother Brooks shared how God saved him and helped him in the beginning of his ministry. Sister Brooks related her testimony of how God came to her rescue when she was close to death. Their testimonies were a great encouragement to the saints. It was truly a wonderful place to be!

If you would like to obtain tapes of the services this meeting, please contact Pastor David Stegmeier at (503) 266-9297. We would encourage you to begin to make plans to be at the next Oregon Camp Meeting. It will be held at the Church of God in Canby, Oregon, August 16-22, 2004.

*Luke 15:17 And when he came to himself [speaking of the prodigal son], he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*

*18 I will arise and go to my father,*

*and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,*

*19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

*20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*

# ADMITTING SIN



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **New Labels for the Same Old Sins**

The prodigal son said in verse 18 of our Scripture text, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." We can read of only a few men in the Bible who admitted that they were sinners, but often it took much convincing before the guilty one admitted it. A few of them were Pharaoh, Balaam, Achan, Saul, Judas, and no doubt others.

Sin is a word that is rarely spoken of anymore. Why is that?

Why do we not read about sin in the newspapers? The word *sin* reminds people of God. Men do not want to be reminded of sin today, and they certainly do not want to admit that they are guilty of sin. Sin often has other names attached to it, to take away some of the harshness of it. For example, the term *adultery* has been dressed up and is often referred to as an "affair." People want to soften the term just a little. Hollywood is full of people who commit adultery, and the same is true in politics.

Alcoholism has been called a disease, but it is the only disease I

know of that comes in a bottle. Fighting and vandalism are called "improper conduct." Nevertheless, at the heart of it all is sin. It is very difficult to get a man to admit that he has sinned, because with sin comes responsibility. One reason that not many people get help is that they are unwilling to admit that they have failed God. People often use terms such as ignorance, inhumanity, dysfunction, perversion, crime, and poverty to cover their sins. The Prophet Isaiah spoke of such a time in the Old Testament. He wrote in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good

evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

Today people have new labels for the same old sins. Sin is an old evil present in the hearts of people who do not have Jesus Christ. Since the Garden of Eden, sin has been a force in our world. Although people have tried to dress it up and put new labels on it today, God called it just what it is: it is sin in the heart. People can dress up sin and change its name and try to smooth it over, but it smells just as bad in the nostrils of God as it did when Adam and Eve committed sin in the beginning. Sin is still a stench to the Lord God Almighty. When people have so-called "affairs," it is nothing more than "polished" sin.

Homosexuals are called "gays" today. They have become greater in number and more vocal, so they came up with a term that does not offend them. The same is true of lesbians. Nevertheless, these are still sinful lifestyles. Today everyone seems to have excuses for why they do what they do. Many people make excuses for not attending church services; however, saints of God desire to go to the house of God whenever services are being held.

### **Sinning Against God**

Often when an individual violates the law and gets caught, he claims that he was molested as a child or abused and that he had a bad home life, to defend his actions. Such a person might have suffered some things in his youth, but that does not relieve him of being responsible for his own actions. People just do not want to admit that they are guilty and that they have committed sin against God.

The Baptists say they "sin more or less every day," and maybe they do. However, if you sin every day, I have some questions to ask you: Why did Jesus come? Why did we not stay under the old Mosaic Law? Why do we not offer up animal sacrifices? Some people back in the

Old Testament lived better lives than some people who claim to be Christians today. The truth of the matter is, Jesus came to save His people *from* their sins, not *in* their sins.

If you are enjoying sin, let me tell you, the enjoyment is only during the sowing season. There is only seasonal pleasure in sin, and that is when you are sowing it. There is no pleasure in the reaping of sin. You may sow in sin for a short period of time, but you might have to reap it for eternity. God knows how to deal with sin. If one is an alcoholic, he is sent to Alcoholics Anonymous for rehabilitation. However, without salvation he is going to go right back into the same condition.

Men cannot legislate laws against sin and clear it up. It is in the hearts of men and women. Until their hearts have been changed, sin will remain there. Sin is the downfall of man. Some sins may not hurt other people, and others may not even know about their ungodly deeds; however, all sin hurts God. It was against God that the first sin was committed.

In the Old Testament you can read of Joseph, who was a type of Christ. Joseph was alone with Potiphar's wife, but it was because he had to be, not because he wanted to. Genesis 39:9 reads, "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, but he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Why did he say that? Because he knew that he was in the presence of God every moment. No matter what he did, God saw him.

The Psalmist David said in Psalm 51:4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." I repeat, all sin is against God. He can be hurt just as you can be hurt.

Should someone offend you or do something against you, it hurts. Sometimes you might even feel as if it is tearing your heart out. That is the way God feels when people hurt Him. When He gave such a great sacrifice, His only Son, so that people would not have to sin, yet they continue in sin and reject His Son, that hurts Him.

Some people do not believe they need to be saved. They drink an alcoholic beverage now and then, but they are not drunkards. Friend, if you take a social drink once in a while, you need to keep in mind one thing: the drunkard started a little at a time.

Former President Ford's wife, Betty Ford, started a center for alcoholics because she got caught up in social drinking when she entertained guests in the White House and became an alcoholic. Those who indulge a little at a time do not see their need of help. Often people think, "The drunk down the street definitely needs help. Everyone knows that, but not I."

Others feel that because they work, provide for their families, and are not lazy, they do not have a need. They may treat people nice, and they may not be the type to get angry and fight with people. Therefore, they do not feel they need salvation. Such individuals say of others, "I wish So-and-So would get straightened out with God. I wish he would get help," yet they themselves need help.

Today the words of the prodigal son are becoming more scarce. Nevertheless, the truth of the matter is, without salvation people are going to go to the same hell as the drunkard, the adulterer, the homosexual, the lesbian, and the murderer.

You may say, "Oh, I am not that bad." Friend, God does not rate you according to how many sins you have committed. He is looking at the fact that you have turned down His Son, Jesus Christ. For that reason, unless you repent and forsake your sins, you will go to the same place as the vile sinners that you

read of in the newspaper and practically gasped when you read about their deeds, thinking, "How could anyone do such a thing?" You will end up in the same hell those individuals are going to if you have not been born again.

### **The Only Remedy for Sin**

The Bible tells of your true condition. Romans 3:23 states, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Since all have sinned, all need to be saved from sin. This is the category that all men without Jesus Christ fall into. If you are a sinner, you are on your way to a devil's hell just as quickly as the hands of the clock are moving. Each tick of the clock brings you closer to the Judgment.

You may ask, "Are you trying to scare me?" No, I am trying to get you to think. Today people prepare for everything except eternity. They prepare for vacations, they prepare to paint a house, they prepare to buy a house or a car, they prepare to change jobs, and so on. But how many are preparing for eternity? Dear one, your greatest need is preparing for eternity. You might go into eternity without going on vacation. If so, someone else will spend the money you would have spent on vacation, but you will be lost, not just for a moment, for eternity. No one can buy your soul out of hell by paying for a high mass or a low mass.

All have sinned. There is no such thing as a "good sinner." Some people might have good qualities and be pleasant to be around, but in the eyes of God none are good without Jesus Christ. To be good you must have Someone good inside you: you need Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 64:6 what righteousness without Christ is like: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

The good news is, you do not

have to stay in sin. When I first went to church, that news was pleasant to my ears. I did not have to continue to live the way I had been living. I did not have to join a church, sign a card, or shake the preacher's hand. All I had to do was repent and be born again. When I did that, the old life passed away. With the old life went the alcohol, the tobacco, the hatred, and the meanness. All these things were removed as far as the east is from the west, never more to be remembered against me. In essence, God said, "I am not going to bring up those sins against you." When you see sin as it really is, you will find that you do not have to stay in that condition any longer. There is a remedy for sin.

Now, you must do something to get out of sin. First, you need to let God reason with you. God can talk to you whether you are a Bible scholar or not. Before I got saved, I did not know any Scriptures, but that did not stop God from talking to me. He condescended and came down on my level, right where I was.

### **The Way to Father's House**

When I heard the Gospel, I knew that I was a sinner and that I was on my way to a devil's hell. I did not want to stay in that condition any longer. I wanted to be free! Though I did not know much about the Gospel, that did not stop the second Vicar of Christ, the Holy Spirit, from working with me. I did not even understand altogether what was working on me. I just knew that I was miserable. After the message went forth and the invitation was given, I knew where I could get rid of that miserableness. When I heard the Word of God, I knew that I needed to be born again, so down the aisle I went. I did not really know how to pray. I was told to pray from my heart, and I did. My prayer was not long or wordy or eloquent. The only thing I said was, "Lord, I am a sinner. I need Your

help. Save me. If You'll save me, I'll live for You all the days of my life," and I meant it. There was nothing fancy about my words. Sinner friend, you do not have to speak a lot of fancy words to get saved. You do not have to go through a big ceremony to get God's attention.

The Bible tells us in Luke, Chapter 18, about two men who went up into the temple to pray. Verses 10-14 read: ". . . the one a Pharisee [he had been schooled in religion], and the other a publican [or a heathen]. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself [his big audience was himself], God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers [he got really bold in this prayer], or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven [he was ashamed of his sin], but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." You read of two prayers going forth: one prayer went no further than the one doing the praying; the other prayer touched God's heart and brought salvation.

Friend, you do not have to stay in sin any longer, but there is something you must do. Our Scripture text says in verse 17 of the prodigal son, "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!" It was at this moment of truth that the prodigal found his way back home. One has well said, and it is worth repeating, "When the prodigal was at home, what he wanted was his independence. When he was out in a far country, he said that was pleasure. When he lost his money, he just called that bad luck. But when he reached the bottom in the hogpen, he had

enough sense to call it what it was: 'Father, I have sinned.'

When you see sin as it really is, you will start on the road back to Father's house. There is a remedy for sin. You do not have to sin any longer. If you are living in sin, this could be the day that you stop sinning. How can you stop sinning? By the power of God.

### **The Wall of Salvation**

Someone may say, "Do you mean God can actually control an individual so that he will not sin?" He can if the individual lets Him do it. If you allow God to control you, He can. God knows how to keep an individual from sin. All you have to do is let Him do it. Now, you certainly have your right of choice. You do not have to let Him do it. You can hold out for your own will and your own way. On the other hand, if you let Jesus Christ control your life, He will guide and direct you. There will be a wall of protection around you: the wall of salvation. He will keep you if you will allow Him to do so.

Today false religion has duped the minds of individuals so that they do not believe anyone can live right. If it were true that no one could live right, God might as well have wrapped this thing up a long time ago. God still has a church; He still has a people who live right, by the grace of God. It is not due to any greatness of our own. All we have to do is obey what He tells us and go where He shows us. Dear one, if you will obey Him fully, He will keep you.

There is One who cares, and He is calling you. The Scripture reaches out to you from the words of 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

I repeat, there is a remedy for sin. Whatever you do, do not make fun of the Word of God or the messenger, because you may sin against the remedy for your sin. Some young people are as bold as lions: they are bold in sin. Also, they dress

like rebels, act like rebels, talk like rebels, and seek out other rebels. According to God's Word, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

Second Chronicles 36:16 tells us what can happen to people who make fun of the Word of God and the messengers: "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy." That is a sad place to be left in, with no remedy for your sin.

### **"Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve"**

The word *remedy* means "a cure, a healing, or a medicine." Too many people do not like to take the remedy. Nevertheless, God has a remedy for sin. Now, you do not have to take it, but if you will, God has a cure. You do have a choice about this remedy when it comes to accepting or rejecting the Gospel. You do not have to be saved. God is not going to force you to accept Him; He is a gentleman. He will stand at the door of your heart and knock, but the latch is on the inside. If you want Him to come in, you must open the door, and then He will come in.

The Scripture says in Joshua 24:15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Why is it difficult for a person to say, "I have sinned"? Sometimes one may say, "I made a mistake" or "I slipped up" or "I messed up," but it is hard for an individual to say, "I have sinned." Oftentimes it is just plain pride that keeps one from acknowledging his sins. He thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think. Pride will take you to a devil's hell. No matter who you

are, you are going to die just as others do, and you are not going to be able to take anything with you when you die. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:7, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

Often people think, "What would people think if I went up to an altar and got down on my knees and asked God to forgive me? I could just do it back there at my seat." When God tells you to acknowledge a need at an altar of prayer, doing it back at your seat is not going to clear it up as obeying God would. Oh, I know there are times when people can move up and do not have to go to an altar of prayer, but at times God is going to touch your heart and make it known to you, "You need to humble yourself at an altar of prayer and ask for forgiveness."

God can see what is inside your heart, and He knows if you think too much of yourself. Other people may not be able to, and you may not really recognize it, but God can see it. Read the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

There is no salvation whatsoever in the mourner's bench. However, it is a convenient place to pray and a good place to acknowledge and confess to Jesus Christ before the congregation. It will do a wonderful work against pride. Also, it is a place where someone can pray with you and instruct you if you need direction.

### **Coming to God the Bible Way**

What must you have to be saved? You must have godly sorrow. Second Corinthians 7:10 states, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Godly sorrow is a

sorrow that God puts on you, and you are sorry that you hurt God. Also, you feel guilty about the way you have been living. With worldly sorrow one is merely sorry that he got caught at something. For example, one may be sorry that he got a speeding ticket or sorry that he robbed a bank.

When you feel the guilt of sin, or godly sorrow, the Holy Spirit is moving on your heart. If you will follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will lead you to confess your sins and get straightened out with God. Then all the sins in your life will be removed and you can be as guiltless as a newborn baby. Often I have used the illustration that it is just as if there is a big blackboard with all your sins written on it. When you confess, repent, and turn from all your sins, it is as if God takes a big eraser and wipes the

slate clean. His next words to you will be, "Go thy way and sin no more." Your heart is then all cleaned up, just as clean and pure as a newborn baby.

Only One can forgive sin, and that is Jesus Christ. I cannot forgive your sin, and you cannot forgive your sin. Now, I could forgive you for sinning against me, but I cannot clear it up with God. If you get your sin cleared, it has to be cleared up with God Himself. If you are a sinner, it is your prayer that God wants to hear. Friend, won't you be honest about your condition? Do not make an excuse concerning why you did what you did. If you have sinned, then you need to tell God that you have sinned. You need to tell God the truth, because God is Truth, and He knows the truth. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:

but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

You should not rely on some great feeling you might have had in religion. You must have faith in God. If you come to God the Bible way, you can be saved, and that is the only way you can be saved. When the prodigal son saw that he had reached the bottom, he said to his father, "I have sinned against heaven, and before thee" (Luke 15:18). Dear one, if you will pray from the heart, "Lord, I have failed. I have sinned, and I want You to forgive me. I want You to save me," you will get God's attention, and He will save you according to His Word. If you have a need, won't you mind the Lord? He wants to help you.

(Cassette C-4672E)



A genuine Christian is like a good watch: he has an open face, he has busy hands, he is made of pure gold, he is well regulated, and he is full of good works.

# Radio Log



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

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

*Hosea 13:15 Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.*

*16 Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants*

*shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.*

*Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.*

*2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.*



# God's Final Appeal

**Brother Esau Brooks**

## **The East Wind**

I cannot help but marvel at all the good things that come to us from the Word of God. How could those prophets of old have spoken the way they did concerning conditions so similar to conditions among us today? Verse 1 of our Scripture text reads, "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." These were words directed by God through the Prophet to the nation of Israel. They become very significant as we consider, first, the contents of the message, and second, the people to whom the words were being directed. One thing we can be assured of is that God knows what He is doing and what He is saying. He

never makes a mistake. When He cried out through the Prophet, "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God," it was because Israel needed to return.

There might have been some people in those days, as there might be today, who disagreed with such an assessment, but that does not matter. The Bible says in Romans 3:4 to "let God be true, but every man a liar." I began the Scripture reading from Hosea, Chapter 13, at verse 15 so that you could get a glimpse of the background from which this assessment came. The verse begins with the words "Though he be fruitful." From these words, we gather that, no doubt, things were looking fine. However, God was saying, "Though he be

fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness."

An east wind is the kind of wind that dries out everything. No matter how much moisture is in the air or coming from the ground, soon it will all be gone if the east wind persists in blowing. In our Scripture text God was drawing a comparison: "Though he [Israel] be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come."

We have a lot of east wind blowing today, and it is drying out souls and the work of God. If you have gotten saved recently and have never had a chance to experience the good blessings and dealings of God, then I suppose these

words seem strange to you. However, those who have been around for a while would have to acknowledge that things have gotten mighty dry.

Today people seem to get carried away with everything but the things of God. When it comes to the things of God, many people could care less. There were times when shouts of praise to God were heard all around. People shout and make a lot of noise on the ballfields and around the rock festivals, but that is not the kind of noise I am talking about. I am speaking of making a joyful noise unto the Lord. The Psalmist David said, "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD" (Psalm 98:4).

You may say, "We differ in that, because I am of the quiet type." Maybe you are, but you are not as much of the quiet type as Peter and the rest of the Apostles were a few days before Pentecost. A few days later, after they had obeyed the Lord and tarried in Jerusalem and the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord, together, and there came a sound from Heaven as of a mighty rushing wind. Cloven tongues as of fire sat upon each of them, and you would not have believed they could have made the noise they made. They brought the whole city together, and they were carrying on in such a manner that the only way the people could describe it was to say they must be drunk. So Peter stood up and said, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose. . . . But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:15-16).

You see, one minute they were of the quiet type, and the next minute they were of the noisy type. What made the difference? It was what they got! You may ask, "Do you believe in a church that is always making noise?" Not really; it depends on where the noise is coming from. I have been around religious groups of people that made a lot of noise, and that is all. It is not just the noise; it is what goes with the noise.

## The Secret of Survival

Man was made to be happy and to find pleasure. I have ever been convinced and I have ever argued this point: if you do not find pleasure in doing what is right, you will find pleasure in doing what is wrong. If you are not going to enjoy yourself serving the Lord, you will soon be straying and looking on the devil's ground for what you think is lacking in your life.

Look at our young and rising generation today. They are becoming fascinated by everything else and every other condition but the service of the Lord. Many youth are only around the church until they can go out on their own and do what they want, and away they go. I have been in areas where many young people have gone to Sunday school only until they reached a certain age, and then no one saw them anymore. It does not seem that people can get enough to draw them back, to appeal to them. If people would really get saved, it would take care of that need.

Again, verse 1 of our Scripture text reads, "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God." This was the secret for Israel's survival back then, and it is the secret of our survival today. The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 1:21, "How is the faithful city become an harlot!" God, through the Prophet Hosea, went on to say that "an east wind shall come." You may appear to be doing well, but this east wind of the Lord will come up from the wilderness, and what will happen? Your spring will become dry. There used to be a lot more springing up. One songwriter wrote, "*There is joy in the service of the Master, Let me sing of the glory I have found; Since I gave all to Jesus and his favor gained, Oh, wondrous streams of joy forever abound.*"

Now, please, do not misunderstand me. I am not plugging for emotionalism, neither am I trying to work up something. I am just trying to see if people can get to the place to where they begin to act as if this

thing is really worth the while. "O Israel, return." *Re-turn* unto the Lord thy God. People are returning, but sad to say, they are returning to everything but the Lord God. Why was Israel being called to return? God's assessment of her condition was that she had fallen by her iniquities. Whether you believe it or not, sin will ruin you; it will destroy you.

## "Because Iniquity Shall Abound"

In this appeal that God was laying out to old Israel, notice that He was making it personal. It was a plea from God to Israel to get back to what she used to enjoy and find pleasure in serving Him. Israel was in a fallen condition and totally unaware of it. How do we know they were unaware? Because God went on to say in verse 1, ". . . thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Why would He say that if there was not a reason for it? In essence, God was saying, "Though you seem to be fruitful, you are not what you used to be and how you used to be. The only solution, Israel, is to return." Friend, the further you drift from the reality of serving God, the worse it is going to be for the world, the church, your children, and your grandchildren.

God was making it clear to Israel that her iniquity had caused her to fall. The word *iniquity* in the Bible is not merely talking about robbing a bank or using a gun to kill someone. Sometimes the word *iniquity* is used in the Bible to designate rebellion. When our Savior was prophesying concerning these last days, as His disciples called His attention to the beauty of the temple and the magnificence of its worth, He said there was coming a time when not one stone would be left upon the other that would not be thrown down.

As He sat down, they came to Him and began to inquire, "When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the world?" He prefaced His message in Matthew, Chapter 24,

with the words, "Take heed" (verse 4), and then He said, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (verse 12). Could that be the trouble with many today? Has *your* love waxed cold? It happened to Israel of the past. Israel had fallen by her iniquity, rebelled against God, rebelled against His ways, and rebelled against His standard and His requirements. That is all it takes to kill the joy.

Israel had fallen from God's favor, and God was making it known. No doubt, she was going along acting as if all was well, but the favor of God was lacking and becoming more and more evident, because God was displeased. He wanted a land in which He could delight, a land through which He could shine forth the perfection of beauty. Does not the Bible still say in Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell *together* in unity!" It looks as if people nowadays have adopted the mentality that it is good and pleasant to dwell in *dis*-unity. Let the world be what it may be, and let false brethren be what they may be; but let the church be the church! Let others have all the disunity they want to have. Church, let us have unity among us. People cannot go very far with God bickering and fussing and rebelling against God's will and His standard. There is a standard marked out in the Bible for God's people. We have to go back to finding it and exercising it and teaching others about it by demonstrating the need of it.

### **The Call to Restoration**

Israel had fallen from not only the favor of God but also His likeness. She was no longer like Him: she was not acting like Him, talking like Him, or walking like Him. We do not need to be told that this is happening to people today. As a result, many are out wandering. We need to safeguard ourselves against

that happening to us. Let us keep acting as God would have us to act.

Sister, you need to keep your hair long as the Bible teaches. Church of God, you ought to love, respect, and support your pastor. That is like God. Paul, writing to the Ephesian congregation, said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1). A pastor fills the place of a father in a congregation, and that is the reason the Bible lets you know that you should entreat him, not reprove him or be critical of him. Someone may say, "But, you don't know what's going on." I do not need to know. I am just giving you the Word of God. This is what is going to judge you in the last day, and it is judging you now. You ought to entreat your pastor as a father. You may not agree with me on this; nevertheless, it is what the Bible says. The Bible says to rebuke not an elder. You might not have been hearing it, or maybe you have, but have you been heeding it?

Israel had fallen from God's favor, His likeness, and His image. They were portraying a far different picture than what God desired. No man in a fallen condition can have fellowship with God—no man, no matter what he says or how much he argues. Friend, if you are fallen, you are fallen. The call that God was making to Israel was the call to reconciliation, to get back to where she was going to agree with God. Just as God was giving Israel a call to reconciliation, today He is calling for you to bring your ways in line with His ways.

The words "O Israel" are words of desperation and anxiety. Oh, how God wanted Israel to come back home, to come back to what she used to be and what she ought to be. God wanted fellowship with Israel, but to have it, Israel would have had to return. The same is true with people today. Sin will ruin and destroy. Proverbs 13:15 reads, "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard." Why is it so hard for some to be true to the Lord, to serve the

Lord? Why is it so difficult to be a Christian? The way of the transgressor is hard, but not the way of the obedient.

The call to restoration is not a call to return to certain practices or actions or activities, but a call to return to the Lord thy God. He alone is the One who can make the difference. Israel needed to be restored, and the only way for that to come about was for her to see her condition and return to the Lord God. She had fallen from God's likeness, His favor, and His image, and God was calling for her to return.

### **Seek the Lord While He May Be Found**

Notice the sense of urgency that the words "O Israel" reveal. It was as if He had a pain in His heart. "O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God." Oh, it was hurting God for Israel to be as she was. Today it is hurting the world, and it is hurting the church. We do not want that. Child of God, I am sure that you do not want to be a hurt. A true Christian wants to be a help. God's call is urgent, but it is also a despairing call: "Israel, you have but a short time to do this. O Israel, do it in time." The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will . . . abundantly pardon." God was going to soon give up on waiting for Israel's return.

Today the Lord is giving her one more call, issuing not only words but also directions. Directive number one is to return. How is Israel to return? Verse 2 tells us, "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity." Your prayer should be, "Lord, make me more submissive and more obedient." The same is true if you are out in sin. God is calling for you to quit relying on church joining and shaking the preacher's hand

and return to *Him*. You have already turned out of the way, now you need to turn back to *the way*. When the Lord said, "Take with you words," He was calling for open confession. "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say into him, Take away all iniquity." There must be an acknowledgment of the wrongs that have taken place in people's lives. You see, you cannot just go to an altar and have the preacher do all the praying. You have some praying to do too. People are getting so used to this push-button age that they think all they have to do is go to an altar and say, "Brother, I want you to pray for me." You need to pray for yourself. I can pray for you, but if you need to do the praying, you need to get busy praying. After all, you are the one who has fallen, and you need to acknowledge it.

### Reconciliation

Hosea 14:2 says, ". . . turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously [then it is a call of engagement]: so will we render. . . ." When one does that, then he will begin to start paying up to God what he has been coming short in paying up. I am not going to detail those things that one needs to render, but in Psalm 116:12 David said, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" What does the Bible say about Hezekiah? He rendered not unto the Lord according to His benefits.

We ought to give God a little more than what we are giving Him. If God is making you feel bad, then it must be because He wants you to get right. Do not fall out with the preacher. You need to fall out with the sense of false security that so many are allowing themselves to fall under.

No returning is complete without an open confession. There must be a reconciliation for the work of returning to be complete. Brother, there may be times when you have

to go over the way and throw your arms around a brother, or a sister with a sister, and say, "Forgive me for how I felt toward you and for what I have been saying about you." If there is going to be restoration, there has to be a complete returning. Many today are not getting back to God because they are failing right there in their returning. They go to the altar repeatedly and seem unable to get anywhere. The reason for it is, they will not make a complete turn, but they must do it or be lost.

Will you return unto the Lord your God? You may ask, "Well, what will I get in return if I should do so?" God, speaking yet in Hosea 14:4, said, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." David said in one of his prayers, "Lord, You have been favorable unto the land. You have brought back the captivity." Dear one, won't you make your life really count for God by searching and obeying the mandates of Almighty God?

Many people experiment with drugs to look for a thrill or some fascination. Then when they have tried it and run out of it, they are back where they started. Sin is like a merry-go-round: you always go back to where you started, but in worse shape. If you are serving the Lord, do not let the devil or the world or people cause you to fail Him. If you do, you will regret it. Every man and every woman who lives in sin will regret not serving the Lord.

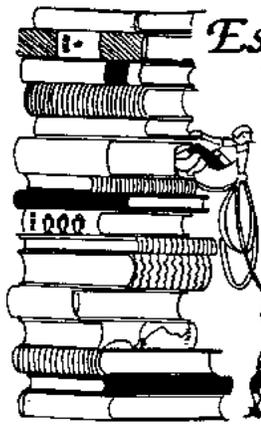
Serving the Lord is not all talk or imagination. Thank God, it is real, and it is something that you can feel and enjoy right in the midst of all that is going on. As far as I am concerned, I am satisfied with Jesus. I will spend all my life with the Lord. I remember when I first got saved, I used to want to live as long for the Lord as I had lived for the devil, and I was so happy when I closed the gap. Today I am still happy. All my young years were spent in the service of the Lord.

If you were to ask me if it has been worth it, I would say there is not one thing I would change. I would do it all over again. I have had some dark places to go through, and I do yet, but I go through them. Then after I am through them, I am through. I do not sit down and try to go back over them again. No, I keep going. Many times the tears have fallen from my eyes as I have been brought face to face with conditions that have only come about because of serving the Lord. Life has its heartaches, and I have had my share, but I have never had so many that I have wanted to go back into sin.

I feel privileged to be a child of God and to serve God. This is the real thing, thank the Lord! I do not have to smoke cigarettes to have peace. Bless God, I have peace, and I do not smoke. Friend, you should try it. Do not knock it until you have tried it, because I see others enjoying the same thing. I can understand when I see people getting carried away with this. I pity those who are sitting on the sideline, so to speak, looking around to find something to complain or murmur about. Also, I pity the one who has all that this world can give and yet does not have Jesus. If you are saved, whatever ground you have gained, by the living grace of God, endeavor to hold it, and let every day with Jesus be sweeter than the day before. Heaven is going to be enjoyable. It will be worth your giving up the world and missing what the world has to offer. You do not want to miss Heaven, no matter what it costs. You must be true at any cost.

One does not need to tell a person that he is fallen. He will know it when he hurts. It does not call for any kind of argument or getting together and negotiating. You know when you have fallen, for God will tell you to return. God bless you.

(Cassette C-4717E)



*Especially for Young People*

## The Hidden Word



"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

Laboriously, but often unwillingly, Bob had learned a verse of Scripture each Sunday in the little country Sunday school. His patient teacher, a neighboring farmer, had never chided or criticized, but he did expect his boys to learn their verses. "If you never remember anything I tell you, boys," he used to say, "remember God's Word. Some day it will do you a good turn if you hide it in your hearts now."

After a time, Bob grew up into adolescence. He no longer cared to memorize Scripture verses. He pretended to be "too old" to care much about Sunday school, though he did come rather regularly. Then, a few years later, he left home and went to the big city to seek his fortune. Farmerteacher Jeremiah Barnes shook his hand on the last Sunday he was in church and said: "Goodbye, Bob. I wish you success in the city. Just remember those Bible verses you learned as a boy. They may do you a good turn some day."

Bob had laughed and said, "So long," to his old friend, and then turned away to say goodbye to a girl friend. As for the verses, well, he did not think much about them. He probably could not have recalled one at that moment had his life depended upon it.

Several years passed and

Farmer Jeremiah heard little of his former pupil. He often inquired after Bob, however. Once, when he called at Bob's office, Jeremiah sensed the thinly veiled amusement on the rouged face of Bob's secretary, and he understood as she surveyed his five-year-old suit and battered hat. Jeremiah was glad to get away from that streamlined office. He felt sorry that Bob had to work in such a place. God did not seem to be around there either.

Then, one day, some months later, word reached Jeremiah's ears that Bob was very ill in a city hospital. He hurried over to Bob's home to inquire. Yes, he was told, Bob was very sick. Bob had to have an emergency operation, and his mother was ill herself and could not go to the city. His dad had gone off on a business trip. Would Jeremiah go?

Of course, Jeremiah went by the first train. He found the great gleaming hospital with its endless corridors, flitting nurses, and white-coated doctors. After a time, he was shown to Bob's room, with a cautious warning from a stiffly-clad nurse: "The patient is very ill, sir. I can allow company for only five minutes."

Bob's white, pain-racked face twisted into a smile of welcome as the old teacher tiptoed into the room. "Hello, Jeremiah," he said in weak tones, "glad to see you."

Jeremiah's warm, firm hand-clasp told the sick youth more than

all the words the old farmer could say just then. "Look, Jerry," Bob said, with effort, "I remember a verse. 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' Is that right, Jerry?"

With tears in his keen blue eyes, the farmer nodded. "That's right, boy! I'm so glad you didn't forget."

"Same here, Jerry. I called on Jesus, and I've given my heart to Him, as you so often told us to do. It's all right now, Jerry."

Selected

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### *Words Without Heart*

*I often say my prayers,  
But do I ever pray;  
And do the wishes of my heart  
Go with the words I say?*

*I may as well kneel down  
And worship gods of stone  
As offer to the living God  
A prayer of words alone.*

*For words without the heart  
The Lord will never hear;  
Nor will He to those lips attend  
Whose prayers are not sincere.*

*John Burton*

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*1 Timothy 2:1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;*

*2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*

*3 For this is good and acceptable in*

*the sight of God our Saviour;*

*4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

*5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

*6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*

*7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.*

*8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*



# The Need of Prayer

**Brother Emerson A. Wilson**

## **The Secret of a Good Warfare**

I want you to study the Scripture text in the light of the context. Paul said in verse 7, "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not." He was speaking a Bible truth, and it is something we definitely need to consider. Verse 8 reads, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

In 1 Timothy 1:18 we find the key to Paul's exhortation: he was teaching Timothy the secret of warring a good warfare. The Apostle Paul was letting Timothy know that he was dealing with those things so that he "mightest war a good warfare." I want to stress the need of prayer in a greater way in our Christian living. Paul, writing to the church at Ephesus, set forth the same truth in Ephesians, Chapter 6. He said in verse 11, "Put on the whole armour

of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Step by step, Paul outlined how to live carefully; then, after the armor was finished, he said, "Praying always. . . ." Prayer goes right along with warring a good warfare. Far too many have made shipwreck in their Christian experience because their prayer lives were not what they ought to have been.

You can endeavor to live right and put on the whole armor of God, but unless you keep your prayer life up to date, that will be the avenue through which the devil works to take advantage of you in your weakness, eventually overriding and overruling you. Therefore, after Paul gave instructions concerning putting on the whole armor, he said, "Praying always. . . ."

He was talking about staying in an attitude of prayer. Prayer is not

always words expressed: you can pray and never say a word. One time Jesus prayed at a certain place and, in so many words, said, "Father, You have already heard Me, but for the benefit of those standing by, I speak these words."

Prayer is keeping your heart in an attitude of communing with God. You cannot pray at all times. Certain religious groups have taken that literally, and because of that, they have certain men who spend all the time they are awake in prayer; he was not talking about that. He realized that we have other duties that we have to do, but we can stay in an attitude of prayer in our hearts and be reaching out to God.

"Praying always with all prayer [that is a big job] and supplication in the Spirit [then after you pray all the time, you must watch all the time, because it does not do any good to

pray if you do not watch], and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). This verse lets us begin to see what a job we have.

Paul instructed us to pray for all saints, and in our Scripture text, we read a command to pray for all men everywhere. If you think that is foolishness, you do not believe the Bible. You read what the Bible says, and then you go and do what you want to do. That is just exactly what is going on, and it is making the church more powerless every day.

God has ordained the way in which we should walk. He knows more about what it takes to stay saved than we will ever know, but people get heady and begin to think, "I do not have to do that to be saved." You have to do just what the Book says; do not be deceived. I am not warring against you; I am warring against spirits that are warring against every one of us.

If people would start widening out on their praying as the Word of God says, they would be getting along better than they are. If you would go back to the very scheme of salvation, you would see that God never ordained that you take care of yourself. You are your brother's keeper. We must bear one another's burdens.

The church is in a corporate position: we pray for all saints, and all saints pray for us. If you are not careful, you will get caught up in the spirit of the age and become selfish; then your prayers will not get beyond yourself, your family, and maybe out into the congregation a little. Remember, God is looking down.

### **Your First and Greatest Duty**

In verse 1 of our Scripture text Paul said, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all [above all else and before all else], supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." God would have you to realize that your first and

greatest duty is your prayer life. I wonder, how do you rate?

You may say, "Oh, I am doing my duty." If you were to lay aside preaching, ushering, Sunday school teaching, or whatever you consider to be your duty, what about prayer? God is looking at that first of all. He is glad when you preach right, sing right, testify right, usher right, or teach Sunday school right; but first of all, how is your prayer life? God deals with first things first.

If you could only realize that Paul's writings are the words of a man who was more successful than any two or three preachers today put together. Paul, in writing to a young minister, was revealing the secret of his success so that Timothy could be successful too.

I want to deal with the first thing Paul instructed Timothy on—prayer. The point that I want to get to you is the expression, ". . . *first of all*, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men."

You are under a command of duty to thank God for all men: the high and the low, the educated and the uneducated, the good and the bad. Paul went on to tell why we should pray for all men. He wrote in verse 4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Why is it that more people are not coming to a knowledge of the truth? I believe one of the greatest reasons is that the church is not under the burden of prayer to bring people to a knowledge of the Truth. Some even developed the attitude, "Well, they can see the Truth if they want to. I found it, so they can find it." You did not find it! If you were ever blessed with salvation and with coming to a knowledge of the Truth, it was because someone prayed and wept for you. You did not accidentally fall into it.

My friend, I believe that with a little more diligent prayer on the part of the church, we will see more men saved and more people come out of Babylon and come to a knowledge of

the Truth. I remember the old saints used to say that they prayed people in. My father and mother prayed me in, and when they prayed, oh, how miserable I was. Afterwards, they told me, "You would not come, so we just prayed you in."

God is just the same today! His attitude toward the lost is just the same, and His power to work is just the same. Where is the breakdown? We are not getting hold of God in a diligent enough manner. When we get as interested in people being saved and coming to a knowledge of the Truth as God is, more people will get saved and come to the Truth.

### **Praying for All Men**

Church, I hope you can see that we are laborers together with God. You can read that in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 3. However, there is a part that we cannot do, and there is a part that God does not do. I repeat, we must pray for all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the Truth. You may say, "Well, I have not let down." The whole church needs this message, and you need it too; but you are not awake to your need.

My friend, when you cease to pray people in, the next move will be some kind of gimmick to get them in some other way. There is no other way to get people in the church but to pray them in; that is God's way. You should not be satisfied to enjoy this salvation another year and yet see people lost and dying all around you. I believe there are still countless thousands of honest hearts over the world. Unfortunately, we are waiting for God to do something, and God is waiting for us to do something.

God's will is that you pray for all men. Kings, potentates, and vile people need to be saved, and people who are saved out in Babylon need to come to a knowledge of the Truth. Our Scripture text states in verses 4-6: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave

himself a ransom for all. . . ."

I will just make it a little stronger, and say this concerning division. Brother, we need to be burnished with the thought of truth that there is *one* God, *one* mediator, and *one* body. That is a pertinent truth that is needed today above any other truth. If you really believe and practice that, there would be just one brotherhood. To have division, someone has to step aside from that truth of there being just one God and one mediator between God and man.

For example, you may not believe in wearing a necktie; that is your business, but you should not split up with someone who does wear one. People need to come back to this truth! You may not believe in using a guitar when you sing; that is your privilege, but if you split up because another brother uses a guitar when he sings, you are not holding to the truth that there is one God, one mediator, and one brotherhood. I say, we need to pray! What is going to heal division? Prayer. What is going to heal breaches? God's people praying.

I am glad that I have never run down another brother, privately or publicly. I preach my convictions, but I in no way run others down. No, sir, and I will not do it. We need to get down to business and pray until God dissolves the breaches. Why has it not happened? Because too many think, "Well, we respect other groups of people. We believe they are getting people saved." So we just go on our way and get people saved, and let them go on their way and get people saved; all the while failing to see that the world is looking on. May God help us.

Someone may say, "Well, there will have to be some concessions made." The starting place is prayer! One reason divisions exist is that so often people do not really pray about it. They just live with it and accept it. This is so whether you want to admit it or not! God is telling us that we need to pray for all men. Pray for these circumstances; pray that breaches can be dissolved and that

we can be brought to the place where we can have a real brotherhood.

God wills that all men be saved and come to a knowledge of the Truth. God wants the people behind the bamboo curtain and the iron curtain saved. How long has it been since you prayed for the Russians? You cannot have a wrong attitude toward people and pray for them. Your prayer life can become diversified; however, in too many cases, people pray according to their own feelings, not according to what the Word says. If there is anyone at all that you would not pray for, then you cannot pray for anyone. The Bible lets you know that. You ought to pray for all men so that they might be saved.

### **Maintaining an Attitude of Prayer**

God moved on the Prophet Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, to set forth the work of Christ in the words of prophecy. He prophesied of many things that would happen. Old Testament Israel did not want to hear the Word of the Lord, so he just hushed and wrote the last words spoken to them. In the Book of Malachi God put stern judgment on them. He told them, in so many words, "You do not want Me. My table is contemptible to you. You do not want to hear My voice or pray to Me." He then began to speak in words of prophecy of what would happen in this New Testament dispensation.

Malachi 1:11 reads, "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles [you know he was talking about a New Testament day because His name was never great among the Gentiles during the Old Testament age]; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering. . . ."

Incense is symbolic of the prayers of the saints. So, in essence, God was saying, "You people can turn Me down, but a day is coming when the Gentiles will rejoice in My name

and there will be incense [prayer] going up in My name from early in the morning till late at night. When the Gentiles have opportunity to come in, they will be a praying people." He said that incense would be going up everywhere. This is where Paul derived the expression, "I will therefore that men pray every where."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul said to the church at Thessalonica: "Rejoice evermore [that is not merely a good idea; it is a command]. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Paul said in our Scripture text, "I will that men pray every where" (verse 8). A praying heart will find and stay in a praying place. Paul was telling us to stay in a praying condition, or in an attitude of prayer, everywhere, all the time. You may ask, "How can I pray everywhere?" You can pray everywhere by staying out of places where it is impossible to pray. There are some places where prayers are strange and real prayer cannot be made.

### **Barriers to Prayer**

A man cannot pray when he is engaged in a crooked bargain. The devil may tempt you to cut the corners a little to get some extra money. When you know that you are being slightly crooked, it would be impossible to stop and tell a customer to wait a minute while you pray about it; prayer would be the least of your thoughts.

You can get into places where prayer is out of the question. The only way you can pray everywhere is to stay out of anyplace where you cannot honestly and uprightly pray, and that covers a multitude of places and things. If you cannot pray there, then you should not be there. There are places where, if you were to even try to pray, it would be blasphemy. Can you picture a drunk sitting in a barroom having to hold on to keep from falling off his seat and saying, "Bring me another. Wait a minute,

I want to pray"? That would be blasphemy.

It is impossible for one who is engaged in gossip to pray. I do not think people today know what gossip is. Webster's Dictionary says that gossip means, "a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts; a rumor or report of an intimate nature; a chatty talk." You cannot engage in gossip and pray.

Have you ever heard two gossipers talk concerning things they did not know anything about, saying, "I heard this. I don't know if it is a fact, but I heard it"; then about half-way through the conversation, say, "Let's stop and have a word of prayer"? No, there is no atmosphere of prayer when a person is running down someone else and doing defilement.

I want you to get the point: there are places and conditions in which you cannot pray. No one can pray all stirred up and worked up in an outburst of anger. Have you ever seen anyone stop right in the middle of that and pray? Prayer is out of the question when young people overstep and go somewhere alone and pet and carry on. Have you ever heard of them stopping and having a good season of prayer? I want you to see that there are some situations that you can get into where prayer is out of the question; and when prayer is out of the question, you are out of line with God. Moreover, when you cannot pray, you are not right with God.

Some younger leaders are telling people that so much of that is natural. Friend, do not pay any attention to them. They have not been around long enough to know too much. I am telling you what the Bible says. Young person, you need to keep your hands off each other. You may ask, "How far should I go? What should I do?" A good rule is, when you get worked up in any circumstance or place that you cannot calmly pray and get hold of God, you are out of divine order with God and have overstepped biblical principles.

God wills that men pray every-

where. No man can pray while sitting in the living room watching two men fight on the television screen. That is an atmosphere where your affections become stirred and carried away. You cannot watch the devilish television (the love scenes, the fighting, people shooting in a western movie) and get down in the living room and earnestly pray. You would be completely carried away from the thought of prayer. You are in a place where prayer cannot rightly be uttered.

All these things are keeping people from praying as they ought. "I will that men pray every where" covers *all* circumstances. You must not allow yourself to get into circumstances where you cannot pray. This is the devil's way of carrying you away.

It is impossible to pray a fervent prayer while you are reading suggestive literature or listening to suggestive music. Those things could not stay in print or stay on the radio another day if they did not affect people. They are there because they *do* affect people, and worldly people like to be affected in that manner.

You cannot fuss with your husband or wife and pray. People wonder why they are not getting any diligent praying done. There are barriers to prayer. You can get in such a frame of mind and attitude of heart that you cannot pray. Jonah could call on God out of the belly of the whale, but professing Christians today get swallowed up with the monsters of our day and are ashamed to pray and look up to God.

### Lifting Up Holy Hands

Paul was not writing to the world in our Scripture text. He was writing to the people of God. The devil is working to get you in a position where you cannot pray right, and then your defense will be gone. Study the whole armor of God: it is all defensive, and the weapon is prayer. None of us has any other weapon to use against the devil. When speaking of prayer, I am not

talking about when you cannot say a prayer, but rather praying in such a way that God recognizes that you are really praying.

Again, 1 Timothy 2:8 reads, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands. . . ." Lifting up holy hands is symbolic in the sense that the Jewish attitude of prayer was different from ours. In the Old Testament, when Solomon prayed, he lifted his hands toward heaven with his palms opened to God. You may ask, "Do I have to lift up my hands when I pray now?" No, that was symbolism; however, there are some truths that shine forth from that Old Testament custom that we want to study.

The Psalmist David wrote in Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense. . . ." Back then, they took fire off the brazen altar, took incense, and went in before God. As I mentioned earlier, the incense was symbolic of the prayers of the saints. If you were to go back and study that incense, you would find that many rules had to be observed. Just any kind of incense could not be brought. God went into detail to tell them how to mix it right. After it was mixed right, it had to be kindled with holy fire and rightly presented before God.

What was the Psalmist conveying? Just any kind of prayer will not work; God will not accept it. In essence, he was saying, "Let my prayer be rightly ordered. Let it be kindled by the power of the Holy Spirit. I want it to be accepted as incense." Then he said, ". . . and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (verse 2). The evening sacrifice had to be pure and clean, without spot and blemish, acceptable to God.

The Psalmist was expressing that when he lifted up his hands, he wanted them to be as clean as the evening sacrifice. Lifting up the hands with the palms open to God showed forth the entreating request. The palms were open, ready to receive. These ceremonial moves set forth truths, conveying to God, "I need help, I desire help, and I expect

help."

When Paul mentioned "lifting up holy hands" in 1 Timothy 2:8, the Greek word *holy* used there means, "hands that have not touched forbidden things." Psalm 26:6 says, "I will wash mine hands in innocency [holy hands—innocent, clear]: so will I compass thine altar, O Lord."

People today mess around and get into things that they know they should not be in, touching forbidden things and doing things that are contrary to the Scriptures, then they turn around and want to pray. Let us read how God feels about that in Isaiah, Chapter 1. Old Testament Israel delved in sin and then wanted to come through His courts and raise their hands and pray. God said: "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil" (verses 15-16). If you do that, then God will hear you.

Someone may say, "If that were the standard, a sinner could not be saved." Let me make it plain: I am talking about a saint praying. God holds a different standard on the saint than He does on the sinner who is coming defiled, seeking help from Him. God will hear the vile sinner who comes in repentance and wants to be clean. He can be corrupt and lift up his hands when he comes in a repentant attitude, and God will hear him. On the other hand, if you, as a child of God, know what the truth is and mess around a little and then lift up your hands, see how much He hears you.

### **Regarding Sin in the Heart**

Psalm 66:18-20 says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: [The sinner who comes in real repentance is not regarding iniquity in his heart. He is coming to confess and forsake his sin. When you regard iniquity in your heart, you know it is wrong, but you will

not confess and forsake it. Therefore, you are regarding it and keeping it in your heart, and God will not hear you!] But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me."

Paul spoke of the first requirement as that of lifting up holy hands. God's good gifts cannot be laid on dirty palms. A little sin regarded in the heart will hold back the whole of God's grace. If you, as a professing Christian, regard something wrong in your heart, you may pray and pray, but the answer will not come. People today are doing this very thing. The devil has shifted them over to something that is not in accordance with the Bible; then when their prayers go unanswered, they say, "I am just leaving it with the Lord." You need to be very careful along this line.

First Peter 3:8-12 tells us: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing [read closely]. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." You do evil when you overstep God's eternal Word and God-given convictions that He has taken time to implant within your heart. When you overstep those, the face of God is against you. This is according to God's Word.

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath. . . ." "Without wrath" means having no vindictive or revengeful feelings toward anyone. We are living in a time when people carry wrong feelings for years. Some people cannot pray because there is

wrath in them and they carry revengeful feelings toward others. If that is the case with you, you need to make things right with your brother, and then come back and God will receive your gift and hear your prayer. If you have revengeful feelings against anyone, it will affect your praying.

If you carry a hurt for very long, you will begin to develop revengeful feelings; it is just as natural as getting hungry. You had better forgive that person from the heart, and do not let too much time pass before you do so. This is the reason Ephesians 4:26 says, ". . . let not the sun go down upon your wrath." That means, when anything in anyway has hurt you or stirred you, do not let the sun go down upon it. You had better get down somewhere and pray, "Lord, I do not believe this was right. I think that person has done me wrong, but by Your grace, I forgive him from the depth of my heart. I am not going to hold him, I am not going to think about it, and I am not going to be plagued with it." That is what the Bible says to do.

My friend, human and divine forgiveness go hand in hand. Jesus let us know in Matthew 6:14-15 that just as you forgive men their trespasses, so the Father will forgive you. If you forgive men and kind of hold them, then He will forgive you and kind of hold you. On the other hand, if you forgive men freely, then He will forgive you freely, and you can be free.

Just as an angry man is unfit to pray, likewise, one who cherishes feelings of that nature in his heart is shutting himself out of the secret place. Your relationship with God is governed by your relationship with others.

### **Hindrances to Prayer**

Psalm 62:3a says, "How long will ye imagine mischief [or evil] against a man?" Evil imaginations will ruin your prayer life. The Psalmist went on to say that if you imagine evil against someone, you become like a

tottering fence and a bowing wall; you will be slain. May God help us to reach the day when we will have enough confidence in one another as brothers and sisters in Christ that we will not imagine anything about a brother or a sister until we know that it is definitely a fact and not an imagination.

Imagination can wreck you spiritually. As an example of what I am talking about, suppose someone said, "Well, I saw this and that, and I can just imagine . . ." or "I put two and two together, and I just imagined they were up to something." Right there your wall begins to get a bow in it, and your fence begins to totter, spiritually speaking. It will end up killing you spiritually. Those are the devil's works; he is out to destroy your soul.

While speaking of relationships and what will hinder your prayers, let us read 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, [Husband, how long has it been since you told the wife that you appreciate how clean she keeps the house?] as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

Many times people get into a form and live as they want to live, yet they think they can really pray. Dear one, you must first get rid of the things that hinder your prayers. Not having a right relationship in the home hinders many people's prayers. Because their prayers are hindered, the children slip out of their hands and into the world and they are lost; nevertheless, you have your own way of living and your own ideas, and you are not going to change. Well, you are going to pay the price when you do not change.

Peter, throughout this letter, was dealing with the attitude of a slave toward a master and a master toward a slave, a parent's attitude toward a child and a child's attitude toward his parents, and the attitudes and actions of a husband toward a wife and a wife toward a husband.

Whether you believe it or not, these things will hinder your prayers.

People go on living the way they want to live, holding on to their own fanciful ways, but watch them when they get down to prayer. See how much praying they can do. Why would God bring up the thought of the way the husband and the wife live hindering their prayers? Because prayer is such a necessity.

Above everything else, you need to keep your home in such a way that you can offer prayer and God will hear. It is the only defense for your home. If you allow things to get into your life, it will hinder your prayers. Too many are claiming to be Christians, maybe even holding offices in the church, whose home lives are not good. They have hurt each other until they do not have family worship anymore. The father prays one place and the mother prays some place else.

You cannot treat your wife or your husband just any old way and get down and really pray in front of him or her. Why? He or she will condemn you so that you cannot pray. He will not have to say a word; just his presence there will make you mutter and stutter. The devil has been working in the home as never before for the last few years. My friend, by attacking the home, he has thrown countless thousands of youth into the deep abysses of sin because their homes were not what they ought to have been.

### **Principles of Conduct Governing Marriage**

Peter said that husbands need to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honor to her as unto the weaker vessel (and wife, you need to make sure that you are the weaker vessel). If she remains the weaker vessel, it will not be hard for the stronger one to handle her, take care of her, and help her. However, when the weaker vessel becomes the stronger and the stronger one becomes the weaker, then your home is not as God would have it to be. You

may say, "Oh, that is the way we live." Well, if it is, you are not doing any real praying. No, you are just going through a form.

The Bible lets you know that your prayers can be hindered by what goes on in the home. When Paul taught about the home, he taught what is known as reciprocal ethics. He never places all the responsibility on either one. He never brought up what the husband should do, but he brought up what the wife should do and what her attitude should be. Marriage is not a one-sided relationship. You cannot have a really happy marriage with one-sidedness. A marriage must be placed on a reciprocal obligation.

When Peter wrote this in A. D. 62, it was a completely new concept for that era. He was writing to a society of people where women had little or no rights. Therefore, he began to teach that the husband is to deal with her according to knowledge, as the weaker vessel, and as being an heir together of the grace of God through New Testament salvation. The husband must be understanding, sensible, and sensitive to the feelings of his wife. Why? He is the stronger vessel.

First Corinthians 7:1-4 reads: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife."

When you get married, you sign an agreement. There are three of you in that union: the husband, the wife, and God. Matrimony is holy, and both of you swore an oath that you would fill the position of a wife or a husband to each other for as long as you both shall live.

Paul said, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication. . . ." I just want to say

right here, there is no excuse for sin, but there are reasons why men have been drawn into sin: because their wives refused to fulfill their rightful position to their husbands. A man may be tempted, but temptation is not sin; however, yielding to temptation is sin. God has ordained that if a man is tempted, if his passions are stirred in any way, he can go home to his companion. The same holds true for the wife.

There are people over the country who teach that a man and his wife should never come together except to produce a child. That teaching is false, and it is working in a devilish way among people. There is nothing in the Bible that teaches such an idea. The Bible teaches just the opposite. It teaches that within you is a craving for the opposite sex, and when you get married, your body is no longer your own.

The husband's body belongs to the wife, and the wife's body belongs to the husband. Paul let us know that the husband and the wife are to keep coming together and have a close relationship. Homes do not break up where the husband and the wife have a close relationship with each other. Paul went on to say in verse 5, "Defraud ye not one the other. . . ." Who can be a Christian and defraud? But this happens, and their prayers are hindered.

The husband should dwell with his wife with understanding. Brother, there are some things you have to understand. The woman is the weaker vessel, and she may not always be as strong as you are. She might have more sicknesses throughout her life, and you will have to understand. So Paul said, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, [You should not just shut each other off; it has to be with consent and some understanding. When you deal with understanding, the other companion will say, 'I understand; that will be fine.'] that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency." You can keep a

lot of temptation out of your home if you will be the right kind of husband or wife. If you fail to do this, you will hinder your prayers.

Paul was writing to people who were in darkness. They did not deal with the woman as the weaker vessel. Before the Gospel came, the woman was dealt with as the stronger vessel. In some countries yet today, you can see a woman carrying a heavy load on her head and her husband walking along beside her not carrying anything. That is the way people in darkness live. The Gospel brought the understanding that the woman is the weaker vessel and the man is the stronger vessel, and he should take care of her. Christianity introduced chivalry.

### **"Without Wrath and Doubting"**

There are things that are barriers to your prayers. Our Scripture text says, ". . . lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," or the Greek version says, "without disputings." In Mark 9:17-28, when the man brought the boy who had a dumb spirit and threw himself on the ground, the man told Jesus that he had brought him to His disciples but they could not cast out the spirit; so Jesus cast out the devil.

The disciples asked why they could not cast him out. In Matthew 17:20, which relates the same story, Jesus answered the disciples, "Because of your unbelief." Mark 9:33-34 reveals the cause of their unbelief. Jesus said, in so many words, "What were you fellows disputing over when I came down?" Here was the reason for their unbelief! They all held their peace, so Jesus let them know that He already knew what they were disputing over: it was over who was the greatest. Disputations, whether over the standard or anything else, will kill your faith. It is one of the devil's ways of working unbelief.

James, Chapter 1, tells you that when you pray, if you doubt, do not expect to receive anything. If you doubt, you are like the waves of the

sea, tossed to and fro. You must first come implicitly relying on the promises of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ. These promises would not be any good had Jesus not done a finished work. What good would the promise of healing be had Jesus not taken the stripes across His back and paid the price? You must come looking and leaning implicitly on the Word of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ, without doubting.

Jesus said in Mark 9:23, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." In Mark 11:22 and 24, Jesus said: "Have faith in God. . . . Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

How does God want you to pray? First of all, our lesson text lets us know that you need to have a little greater consideration for all men everywhere. Next, he tells you how to pray: "Lifting up holy hands [meaning clean lives], without wrath [God, who is looking on the heart, must see that you have no revenge and no bitterness.] and [without] doubting." God is still a rewarder of everyone who diligently seeks Him. How can you diligently seek Him? When you come to him with clean hands, a pure heart, and without doubting.

God is still on the throne. He is as ready to answer prayer today as He was when He walked here on the earth. The Bible states plainly in the Book of Romans that the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. God has never repented. People say that God does not heal today as He used to. God has never repented. When He gave the gifts of healing to the morning-time church, He did not take it back. As long as the church is here on the earth (until Jesus comes again), every gift is available for the church to operate. The starting place is getting our lives straightened out to the place that we can truly pray.

*(Cassette C-049)*

# The Unity of the Spirit

*Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

*2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

*3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

*4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

*5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*



**Brother C. H. Dickerson**

## **Working for One Common Cause**

God's church must have unity. The very pivot point for advancement is unity. However, people will never have unity until they learn how to take orders. The thought of taking orders should start in the home with children. When they are young, they need to be taught to take orders. Parent, you should not wait until they become teenagers. They need to learn to take orders before they begin to walk. If you teach children in the home to take orders, when they get in school and in the work force, they will be able to take orders. Then when they go to the house of God, they will be able to take orders. Saint, when you take orders and follow the leader as God tells you to do, then you will see

unity and God will work in a greater way than ever before.

Unity is important. In every branch of the military service, taking orders is vitally important. It is also of utmost importance in the Kingdom of God. If you look in the Word of God, you will find there was a time when Moses did not take orders. He did not do what God told him to do, and as a result, he never saw the promised land. Taking orders is part of humbling yourself. God wants us to humble ourselves so that we can take orders and do what He tells us to do.

God's true people want unity, and they work toward that goal. God has placed within the saints of God words of reconciliation. It is our duty to reconcile every man and every woman that we possibly can to the

things of God. When reconciliation comes, it is our payday. We are rewarded according to our work. If we work for God, the harvest will be a joyful time. It is to the farmer as well as the saints of God, because every man receives the reward that is due to him.

On the Day of Pentecost, when the people of God were with one accord, people were saved by the thousands, bodies were healed, and people were raised from the dead. God did wonderful things! In time they left their first love and were scattered abroad; then all these things came to a halt. Nevertheless, God has never changed His mind. He still desires to get people to the place where they will be in one place with one accord, to see souls saved and bodies healed and people deepened

down in the things of God. When that happens, God will move and bless us in a greater way. We will see more people saved and more bodies healed. Why? Because people are praying and working for one common cause, and that is to see these things come to pass.

Today we take many things for granted. We buy a loaf of bread at the grocery store, and we simply recognize it as being a loaf of bread. However, to produce a loaf of bread it takes dozens of people working together. First, the farmer must till the field and sow the seed. Next, at harvesttime the grain must be harvested, cleaned, dried, milled, ground, weighed, sacked, and sold to a bakery. At the bakery it is mixed with other ingredients, baked, sliced, packaged, and delivered to the grocery store. After it reaches the grocery store, the stock workers, the cashiers, and the baggers all have a part in getting a loaf of bread to you. In other words, it takes the unity of dozens of people to put one loaf of bread on your table.

By the same token, when it comes to winning souls, it takes the unity of God's people. It takes the church working together. God has ordained that we each do something to see souls won for Him. When we all work together and do what God tells us to do, He will honor us, and we will see souls saved, problems worked out, bodies healed, and congregations growing. To see these things done, God's people must work together.

### **The Recipe for Unity**

In our Scripture text Paul said to "walk worthy," which means that you must do your work well, not someone else's work, but *your* work. When God saved you, He placed you in the body as it pleased Him, according to 1 Corinthians 12:18. He knows what you are capable of doing and how you would handle certain situations. If each member of the body does his work properly, just as a healthy physical body does, great

things will be accomplished. When God places people in the spiritual body and each one fills his position, the church accomplishes the work that God intends her to do in winning souls for Him. For this to take place, no one can withdraw or hold back; each one must do the work that God has called him to do.

Paul laid out the recipe for unity. He said to have unity, you have to walk worthily. You must do the work that God has called you to do, and do it well. Then Paul said that he was the prisoner of the Lord, not by force, but because he loved God so much that he was willing to do exactly what He said to do. He wanted to please God. Although Paul laid out these conditions many years ago, they have never changed. God used Paul in a great way. You must come to the same place that Paul did: you must love God so much that you are a prisoner of God. Whatever God says, that is what you must do, regardless of what people say or think.

When I was in the Army, I was told when to get up, when to brush my teeth, and when to go to bed. When we are in the body of Christ, the Head tells the body what to do. If the body is functioning properly, it does exactly that. Christ is the Head of the body. When He tells the arm to move, the arm should move. Child of God, when you were saved, you became a prisoner of the Lord. It is not that you are held against your will. God has done so much for you; therefore, you ought to love Him so much that you are His prisoner. You ought to do what God tells you to do regardless of the outcome.

Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Paul, in Ephesians 1:1, let us know that this Ephesian letter was to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Paul told them to walk worthily of the vocation wherein they were called. To get the right meaning of this text of Scripture, you have to realize why the saints of God are called. Child of God, do you know why God saved your soul and turned your life around? Too many times people have the idea that they

were saved because a hell-fire message was preached and they were fearful of losing their souls, so they got saved. If that is your idea of salvation, you are going to miss Heaven. God never saved you only to take you to Heaven. He saved you to do a work. If God saved you to take you to Heaven, why are all saved people not in Heaven today? God placed us in the body to do a work, and there is still a work to do. He has placed each of us in the body as it pleases Him so that the body can work together for one common cause.

Saint, if you are going to work for God, you need to know why God saved you and why He put a new Spirit in you. Why did He remove the old stony heart and give you His Spirit? You need to consider these things, because too many are not doing the work that God meant for them to do. They were saved, and now they merely sit back, thinking they are ready to go to Heaven. That is not what God has in mind. God has a work for people to do. There is a lost world, a world in trouble. Who is God going to work through to reach them? He chose to work through man, but He cannot work through man until the vessel is cleaned up.

### **Chosen Vessels**

Second Corinthians 5:20 tells us that the saints of God are ambassadors for Christ. As an ambassador for Christ, you are not equal to Christ, as some claim to be, but you represent Christ. When Jesus went back to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit. He said that when the Holy Spirit is come, He will give you power. Why? To be a witness to a lost and dying world. He called you to promote the Gospel, to tell others what God has done. There is no other mission that God has called you for. You are to win souls for Him.

God gives talents to each member of the body of Christ. He gives the talents to preach, to sing, to play instruments, to be helpers, for government within the church, and so

on. Everyone who is saved has a talent of some kind. Everyone cannot sing or preach, but God has given a talent to every saint of God so that he or she can do something for the furtherance of the kingdom.

When we have dinners at church. One may bring ham, and others bring potatoes, salads, and desserts. All these foods combined make a complete meal. Similarly, in the body of Christ, God calls some to preach, some to amen the message, some give praise to the Lord, some sing, and some play instruments. When God puts it all together, it becomes a complete spiritual meal, and people are happy and satisfied. Then they go home and tell others how good it was. Why was it good? Because many people brought their God-given talents and put them into the service.

We read in Acts 9:15-16: "But the Lord said unto him [Ananias], Go thy way: for he [Saul, or Paul] is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." In essence, God said, "I have called him to bear My name." Saint, when God picked you up out of the life of sin and saved you, He called you to bear His name. You need to represent His name as a name of honor, because it is a name above every name. God wants you to lift His name up above every name. You need to put God on the highest realm; He must come ahead of everything else.

Speaking of Paul, God said, "I will show him what great things he must suffer." God does not give the Christian a bed of roses, so to speak. Our attitude should be, "Whatever the cost, I will pay it!" There is going to be a cost. You are going to suffer. You might have friends turn their backs on you, but God will pay you for everything you suffer for His sake. He will bless your soul for the time and the effort that you spend.

God is saying to you, "Bear My name before the Gentiles." You may say, "Well, that was only concerning Paul." If that were true, then what is

our work? When Jesus told the disciples that they must be born again, were they the only ones He had in mind? No, all must be born again. The message to everyone who is saved is this: "Carry My name, highly regard it, and guard it against all falseness." Child of God, if someone tries to tear down the name of Jesus or the body of Christ, you ought to stand and defend it. It will cost you something. You may bear some battle scars and bruises from it, but God said, "I will pay you what it is worth when I come again."

In Acts 26:16 the first thing God said was "rise." You have to rise and stand upon your feet. Do not try to lean on someone else. When Moses put up the tabernacle, he put silver sockets under each side so it would stand alone. That is what God wants you to do. He wants you to get an experience so that you can stand alone. The winds will blow, but you can still stand. Some will fall, but you can stand right there. God wants you to have such an experience that if your husband or wife quits serving God, you will continue to serve Him. If your parents give up, you can walk on for God. He does not want you to lean on others.

In your experience you ought to lean totally upon Christ; He has never fallen. When you lean on Christ, you are not going to fall. That is what He wants you to do. He said to stand on your own feet and not lean on anyone else. Why? Because storms are going to come and the winds will blow some people down. Some are going to be destroyed. If you lean only on Christ, when the wind stops blowing and the smoke clears away, you will still be standing.

Again, in Acts 26:16 Jesus said, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister." He was not talking only about ministers who stand behind the pulpit. We read in Revelation that He called each of us to be a priest. What was the call? To preach the Gospel. Every child of God is called to live God's eternal Truth. Often you do not have

to say a word. Just live a sinless life, my friend, and you will preach a great message to this lost and dying world. They will know that something is different about you.

The world is in trouble. We are living in a day when some so-called ministers say, "You can't live above sin. We all sin." They can testify for themselves, but the child of God does not sin. That is the reason Jesus came. We read in Matthew 1:21, ". . . for he shall save his people from their sins [not *in* their sins, but *from* their sins]." God gives grace and power so that you do not have to sin. You do not have to do what the devil wants you to do.

### **Rise and Be a Witness**

In Acts 26:16 Jesus said that He came to make you a minister and a witness. It is one thing to tell others about the Word of God, but it is another thing to show the Word of God in action. You can tell people that God can save them, work out their problems, and heal them, but it is another thing to show them that He can. That is the reason Jesus said, in essence, "I have called you to be a witness so that you can show people the right way."

Before Paul was converted, he was a scoundrel. He punished the saints of God, killed some, and put others in prison; but when God saved him, he became a witness to what God had done for him. His life was changed completely. When God saves an individual, he is changed completely. Jesus said in verse 17, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles. . . ." Saint, you do not have any excuse for being afraid of people. In essence, Christ said, "It doesn't make any difference what people say, for I have delivered you from them." Why? To live for God, to do what you need to do, and to carry your part in the body. Do not worry about what people think of you. Some will hate you, but they hated Christ and the disciples. We need to get over the hangup of what people think.

If the pastor preached only what people wanted to hear, he would not preach against anything. Some people do not want to hear the message on tithing. Others do not want to hear the message concerning the dress standard. Some people do not want to hear the message concerning the hair standard. Others do not want the pastor to preach holiness, or living above sin. Jesus said that He delivered you from these things. Why? To go out and preach the Gospel and to be a witness. He said that some will like it and others will turn away from it. Nevertheless, you must preach the Gospel.

### **Holy Living**

What are we to do to open people's eyes? This old world is getting more vile all the time. It is going deeper in sin than ever before. A child of God is going to draw attention. Jesus said in Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes." The first thing you must do to open people's eyes is go out into the world and live as the Bible instructs you to live. Too many people are talking but not living it. This causes people to become sick of anything to do with church before they ever get started. Jesus was saying that, to open their eyes, first of all, you must show them something different. You must show them that serving God is more than just having religion and going to church. You must back it up with holy living.

Once people's eyes have been opened and you have their attention, they are going to say to you, "What is different about you? Where do you go to church?" Then is the time to do a little testifying, not too much, but just enough salt to make them thirsty. If you give them too much salt, people slide the plate back and leave the table. Why? Because they do not want anymore; it is too salty. Saint, you need to give them just enough to cause them to be thirsty.

After you have opened their eyes, then you are going to have a chance to turn them. Look again at verse 18: "To open their eyes, and to turn them

from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God [then after they are turned, they are ready], that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Church of God, this is our calling; this is our mission. This was what Paul's calling was, and it is the calling of every saint of God.

Christian friend, you are to be a witness and a minister to open people's eyes and to turn them from the power of Satan to the power of God. If you do not do that, then you are failing your mission, because God has ordained it that way. Church of God, we are ambassadors for Christ, and the only way we can do it is through the power of unity. There is power in unity! The devil hates it; he is afraid of unity. That is the reason he is working so hard to destroy the unity of God's people.

We read in 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation. . . ." I remember when I was a boy playing ball. Before we started playing, two boys would choose their teams. Church of God, we are a people that God Himself has chosen. That ought to put some backbone in us. We did not choose Him; He chose us to fill His army and to go forth to battle sin.

### **Showing Forth Praises**

God said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [when we keep God's Word, it will make us peculiar]; that ye should show forth the praises . . ." (1 Peter 2:9). We need to praise God for what He has done. Had it not been for God, we would be on our way to hell today, or maybe already in hell. He chose us, picked us up, and put us on the highway of holiness.

God told us that we need to show forth praises for what He has done. May God help us to praise Him more! We were nothing but a bunch of beggars, but God picked us up and made something out of us. He made us witnesses for Him; therefore, we ought to show praises for that. I am

not talking about working up something, but letting people know that we are on the winning side. God has never lost a battle. He is still the same, and we ought to praise Him with all our hearts. My friend, are you on the winning side? If so, then you ought to praise God for that and let people know that you are.

The rest of verse 9 says that you "should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." God help us never to forget the times when we were in darkness, bound by the habits of life. Sin was on every side. Many people were in distress, not knowing which way to turn. One day someone introduced them to Jesus Christ, and when they found Him, He took care of the drugs, the alcohol, and the cigarettes. Church, may God help us never to forget what God has done for us, where He has brought us from, and where we are today. He is worthy of all the praise that we can give Him!

### **"Stand in Awe, and Sin Not"**

What an honor to be called of God! David wrote in Psalm 4:3-4: "But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself [God set us aside for Himself, for His use]: the LORD will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." The message is still the same: stand for what is right and sin not; do not compromise. The devil will try to get you to compromise, but do not back down. You must stand for the Truth that God has given you.

Although modernism has crept in among many places, God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. His Word has never changed. It never will; therefore, you must not compromise or back down. Stand for God's Truth, and stand in awe. Commune with God. In the early hours of the morning, when you are lying in bed all alone, talk with God. He will show you exactly where you stand. We are living in a day when there are

many sheep stealers, trying to fleece other congregations, trying to steal good people. Those who do that are nothing but sheer thieves, and *all* thieves are going to have their place in the lake of fire.

God has called me to be the overseer of the Church of God where I pastor. That is all I can oversee, and that is all I try to oversee. Each pastor is to take care of his own congregation. I do not have time to fleece other congregations.

There are ingredients for unity, just as there are ingredients for anything you make. To bake a chocolate cake you have to have flour, eggs, oil, and so on. Not one of these ingredients is good alone, but when they are blended together and baked and covered with chocolate icing, how good it is! A cake does not just happen, nor is it something that you just throw together. You must measure the ingredients and put in the right amount of each.

Whenever we, as the church, get the ingredients that God has for unity, measured out and blended together, it will be as the Psalmist David said in Psalm 133:1, which reads, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Unity does not come naturally. For example, unity in the home is not a natural thing; a family must work to have it. Where there are two people, there are two ideas, and then when children come along, there are many more ideas. With all the many ideas, each one having his or her own way would be far from unity. To have unity, each member of the family must give a little here and there. My friend, I am not talking about letting down on the Bible standard. I am simply saying that there might be some places in the home where you can work harder toward unity.

The same is true with members of the body of Christ. Where there are people, there are many different ideas. However, if you want to see souls saved, it is not too hard to give up your own way. Many years ago we had a church that had a twenty-two foot ceiling. The only insulation

in the ceiling was a three-inch board, and our heat bills during the winter were running one thousand dollars a month. We had a small congregation and could not afford a utility bill as high as that. So we decided to lower the ceiling about ten feet and put in insulation. The wood ceiling was beautiful, and one brother did not agree with that decision. Nevertheless, the morning the work began, the brother who disagreed with that decision brought his tools and went to work right along with the others. That is a good example of how unity works.

You may disagree with something, but if the pastor decides that is the way it will be done, then you ought to submit. Why? Because God made him the overseer; God put him in charge. My friend, you ought to do what the overseer says. If you think you have a better idea, you might sit down and talk with him, but you need to work together for one common cause. We all are to labor together to win souls for God, to see souls strengthened, and to see the body of Christ edified.

### **Humility and Preferring One Another**

I repeat, unity does not come naturally. That is the reason we see labor unions go on strike repeatedly. Also, that is the reason many congregations have had splits. There was a lack of unity. To have unity there has to be a solid foundation and certain ingredients.

The Word of God gives three basic conditions for unity. In Ephesians 4:2 the Apostle Paul lets you know that the first one is that you must have humility, or "lowliness and meekness." One must be humble, just as Christ preached and practiced. The Scripture says He was led away as a sheep to the slaughter. Though He had all power, He opened not His mouth. He humbly did what God said to do. This is what God expects of each of us.

To have unity in a congregation, and if God is going to use you, you

have to be humble. Each of us has to show and practice humility. Humility also means to prefer one another. First Timothy 5:17 reads, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour [not just honor, but double honor]." If you have a pastor who stands and preaches the Gospel, you ought to give him double honor; he is worthy of it. You may think, "We should not lift up men." Acts 5:13 states, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them." They magnified men because they preached the Gospel. First Thessalonians 5:13 states, "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." Why should you highly esteem them? You should do it for the work's sake, or for the church's sake. You should not be afraid to lift up your pastor when he preaches the Truth. You ought to esteem him very highly for the work's sake.

First Timothy 5:17-18 reads: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." When God's man preaches the Truth and exhorts the Word and the doctrine, you should not try to take the praise away from him. God needs a channel to work through. He needs a vessel to carry the Gospel, and it must be clean. You ought to lift up men of God who preach the Truth and encourage them for the work's sake.

My friend, too many are trying to starve God's men to death and take the praise away from them. That makes it much harder for God's men to preach. I am still talking about having unity and hearing the Word of God.

The second condition for having unity is to prefer one another. First Timothy 5:18-21 states: "The labourer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. [Saint,

if someone comes to you and begins to run down God's people, you should not receive it. Instead, you ought to rebuke that person. You should not allow anyone to plant a seed of discord. If you do, you are disobeying the Word of God. Anyone who disobeys the Word cannot make Heaven his home.] Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things [there is a charge before God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy angels that the people observe these things] without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality."

First Peter 5:5 says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder [should an elder correct you because you are doing something that you ought not to be doing, you should not make fun of him, talk about him, or call him a name when his back is turned]. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Again, I am speaking of the necessary conditions for unity.

### **Long Suffering and Forbearing One Another**

The third condition necessary for having unity is long suffering. In Ephesians 4:2 Paul said, "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Being long suffering proves our love to man and also to God, In 1 Corinthians 13:4 he said, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself [in other words, it does not brag about itself], is not puffed up."

The fourth condition necessary for having unity is forbearing one another in love. When these conditions are not present, unity will not be present. When the Bible speaks of forbearing one another, what does it mean? Throughout Colossians, Chapter 3, Paul wrote of many things they were to put off. When he got down to verses 12-13 he said: "Put on there-

fore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies [this is not superficial, but it comes from the depths of your heart], kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another [or bearing with one another], and forgiving one another."

Dear one, if you cannot get along with the saints down here, you cannot make Heaven your home. Forbearing one another is learning to live together. The reason some marriages last for fifty years is that the couples learned how to live together. Sadly, very few marriages last that long. What is it that makes a marriage last? It is learning to live with each other's faults.

We all make mistakes, and we all have faults. If we are going to be successful, we must overlook the faults of others. Wife, if the husband throws his clothes and his shoes here and there, you should not jump all over him and nag him half to death.

Husband, if you go home and the house is not as you think it should be, do not be afraid to help your wife. Then maybe she will learn what you want and what you expect. If you just sit back and holler and fuss with each other, you are never going to have unity in the home. It will only get worse. You may say, "I work all day." Well, the woman works in the home all day. She starts in the morning and gets breakfast, and then she cleans the house. By the time she finishes doing that, the children need to eat again, and the kitchen needs cleaned again. After lunch she gets them cleaned up and ready for a nap, and then she gets the house all cleaned up again. About that time, the school-aged children come in from school and the house looks all cluttered again, and then the husband comes home. A whole day's work almost seems in vain some days.

Men go out and work and then come home and sit down and say, "Oh, man, I'm tired. I've had a hard day." Well, so did the wife. I have said many times that I would not trade places with a woman. I would

rather dig ditches. To have unity in the home, a family has to work together, and then endeavor to keep that unity. The same is true in the church. My friend, we must forebear one another.

Look again at Colossians 3:13, which reads, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel [the Greek says 'a complaint'] against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Do you have a complaint against someone? Do not make an issue out of it. You are to forgive that one just as God forgave you. How many complaints did God have against you, Christian friend? When you asked Him, did He not forgive you of them all? Likewise, you must forgive as God has forgiven you. That is the only way you can be forgiven. Some have said, "I will never forgive that person. I am holding him for this." Then God will not forgive you.

When a person asks God to forgive him, Micah 7:19 tells us that He puts the sin down into the depths of the sea. In Psalm 103:12 we read, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." If you are a child of God, you must do likewise. It is impossible to be saved and do anything else.

### **The Bond of Perfectness**

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:14, "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." This love will hold us together; it is what bonds us together. The reason so many homes are split up today is that they have lost their love. The reason some congregations have split up is due to a lack of love. Divine love binds the church together. It will cause you to overlook the faults of others. It will help you to look above every day happenings to the souls that you are affecting.

In verse 15 we read, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." I thank God that He called me and placed me

in the body where He is the Head. Again, verse 3 of the Scripture text states, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Unity is not a natural thing; it requires hard work. The one foundation that must be laid is found in 1 John 1:7, which says, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." You will have unity with one another if you walk in the light as He is in the light. If your brother walks in the light and you walk in the light, then you will have fellowship. You can have fellowship with all the saints who walk in the light.

The Apostle Paul used the word "endeavouring," which suggests strenuous efforts being put forth for this purpose. I repeat, unity does not come naturally. Paul let us know that we must put forth strenuous effort to get along, but he did not say it was impossible. We can have unity if we are willing to put forth effort to work at it and forgive and overlook the faults of others. We can have perfect unity and do the job that God has saved us for, and that is to win souls.

Friend, we may not see everything the same when it comes to personal convictions, but as far as the doctrine is concerned, we will see eye to eye. When God moved upon the disciples and gave them the Books of the New Testament, the Bible tells us it was written by holy men of God. After Paul was converted, he spent three years down in Arabia. He never saw any of the other Apostles, but when he got back, he saw eye to eye with them because he had the same Teacher they had. However, they differed concerning circumcision, and they got that straightened out. Peter did not get angry because Paul came back and rebuked him. No, he humbled himself and found that what Paul said was true. Circumcision in the flesh never made anyone a saint of God, but heart circumcision is what makes a saint of God. If a person is a true child of God, he will work to keep the unity of the Spirit.

### "Be Ye All of One Mind"

Christ left us an example. First Peter 2:22 states, "Who did no sin, neither was guile [or deceit] found in his mouth." In 1 Peter 3:8-9 we read: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful [or have compassion for one another], be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing [if someone rails on you, do not rail on him]; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

We need to be willing to be melded together. I am not talking about letting down on the standard or allowing a disgruntled spirit to work. You cannot do the work of God with an old disgruntled spirit. I am talking about getting along with people who claim to be saints of God but have different ideas concerning some things. We need to be banded together for one common cause—to go forth to win souls for God. When we do that, God will bless us.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." God has *one* spiritual body, and He is the Head of that body, according to Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 1:18. In the Church of God we do not have a Pope or an earthly headquarters to run the Church of God. We have God-called men whom God has placed over each congregation. To those pastors, God said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers [not someone else's flock, but one's own flock], to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." No one can keep the unity unless he becomes peaceable. Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed

are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Friend, you are either a peacemaker or a troublemaker. There is no middle ground. Jesus said that the peacemakers shall be called the sons of God. There are only two spiritual fathers. If the peacemaker is a son of God, you can conclude who the father of the troublemaker is. That is God's eternal Truth. If people deliberately cause trouble, they are not of God. We are either trying to make peace with our brothers and sisters or trying to cause trouble. The doors of Heaven will be closed to every harsh, fault-finding, criticizing spirit.

Saint, are you really endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit with every one of God's children? Again, in Ephesians 4:1-3 Paul stated: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It does not say, "If you can," but he said, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This is a commandment. If I work hard to keep the unity of the Spirit (God expects and demands that), and if others do likewise, we will have unity. However, if someone reneges, we cannot have unity. It is a two-way street. I have to do all I can and you have to do all you can for us to have unity. When we have unity, we do not have to worry about someone tearing us down. If we have unity, we have one objective in mind, and that is to lift up Christ.

In closing, I ask you, are you saved? If so, God saved you to do a work. Are you doing that work? Are you working as one with the people of God to win souls to God? If not, I trust that you will ask God to help you.

(Cassette C-3915M)

# Announcements

**NEWARK, OH**

Oct. 6-12

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH

Evangelist: Brother Wayne Hafley, Minerva, OH

Service times: Mon.-Sat. 7:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:45 & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 83 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055

Telephone: (740) 344-2543

**MEDINA, OH**

Oct. 12-18

**REVIVAL:** Medina Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256

Evangelist: Brother David Stegmeier, Canby OR

Service times: Sun. 6:00 p.m. & Mon.-Sat. 7:00 p.m.

For information contact: Pastor C. H. Dickerson, 215 Montview Dr., Medina, OH 44256

Telephone (216) 725-6853 or 725-5993

**KENYA, AFRICA**

Oct. 20-26

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, Kenya, Africa

For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 83 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055

Telephone: (740) 344-2543

**NEWARK, OH**

Oct. 29-Nov. 2

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH

Evangelist: Brother David Stegmeier, Canby OR

Service times: Wed.-Sat. 7:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:45 & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 83 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055

Telephone: (740) 344-2543

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## Medina Labor Day Meeting Report

*"Glory to God! We'll sing it again! Glory to God! We'll shout the refrain! Praise to Jehovah our tongues shall employ, Home to Mount Zion we're coming with joy."* With these words the Labor Day Meeting in Medina, Ohio, began September 1, 2003. The words of this song were very appropriate, because the theme of the day was praise and thanksgiving. Testimony after testimony was given by the saints to thank God for healing, help, and salvation. Many hands were raised and tears flowed as God's Spirit was rich in the midst.

Several testified of how they awoke that morning feeling ill, but they asked God for help and pressed their way to the meeting, and He answered those prayers. The morning speaker was Brother Roger L. Decker, from Newark, Ohio. He preached a beautiful message entitled, "The King-

dom of God: Is It Established or in the Future?" Thank God, we can live in His kingdom now! It is not a kingdom that is coming sometime in the future, but it is a present-day reality. It is the kingdom of peace, and it is reigning within. One songwriter penned, "We possess it right here when he saves from all sin." What a kingdom!

The afternoon service seemed to begin right where the morning service ended. God's Spirit again blessed and encouraged the hearts of His people. Each song and testimony was uplifting and told of how God saves and keeps. A quartet sang the words, "I just want to thank You, Jesus. You're the best thing that's happened to me." Every child of God in the building could surely say amen to that. Jesus truly makes life worth living. This was evident in the abundance of

praise that went forth in the services.

Brother Wayne Hafley, from Minerva, Ohio, preached in the afternoon service. He brought a soul-stirring message entitled, "Being Filled With the Power of the Holy Spirit." He spoke of the great need to be filled with the right Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we do not have room for anything else. Thank God, His Spirit strives with each of us through the Word.

The Medina congregation put forth great effort to make this meeting a success. To each one we say, "Thank you!" From the older saints working in the kitchen to the children washing dishes, we want them to know that we appreciate their hard work. Greater than our thanks are the blessings that God gives. Nothing goes unnoticed by Him. The Medina Labor Day Meeting was a wonderful place to be. We were truly blessed to sit together in heavenly places, and we give God all the praise!