

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

Guest Editorial

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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"But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Salvation—God's Unspeakable Gift

God has an everlasting love for all men. He is certainly stirred at sin and the sinful way that man lives. From the very beginning of time, God knew that man would sin and need a Savior, or a Redeemer. No one in Heaven or on the earth was worthy to make the supreme sacrifice to redeem man. God sent His only begotten Son into this undeserving world to live a life of example and to lay down His life freely for the sins of the world. The greatest gift that man could ever receive in life is salvation. It is given by grace (God's unmerited favor) and bestowed upon us because of His love. This experience is not an attainment that the receiver can boast of. Man cannot do anything to make himself worthy of this unspeakable gift. Isaiah 64:6 informs us that "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

One cannot climb up to acquire this pearl of great price. It cannot be purchased with money as Simon the sorcerer thought in Acts 8:18-20. Peter told him, "Thy money perish with thee" (verse 20). Neither can good works obtain it. It is a gift, and much like any gift, the only course the recipient has is to accept it with thankfulness. Jesus Christ offers this precious gift to all men. He has paid the supreme price for every man's redemption.

What is salvation? Webster tells us it is "deliverance from sin." The Scripture defines salvation as being set free from sin. A person who is bound in sin is like a man who is in a literal prison: his freedom has been taken from him and bars hold him fast. He cannot know freedom until someone comes, opens the doors, and sets him free. This is what salvation does for the sinner: it sets him free, not to do as he pleases but to live and move as God desires him to.

Salvation and freedom are offered to all when the Gospel is preached. As men and women hear the Word of God brought forth, the Holy Ghost brings an awakening to their hearts and reveals their lost condition. He also invites them to be saved from the life of sin. If an individual will diligently seek the Lord with all his heart, as Jeremiah 29:13-14 tells us: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. [Then] . . . I will be found of you, saith the Lord. . . ."

Seeking God with your whole heart is necessary, but in your seeking Him you must also believe that He hears you and is ready to pardon, forgive, and restore. Faith and obedience are the keys that unlock Heaven's storehouse. In Hebrews 11:6 we read these words: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

[continued on page 7]

Mark 5:25 And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,

26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

27 When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

28 For she said, If I may touch but

his clothes, I shall be whole.

29 And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

30 And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?

31 And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging

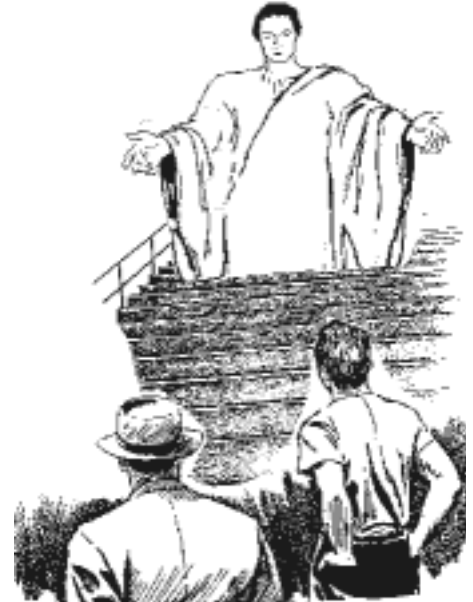
thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?

32 And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.

33 But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.

34 And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

Touching Jesus



Brother Roger L. Decker

Overcoming Obstacles

In Mark, Chapter 5, many exciting things happened. At the beginning of the chapter, Jesus cast a legion of devils out of a man. Then, as Jesus was on His way to heal the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, a certain woman pressed her way through the crowd and touched His garment. The Scripture does not say anything about this woman other than the details concerning her physical condition.

Today we are faced with many great needs. When you pick up a newspaper, sometimes it is depressing to read it. You cannot find many things in it that are encouraging.

Today many churches throughout our land are supposed to be devoted to supplying those needs, but it is very evident that something is wrong. Many people flock to churches on Sunday, and at times people get stirred a little in their souls to the degree that they refrain from this and that; nevertheless, in too many cases, there is not a definite, lasting change. The reason is that many people are not really touching Jesus.

Many times there are things that people consider obstacles that prevent them from touching Jesus. In our Scripture text we read that a woman who had an issue of blood came to Jesus Christ. The Scripture says she had spent all that she had

and had tried many physicians, but she could not be healed of any. Three of the four Gospel writers mention this: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. When they wrote of this miracle, they all agreed that she had an issue of blood for twelve years.

Getting to Jesus was not an easy task for the woman. She had the crowd to deal with as well as the Law. Leviticus 15:25 says, "And if a woman have an issue of her blood many days out of the time of her separation, or if it run beyond the time of her separation; all the days of the issue of her uncleanness shall be as the days of her separation: she shall be unclean."

The first thing this woman had to overcome was public disgrace

and embarrassment. She had endured twelve years of suffering, and she grew worse even though she had spent her life's savings trying many physicians. This woman very easily could have been in the depths of discouragement. No doubt, she lived under depression every day. She had a great obstacle to overcome (public embarrassment), but her faith was stronger than her shame. She felt within her heart that if she could touch His clothes, she would be healed. No doubt, she had heard of the healings that Jesus had performed, and she was determined to press her way through the crowd until she received help.

The Bible lets us know that she also had to overcome the press, or the throng of people. Mark 5:27 says she "came in the press behind," or in the crowd that pressed upon Him. She did this to avoid being noticed, but it was still an act of faith. She was fully confident that Jesus was able to heal her. She had no doubt in her mind about that, yet she trembled because of her conscience. She felt unworthy, and the crowd was large. No doubt, in that crowd was the religious hierarchy; however, she was not going to allow that to deter her. She pressed on. She was sick and needed help, and her faith carried her to victory. Her faith was rewarded with virtue that supplied her need.

Putting Forth Great Effort to See Jesus

Holding that thought, I want you to read Luke 19:1-6: "And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus,

make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully."

Those verses of Scripture tell of another instance in the Word of God when getting to Jesus was very difficult. Zacchaeus had heard some things about Jesus and had heard that Jesus would be passing that way. He, too, had some things that would discourage one, even to the place of turning back and saying, "What's the use! I can't get to Him. I'll wait until another time."

Zacchaeus had some things working that would discourage a soul from seeking God. First, he was a little man. It would not have done him any good to press through the crowd, especially being a tax collector. You may ask, "What difference did it make that he was a tax collector?" The tax collectors were known for collecting more money from the people than what they really owed.

Jesus was passing through Jericho. It was a town for the wealthy, and it was called "The City of Palms." Its gardens of roses were known in many lands. Even the historian Josephus called it a divine region and the fattest in Palestine.

With all that wealth in Jericho, that made it a great place to collect taxes. Perhaps you have heard the expression, "Get the rich." That was exactly what Zacchaeus was doing as a tax collector. Although he was wealthy, he was unhappy. No doubt, he had reached the top of his profession, but he had gained a bad reputation and was hated by the common people and by nearly everyone except the government itself. He chose a profession that made him rich, but he was despised and considered to be an outcast. However, he heard that Jesus received tax collectors.

Coming to Jesus by Faith Despite Strong Opposition

Another word for *tax collector* was "publican," and it was a politi-

cal office created by the Romans to help collect taxes in the provinces. Luke 19:2 says that Zacchaeus was called "chief among the publicans." The publicans were contracted by the government to collect taxes, but they did not do it all themselves. They hired others to do the work for them. In New Testament times people often scurried to get that job, and then they would collect the taxes, plus they added a profit from the citizens. They had the backing of the Roman government.

Publicans were held in lowest esteem. Actually, they were thought of in the same way as the harlot. Matthew 21:31-32 says: "Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." They were placed in the same category as the harlot.

Jesus was accused of eating and drinking with the publicans. Matthew 9:10-13 reads: "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners [two outcasts]? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Zacchaeus, like the woman with an issue of blood, was determined to get to Jesus. Reputation or no reputation, short in stature or tall, it made no difference to Zacchaeus. He was going to get to Jesus Christ.

Mark 6:54-56 says: "And when

they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole."

As soon as Jesus landed on the other side of the lake, again, He was surrounded by a throng of people. Undoubtedly, the entire crowd came with insistent demands, and they came believing. If they could but touch the hem of His garment, they would be made whole. Those people were so stirred that they carried the sick in beds wherever they had heard that Jesus was going to pass by. In the Scriptures that I have used, we find that people put forth tremendous effort to get to Jesus. Those who came, came in faith, and they refused to be denied, even by the strongest opposition.

Obstacles That Hinder People From Touching Jesus

Today people let many obstacles hinder them from touching Jesus Christ. One big obstacle is false religion. False religion will let you join a church and be indoctrinated. You can be baptized and considered a member in good standing, even though you have never touched Jesus Christ. Whenever Jesus Christ was touched, there was a change. Sometimes people go to an altar of prayer and get nowhere with Christ; they bring their obstacles with them.

In the Scriptures that we have studied, we can see that the people would not be denied. They went through much to get to Jesus Christ. Every time someone put forth extreme effort, Jesus Christ stopped. When Zacchaeus climbed up in a tree, Jesus stopped when He came to that place. What was that place?

It was a place where He saw a need. Many obstacles are facing people today. False religions are flooding our land, and they get people into their churches. They sit there faithfully every service, but they never touch Jesus Christ. Many make religious moves, but not too many are touching Jesus Christ.

Another obstacle that hinders people from touching Jesus is the world. People want Jesus Christ, but they also want the world; however, the two cannot mix. The world is enmity against Christ. The world has never accepted Jesus Christ, and it never will. That is the reason if someone gets to Christ, he or she must come out of the world. Many people love the world too much, and they feel that it is asking too much of them to give up sinful pleasures.

The world will promise, but it cannot fulfill. If you ever get the needs of your soul fulfilled, it must be through Jesus Christ. The world cannot satisfy your soul. The Apostle John admonished in 1 John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." You may hang on to the world, but it will be your downfall. It will stop you from really touching Jesus. The devil is working overtime on young people. Young person, do not do those things that you will regret for the rest of your life. If you were to drive a nail in a board and then pull out the nail, the nail would be gone, but the hole where the nail had been would remain. The same is true of sin.

In the New Testament you can read about Demas. The Word of God says some good things about him. He was a fellow laborer with the Apostle Paul. At one time he was a big help to the Apostle Paul,

and Paul could rely on him. However, something happened to him. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:10, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." This present world has kept many people from touching Jesus. John wrote in 1 John 2:17, "And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

God-Given Power That Brings a Change

Now I am going to tell you how you can know when you have touched Jesus. It is right in the Scriptures, and it stands out. Is it because you have started doing good? How can you know whether or not you have an old religious profession? Mark 5:28-30 reads: "For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?" Jesus knew who had touched His clothes, but He was setting the woman up for a confession.

Luke 6:19 says, "And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all." The word *virtue*, as it is used in these Scriptures, means "power." In Mark 5:30 we could read, "And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that power had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?"

We could read Luke 6:19, "And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went power out of him, and healed them all." This virtue was God-given power to correct a situation. When this power comes into a man by faith, a change takes place. When you touch Jesus Christ, it makes no difference what

the problem is, whether it is the need of divine healing, the devil being cast out, salvation, or whatever the problem, something happens. You can read of this throughout the Word of God. Touching Jesus is all that really matters. I repeat, when this power comes into a man by faith, a change takes place.

Acts 1:8 (the words of Jesus) reads, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." When you have touched Jesus, for whatever reason, a change will take place. When you have touched Jesus at an altar of prayer, you will quit sinning. Why? Because virtue goes out of Christ and goes into you; then you have power to say no to the devil and yes to God. Too many people go to an altar of prayer, but they do not touch Jesus.

Jesus felt virtue go out of Him when He asked, "Who touched my clothes?" Jesus knew it was a touch by faith. He knew that her touch was different from that of the crowd. It was different from the multitudes of the day; it was a touch by faith. If you touch Jesus Christ by faith, a change will take place. You may be the worst sinner in the world, but if you make contact with Jesus Christ by faith, virtue will go out of Jesus Christ and into you. You will become a new creature in Jesus Christ.

Have You Touched Jesus?

There are many church joiners, but they have never touched Jesus. Friend, to see inside Heaven, you must have virtue, or power, from Jesus. Jesus said in John 15:4, "Abide in me, and I in you." God is not asking for people to "act" religious. The world is full of people who merely act religious. He is asking for people to testify of what His power is doing for them. Child of

God, you ought to tell others what God has done and is doing for you. The reason many people cannot do that is, they have not really touched Jesus.

I want you to consider what happened on the road to Damascus, where the greatest preacher, next to Jesus Christ, got converted. Paul had a one-on-one encounter with Jesus Christ. He was born into the church out of season. In other words, the church was not praying for him. However, it was praying against him, but that did not stop a change from taking place.

I repeat, when one touches Jesus, for whatever reason, a change always takes place. The sinner will quit sinning. He will quit doing anything that is wrong. However, he does not just quit things, but he starts doing that which is right. He will love to go to the house of God. No one will have to tell him to carry his Bible to church, to look the way a Christian should look, or to get into the revival services. No, he has touched Jesus and wants everything that Jesus has for him. He had been feasting at the wrong supper for so long, but after touching Jesus Christ, he does not want to miss one meal, spiritually speaking. The wrongdoing ceased, and he desires to do right. Oh, he will make mistakes. If it should be a mistake that affects someone else, he will make it right immediately, because he wants to do what is right. When you touch Jesus, you will know by how you are getting along spiritually. You may say, "Well, I am still struggling." No, when you touch Jesus Christ, a change takes place, a change that is evident. Even the dog that you used to boot all the time will notice a change.

The woman in our Scripture text pressed through the crowd to touch Jesus, Zacchaeus went above the crowd to see Jesus, and the sick were carried and laid wherever Jesus passed by, all to make contact with that virtue, or power. Whenever people made contact with Him, He healed them.

If you truly want the power of God in your life, you can have it. You might have a tendency to be satisfied with a sloppy experience. You can even get used to it. You can become so used to asking God to forgive you that that is all you ever get done. The next thing you know, you will have lost that vital contact, or virtue. Remember, the word *virtue* means "power," and in some instances, it also means "strength." Friend, you can have this power if you want it. Do not let anything hinder you.

Christ Can Supply Every Need

You might have made religious moves just to be accepted by others. You need to have Christ accept you. When He accepts you, it will not make any difference to you who else accepts you. Again, I urge you, do not let anything hinder you from touching Jesus. Do not let your husband or your wife, your boyfriend or your girlfriend, or anything in this world hinder you. Nothing is worth your being lost.

You may say, "Well, I love my husband [or wife] so much that I can't . . ." Dear one, no matter how much you love your husband or your wife, he or she did not go to the Cross for you, and he or she is not about to. Nothing is worth your being lost and going to hell. If you come to Jesus Christ with a need and, by faith, do what God has shown you to do, you will be so glad that you did.

Again, verse 30 of the Scripture text reads, "And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes?" Then Jesus said to the woman, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague" (verse 34). Her affliction was healed. After that, Jesus went to Jairus' house and raised his daughter who was dead.

Jesus was always busy doing the will of God. Anyone who touched Jesus by faith got their

needs supplied. Now, you can read of one man called Simon the sorcerer who made religious moves in Acts, Chapter 8. He even got baptized, but he had not touched Jesus Christ. Oh, he was impressed by Phillip and all the things that Phillip did. He followed after Phillip, desiring to have the same power that Phillip had. He failed to realize that the disciples could not have given

him that power. He had to touch Jesus Christ to receive it.

If you are unsaved, won't you be honest and do something about it? Do not continue in your present condition. Things do not just naturally get better when you are a sinner. They do not just work their way out. Touch the Master, and you will be so glad that you did. Why don't you get it settled today?

Ask God to help you. If you have been up and down or in and out in your Christian experience, sometimes feeling as if you want to serve God and other times not feeling as if you don't want to serve Him, you need to get rid of that kind of experience and let a change take place. You will be so glad that you did.

(Cassette C-4029M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

When this gift is received into the heart of man, it will bring about a radical change. The Apostle Paul informed us in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [a new creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The old sinful life goes away. The things you once hated, you now love. The things you once loved, you now hate. The gift of salvation is truly a miracle from God. All can have it, if they truly desire it. If you are tired of the life you have been living, come to the Savior. He is ready to forgive, restore, and bestow this unspeakable gift upon you. You must forsake the old life of sin.

God's ears are always open to

the cry of an individual who has a broken heart and a contrite spirit. How about you, dear reader? Do you long to have a personal relationship with God? Is there a thirsting within your soul to want to know Him? Do you desire to be saved? The words of Isaiah 55:1 tell the weary soul, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

You can be assured that God can deliver you from sin regardless of how deep you might have gone. God specializes in things that are impossible. He wants to show you His great power and what He can do for you, if you will just allow Him! Your life may be wrecked

with sin, and you may feel that you have nothing left to offer Him. His words to you are "Come unto me." Salvation is free, but discipleship will cost you all. Consider these words recorded in Ezekiel 18:30, which reads, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Verse 32 goes on to say, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

Dear one, will you come to Jesus, take faith in His pardoning love, and allow Him to save you and give you this unspeakable gift?

Selected



Have you visited
our website lately?

Check it out at
www.godsacres.org

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The Power of God

Brother Patrick Brower

The Preaching of the Cross

Our Scripture text says, ". . . to every one that believeth." Too many people stop short of believing. They say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus. I'm a Christian," but they fail to do the works. Matthew 12:49-50, speaking of Jesus, reads: "And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." It is not enough for you just to believe in God; you must do the will of God. To do His will is to let the Holy Ghost come into your life and let Him guide you.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth

the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Those who work iniquity are still living in sin, or wickedness. Iniquity is wickedness. The Lord has no part with those who are living in wickedness. If you do the will of God, you will have the blessings of God.

James 2:19-20 reads: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" What was the writer speaking of? He was speaking of having love one to another. Jesus said in John 15:12, "This is my

commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." The most important work is that we love one another.

At one time I was lost, even though I was religious. I was a member of a church, and we had Bible study with another couple. We were taught that everyone must sin. Thank God, I did not buy that. Romans 6:1-2 says: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Friend, you do not have to continue in sin. You can cry out to the Lord right where you are. You can have the power of God to put off sin. I praise God for the power of God! You do not have to curse and swear and do sinful things. You can live free from sin. Praise the Lord! The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corin-

thians 1:18, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." The preaching of the Cross means nothing to people when they are not living in the Spirit. It is foolishness to those who perish. The preaching of the Cross (the life, the death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ) is the power of God.

Some time back, I read an article that said if you want to fill a church today and see a congregation grow, you must have lots of music and preach short messages. Also, it said not to preach anything controversial, but to preach simple things that everyone likes. One might draw a large congregation of people, but he would not have the Church of God. The saints of God want to hear God's Word. We do not want to be cut short. When a true man of God gets up in the pulpit and preaches, you are hearing from God. You should not try to limit God to a few minutes and say, "That is all the time I have for You, Lord. I have things to do. I need to go home and watch television." Child of God, you need to give your time to God and listen to the Word of God so that your heart might be filled with His Word.

The preaching of the Cross to those who are saved is the power of God. Jesus Christ is the Word. The Bible says that He was made flesh and dwelt among us. Christ preached the Gospel, and He preached that you must love your fellowman. He healed the sick and raised the dead, and He was persecuted. He was crucified on the Cross. What an awful death! Why did He do it? He did it to save us from our sins. It was for the remission of sins. He was spat upon, slapped, and whipped, and He wore a crown of thorns; He was humiliated. He was taken out and nailed to the Cross through His hands and His feet, and He hung there and died. Before sundown, they took Him down from the Cross and placed Him in a tomb, and He

lay there for three days and three nights. On the third day He was resurrected. The Resurrection is the power of God. Jesus Christ is the power of God.

"The Foolishness of Preaching"

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:19-21: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." "The foolishness of preaching" is an attempt to save you if you are lost. It is an attempt to put you back on the strait and narrow way if you have wandered off course.

Paul stated in verses 22-25: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Today many preachers try to put forth their own wisdom, not what the Word of God says.

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Paul said: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Is

your faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ or in man's teaching? You need to have your faith in the power of God. The Lord can do wonderful things with a soul who is willing to listen and learn and do the will of the Father.

The Apostle Paul penned in 2 Corinthians 13:4-5: "For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobrates?" In other words, Paul was saying that Jesus Christ is in you, except you fall away, or backslide.

First Timothy 4:1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Saint, you must be careful of seducing spirits. Those spirits are not just floating around in the air. They may be working through your best friend, your mother or father, or your children. Seducing spirits can lead you away from the Truth.

A Holy Calling

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren . . . and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." You can leave the Church of God, go down the road, and still call yourself the Church of God if you want to, but that is not the Church of God.

The Church of God does not divide; that is not God's plan. There should be no division among God's people. We need to be united. There should be no factions among us. You can call yourself the Church of God and put that name on the church building, but that does not make you the Church of God. The Church of God consists of those who have been born again and who are

walking in the Spirit and doing the will of the Father.

Second Timothy 1:6-10 reads: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:3-9: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

There is power in the preaching of the Cross. Most people hardly ever hear the word *repentance* nowa-

days, and they hardly ever hear about a place called hell. No one wants to think about hell, and not many preachers want to preach about hell. We do hear about these things in the Church of God. Do you know why they do not preach these things in other churches? It is because they are sinning.

One preacher standing behind the pulpit stated, "I am a sinner, and I still sin." Some like that because they can live in sin and yet be a member in good standing. Those people fail to realize that Judgment Day is coming, and those who are living in sin will be lost.

Are You Drinking of the Lord's Cup?

I want to talk a little about the Lord's cup. Matthew 20:20-23 reads: "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons [her sons were James and John], worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

We continue to read about this cup in Matthew 26:26-29: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say

unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

To get a better understanding of this cup, we need to read verses 36-46: "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee [James and John], and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

This cup that Jesus said they would partake of was His Crucifixion. John 18:10-11 tells us: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jesus had to drink of that cup. He knew that He

had to die, and the cup that He drank of was the Crucifixion. Are you able to drink of this cup? First Corinthians 10:21 reads, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." You cannot drink of His cup and then feast with the devil. You cannot live in sin and in righteousness at the same time. You must choose one or the other; it is your choice.

Examine Yourself

First Corinthians 11:25-29 reads: "After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

When you drink of this cup, the Lord's Crucifixion and the Resurrection, you partake of the New Testament and of His love. So many people today are still living according to the Old Testament. They only have sabbath day worship, and they want to make sure their boy babies are circumcised according to the old Law. They want to continue in works, traditions, worldliness, new moons, and so on. What happened to the teachings of the New Testament? We have the precious blood of the Lamb that paid for our sins so that we can live in holiness and in righteousness.

After the Lord was crucified and buried in the tomb, the Jews tried to hide the Resurrection. We read in Matthew 27:62-66: "Now the next day, that followed the day of the

preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again [they called Jesus Christ a deceiver, but they were the deceivers]. Command therefore that the sepulchre [the tomb] be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch [or guard]: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

Jesus rose from the grave. Matthew 28:11-15 says: "Now when they [speaking of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary] were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

The priests paid money to those guards and told them to say that the disciples stole the body and that Jesus did not rise again. What do you believe? Do you believe what the Jews tried to make the people believe?

Resurrecting Power

The Lord has designed that there should be two witnesses. The Word and the Spirit are the two witnesses. The Lord never wants to have only one. Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the grave, and He Himself was resurrected. There is only one record of Lazarus' resurrection, and that is in John, Chapter

11. Jesus was about two miles from Bethany, the place where Lazarus was, and they told Him that Lazarus was sick. Jesus said in John 11:4, "This sickness is not unto death." Then, He said in verse 11, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The disciples said, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well" (verse 12). In verse 14 Jesus said, "Lazarus is dead."

When Jesus went to Lazarus' home, his sister Martha came out to meet Him. Verses 23-27 tell us: "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Friend, do you believe this? Many saw the resurrection of Lazarus and believed. Many people were there to mourn the death of Lazarus. When Jesus told them to take away the stone, Martha said to him, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days" (verse 39). Nevertheless, Jesus called Lazarus forth from the tomb.

The power of God is in the resurrection, or in the life. One day maybe the Lord will say to you, "Come forth!" That is the power of God. You may say, "Now, wait a minute. That was when Jesus was walking on the earth." There was another resurrection. In Acts 9:36-37 you can read that Tabitha, or Dorcas, died, and the saints called for Peter. He went to Joppa where she was and prayed; then he said, "Tabitha, arise." She got up, and she lived. Today many teach that there is no divine healing. They say that it went out with the Apostles. The power of God, not the Apostles, raised those people. The Spirit of God healed those people, and He is still working today.

The Church of God still

preaches that you must live free from sin, and if you live a life free from sin, you must be baptized with the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost must dwell within you. John wrote in 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The child of God cannot sin because His seed remains in him. You may be baptized, and that is a good testimony to your salvation; but when you go down into the water, you come up the same person. The water does not change you. You must have the Holy Ghost living in your heart to overcome sin.

Some teach that the Christian continues to sin, but that it is not counted as sin because the blood of Christ has it covered. Friend, that is not what that verse says. Again, John stated, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him." That seed is Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost. He is the power of God that is in you. Jesus Christ was a perfect man. He was God in the flesh, and He was without sin. He was perfect and did not sin while He was on the earth, and He will not sin while He is living in you. If you are a child of God, you cannot sin because God is in you. If you do not want to commit sin, God will be right there to help you.

Take Your Need to the Lord

Sometimes Satan tempts me. I have gone to places and when I tried to pay, they did not charge me enough. I had to tell them, "That's not right. I owe you more money." I went to a restaurant and the bill came to approximately thirteen dollars. I gave the man a twenty dollar bill, and he gave me back about eighteen dollars. I said, "Didn't I give you a twenty?"

He said, "Oh, yes, that's right." He shut the window and opened the cash register, pulled out two fives and tried to give me ten more dollars. I said, "Wait a minute. You

have it all wrong." I explained, and then he gave me the right change.

Saint, Satan wants to tempt you. It is only through the Holy Ghost that you can say, "I am not going to yield to this temptation because the Holy Ghost is right here to help me." You might be alone, but God sees everything. He knows your heart. The Spirit of God will keep you from sin. You must be baptized with His baptism. Can you drink of His cup? Can you drink of His Resurrection and of His blood in the New Testament? You might be saved or you might not. You might just be professing to be saved, trying to live the life. You might even put up a good front, but one day you will face the Judgment. Nothing is hid from God.

In the Church of God, we still have altars. When I look at them, I see buckets of tears: tears of joy, tears of pain, and tears of sorrow. I also see the things that people have laid aside: alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sin, makeup, jewelry, ungodly apparel, and unforgiveness. Do you have unforgiveness in your heart? I had unforgiveness for a while. A man had greatly wronged me and cost me a lot of things, and I struggled with that. Unforgiveness was like a ball and chain around my neck. Every time I tried to go forward for God, it held me back. I could not fix things because of the hatred and the unforgiveness that I had for that man. I knew that was not doing anything to him, but it was hindering me. If you have unforgiveness in your heart, you need to get rid of it so that you can be free. John 8:32 says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Do you have unforgiveness, hatred, envy, strife, or the spirit of division in your heart? Do you have something against a brother or a sister? Why do you think many church buildings are empty today? The people had things in their hearts. They had serious heart conditions, spiritually speaking. The Lord can take care of your condi-

tion.

What else do you have that you could leave on the altar for Jesus? You need to leave it all with Jesus so that you can be clean, pure, and righteous for the Lord. If you are full of sin, you can be full of the life-giving water of Christ. Friend, whatever you have in your heart, you can leave it on the altar. You might have tears of sorrow for an unborn baby. You might not have had a baby, and there is sorrow or bitterness in your heart. You might even have a disagreement with God. Perhaps you are bitter toward God because you have lost a child. Whatever your need is, you can take it to the Lord.

Finding Help in the Time of Need

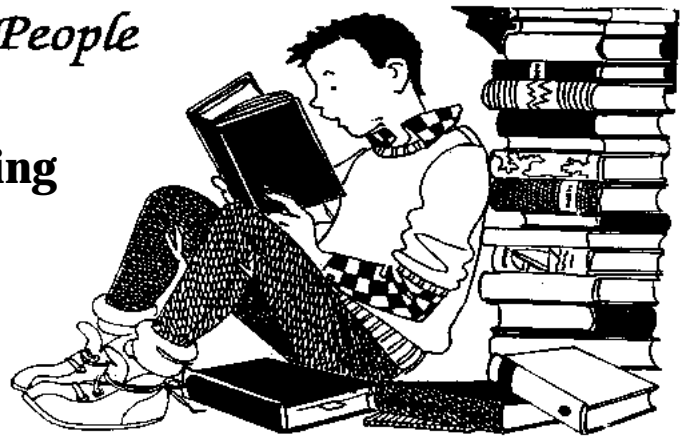
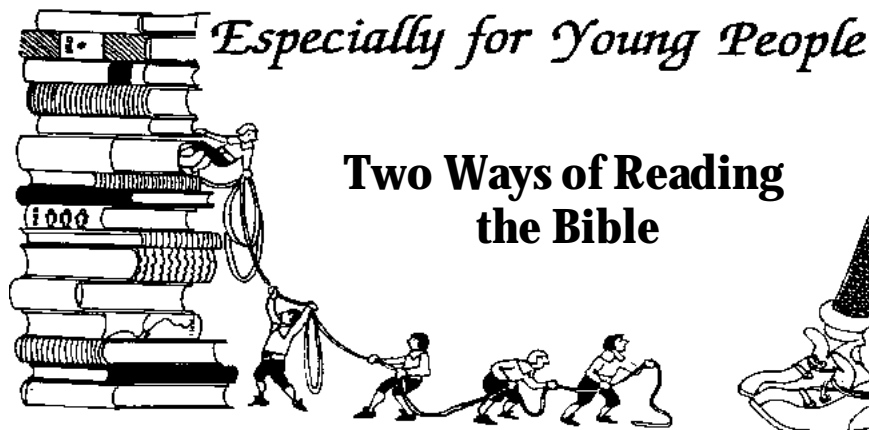
Once I met a man who said, "When I die and stand before the Lord, I'm going to argue with Him even then."

I said, "No, you will not."

You might have such thoughts in your mind, or you may question why this or that happened. You can go to the Lord and set it straight. Perhaps you are afflicted. James 5:13-16 reads: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

You can go to God today for salvation and strength. Ministers are no exception. They need to find an altar of prayer as much as anyone. They ought to be the strongest ones in the church. If you have needs, you can go to the Lord and find help.

Pride can keep you from the altar. Proverbs 16:18 states, "Pride



"Would you like another chapter, Lilian?" asked Kate Everard of the invalid cousin whom she had lately come to help.

"Not now, thanks; my head is tired," was the reply.

Kate closed her Bible with a feeling of slight disappointment. She knew that Lilian was slowly sinking under incurable disease, and what could be more suitable to the dying than constantly to be hearing the Bible read? Lilian might surely listen, if she were too weak to read for herself.

Kate was never easy in mind unless she perused at least two or three chapters daily, besides a portion of the psalms. She had several times gone through the whole Bible from beginning to end. And here was Lilian, whose days on earth might be few, tired with one short chapter!

"There must be something wrong here," thought Kate, who had never during her life kept her bed for one day through sickness. "It is a sad thing when the dying do not prize the Word of God."

"Lilian," said she, trying to soften her naturally quick, sharp tones to gentleness, "I should think that now, when you are so ill, you would find special comfort in the Scriptures."

Lilian's languid eyes had closed, but she opened them, and fixing her soft, earnest gaze upon her cousin, replied, "I do—they are my support. I have been feeding on one verse all morning."

"And what is that verse?" asked

Kate.

"'Whom I shall see for myself,'" began Lilian slowly, but Kate cut her short—

"I know that verse perfectly—it is in Job. It comes just after 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'; the verse is, 'Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.'"

"What do you understand by the expression 'not another'?" asked Lilian.

"Really, I have never particularly considered those words," answered Kate. "Have you found out any remarkable meaning in them?"

"They were a difficulty to me," replied the invalid, "till I happened to read that in another translation where they are rendered a little differently. Then I searched in my own Bible and found that the word in the margin of it is like that in the other translation."

"I never look at the marginal references," said Kate, "though mine is a large Bible and has them."

"I find them such a help in comparing Scriptures," observed Lilian.

Kate was silent for several seconds. She had been careful to read daily a large portion from the Bible, but to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest it," she had never even thought of trying to do. In a more humble tone, she now asked her cousin, "What is the word that is in the margin of the Bible instead of 'another' in that difficult text?"

"A *stranger*," replied Lilian. Then, clasping her hands, she repeated the

whole passage on which her soul had been feeding with silent delight: "Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and *not a stranger*."

"Oh, Kate," continued the dying girl, while unbidden tears rose to her eyes, "if you only knew what sweetness I have found in that verse all this morning while I have been in great bodily pain! I am in the Valley of the Shadow—I shall soon cross the dark river. I know it, but He will be with me, and 'not a stranger.' He is the Good Shepherd, and I know His voice."

"Oh," continued Lilian, "in the glad resurrection morning, it is the Lord Jesus whom I shall behold—my own Savior, my own tried Friend, and 'not a stranger.' I shall at last see Him whom, not having seen, I have loved."

Lilian closed her eyes again, and the large drops, overflowing, fell down her pallid cheeks. She had spoken too long for her strength, but her words had not been spoken in vain.

"Lilian has drawn more comfort and profit from one verse—nay, from three words in the Bible, than I have drawn from the whole Book," reflected Kate. "I have but read the Scriptures, but she has searched them. I have been like one floating carelessly over the surface of waters under which lie pearls. Lilian has dived deep and made the treasure her own."

Selected

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world,

that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

The Manifestation of God's Love



Brother Allen Polston

"Prove All Things"

God is interested in His human creation as He looks down upon us. He is interested in more than lip service when it comes to serving Him. How you choose to live is a serious matter. It is something that God takes into account every day. First Thessalonians 5:21 says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." Christian friend, God is interested in your proving things. You can easily give lip service to God, but He is interested in your proving your love to Him. He wants you to prove what you profess. Almost everyone claims to be a Christian, although they will tell you that they see things differently. However, the real proof is when the test comes. As God looks on, He desires to find proof in your life.

Investigators or lawyers would

not dare to present a case without evidence, or proof. It would be foolish for them to try to win a case without first gathering pertinent evidence and information to use as proof. Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." God is looking for those who will honor Him with their lips and draw near to Him with their hearts. Friend, He wants your heart to be right.

The love that the Scripture text speaks about is a special kind of love. Most everyone has some kind of love. A godly husband loves his wife, which is a very beautiful love. Parents should love their children. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 3:4 that in the last days some would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

John wrote in verse 7 of our Scripture text, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." This verse lets us know that is a special kind of love. It is not just a love for a spouse or a child, and it is certainly not a love for pleasure. False religion has contributed to much deception because they have not dealt in particular with this kind of love. They let people think that if they love some, they are all right. Many people feel that if they are good morally, and work, pay their bills, and belong to a religious society, they are in good standing before God. However, this lesson deals with a special kind of love that God requires of His people. If you are going to be His child, you must have this kind of love. You can prove your love when certain situa-

tions arise that might tempt you not to love someone.

How else can we prove our love? As saints of God, God has designed that we prove our love to one another. Friend, the choice is yours; this is not forced upon you. You can look around in this world and see much hatred manifested. Many people do not have this kind of love. You can read in your local newspaper any day of the week about people who do not possess this kind of love. Their deeds prove that they do not have this love.

Some time ago, I heard about a couple whose daughter was kidnapped when she was a very young child. A lady conjured up a scheme and researched that missing child's background; then she called the parents of that missing daughter and said, "I'm your lost daughter." The couple became quite excited; they were thrilled. They thought their daughter, who had been missing since the late eighties, had been found. Sadly, they discovered that it was just a big hoax. The woman was not their daughter at all. The woman who made up that false story is an example of one who does not have this kind of love.

God has given each of us a choice. Friend, He made it possible for you to decide how you will live. You can behave as the woman who called that family and fooled them or you can behave much differently than that. You can be kind, honest, caring, and considerate. The choice is yours.

Ministers of Righteousness

When people do you wrong, that sets the stage for you to prove your love to them. When people speak against you, as a Christian, God is allowing you an opportunity to prove that He is mighty and powerful, that He is living in your heart, and that He is divine. Sometimes you may look at situations and feel very discouraged. I know what it is to feel discouraged. It has happened to me. Discouragement

will try to move into your life. Sometimes you may look at situations and begin to feel down about them, but you need to turn them right around on the devil and let God help you to understand. God is setting up opportunities for you to show others how strong and mighty He is. He can handle every situation.

Second Corinthians 3:6 reads, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [or able ministers of righteousness]." God has made us able. Thank God, we are not disabled. We can prove the things of God to the world because He has made us able. The Scripture found in Matthew 28:18-20 is very dear to me: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

God has all power in Heaven and in earth, and He is with us always. He is with us in the hard times as well as the good times. He is there whether we are on the mountaintop or in the valley, and He has all power. He shares that power with us so that we can have the resources we need to teach others how God wants them to live—those who are for us and those who are against us. We can show all nations the way God wants them to live.

How God Manifests His Love Toward Us

Our Scripture text tells us that God proved His love for us. He proved it by the way He treated us. By His actions, we would understand that God was dealing with something more than words; it was proof. Everyone who has ever tasted of the good things of God can agree that God has proven His love

to us. If you are lost in sin, no doubt your life is a mess and you are dealing with things that you regret becoming involved in. Dear one, you can ask Jesus to come in and cleanse your heart. He will put out the devil and give you power over those sinful things that you were doing. Then, thank God, you can say, "God is good! He is able to deliver, and He has proven Himself strong in my behalf."

When I was living in sin, I did not have a way out of the mess that I was in. I was a captive, and I was afflicted and tormented by the enemy. Thank God, one day Jesus came and sent the old devil where he belongs. God proved that He loved me, and He proved it with more than words. I thank God for that proof.

Verse 9 of our Scripture text tells us, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us." God manifested His love; He did not just say it and then leave us wondering whether or not it was true. This love is not just to sinners, but He continues to manifest His love to us after we get saved. Have you ever been afflicted, your body racked with so much pain that nothing seems to help, and then God gave you a touch? He was manifesting His love to you. God proves His love for you by the things He does for you.

John said in verse 9, "... because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." You should not live so that God feels grieved about your failure to keep His commandments. Also, you do not have to be depressed, sad, or lonely to serve Him. I just began to live when I turned my life over to God. You do not know what living is until you get really serious about serving the Lord. You must sell out to Him and let Him have full control, and then you can begin to know what life is all about.

I thought that I was really living while I was in sin. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5:6, "... she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she

liveth." In other words, that person does not even have life. You do not have life until you get victory over the devil. Life truly begins when you serve God and have victory over the flesh and have victory over sin. Then you will no longer yield your members as a servant to iniquity and uncleanness. When you get victory, then you can begin to enjoy life and your fellowman, just as God created us to enjoy them. You do not even start living until you get in Christ.

Be Content in Serving God

Friend, you should not let people who are living in sin fool you. They try to make the world look glamorous. The devil tries to make the advertisements on the billboards look so inviting. He will show you a scene with young people playing volleyball on the beach in their ungodliness, half-naked, drinking beer, and having fun. He does not show you the scene the next morning when they are lying in an old, cold jail cell, regretting what they have done. Perhaps they killed someone in a drunk-driving accident.

Years later, they might develop sclerosis of the liver. The devil does not reveal that side of the picture. Living for God is much better than living for the devil. The world may try to make sin look glamorous, but the Bible says the devil is a liar and has been since the beginning. He will lie to you and tell you that it is exciting to live in sin. Friend, you had better not listen to him. He will try to get you to compromise or make you feel that you are missing something. If you are saved and sanctified and serving God, you are not missing anything. You are on the winning side.

What will you miss by serving God? By serving God, you will miss hell. Also, if you serve Satan in this life, he will turn your life into a hell on earth, sooner or later. Eventually, he will cause you to regret the choices that you have made, and

you will wish that you had never looked at the things of this old world. You need to be content in serving God.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Thank God, it is *great* gain. It is not just a little gain to be godly and holy and to serve God in contentment. It is wonderful!

You do not need to let the devil fool you and trick you. That is exactly what he is trying to do. This world is getting worse, and the things that the world is offering are getting worse. The devil is trying to do everything he can to lure young people into the party life. He tries to make things look so enticing, and he puts deceptive thoughts in their minds.

James, talking about temptation, in James 1:14, said, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The devil tries to make sin look inviting. If you meditate on those enticements, you will begin to yield to those things. James went on to say in verses 15-16: "... sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err [be careful], my beloved brethren."

Romans 6:23 tells us that "the wages of sin is death." There are wages in sin. The devil will make sure that you get paid, and they will not be good wages. The wages of sin is death. Friend, if you really want to live, let Jesus be your all in all. Let Jesus control you completely, and then you will know what living really is. When God saved my soul, when He had mercy on me and called me to be one of His own, then I really began to experience living.

"God Commendeth His Love Toward Us"

God manifests His love to us. In this Scripture lesson, when we talk about the manifestation of the love of God, we see that the Word was sent: God sent His only begotten

Son, and He gave Him so that we might live. God proved His love to us by His giving. Christian friend, you can manifest God's love the same way, through giving.

If you are not a Christian, you are dead in trespasses and sins, spiritually speaking. God looks down on such a dead condition right in the ranks of religion. In the world of religion, many are spiritually dead. I am talking about people who are church members. They do not have any spiritual life in them. They are holding things in their hearts that are more precious to them than Jesus. Friend, if you are holding something in your heart that is more precious to you than Jesus, you do not have spiritual life. Jesus must have the preeminence. He must be the supreme authority in your life.

Many people have a difficult time surrendering little things. I had a hard time. I kept thinking, "How can I give that up? How can I live without that?" When I chose to give up all, I found that the devil had been tricking me and lying to me. Unfortunately, he is doing that to many people. The Gospel is hid to many people because the god of this world has blinded their minds. The devil has blinded them and has caused them to think they would be missing something if they were to serve God. I thank God that He has opened my eyes! Friend, God can apply eye salve and give you sight!

The song "Amazing Grace" reads, "I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see." We ought to appreciate what God has done for us. He gave His only Son. Romans 5:8 states, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What a love that is! When you were against God, committing sin and living in wickedness, what did God do? He commended His love toward you by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, and He died for you.

When we think about the love between a husband and a wife,

those of us who have entered into holy matrimony know that it involves giving. You will not make it in a marriage if you enter into that marriage and insist on everything being your way. If you have the attitude, "That is the way it is going to be, and I am not going to change," you are going to have trouble.

I still believe in the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures, which teach that the husband and the wife have their respective places and both have to do some giving in order for their love to grow and to be what God would have it to be. Both the husband and the wife must have a willingness to work together. At times, you may not want to give, but you have to give a little to get through some hard places. Although a husband and a wife may come from different backgrounds, they should not holler and scream at each other.

Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. He was *willing* to give. The manifestation of God's love has been proven to you and me in His giving. Now, God will not give when it comes to what is right and what is wrong; that is not the kind of giving that God gives. He has given Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. What a sad day that must have been! What anguish He must have felt as He had to relinquish that close relationship for a period of time and give His Son to be rejected, despised, and treated in a cruel manner; yet that is what He did. He gave a Sacrifice for sin: Christ is the propitiation for sin. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God's Love Has Been Extended to You

We can read about the manifestation of God's love in Titus 3:3-6: "For we ourselves also were

sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." God's love and kindness appears to all of us. It comes and presents itself to us so that we might get an understanding of it.

We need to understand God's love. I am not preaching this message to say that God's love is all that is important. Nominal religion may make it seem that God just loves and overlooks everything. False religion promotes the idea that God's love is so strong that He overlooks sin. They say, "You cannot help but sin, but God hides His eyes and overlooks it." I am not preaching that deception.

God does not want you to continue in sin. His love will forgive the most wicked acts that you have committed. Sinner friend, God's love has been extended to you. If you are willing to repent and to turn from your sins, He will wash them away, never to be remembered against you again. He will remove them as far as the East is from the West. He will place them in the depths of the sea of forgetfulness, where they will abide forever.

God loves us in a mighty way. His love is something that we all need to understand. His love was manifested by His giving, which He gave on *your* behalf. He gave to you when you were working against Him. You were taking the glory and the praise that belonged to Him. You were taking the time, the talents, the strength, and all the things that God has given you and using them for your own sinful pleasures.

The prodigal son came to the place where he said, in so many

words, "Give me what's mine. I'm going to do as I please." It is so sad when young people begin to take all that God has given them and do not give Him anything. They take and go their own way.

The Grace of God Brings Salvation

God is giving and giving and giving, and people in sin are taking and taking and taking. God, in His love, cares for you, and He is concerned about you. He has given all of this for you. It is more than just a Scripture. It is more than just a recital of John 3:16. It is reality. God wants it to become a reality to you. He wants you to understand what He has given on your behalf. We did not love God first; He first loved us. First John 4:19 reads, "We love him, because he first loved us." How does that work? Titus 3:4 says, "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared [to us]."

Titus 2:11 states, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Friend, the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared. What is packaged in that grace that appears? One thing is the vision, a manifestation of God's love. Christ was willing to give Himself and suffer greatly for you when all you were doing was taking everything you could get your hands on. Even if you were not a vile sinner, you were still taking from God when He was giving on your behalf.

Many times through the preaching of the Gospel, God reveals to precious souls how good, kind, caring, and loving He really is. Men of God preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ faithfully, week after week, year after year, in an effort that God, in His mercy, might appear to men. That is the kindness of God, the love of God, and His nature of giving. He does it so that it might cause the hard hearts to soften and so that the resentment, the bitterness, and the resistance might be

shattered; then ones can turn to God, pour out their hearts to Him, and say, "Thank You, Lord, for Your blessings on me. Thank You for giving Your Son for me and for making it possible that I could get out of the mess I was in." He does that so that ones can be free of error and delivered from bondage. Friend, if you will turn to Him, then you can enjoy life. You can be healed when you are sick, strengthened when you feel weak, and uplifted when things cause you to feel low.

God wants His love and kindness to appear to you, dear one. Why? He is hoping and trusting that it will cause you to draw nigh to Him. Will you draw nigh to God? God wants to enjoy you, and He wants you to enjoy Him. The Bible says He stands at the door of your heart and knocks. He wants to come in and sup with you. He does not want a relationship where you pick up a Bible and scan a verse just to feel that your obligation is complete. He wants a close relationship with you.

In the Old Testament you can read that God dwelt in a pillar of fire and brought the Israelites out of Egypt, but He was not happy being that far away. He wanted to be closer to the people than that. Next, we read that God's presence dwelt in the ark. As the people moved the ark about with them, He was put there in the holy place, but He was longing to be closer than that. Solomon carried out the wishes of David, who could not build the temple. What a beautiful, fine place it was! However, Jesus told people not to fix their eyes on that temple, because something better was coming.

On the day that terrible pain and agony were inflicted upon Jesus' body, thank God, a way was made so that we would not have to be separated from God anymore and be deceived by the devil. The veil before the holiest of holies was torn in two, to open the way so that we could enter the most

holy place. The manifestation of God's love was made real. He is hoping that it will appear to more souls every day. That is one reason we gather regularly for services. Another reason is so that it might appear to us again and again, so that we might not lose sight of it. Sometimes we tend to put things in the back of our minds and forget the importance of them; therefore, we come to the services so that God's love and kindness might be manifested to us afresh.

Accepting God's Mercy

The love of God can melt any hardness that the devil has tried to work and any seeds he has tried to sow in your life. It will cause you to draw nigh to God. What a precious blessing it is to draw close to God! When His love is manifested, you can respond accordingly. I am glad for the night that He spoke to me. I did not deserve it. Looking back, I still marvel when I think of how it all worked out. It is still amazing to me how well everything came together. I came home from work one evening, and it was the middle of a revival meeting.

I had given my word that I would attend one night of the meeting, but I really had no intentions of going. I had planned to go to my house, change my work clothes, and leave. However, that night God had set up an arrangement for me. When I went into the house that night, the wife of the evangelist said, "You promised my husband that you would go to service one night. At least you could keep your word." That is all she said, but that was enough. I said, "All right, I will keep my word."

I was living a wicked life, and before I was getting ready to leave to go to church, a friend of mine called and asked, "Will you meet me in town? I need some dope."

I had some on me at the time, so I said, "Yeah, I'll meet you," but I did not tell him that I was going to

church. My mother had given me a Bible for my sixteenth birthday, and I saw it laying on a shelf in my room, so I grabbed it and took it along. I thought I would follow along in the Bible so I would not have to look at the preacher. I laid the Bible in the truck and drove to a store parking lot where I was to meet my friend. He jumped into my truck and saw my Bible and said, "What are you, a Bible-toting drug dealer? Why don't we go out and get high?" The devil was making an opportunity for me not to go to church, and I could have missed out on what God had in store for me. I said, "No, I gave my word that I would go to church tonight." He laughed it off and mocked me a little and went his way.

I have never been the same since that night. Up to the time when I was getting ready to enter the church doors, I had taken what God had given me and abused it, yet God gave me an opportunity. The love and the kindness of God appeared to me that night so strongly that it began to overcome the fears and the lies that the devil had been telling me. God opened the way and said, "Here it is; you can have it." I thank God for the love of God! He did not owe me that opportunity, and I did not deserve it. God's love is manifested in His giving.

God has given us much. Friend, it ought to cause you to draw nigh to Him. He was willing to give so much to bring you into the Kingdom of God, and He wants to commune richly with you. God loves you very much! Why not let God's love and kindness do the work in your life that God intends it to do? God gives because He cares for you so greatly, and He wants to claim you as one of His own. He wants you to walk closely to Him. Won't you draw nigh to God? He wants to have fellowship with you.

(Cassette C-5074M)

My Personal Testimony

Sister Missy McCartney



On a dark Monday morning, around 6:45 a.m., I was headed west on State Route 16 toward Newark, Ohio. I was driving and singing along with my tape, just as I had other mornings. As I traveled up a hill and over a bypass, all of a sudden, I saw headlights coming toward me in my lane. I did not have time to think. I had nowhere to go, and we hit head on.

The next thing I knew, I awoke to darkness; I could not see anything. Then the memory of the headlights came back to me, and I knew I had been in a car accident. My first thought was to get out of the car and talk with the other driver, as others do when involved in a car wreck. As I sat up, I noticed that my seat was reclined backward from the impact, and I realized that I was trapped. Since it was dark and I could not see anything, I felt down at my legs where I could not move. I felt a bone sticking out of my leg and realized that I had been badly hurt. At this time, I realized that my seven-month-old daughter Alex was not crying. This scared me, and I started calling out to her.

During all of this, a State Highway patrolman had been traveling one car behind me and had witnessed the collision. (He told me later, at the hospital, that he took a few moments to gather himself together before he radioed in the accident and called for help because he was so shook up.) He then called for Life Flight. He walked past my car to check the other driver. He said the driver's engine was lying on his chest, and he was barely breathing. He then heard me calling for Alex. He walked over and shined his flashlight into my vehicle. He got Alex out of the car and took her back to his patrol car. He left her with medics and then crawled in the backseat of my car. He talked to me the whole time the rescuers were cutting off my car door to get me out. He let me know everything was going to be okay, including Alex.

I passed out when the medics moved me from my vehicle to the stretcher, but I regained consciousness as they rolled me down the road. I felt the cold air, and it seemed as if every bone in my feet and legs were jiggling like jelly.

The medics loaded me into a helicopter where they already had Alex strapped in. She was still in her car seat with her head taped against it so she could not move her head. I held her hand and started talking to her, telling her it would be all right. I told the medics that my legs hurt. They told me they could not give me anything until we got to the hospital, but that we were only five minutes away. They told me they would drop me off at Grant Medical Center and then they would take Alex to Children's Hospital. They told me not to worry because they would stay there with her until someone arrived whom she knew. My legs hurt terribly, but God was there for me so strongly. I did not want to let go of my daughter when she needed me so much, but I knew I had to. I had to let go and let God be with her.

When we landed, hospital personnel were everywhere. They lowered me down through the roof of the hospital into an elevator. Just the little movements over the elevator treads sent terrible pain into my legs. They pushed me into a room, and doctors and nurses were lined up on both sides of me. I asked for something for my legs again, and at that time I was put out.

I awoke to a whole new surrounding. I was in a recovery room. A doctor was standing at my bedside to show me a chart and to explain my injuries to me. I was very nauseous, so I asked if he could talk to me later. He then motioned to a nurse, and they took me upstairs to my room. As they were moving me onto a hospital bed, the pain was very severe. Whenever anyone touched the bed, it seemed as though someone were shaking it.

The next few days in the hospital were kind of fuzzy to me. My injuries included a compound fracture in my right leg and a hyper-extended ankle in my left foot. That was all they could tell at the time, because my right foot had become so swollen that they could not see to do anything. They pulled my left foot up where it needed to be, pinned it in place with screws, stitched and stapled the cuts and the tears, and put a boot on my foot to hold it in place. For my right leg, they attached a rod from my knee down to my foot to support it. At that



time, the doctors were very concerned about my right leg because I did not have a pulse in it. They told my family that they could not let it go that way very long or they would have to amputate it from the knee down. The chances of amputation were very high. The church started to pray.

Late that evening, a nurse came in around 11:00 p.m. and, as she was checking my bandages, she became very excited. She said she had found a very slight pulse. From that time on, every time the doctors and nurses checked my leg, the pulse was stronger. Then the color started to come back into it, and they knew it was going to be all right—no amputation was going to be necessary.

I was not allowed to lower my legs. I had to keep them straight out in front of me so the blood would not rush through them. For the next week, I concentrated on my therapy of maneuvering around like this and getting better. I knew I had a long road to recovery ahead of me, but God was with me all along. I have to say that I never felt so much peace, even amongst the hurt and the pain.

A week after my accident, I faced a new hurdle to overcome. The nurses came and got me in the morning to perform surgery on my right foot, since the swelling had gone down. When the doctors had completed the surgery, my family was again given bad news. The doctors said my whole ankle joint had fallen to the bottom of my foot, where it had lain for a week. To make matters worse, it had rotted the side of my foot to where you could see all the way to the bone. My heel was crushed like sand. The doctor told my family that they had done the best they could, but they had never seen an injury like that. They could not say whether I would ever be able to walk on it; there was a possibility that I might not have been able to walk again.

I was in the hospital for another four or five days, and then they sent me home. My therapy and doctor's visits were every few days. The doctor was worried that he was going to have to do microscopic surgery and skin-graft surgery to close the hole in my foot. Again,

God moved in a great way! I did whirlpool treatments twice a week, and the hole in my foot gradually closed and healed on its own. Once it was healed, three months later, I was able to stand on my feet with a walker. I walked with a walker for approximately one month, and then I used a cane. One could tell that I had been in an accident because I walked very crippled up. As time has gone by, to see me walk today, it is a miracle! I barely have a limp.

I thank God for His mercy shown to Alex also. After she arrived at Children's Hospital, they performed many tests on her to make sure she was okay. When her daddy came to pick her up, a nurse was holding her, and she was asleep. In her sleep she was still sobbing from the trauma. They released Alex to her daddy, but as he was ready to take her, he noticed that she had a large knot on the back of her head. He questioned the doctors about it, and they had not noticed it being there before. They performed another test on her, and then she was allowed to be released. We were told that years later she might have seizures as a result of the accident. Alex was very sore for a week after the accident, but thank God, to this day she has never had one seizure! She is a perfectly healthy little girl, and she has never been behind in any part of her development.

I thank God so much for bringing me through this trial in my life. He touched me and healed me and gave me the gift of my legs again. I truly appreciate that more than words could ever say. Through all of this, God has shown me great love and a different way to look at life. The love of God and the grace of God are what brought me through, and I thank Him.

During this time, the church proved to be a family. They were there for me in a great way. I can never repay them for the cards, the flowers, the gifts, the love, and most of all, the prayers that I felt when I was suffering so much pain.

I thank my family and parents for being there for me and for taking care of my daughter and me. I truly thank God for His wonderful mercy and love to us all.



The Cigarette Smoking Christian



Brother Calvin Foster

Compelling Reasons to Stop Smoking

In the world today we see many people who profess to be Christians, yet they are living in sin. However, there is no such thing as a sinning Christian. Although it is possible for a Christian to commit sin, he does not go out every day and deliberately commit sin and say he is a Christian.

I want to try to help those who are bound by the cigarette habit. First, I want to share some information with you from my medical encyclopedia. It states: "The U.S. Surgeon's Report on smoking in 1964 was the first wake-up call to stop smoking cigarettes. In fact, it was the first public announcement that smoking was potentially dangerous. Smoking related diseases kill approximately 440,000 Americans a year from a variety of dis-

eases now linked to smoking. They include lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, chronic lung disease and emphysema, chronic asthma, mouth and throat cancer, bladder and kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer, osteoporosis, and more.

"For women the consequences are far-reaching. Lung cancer kills more women than any other cancer each year. According to the Harvard Nursing Health Study, just one to four cigarettes a day can double a woman's risk of heart attack. People have smoked tobacco for thousands of years in spite of the dangers. Many people become smokers. Young people begin smoking as an act of rebellion or independence.

"Most adults smoke to reduce their craving for nicotine. The effects of nicotine help make smoking pleasurable. Nicotine stimulates the nervous system and the heart and other organs. However, its effect on

the nervous system also causes many people to become addicted to it. Such an addiction makes it hard for people to quit smoking. In 1988 the Surgeon General warned that the nicotine in tobacco products was as addictive as the illegal drugs, heroin and cocaine.

"Smoking becomes a ritual associated with everyday tasks such as talking on the phone or taking a fifteen-minute break. Habits are formed by repetition. A pack-a-day smoker repeats the hand-to-mouth ritual of lighting and puffing on a cigarette about two hundred times a day. That is seventy-three thousand times a year."

The label on a pack of cigarettes reads, "The Surgeon General's Warning: Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and may complicate pregnancy." Another warning reads, "Smoking is addictive." The Surgeon General is

the chief medical officer of the United States.

If a man were in the hospital really sick and a nurse went into his room and said, "Buddy, let me tell you something. The Surgeon General told the doctors to give you a certain medicine and told them what to do, but they would not listen to him. Had they listened to the Surgeon General, you would have been home by now and would not have had to spend so much money."

No doubt, that man would have listened to the nurse and said, "Is that right? Do you mean to tell me they wouldn't listen to the Surgeon General? Did you mean to tell me I could be up and out of here if they had listened to him?" The nurse would have said, "Sure, that's right!"

Then that man would have said, "Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to sue this hospital and all the doctors who have been involved with my treatment." However, that same man could read on a pack of cigarettes, "The Surgeon General's Warning: Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and may complicate pregnancy" and just keep smoking tobacco.

I want you to read what the American Cancer Society said about how quickly your body begins to recover after smoking: "Twenty-four hours after quitting, your chance of a heart attack begins to decrease. One year after quitting, the risk of heart disease is half that of someone who continues to smoke. Five to fifteen years after quitting, the risk of having a stroke is reduced to that of a nonsmoker."

A Common Salvation

God has given all of us common sense, and we all have our five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting. The devil attacks us through those senses that God has given us. He wants us to

see things that we have no business seeing. He wants us to touch things that we have no business touching. He wants us to taste things that we have no business tasting. He wants us to hear things that we have no business hearing, and then he wants us to repeat it.

Common sense is the normal ability to think or to reason soundly. We are living in a time when many people do not exercise sound reasoning. There was a time when the Christian community as a whole knew that smoking was wrong. I can remember when I got saved in the early seventies, everyone knew that when a person got saved and gave his life to God, he quit smoking, he quit drinking, and he quit carousing. That was common knowledge in society.

In the Book of Jude, verses 1-4 read: "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Again, Jude said in verse 3, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation." The word *common* means "belonging or relating to the community as a whole." This salvation works no matter where you live. It is a common salvation. We all can live for God and live holy lives. The same thing God requires of me, He requires of you. He said we should earnestly contend for the faith. I want to earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

What has happened today? Men have crept in unawares. I have been in the offices of some preachers, and they have big ashtrays sitting on their desks full of cigarette butts. The people are not being taught against it anymore. In the short time that I have pastored, some people have run off because I have preached against smoking. Nevertheless, I cannot allow cigarette smoking people in the choir of the Church of God. Some people go to church all the time with their Bibles, yet they can hardly wait until they get outside to light up a cigarette. Today sometimes you have to make sure that you put a "No Smoking" sign inside the church building.

The Basic Guide to Good Health

The Gospel is good news for the whole man. God is concerned about the whole man. He is concerned about you, friend. In the Book of 3 John, verses 1-4, John wrote: "The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." Thank God for such a thing as soul prosperity.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 55:2, "... eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," when it comes to the things of God.

First Timothy 6:6-8 says: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." A soul full of grace will improve health. We know that is true. Many times when people get saved, their lives improve and their health improves.

We pray that those who have prosperous souls will have healthy

bodies. God wants your soul to prosper, and He wants your body to be healthy. With a healthy body the grace of God can shine in us in a larger area of activity.

Most of us have been taught the basic guide to good health since we were children. One of the first things we were taught was cleanliness. Cleanliness is a virtue in this country. We have modern plumbing, and we have enough soap and water. Use it! You may not like water, but you should use it for the sake of your own health and for the sake of others.

The next basic guide to health is making sure that you get enough rest and sleep. Eight hours of sleep each night is average, but the real test is how you feel. If you are truly rested in the morning and have sufficient energy to carry on the day's activities, your sleep pattern is providing all the rest you need.

The next guide to basic health is eating three square meals a day. If you are accustomed to three meals, do not change your eating pattern, but do pay special attention to breakfast. Nutritionists say that the first meal of the day is the most important. You need to make sure that it includes something from each of the four food groups.

The first food group is the milk group, which includes whole milk, skim milk, evaporated milk, instant milk, nonfat dry milk, and butter-milk. The second food group is the meat group: veal, lamb, pork, fish, eggs, dry beans, dry peas, and nuts. The third group is the vegetable and fruit group: spinach, carrots, broccoli, sweet potatoes, cabbage, turnip greens, kale, oranges, grapefruit, apricots, and so on. The fourth group is the bread and cereal group: whole grains, dark and rye bread, rice, noodles, and cornmeal.

The next thing that is important to good health is exercise. Regular exercise promotes good muscle tone and eases tensions that build up daily. A regular, brisk walk will do a great deal for your muscle tone, circulation, and general health.

Are You a Good Steward?

Smoking brings bondage to the drug called nicotine. It is a bondage to the flesh. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:16-19: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Paul said if any man defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. If I corrupt or destroy the temple of God, He will destroy me. My body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Using tobacco is not good stewardship of your body, your money, or your time on earth. First Peter 4:7-10 states: "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

God wants you to be a good steward of your body, your money, and your time. We have only so much time here on earth. We know that we all are going to die from something. I am not trying to preach that you will be so healthy that you will never get sick and die, but you should use the common sense that God has given you.

All over our country today, people are addicted to tobacco and drugs. I dealt with a man who enrolled himself in a drug rehabilitation center. Those programs do not seem to be very effective. The man put himself in that program for thirty-four days. While people were

in that program, they had to be away from their families and could not visit them. They were away from the cocaine and other drugs, but they were instructed to smoke cigarettes constantly. All of them were smoking.

Some time ago, I attended some Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. I will tell you, with all the cigarette smoke, it is difficult to sit in their meetings. All of them testify about whatever is your god is your god. They are not specific.

The medical encyclopedia tells us that caffeine in tea, coffee, and cola drinks is not harmful if consumed in moderate amounts. You just need to set a daily quota for yourself.

Smokeless Tobacco

Another deadly killer is smokeless tobacco. You may ask, "Isn't smokeless tobacco safer than cigarettes?" Doctors believe it is actually more addictive and more dangerous. The nicotine in smokeless tobacco is the same nicotine that is in cigarettes, and a can of snuff contains as much nicotine as sixty cigarettes. What is in smokeless tobacco? The tobacco companies put the ingredient *formaldehyde* in it, which is a preservative for dead bodies. Is using smokeless tobacco cool? Some people think that chewing tobacco is a cool thing to do. All it takes is a look in the mirror to see that using smokeless tobacco is dirty and disgusting. Stained teeth, rotting gums, and bad breath are very unattractive.

Some athletes believe that using smokeless tobacco will improve their game. Research studies on baseball players found no evidence that chewing tobacco helped them concentrate or play better, because using smokeless tobacco increases blood pressure and causes narrowing of the arteries. It can actually hurt an athlete's performance. Young person, you need to look at some of the pictures of what smokeless tobacco does. What smokeless

tobacco can do to your mouth and your teeth is not a pretty picture.

In the Book of Philippians, Chapter 1, the Apostle Paul said he wanted to live. You know that you want to live. All of us want to live. We love living. The Apostle Paul said in verses 21-24: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

Drinking strong drinks and getting drunk and smoking have been around for centuries. However, I cannot imagine Paul smoking camel hair or any such thing. Paul said it was far better for him to go and be with Christ: but for those to whom he was addressing, it was far better for him to remain for a while and preach the Gospel to them. That is what I want to do. I want to live as long as I can to preach the Gospel and bust up the devil's strongholds.

When I started attending those Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, I thought, "How can I get the Gospel to these people?" I want to help others find Christ and grow in Christ.

A New Heart and a New Spirit

Ezekiel 36:25-27 reads: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

I used to be bound by cigarettes. How did I overcome that habit? God gave me a new heart and a new Spirit; He put His Spirit in me. I remember when I got saved that I

had to overcome the habit of smoking, but thank the Lord, my heart was in serving God. I put my heart into going to church and serving the Lord. Certainly, it was a battle, especially after eating. When you put your heart into serving God, that is the key.

Proverbs 23:7 states, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." I thought in my heart that I could overcome the smoking habit and that I would not have to go back to it. I thought in my heart that I could be saved and live for God, and I have been doing it ever since.

Some time ago, a man said to me, "I want to get saved." In talking to him about getting saved, as soon as I mentioned cigarettes, the expression on his face changed and he said, "What? The Lord didn't say you had to give up cigarettes."

Romans 10:9-10 says: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." I believed that with all my heart, and God delivered me. He can deliver people from drugs and alcohol. Friend, He can deliver you from nicotine.

Jesus Christ is the Great Physician. He goes to where the real problem is. In Matthew 12:34-35 Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and said: "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

Some people are out telling the Christian community that you can commit suicide and still be saved. Friend, if you commit suicide, you are going to split hell wide open. What is the cigarette smoking Christian doing? He is slowly committing suicide. He might as well jump off a

building and make it quick. A slow death is a miserable death. It is an evil thing to kill yourself.

In Matthew 15:19-20 Christ, speaking to His disciples, said: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man." In verses 16-18 Jesus said: "Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man."

Jesus Christ did not come just to take away the indexes of sin. These are just the indexes of what is wrong with the heart: smoking, drinking, lying, stealing, and so on. Remember, Christ came to give the sinner a new heart and a new Spirit. When God changes the heart, you will receive a new Spirit. Then you will have the power and the strength to overcome these things; it is a powerful strength that is not in yourself. Often when a person stops drinking, he stops smoking; one thing leads to another.

The Gateway Drug

Marijuana is called a "gateway drug" because it often leads to the abuse of other drugs. Tobacco contains a highly addictive substance called nicotine. They put tobacco right in line with marijuana and cocaine. Cocaine is a highly addictive and destructive drug. May God help you, for the sake of the young people. Young teens are trying marijuana at a time when their bodies and brains are still developing. In the past decade the number of eighth graders who have used marijuana has doubled.

Today marijuana is more potent and its effect can be more intense. Even short-term use has been linked to memory loss and difficulty with

problem solving. If you smoke marijuana, are you hurting anyone else? The answer is that marijuana trafficking is a big and often violent business at home and abroad. Young person, if you were to get caught, it would really hurt your parents.

Some say that it cannot cause any real problems in the long term. Oh, yes, it can! If you smoke marijuana, you could do things that jeopardize your future, such as having sex or getting in trouble with the law. Young lady, you ought to keep your virginity. Messing around with marijuana will cause you to do things that you do not want to do. You do not want to become pregnant. You do not need a baby at twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen years of age. If you smoke marijuana, you could get into legal trouble. You could lose your job or your scholarship. You need to stay away from drugs and marijuana, young person.

You may say, "We have heard so much about drugs in the past." Parent, if you do not pay attention to these things, if you do not really stand up and fight against them, they might take hold of your children.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul states: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Paul said he kept under his body. Your worst enemy is yourself, the flesh that you look at in the mirror. Since the flesh is your worst enemy, you had better keep it under. Again, Paul said, "But I keep under my body, and I bring it into subjection: lest that by any means,

when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." You cannot let your body do anything it wants to. Your body comes from the earth, and all it wants to do is get out in the world and play around with the things of the earth, but your soul is crying out to God. Therefore, you must bring your body into subjection. People expect God to bring the body into subjection, but God is telling them to do it.

Purify Yourself

If you profess to be a Christian and you are bound with the cigarette habit, God wants to help you. John wrote in 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

If you have the hope of the Gospel in you, what must you do? You must purify yourself, even as He is pure. Notice that the Scripture does not say that God will do it. You must do it. Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Again, notice that the Scripture does not say that God would do it. He said, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning; that's the reason I have a bad attitude"? Friend, there is no wrong or right side of the bed. You got up letting the devil use you. You need to cleanse yourself from that. You must cleanse yourself from jealousy. You must cleanse yourself from bad

attitudes and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Jesus said in John 8:34, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Sinner friend, when you commit sin, you are the servant of sin. Sin has you bound. A little piece of paper with tobacco rolled inside has many people bound. People will go a long way to get cigarettes.

Jesus said one who commits sin is the servant of sin. You may think that you are doing it on your own, but you are the servant of sin. Sin says "Do it," and you do it. The devil has a way to stir up your emotions and cause you to want to do the wrong thing, to use your five senses the wrong way.

The Sin of Omission

Young person, do not smoke. You ought to stay away from tobacco usage. You do not need it, and you do not want to get addicted to it. You do not want your fingers stained brown or your teeth to be stained yellow from tobacco. Young man, you might want to meet a nice, pretty girl sometime, and you want to have a bright, handsome smile. You do not want her to say, "Ugh, his teeth are so yellow!"

If you are a cigarette smoker, God can deliver you from your sin and from all your bad habits. If you profess to be a Christian, smoking hurts your testimony. There used to be a time when if a person said he was a Christian, he did not smoke. Even now, I thank God that some sinners know that smoking is wrong. If you were to go out and testify to them and tell them about the love of Jesus Christ and how God is saving souls at your church, and then if you were to reach for a cigarette and light it, they would say, "I'm not going there! That is not right." I thank God for that moral fiber that He puts in people.

Perhaps you are a smoker and you try to witness to people at work and then wonder why they do not respect you. Many people still have

it in their minds that a Christian should not smoke or curse. A Christian is different; a Christian is clean. I thank God that many people still realize that in America.

When you are a genuine Christian, people have respect for you. They will say, "That person is a real Christian." At work every September 11 the management gathers everyone together and says, "Calvin, you lead the prayer." Do you know that nowadays some people do not want to hear you mention the name of Jesus? I make sure that when I get through with that prayer, I say, "In the name of Jesus." I love the name of Jesus. There is power in that name! I am glad that I am living in such a way that oth-

ers can see Christ in my life.

James 4:17 reads, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." I have already talked about the sin of commission. You read the Scripture that says he who commits sin is the servant of sin. Now, how can you omit all this knowledge of what the Bible teaches, omit common sense, and go against what the Surgeon General, the chief medical officer of the United States, has declared? How can you omit all of that? How can you omit the Lord's supper and feet washing when the Bible plainly teaches these ordinances? How can you not do these things? If you omit them, you are committing the sin of omission. How can you omit the

thought that God wants your soul to prosper and that He wants you to be in health, to the best of your ability?

Friend, are you bound with the drug of nicotine or any other drug? God has delivered many people from cigarette smoking. They did not have to go through a ten-step program or a twelve-step program. God delivered them when He touched their hearts, and now they walk with God in their hearts. If you are bound by sinful habits of any kind, won't you let God deliver you?

(Cassette C-5147E)

Upcoming Meetings

DETROIT, MI
Nov. 22-26

REVIVAL: Bible Standard Church of God, 14601 Gratiot Ave., Detroit, MI 48205
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, Ohio 43056
Service times: 7:00 p.m. nightly
For further information contact: Pastor Samuel Oree, 18822 Buffalo St, Detroit, MI 48214
Telephone: (313) 892-3483 or (313) 891-5210

NEWARK, OH
Dec. 27-30

CAMP MEETING: The Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055
The first service begins Monday evening. Daily service times: 10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
For lodging reservation, please call Bro. & Sis. Bush at (740) 345-1213.
For further information contact: Pastor Roger Decker, 83 Decrow Avenue, Newark, OH 43055
Telephone: (740) 344-2543

SUMMERSVILLE, WV
Dec. 31-Jan. 2

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Bro. Calvin Foster, Kensett, Arkansas
Service times: Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 6:00 p.m., and Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders
Telephone: (304) 872-4047