

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

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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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Guest Editorial

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.

2 Corinthians 3:2

Living a Good Example

This world is full of spiritual darkness. Satan, who is the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), has blinded the minds of men and women today. In many instances they do not know right from wrong. Therefore, souls grope in a lost condition, not knowing nor caring how to live. They are in great need of someone to shine the light of the glorious Gospel across their pathway and to show them the way of salvation and deliverance from the bondage of sin. We are in the world, but we are not of it. Christ has put us here to be a light and an example of the reality found in salvation. Honest hearts who see the light will come to Christ. In John 12:32 Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [through our lives], will draw all men unto me."

It would be well for each one who professes Christianity to examine oneself to see if he or she is living a life that is pleasing before God. It is easy to profess to be a Christian, yet fail to truly live the way a Christian should. The Lord wants our light to shine. Why? So all can see Him through the life

we live. We are to be witnesses to those around us of God's goodness, grace, and power. Christ dwelling on the inside radiates out and makes the difference in the Christian's life. The things we do and the way we conduct our lives will have a great effect on those around us. Men cannot see our hearts, but they can see the deeds of our lives. If one's heart is truly right with God, His goodness will show forth on the outside. We may be the only Bibles some people will ever see or read.

The Christian is to be an example in word (or talk). The words we speak ought to reflect godly character. Too often ones get caught up in carelessness of speech, failing to be on guard as they should. Without realizing it ones can become involved in conversation unbecoming to the Christian. Words influence others; therefore, it is necessary for our speech to reflect a Christlike example. Slang words must be eliminated from the Christian's vocabulary, for these words are only substitutes for words that actually take God's name or Christ's name

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SUBMISSION



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Age of Accountability

The word *submit* means "to yield to the will or the authority of; to become resigned." *Submission* is "the act of giving in; the condition of being compliant; surrendering of person and power to the control of another." I believe that submission is one of the biggest problems people have in serving God. The Bible speaks much about submission in both the Old and the New Testaments.

Submission starts as soon as children are born. God has given children parents to care for them, to protect them, and to help them grow up to be submissive. We learn at a very young age the necessity of submission. Little children have to be brought into submission, and God's children have to be brought into submission. The only thing children know when they come into the

world is the way of the flesh. Little babies are born without sin. They know neither right nor wrong, so they have to be taught the difference.

When a child reaches the age of accountability, if that child has been trained properly, then God can bring him or her to conviction of sin. Some children come to the age of accountability quicker than others. The more a child is taught the things of God, the quicker God can speak to his or her heart, and the quicker that child can be brought to salvation.

You can read of the birth of Samuel in the Book of 1 Samuel. The Bible lets us know that Samuel's mother, Hannah, was barren. Her husband, Elkanah, had two wives, Peninnah and Hannah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren. Elkanah loved Hannah so much that when it came to giving an in-

heritance, he gave her a double portion to show his love to her. Peninnah was a troublemaker, and because Hannah was barren, she vexed her and made her fret because she had no children.

First Samuel 1:7 says, "And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat." Elkanah took his whole family and went up to Shiloh to the annual festival. Verse 4 lets us know that Peninnah had sons and daughters to accompany her, but Hannah had none. We read in verse 7 that Hannah wept, and she did not eat because she was greatly distressed; so she went to pray. To be barren was a reproach to Hannah, as it was to all Jewish women. Each Jewish woman hoped that the Messiah would come through her lineage.

When Hannah prayed, she made

a vow. Verses 9-11 state: "So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, [She got specific; she did not ask for a girl child. She knew the Messiah was not going to be a female, but He was to be a man child.] then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head."

In so many words, Hannah prayed, "If You bless me with a man child, I will give him to the Lord all of the days of his life." God answered her prayer, and she kept her vow. That is very unusual today; nevertheless, it came to pass in the days of Hannah.

We read in 1 Samuel 1:27-28, after Samuel had been born, Hannah said: "For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there."

Learning to Hear the Voice of God

I want you to read a little about Samuel. First Samuel 3:1-10 reads: "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision [one reason was, there was corruption in the priesthood]. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered,

Here am I.

"And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

"And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

All kinds of corruption was going on at the tabernacle. The children of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were committing adultery right at the door of the tabernacle. Young Samuel was in a place where he was learning to recognize the voice of God. Oh, there is a great lesson in this for mothers and fathers who will give earnest heed to this. Samuel was but a lad, the Scripture says. He did not know the Word of the Lord yet, and he did not recognize God's voice. However, he was put in a place where he could hear His voice. Samuel did not recognize the voice of God. He was doing what his mother had instructed him to do, to minister to the Lord in the temple. He was being raised in the temple of the Lord. It is good to have your children in the prayer services, though they may not recognize what is going on. It is good to have your children in the worship services around the Spirit of God.

Eli instructed young Samuel and told him how to recognize the voice of God. Mothers can do the same

thing yet today. What an opportunity mothers and fathers around the Church of God have today, raising their children in spiritual worship! When they are little and can hardly sit on the seat without falling off, they should be in spiritual worship services so they can hear the songs of Zion, listen to people praise God, and hear the preaching of God's Word, though they do not understand it. It will become something common to their ears.

A Child's First Great Duty

Samuel was actually in the temple ministering to the Lord. There is a great need for children to be taught to submit to their parents, and then they will be better equipped to submit to the Lord. Young Samuel was being raised in the tabernacle, working with the priest, Eli, doing whatever Eli instructed him to do. It was there in the tabernacle that God first spoke to young Samuel.

Parent, you need to raise your children in spiritual worship so that God can speak to them. That is where He can let them know His will. There is a great opportunity and a great need for mothers and fathers to raise their children in spiritual worship, and it is needful for mothers and fathers to bring the children into submission so that God can speak to their little hearts.

That goes right back to having family worship and having a spiritual atmosphere in the home. God can work with your children at a young age right in the home. He can work through afflictions, childhood diseases, and even thunderstorms. Children get scared and want you to pray with them. The home is where mothers and fathers can instruct their children in the things of God at a young age. Children can be taught to submit and to honor their mothers and fathers.

The Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." He used the word *children*, and it

usually signifies those who are quite young. However, it is used here to denote those who are not of age and who are under the care and the government of their parents. Many children think they are grown up at ages fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen, but they are yet children. They still need a mother and a father.

The Bible says, "Children, obey your parents." This is the first great duty that God has enjoined on children. Children, this means that you are to do what your parents command you to do; it is your duty. Paul impressed that upon the minds of all ages. It is of *vast* importance that children learn and are taught to obey their parents. The order of the family depends on it. No family can be harmonious and successful when there is insubordination in the household. When one child misbehaves, disobeys, and is insubordinate, it throws the whole family out of harmony. It also puts mothers and fathers at their wits end in knowing how to deal with the problem.

The welfare of a child depends on his or her obedience. It is of highest importance that a child is taught obedience to law at an early age: the law of the home, the law of God, and the law of the land. One can be neither prosperous nor happy if he or she is disobedient. Children are not competent to reason concerning what is right. They are not qualified to direct themselves. They must be subject to the will of another person. A parent is qualified by age and by experience to direct and guide a child.

Family Government

The family government, or the law of the home, is designed to be an imitation of the government of God. The government of God is what a perfect family government should be. To accustom a child to be obedient to a parent is designed to be one method of leading him to be obedient to God. A child who is disobedient to parents will be dis-

obedient to God. A child who is obedient to a father and mother will most likely become a Christian, an heir of salvation. A disobedient child is not virtuous, prosperous, or happy. Continual disobedience will eventually ruin a child.

If you will study statistics of crime and most cases of crime that lead to time in a penitentiary or to execution, you will find that it starts with disobedience to parents. Disobedience to authority in the home will cause one to be disobedient to the authority of the land.

Again, Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Parents do not have a right to require a child to steal, lie, cheat, or do anything else that is wrong. The Scripture says to "obey your parents *in the Lord*." Parents have no right to forbid a child to pray, read the Bible, worship God, or make a profession of salvation, for this is right. It is commanded by God as a duty. It is right because children owe a debt of gratitude to their parents for what they have done for them. Also, it is right, because it is good for the children and for the structure of the family.

Have you ever noticed that children always think that the parents are doing something against them? They do not think about what the parents are doing for them. Learning to submit at an early age is needful. If there is an unwillingness to submit as a little child, it will be carried through to the teen years and into adulthood. Many problems the church has within the ranks of teenagers and young adults stem from childhood disobedience in the home: not submitting and not being required to submit in the home. Many times mothers and fathers do their best and still wind up with a troubled child.

The Wife's Duty

Oftentimes being insubordinate is carried into marriage. If a daughter will not submit in the home, then she will not submit to her husband,

and there will be trouble in the marriage. Ephesians 5:22 instructs, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Colossians 3:18 reads, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."

The wife's duty of submitting to her husband is commanded in the Scriptures. It is in the Old Testament as well as the New. When God pronounced judgment on what was to come to pass concerning Adam and Eve after the fall, we read in Genesis 3:16, "Unto the woman he [God] said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

First Peter 3:1 tells us, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives." You may say, "My husband is not saved." Just because the husband is unsaved is not a sign that you should not submit to him, as is fit in the Lord.

Titus 2:5 reads, "To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." A woman who will not submit to her husband blasphemes the Word of God. Women are to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home. She cannot be a keeper at home if she is never home. She is not to be a keeper of anyone else's home, a keeper of the telephone lines, or a keeper of every social activity that goes on in the neighborhood. There are some things that men are not good at. One is, being a keeper at home. On the other hand, there are some things that women are not good at, and that is doing a man's job. According to the Word of God, sisters are to be keepers *at* home, not keepers of the home.

Many young married couples want to start out with a three-or-four-bedroom home and nice furniture in every room. You might have to start out on the lower level.

If you will put God first and obey His Word, God will bless.

Divine Order in the Home

Daughters must be taught to submit in the home. They should not be allowed to run all over the countryside with whomever they choose to keep company. Young men have a responsibility to their mothers and fathers. Their mothers and fathers need to know where they are, whom they are with, and what they are doing. Young person, you owe that to your mother and father. The Bible says to honor your mother and father, for this is right. That is old-fashioned Bible teaching.

You may ask, "When young people get old enough, should they have to report to their parents?" Yes, and if they do not, they are out of line. I am talking about submission. Children have to be brought into submission. Mothers and fathers must teach their children to submit.

Parent, you should demand that your children tell you where they are. It is your parental right to say, "I want to know where you are and what time you will be leaving. I also want you to be home by a certain time tonight, not just any hour you choose to come home. I still put the roof over your head, and I still put the food on the table. I am still the parent. When you get married, then you become a family of your own; but until then, you are my responsibility, and you are to submit to what I say."

I would rather be looked upon as being too strict when it comes to standing up for the Word of God than to be a liberal who could care less about where his children are. I always wanted to know where my children were and who they were with. I did not want them to go out and do the wrong things. Mother, father, that is your right as a parent. Now, if they choose to go astray after they get married, then that is on them. They were not taught that way, but if they want to do that, then that becomes their own respon-

sibility. If they want to raise their children differently, that is up to them.

Young person, is it too much of a chore to pick up a telephone and call your mother and father? That is not asking too much of a child. Well, I will guarantee you, you are quick to pick up that telephone if you get into trouble. If you get in an automobile accident, who is the first one you call? Maybe if you had picked it up a little earlier, you would not have gotten in an accident.

Although Christianity elevated the woman and made her equal with the man when it came to salvation, it did not destroy all subordination and authority of the man. Christianity did not throw out submission. The man is better qualified to rule than the woman. Now, that may be hard for you to accept in this day and age, especially by those of the feminist movement; nevertheless, it is true. A man is better at flying a jet plane than a woman is. He is better at carrying an M-1 rifle than a woman is. Also, he is stronger when it comes to fighting than the woman is.

Feminine Qualities

In some things, the woman is far superior. She is superior in grace, beauty, tenderness, and gentleness. She has more patience with children. She can put up with their squalling and hollering and screaming better than a man can. God made her that way. The woman is far lovelier than the man is. That is the reason men seek them, because they are so pretty. However, those qualities are not the qualities adapted for government. In every family there should be a head, someone who is looked upon as the counselor and the ruler, someone to whom all should be subordinate. God has given that prerogative to the man. No family can prosper where that arrangement is violated. The man is the head in domestic arrangements. The husband is regarded as the head of the family.

There is only one place where the wife's submission to the husband comes to an end, and that is when it comes to her obedience to the Lord. The husband has no right to command the wife to be dishonest, to overstep her conscience, to disobey God, or to forbid her to go to the house of God. He has no right to forbid her to pray, read the Bible, or worship her Creator. Should he do so, he is out of line and has overstepped the rights that God gave him as the head of the home. She is to be obedient to God in those cases. She is duty bound to obey God at all times.

It is difficult for a young lady to submit to her husband if she was not submissive in the home. Young sister, you should know how to clean a house, how to put a good meal on the table, how to iron clothes, and how to make beds. Putting a meal on the table is more than just opening several cans and warming them up. You should know how to fix a meal from scratch.

God is more interested in that than He is in young sisters trying to attend college and build careers. A sister does not need college to be a housewife, but she needs good training in the home. Someone may ask, "Well, what if something should happen to my husband?" God will take care of you when you have done that which is right.

"Obey Them That Have the Rule Over You"

It is difficult for a young man to submit to his superiors if he was not made to submit in the home. The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:13, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme." Peter was talking about submitting to the laws of the land. Christians, especially, ought to submit. The Lord has ordained that there be rulers who enforce the law. That is the reason there should be capital punishment. The law is for the lawless.

Hebrews 13:17 reads, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." The Bible commands you to obey them that have the rule over you and to submit yourself. Is your way worth fussing over? One is not fit to pastor who cannot be pastored. He is not fit to teach who cannot be taught. He is not fit to lead who cannot be led.

James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

You need to stay humble before the Lord, submit to His chastisement, His correction, His rebuke, and His voice, just as young Samuel did in the temple when he said, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." If you will submit, then you will have grace to resist the devil. Too many times the lack of submission stems from not being brought into submission in the home. If children were allowed to do their own thing from a child up, then it is not altogether their fault. They are just doing what they were able to do in the home, and so they go on not being submissive. If they do not like something,

they just do not do it rather than to submit. It affects them in their married life, and it affects them in their choices in life. Dear one, God wants to help you.

You need to submit to God and resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Remember, you cannot resist the devil in your own strength. You must submit yourself to God, and then you will be able to resist the devil. If you have a need, won't you seek the Lord?

(Cassette C-4817E)

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Matthew 16:26

I want to ask you a question: What is a man profited in this world if he knows all about botany and does not have in his life the beauty of Jesus, the Rose of Sharon? What is a man profited if he can look through a microscopic lens and talk to you about astronomy if he does not know Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star, and Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings? What is a man profited if he knows all about the ages of the rocks and does not know the Rock of Ages?

***What will it profit, when life is o'er,
Though gathering riches and fame,
If gaining the world I lose my own soul,
And in Heav'n unknown is my name?***



Revelation 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

Coming Out of This Great Tribulation

Brother Esau Brooks

This Time of Tribulation

We would be lost without the Word of God. With all that man has achieved, it is nothing compared to that which the Lord has done and is doing and will continue to do for His people. To be a child of God is to be a child of the King. Praise the Lord! I do not believe that people appreciate the great honor and the privilege as they should in being the children of God.

We are in great tribulation now, but how many will come out of it with victory in their souls? Many have already lost out through this

time of tribulation. The sectarian world would have us to believe that this tribulation period will occur sometime in the future. On the contrary, God would have us to realize that we are in the midst of great tribulation now. Things are happening today that have never happened in the past. Some people who once stood for Truth have joined sectarian denominations, going after mystery Babylon. I have never been able to figure out how those who have stood and proclaimed these wonderful Truths so many times could turn and drop them and then go off and sit in Babylonian pews. It is a

mystery! Once a person has tasted of the Lord and of the glorious Church of God, how could that individual ever go back to Babylon? The way it seems to me, if one can go back there, that person's heart never really left there. He or she was a Babylonian even while sitting in a Church of God pew.

In verse 13 of our Scripture lesson we read, "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" John answered him in verse 14 saying, "Sir, thou knowest." In other words, he was saying, "I don't

know. I've been looking at them, but sir, you know."

The elder said to John, "These are they which came out of great tribulation. . . ." What makes these words so significant? First, it is the time and the location where they are found. As we endeavor to pinpoint the location, notice it is found between the opening of the sixth and the seventh seals. The sixth seal was opened in Chapter 6, and the seventh seal was opened in Chapter 8. An intermission took place, and it was sandwiched right between these two with tremendous developments.

It was a grand time when the sixth seal was opened. Backing up, you can read in Revelation 6:12, ". . . when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; [Glory be to God!] and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood."

John continued in verses 15-16: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." Today some people try to literalize those verses of Scripture, but by no means can they justifiably do so; it defies literalization. It is a spiritual message and a spiritual happening and development that was described.

The Absence of the Wind

Right in the midst of all that accomplishment, John said in Revelation 7:1, "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree." Notice the difference in wording in this verse: "the four winds of the

earth" and "the wind." These four angels who were holding "the four winds of the earth" (powers in religious circles) were there so that "the wind" (the Holy Spirit) would not blow "on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree."

In this verse we have a picture presented to us of four angels. Notice where they are located: they are standing on the four corners of the earth. There are only four main points on a compass: north, south, east, and west, and they cover the globe. No matter what part of the world you may travel, that is about all a compass reads. Now, it may give you an in-between position such as northwest or southwest, and so on, but there are only four main points.

The Lord is trying to tell us something. It is not so much what you think or what I think, but it is what God is trying to get across to us. Those angels are covering the entire sphere of religious activities. After all, that is what the Book of Revelation is for, to show the church what is awaiting her down here. The Church of God is more than having a name over the door and more than singing, "O Church of God, I love thy courts, thou mother of the free." The Church of God is God's headquarters on the earth. If you ever get saved and make it to Heaven, it will have to be through the work of the Spirit of God and the Word of God. When one gets saved, God places that person in the body of Christ, the Church of God. Do not ask which one, because there is only one. There may be dozens of them where you live, but from God's point of view, there is only one.

There is no need for three or four Church of God congregations in one city. That would be two or three too many. You may say, "Oh, you don't understand." I do not have to understand from *your* point of view. The same God you have wherever you are living is the same God that we have. The same Truth that He reveals to me, He will reveal

to all who truly desire it. That is one thing that fascinated me in the early sixties. When I came to the campground at God's Acres and heard others preach the Gospel, I marveled. I thought, "How could they be preaching the same thing here that I am preaching in Honduras?" I knew little about them, and they knew less about me. Therefore, we are dealing with a global God. Thank God, He has the whole world in His hands. He is a great, big wonderful God!

What causes me to marvel is that He is so big that He rules this mighty universe, yet small enough to live within my heart. You can have Him too, friend, if you will open up more of your life to Him. In many regards, Jesus is still in the "stable" of some people's lives. Today nearly everyone is claiming to have Jesus and God, but you cannot see Him reigning in their lives. He is still in the "stable." Why? Because there is no room for Him in their lives.

When it comes to what controls many people's lives, Christ is unheard of. They are still doing whatever they want, taking whatever job they want, and marrying whomever they want. What does He have to do with it? He has everything to do with it! It is no wonder that so many marriages are ending in divorce. To build a home without God, you might as well go to the ocean and try to count the grains of sand on the beaches. It would be impossible.

I am endeavoring to call your attention to the fact that the cause of all that is going on today is, first, the absence of the operation of the wind, or the Holy Ghost. Second, we must realize the effect of the four angels "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth."

The Work of the Four Winds

Paganism, Roman Catholicism, and denominationalism have much of the religious world wrapped up.

What is crippling the operation of God through the Spirit of God are the influences that sectism, denominationalism, Roman Catholicism, and paganism are holding over men's minds. Again, Revelation 7:1 states, ". . . I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind. . . ." Once again, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that he said the *wind* not winds. There is only one wind when it comes to God. Which one is that? The same one Jesus was talking about in John 3:8 when He said, "The wind [singular] bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell when it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This is only through our Redeemer; He is the highest authority when it comes to religion.

The work of these four influences, or powers, in religious circles, is to hamper the operation of God's divine Spirit. Inasmuch as we all would like to believe that every time a man or a woman says, "The Lord led me to where I am now," we have to wonder, because some are walking around claiming the name Church of God, but they are as foreign to the Church of God as chalk is to cheese. They neither regard nor practice the Word of God.

The Book of Revelation was given as a message to teach God's people how to defend and protect themselves against the wicked influences of old Babylon. These influences have power on the earth (or mankind), on the sea (the masses), and on the tree (the professed religious world). Where does all the trouble lie? It is not in the barroom or where the drug pushers hang out. It is where religion is being practiced and believed. Everyone has a church now. I once overheard a conversation where even children were talking about building their own church. Someone might have said it jokingly, but it is something to consider. There is so much of that going on.

Too many times we hear of those who feel they cannot make it or they do not like the pastor, so they go down half a block or so and set up another church. That is not right. God is not in those moves at all! Those moves are not influenced by the Spirit of God. God said when it comes to one another, we must be forbearing. Ephesians 4:1-2 says: "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

Peter asked the Lord in Matthew 18:21, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Jesus said to him in verse 22, "Until seventy times seven." If you were to try it out, you would find just what forbearance takes. Forbearance does not mean that you must work a lifetime to keep trying, all the while meeting with rebuffs and being ignored. No, there is a limit. Titus 3:10 states, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject."

You may ask, "Do you believe in cutting people off?" You do not cut off people; you cut off what they are doing. If they want to flirt with Babylon and bring in unholy influences, you must cut off what they are doing. If they will not let go of what they are doing, then they will have to go. We have to follow God.

Mark 16:17 says, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils. . . ." I tell the people in Honduras, "If you have a devil, my commission from God is to cast out that devil. If you will not let the devil go, I am going to have to cast you out." That is just the way it is.

Try Every Spirit

Verse 2 of our Scripture text says, "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels,

to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea." These angels, as the four mentioned in verse 1, were given to hurt.

Whenever people tie things up to where God's Spirit cannot work, they are hurting that congregation. That is the reason it is better for some people to leave, because they have tied things up for so long. If they were to remain, it would continue to be tied up. It is best to let them go down the road, and then God will have more liberty to work among His people.

Pastors know that many times when they get tied up in bureaucracy, they can hardly go through with God's program. For example, the board might have to decide on a certain issue. The trustees have to say whether or not they give the green light. If any two on the board are opposed to God and His way, they will hold up the work. No matter how right the move is, if any two are opposed, the church will not make any progress.

You may ask, "What does that have to do with the tribulation?" That is what is bringing on the tribulation. When you come up against such things, you are going to have to take a stand for God, and that will be like opening a den of lions. Opinions and discussions on every corner may arise. Someone may say of the pastor, "I don't think he treated that brother right. I wouldn't have done that." Should the people back home say, "You know, Brother Brooks, if I were you, I wouldn't do that," I say, "You are not me, so that settles it. You are you, and I am me."

Church of God, it is wrong for you to counsel with anyone else other than your pastor, unless your pastor gives the green light. For example, if I belong to a certain congregation, I have no business getting on the telephone and talking about happenings in my congregation with someone over the fence, so to speak. In most cases, they do not discuss with you what is happening on their side of the fence, so why should you discuss those things

with them? You should discuss matters with your pastor. You may say, "Well, he and I don't get along." If that is so, you need to find out why, because you may find out that you are the one who is wrong. "Well," you say, "I don't think he would do right. He doesn't like me." How did you come to such a conclusion?

Again, verse 2 of our Scripture text reads, "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: [That is the Spirit of God. How do we know? Ephesians 1:13 says, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.' That is what seals us.] and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea."

Many things are happening today to damage our chances of making Heaven our home. Many people's spiritual future has been ruined because they have lent their ears to those who are disgruntled and to every bit of gossip that flies around. It is high time for this to stop if people are going to come out of this tribulation as well as they went into it. Many people are coming out, but their spirits are as foreign to the Church of God as they can be.

You can read in the Revelation of how God dictated seven letters to seven different congregations to be delivered to those seven angels, or pastors. You could not do that today. There would be those who would question your authority to do so. Someone may ask, "How am I going to tell the difference?" You must get the Spirit of God so that you can try every spirit; then you will know Truth from error.

Will You Be an Overcomer?

Revelation 7:3 reads, "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the

servants of our God in their foreheads." The things that are happening today around the church are mainly sent to establish us in the Church of God. You may say, "I'm confused by all of this." If you are getting confused, it is because you are listening to some other spirit.

When I held a revival in Chicago many years ago, I noticed that there were several different denominations on that one block: there were the Church of God in Christ, the Church of Christ, the Church of the Brethren, and the Nazarene Church. The latter part of Matthew 2:23 states, "He shall be called a Nazarene," so some people built the Nazarene Church. Second Corinthians 5:19 says that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," so other people began the Church of God in Christ, and so on. I looked at that, and I marveled because they all were almost next door, yet they had no fellowship with one another at all.

To bring it a little closer to home, there are many so-called Church of God congregations today, but they would not think of having fellowship with God's people again. First John 2:19 says, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." It is time to look into these things. Our concern should be to come out of this tribulation right.

Four facts are brought out in our Scripture text. First, there is a tribulation. Verse 14 tells us that "These are they which came out of great tribulation." Second, there are going to be those who will make it through this tribulation with victory. I may not be able to call your name as being among those who will come through it, but there will be those who make it. They will not be dazzled by the "cunning craftiness [of men] whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14).

Third, what would be the way of coming out of this tribulation?

They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. We must learn, sooner or later, that there are some things that we cannot pray about and get God to come down and be our errand boy to do the job for us. We are going to have to do it ourselves. *They* washed their robes. This is a "washing" that you have to do for yourself. For instance, if you know that keeping company with a certain individual is going to hurt your spirituality, then you should not keep company with that person. How else are you going to keep your robe white? We read in Jude 12 that these are "spots in our feasts of charity." You can make a difference with some people and pull them out of the fire. However, when you see that you cannot pull them out and that they are going to pull you in, you should let them go. This is not radicalism; it is Truth.

Last, but not least, those who come out of the tribulation are going to be identifiable. For a long time, I wrestled over the question of what is going to become of the church with all that is going on today. I came to realize that she is going to make it. There will always be *the* Church of God, not merely *a* Church of God, and she is going to be identifiable as "these are they which came out of great tribulation." How are you going to know them? They "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." We read in Revelation 3:5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment." We might wear all kinds of colored clothes, but when it comes to the church, only white robes are worn, spiritually speaking. May God bless you!

(Cassette C-5400)

Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last.

The Art of Standing Still

Had Israel not stood still at the Red Sea as commanded by God, they would not have seen His salvation. We need to learn to stand still to get God's guidance.



Psalm 46:10 admonishes, "Be still, and know that I am God." To stand still and trust God is often the most difficult thing a Christian is called upon to do. Standing still is not a substitute for progress. Rather, it is a prerequisite of progress. We will not make progress in the Christian life unless we press forward, but unless we first learn to stand still, to listen and trust and obey, we will be without direction when we do press ahead.

Psalm 46 exalts God as the refuge and strength of His children. It acclaims Him as omnipotent, able to cast mountains into the sea and remove even the earth. He can destroy the weapons of war and make its carnage to cease. After the psalmist acclaimed the power and glory of God and declared His willingness to help His people, he told them to "be still" and know who God is.

It is important that we be stirred into activity. Yet there are times when we must be still and listen to God, be still and learn of Him, be still and let Him work. He can solve our problems, ease our frustrations, quiet our fears, and make a way where there is no way.

Abraham Listened and Obeyed

Abraham became still and listened to God. When he did, God said to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of" (Genesis 22:2).

Abraham must have been amazed and stunned at the instructions that came to him, but he neither argued with God nor offered excuse. God may sometimes speak things to us that we do not like to hear. He may appoint a trying task. But God never uses anyone in a large way until He has fully tested and tried that person.

It was in the furnace of trial that Abraham proved his worth. He showed us how to be still, to stay quiet under great pressure. When God spoke, he listened, trusted, and obeyed. He mastered the art of standing still, not through inaction but by steadfast obedience to the revealed will of God. He proved that his love for God knew no bounds. And then God blessed him. The ram, which God provided to offer instead of Isaac, shows that God

makes a way for those who listen to His voice and do His bidding.

"Stand . . . and See the Salvation of the Lord"

"Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" was the command given Israel when they faced the greatest peril of their lives. They had fled the bondage of Egypt, and it looked for a time as if they might make a clear getaway. But God, who was directing their flight, turned their course and led them over against the Red Sea.

Some may ask, "Didn't God know the armies of Egypt were in close pursuit?" Yes, He knew, and that, I think, is why He led the Israelites as He did. God works in many ways His wonders to perform. The Red Sea, which threatened to be their destruction, proved to be their salvation.

Get the picture. Before the Israelites is the sea, and pressing from behind is the host of Pharaoh's army. It is an hour of great distress. Had Israel disobeyed God and fled, every man seeking his own welfare, all would have been chaos and disaster. But the multitude stood still, and God opened a way where

there was no way. They marched through the Red Sea on dry ground, and the pursuing Egyptians were drowned.

"Be Still, and Know"

Notice that the order to go forward followed the first and more important order, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" or as Psalm 46:10 puts it, "Be still, and know that I am God." The second order, "Go forward," could not have been given had the first order, "Stand still," been disobeyed.

Had Israel jumped the gun on God that day, they would not have seen His salvation. But they stood still in the face of what seemed certain, terrible loss. They stood, they listened, they trusted, they obeyed, and therefore, they saw God's salvation.

They gave Moses, the man of God, a chance to stretch forth his rod. They waited while God rolled back the Red Sea, and then they were told to go forward.

Memorials of the Provision of God

The crossing of the Jordan River forty years later differed from this

incident in that the priests were told to enter the stream. The river did not part until the soles of their feet touched the water. There was a standing still in this victory also, for when the priests reached midstream, they stood firm until all Israel had crossed over the Jordan.

You may remember that twelve men were chosen, one from each of the tribes of Israel, to take from the midst of Jordan from the place where the priests stood firm, twelve stones and carry them to Canaan's shore to be set up as a memorial of the miraculous crossing.

So it is today. From the place where we stood firm under pressure, from these midstream experiences, we gather the things which mark our Christian progress and keep them before us as memorials of the wonderful provision of God in times of stress.

Getting Ahead of God

It was Solomon who wrote, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Good ventures sometimes boomerang because they are untimely. We all need to learn to stand still, stand steadfast in our God-given tasks, to

get God's guidance.

A besetting fault among Christians in this restless age is the tendency to get ahead of God. We are impatient. We cannot wait. Things have to go. We feel we must do something, and often we do the wrong thing.

We loathe guard duty, being a sentry, walking a beat back and forth, getting nowhere. So we take the initiative. We force the issue. We hope God is leading because we are on the march; we are doing something.

All such marchings are ventures in tragedy. It makes no difference how imperative a course of action seems to be, unless a beckoning Christ stands at the end of the road we take, we will lose our way.

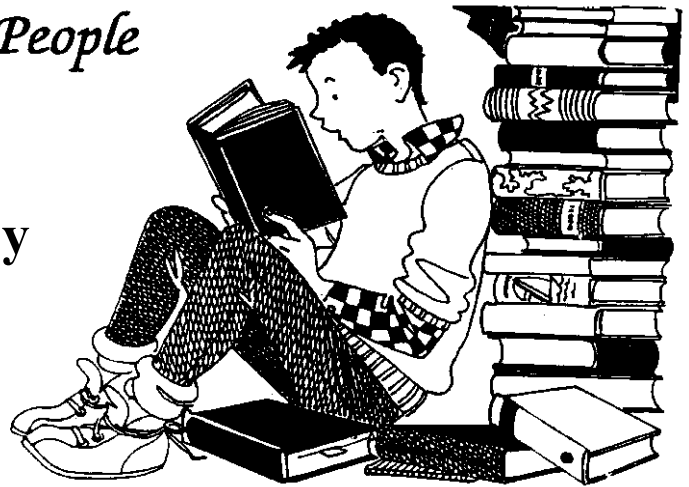
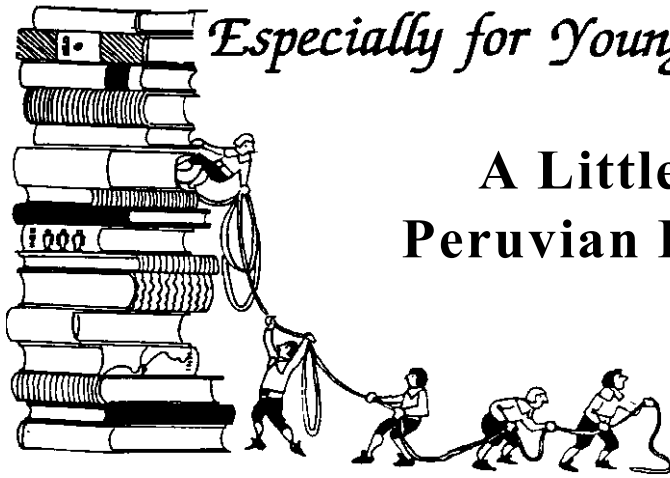
On the other hand, it makes no difference how suicidal a course may seem, what loss and sacrifice it may hold forth, when the voice of God says distinctly, "This is the way; walk ye in it," we dare not turn aside. "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). "Be still, and know that I am God."

Selected

**Christ is our Peace; the sins of YESTERDAY
By His most precious blood are washed away.
Christ is our Life; the trials of TODAY
He bears for us who walked life's toilsome way.
Christ is our Hope; the FUTURE of all
unknown
Is in His care who watches from the throne.**

Especially for Young People

A Little Peruvian Boy



Lener was a little Peruvian boy, whose father died when he was about five years old. His mother was a devout Catholic and tried to teach her boys to do what was right, doing her best to fill the place of both mother and father.

Lener was not allowed to run in the streets with other boys, and he had to be diligent in his studies. He also had to help his mother at home. Then, when he was old enough to do odd jobs to help make a living, this, too, was necessary. Lener learned to work and take responsibility.

Regardless of the sacrifice or hard work, his mother was determined that her three boys would have a good education, so he finished school and started studying at the university.

Sad to say, Lener had already been influenced by friends who did not believe in God, and at the university he found many others with the same ideas. He was a good student, he made friends, and he was popular.

With his outgoing personality, he became a leader and, after a time, became involved in anti-Christian activities.

In the university there were Christians who had meetings, to try to win their friends and classmates to the Lord, but as soon as Lener saw or heard them, he would go and disturb their meetings in any way he could.

Eventually, he got so bold that he would go close to where they were having their meetings and shout to everyone that it was all foolishness and that they had to fight against these Evangelicals and to not believe anything they said.

He would shout, with wild gestures, and draw everyone to himself, leaving the Christians alone. Then he would propagate his ungodly theories. He became more involved in leftist activities, riots, and rebellion. Although the professors were atheistic, Lener's conduct was so wild that they kicked him out of the university before he finished.

The forces of evil were so at work in this young man that he eventually landed in jail. However, God was true to him, and He sent His true servants to minister.

Even in the prison, Lener was such a dynamic leader that everyone looked to him and followed him, partly because he was such a fighter, and also because of his personality.

One day a group went to the prison to hold an evangelistic service, and Lener was determined to stop it. As the preacher began to speak, Lener started to cause a commotion, but God halted him. The preacher was pointing his finger at Lener, and it looked as though the hand and finger were about ten times its true size, as if God Himself was pointing at him.

Lener tried to get away from

that finger, moving around to different places, even behind other men, but it seemed that hand and finger were always pointing right at him. God finally got his attention. He was afraid, and finally began to listen, being gripped with the message.

When the minister asked, "Who would like to accept this wonderful Savior?" Lener shot his hand up high immediately. Everyone around him laughed, and he turned and told them to all get on their knees, which they did!

Lener himself fell on his knees, and with hands raised to Heaven and tears streaming down his face, he cried out to God for forgiveness, deliverance, and a new life in Christ. He had come face to face with God and realized his wickedness before a holy God.

His life was indeed transformed. The new life in Christ and his outgoing personality, coupled with the excitement of finding something so wonderful, inspired Lener to witness and tell everyone possible about what the Lord had done for him. He was just as zealous for His Lord as he had been for Communism and his other ideologies before.

When he went to tell his mother of the great and marvelous change in his life, she did not like the idea and rejected him completely, but later she also was won to the Lord.

Lener, being zealous for his Lord, wanted to serve in every possible way and realized his need for

study and preparation.

Soon Lener returned to school. Being a strong personality, and accustomed to "doing his own thing," he often got into trouble with other students and professors. One time after having a big argument with the director, Lener decided to leave the school. Yet, as soon as he was alone with God, he realized that was not God's way nor will for him. He had quite a struggle, but as he really desired to please and serve the Lord, he tried to listen to God.

He did not know how he would

make it, and he dreaded to go to dinner, because his place at the table was directly across from the director, against whom he felt both anger and shame.

As he prayed and sought help from the Lord, he knew what He would have him to do, but pride was a hindering factor. He struggled with himself and prayed to the Lord for strength and courage.

At dinner time, he went to his place, looked across the table, hesitated a moment, then put out his hand and said, "I'm sorry." The di-

rector accepted his apology, they shook hands, and it was the beginning of a beautiful friendship and fellowship in the work of the Lord.

The enemy of souls does not give up, so there were many struggles and difficulties, but the Lord carried him through. Also, the Lord gave him a lovely Christian wife, a capable and dedicated worker. Together they served the Lord and sought His direction continually for their lives.

Selected

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]
in vain. The Christian must avoid words that imply vulgarity or filthiness of any sort. We who profess godliness must lay aside everything that is hurtful to our Lord.

The Christian is to be an example in conversation (conduct or actions). Our conduct is very important. Worldly people are eager to ridicule you should you do something wrong. The places you go and the things you do should be accomplished with Christ in mind. Again, carelessness often overtakes exemplifying the wrong example to those looking on. God does not want His children living in straightjackets, so to speak, with no liberty or freedom to enjoy life. On the other hand, He does not want us to live loose, uncontrolled lives that bring reproach and disgrace to His name and cause. How you live, the way you talk, and the places you go make a difference. In Titus 3:8 the Apostle Paul gave sound advice to Titus that is good for us yet today, in which he stated, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

The Christian is to be an example in charity (or love). Genuine love is in great need today. First, love to God and then also to our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus informed us

in John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We are to love those who are in sin and know not God. We do not love the sin they do, but we are to love the person. In Matthew 5:44 we read Jesus' words, ". . . Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

There will always be some who may do things that hurt you. Remarks may be said about you that will mar your influence and character. Possibly you could be mocked or disrespected. In a time such as this, you will need to lean heavily upon the grace of God and continue to show forth the right example. A Christian must be ready to love his enemies and react as Jesus did when He was ridiculed, laughed at, and scorned. A Christian must always be ready to forgive that one, even though the individual may never ask for forgiveness. As Christ forgave you of your sins, likewise, you must be willing to forgive all who sin against you. In doing this as Jesus would have you to, you can and will keep your spirit right before God and man. You will be the example He desires.

Our Lord desires each of us to be a vessel through which He can work

to help others. Dear one, you should strive to be a vessel of love and mercy, reaching out to fallen man. A Christlike example may be the only Gospel some will ever see or hear. It is not always what we say that influences those around us; more often it is our godly life and example. There is an old adage, which states, "I'd rather see a sermon lived than to hear one." The example you live as a Christian certainly has an influence on ones you come in contact with every day.

One last thought to consider is to never allow discouragement to overtake you when those around you seem to be paying no attention. Many times people will never let on that your life is having an effect on them. They may not seem to notice when you bow your head in prayer before you eat, but they are watching. Be encouraged, and continue to be the Christian example that God wants you to be. He may just have you where you are to be an example to show men and women how a Christian is to live. Even though they refuse to acknowledge God in this lifetime, someday they will wish they had. When they stand before God at the Judgment, they may say they never knew what to do or how to live. However, God will point them back to the example of godliness you lived before them, and they will be without excuse.

Selected

The Absoluteness of Christ and His Gospel



Brother E. David Stegmeier

The Way of Truth

In Acts, Chapter 17, we find that Paul was waiting for Timothy and Silas and looking around the magnificent city of Athens, which was about three thousand years old, and his heart was stirred. Any real man or woman of God, as he or she looks upon the religious condition of the world, is stirred.

Acts 17:16-26 reads: "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. [I believe that could be said about almost every city in the world today. Mankind has given himself to idolatry, worshiping everything but God. Some people are worshiping the works of their own hands, something they have made or built or acquired.] Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and

with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

"Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. [To many people, the doctrine of the Church of God and the one true God is strange, but I thank God that it is very reasonable and very wholesome, and it makes good, wholesome people.] And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

"For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. [I thank God for the old-

fashioned Gospel and for the old-fashioned way. Jeremiah 6:16 said, 'Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way.' There is no better way than the way of Truth, the Church of God way.] (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

"For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. [John recorded the words of Jesus in John 4:24 to the woman at the well, and He said to 'worship him in spirit and in truth.' That is the

proper way to worship Him. In other words, you must get involved.] God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men." No matter what nationality each of us is, God makes us all one.

John wrote in Revelation 5:4-10: "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book [or the plan of salvation, the Truth], neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda [these are all words for Jesus Christ, or metaphors], the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." The Church of God has always had that Truth.

The Need of the Hour

The Bible tells us in Revelation, Chapter 5, what God thinks about

divisions of races. Peter had a little problem with racial prejudice, and you will find in Acts 10:34-35 that he learned the Truth. He said: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." The women had a problem in the Mormon Church. Men could have many wives: they were very subservient and inferior. God put women on an equal status with men in the Kingdom of God. The Church of God has always accepted women as an equal part with the men. The Gospel of the Church of God is to all nations, races, and tongues. I am talking about the positiveness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what the world needs. The Word of God is Truth. Christ is the personification of Truth, and you can have Him.

Again, Paul said in Acts 17:24-26: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing [God does not need anything, but we need God so definitely in our lives], seeing he giveth to all life [each of our lives is contingent upon God], and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation."

Paul said in verses 27-34: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us [God is very near you if you will reach out, open your heart, repent, and turn away from sin; then you can have him in the temple of your heart]: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven

by art and man's device.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: [This is the message of the hour. Our nation needs to repent. Repentance is the need of the hour. It is more than merely changing your mind. It is having some good, old-fashioned conviction, breaking down the will, and weeping over your condition.] Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world [how?] in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked [it was no different then than it is now]: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."

The Certainty of God and His Word

Men, especially in the United States, want to put Christ and the Gospel on par with all religions, but that is not so! That troubles me, because there is an absoluteness about God, about Christ, and about the Gospel. There is an absoluteness about the Church of the Living God! There is one God, one Christ, one faith, one Lord, one foundation, and one church.

The early church was not uncertain as to where they should stand. They staked their lives on the certainty of God and His Word, and He never failed them. God cannot fail. He has never failed His church, and He never will. I still feel the certainty about God, His Gospel, and the church. We can be a certain people in an uncertain time — not an arrogant people, but certain. There is a difference. Our certainty is in God, and our strength is in Him.

Everything comes directly from Him; it is not in ourselves. We have nothing to be proud about; it is all God!

I am not looking to other religions for any hope. We must look to God. God's people are a positive people, and we are not in confusion. There is much confusion and uncertainty in the world today. You do not have to be in confusion. There is a positiveness about the Gospel. God does not change; He is always the same. God is not the author of confusion. I thank God for the Truth.

Our Scripture text reads in verse 24, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth." The Lord is without any limits. No one can stand up to God. He is the absolute. Nothing is greater than God. Christ reigns equally. God is the Father, but in Matthew 28:18 Christ said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Christ is ruling. Our mission as the Church of God is to proclaim that He is the Lord. He is the only means of salvation, and one day every knee shall bow before Him.

Pure Christianity will never compromise. True Christians do not fight carnally. When Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's son, Jesus told Peter to put up his sword. The Bible says in His holy mountain there will be no hurting or destruction. Pure Christianity will never blend with other religions.

The Church of God will never go along with false religion. God's church is a separate and distinct body of people. Where do we get this? Our roots are way back in the Old Testament. What happened when the Philistines took the ark into Dagon's temple? The statue of Dagon fell over. So they picked it up, and the next morning they came and his head was severed and the palms of his hands were off. God will not tolerate any other god. There is one God.

The Psalmist said in Psalm 83:18, "That men may know that thou,

whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." Christ is the One who makes Christianity absolute. Without Christ Christianity would fail. Jesus is the only Son of God. He is the Messiah; He is the Christ. He was the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Everything about Christ is absolute.

We read in Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Should people think it strange that there is only one church? Christ is the Head. Do you think He would have more than one body? It is all quite reasonable that He has one body. Everything about Christianity is oneness. There is a unity: one head, one body, one foundation, one cornerstone. If there were two, that would bring confusion.

God's Word Is Settled

There are four absolute certainties about the Gospel. First of all, God is absolute. We have read many Scriptures that tell us there is no other god. The gods of other religions are false gods. There is only one God who is the Father of all. The Bible says Christ reigns supreme, and He is always the same. He does not change. We can be certain that He will never change. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Religions change, men change, and institutions change; but the Gospel will never change. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:89, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." I thank God for the Gospel; it is not going to change. It is without error, it is infallible, and it is true. There is an assurance that we possess as God's people. We can have a positive living experience. First John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death unto

life, because we love the brethren."

Luke 1:67-77 states: "And his father [John's father] Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, [As you read the Bible, does it not seem like a letter written to you personally? I think it is awesome. It is not like some foreign book that you struggle to understand or one that was written in some antiquated time. It is very personal. He has visited and redeemed us.] And hath raised up an horn of salvation [There is power in salvation to live above sin. There is a positiveness in this. You can live without sin every day.] for us in the house of his servant David.

"As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, [We can be saved from every enemy. Even death can be an escape for the child of God. We have power over every enemy.] and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, [We can stand before Him. We can come boldly before Him if we have been walking humbly. We serve Him without fear. How?] In holiness and righteousness before him [did He mean that we are to do this only on the Sabbath or on Sunday?], all the days of our life. [Every day can be blessed when you are walking with the Lord. I do not know what people are talking about when they speak of "blue Mondays." I think every day is wonderful serving the Lord. I will admit, I really like Sundays if I were to prefer one day above another, because I get to meet with the saints, but I feel good every day.]

"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord

to prepare his ways; To give knowledge [How do we receive that knowledge? Is it by joining a church? No! Is it by studying the catechism and passing 90 percent of the questions? No! We receive this knowledge by being saved, and we get this knowledge of salvation because our sins are gone, and they are in the depths of the sea, never to be remembered against us again.] of salvation unto his people [it is by shaking the preacher's hand or by hitting the sawdust trail? No!] by the remission of their sins."

Aren't you glad we have a God who is absolute? He is going to do what He said He would do. No false gods and no individual is big enough to thwart the plan of God. Second, the Gospel, or the Truth, will never change.

Third, this experience of salvation does not fade, wear out, or let you down. You can count on it. I have found that it gets better and surer. What else is absolute? The church is. The church remains constant; she is not divided. If a division comes, it is because someone is imbibing the wrong spirit. As I was studying, I thought of all the Scriptures that speak about the oneness of God's people. The church is going on, and she will not change. She is not divided; God's people are all one body.

Only One Narrow Way

How can one get into the church? Acts 2:47b says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Everything about the true Church of God is run by God.

The Apostle Paul had so much to say about the evils of division. He said in 1 Corinthians 12:18, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." This was not written just to fill up space. This is the Word of God, and it will not change. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all

speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind [the mind of Christ] and in the same judgment." He stated in verse 13, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" It would be good if you would read through the rest of that chapter.

Then Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, [Christendom (I am not saying the church, but I am using the term Christendom loosely) is divided according to ministers and theologies. Ministers are needed, but it is God who is the ultimate and the absolute. His Word is absolutely correct.] but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

Let us adhere to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Even though we think D. S. Warner and others were great men, we need to adhere to "thus saith the Lord." Paul wrote in verse 11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The Word of God is the standard of what we believe. I encourage people to bring their Bibles to the services. True Church of God ministers preach right from the Book.

In John, Chapter 17, you can read the prayer of Jesus. Verses 20-21 state: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; [If you are going to say that the prayer of the Son of God was not answered, that is very close to blasphemy. Of all prayers, His prayer was answered. When there is a division or a schism, another spirit is taking over. There is an absoluteness about God, His Son, His Word, and the church. There is even an absoluteness about our experience. We can know in whom we have believed.] as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

I want you to read a song from

one of our hymnals entitled "Only One Narrow Way." It reads:

Only one narrow way, "I am the way;"

Only one open door, "I am the door;"

Only one Shepherd kind, to heal the sick and blind;

Only one reeking cross for souls that are lost.

Only one mind and mouth, all speak the same;

Only one church of God, kept in his name;

Only one gentle hand to lead the little band,

Only one holy plane, one heaven to gain.

Oh, see his crimson blood, flowing for all;

Behold thy patient Friend drinking life's gall;

Only one rest complete, low at his lovely feet,

Only one fountain free, 'tis flowing for thee."

Only one narrow way, "I am the way,"

Only one open door, "I am the door."

We can be absolutely certain in a world of confusion and uncertainty. We are serving a God who is absolute. God will never change, Christ will never change, and the Gospel will never change. The church remains the same. On the one true foundation, you can remain just as certain if you keep your hand firmly in the hand of God. I am glad for the certainty that we can have and enjoy in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(Cassette C-4745E)

"When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

Proverbs 2:10-11

Mark 8:11 And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him.

12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto

this generation.

13 And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side.

WHY PEOPLE SEEK SIGNS



Brother Allen Polston

"Why Will Ye Die?"

We find in this Scripture lesson that Jesus was a little weary. We can see that in the way He responded to the circumstances of that day. Verse 12 says that "he sighed deeply in his spirit." Jesus was no doubt a little frustrated because of the ignorance of the people who were around Him. Their rebellion and their rejection caused Him to ask the question, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" That is a good question, one that we really should consider today.

Why is it, sinner friend, that you

wait and linger outside the ark of safety? Are you waiting for something before you truly surrender your all to God as you know you should? Why is it that you are still unsaved? Why is it that you are not where you should be for God—on fire spiritually and in the work of the Lord? Friend, this is a question that you really should consider as we study the Bible. God is so good to give you extended opportunities, yet you continue to find some reason to resist the Holy Spirit and walk away unprepared to meet Him? This is a very serious matter.

The Bible goes to great lengths

to convince you that salvation is what you need and what God wants you to have. God, through His Word, shows you that if you continue to be defiant, the time will come when you will turn Him down for the last time; then He will no longer visit you and knock on your heart's door.

God, through the Prophet Ezekiel, asked the question in Ezekiel 33:11, "Why will ye die?" Friend, God is asking you, "Why will you choose to be lost when you could be saved? Why will you turn away from God and go on in your sins when you could enjoy the

blessings of the Lord and the happiness that salvation brings?"

I am convinced that if you were to look around at the lives of the saints, you would realize that living close to God is a rich and rewarding experience. Do not look at someone who is disgruntled and who is always causing trouble. People such as that need salvation. If you will be honest and look to examples of people who have lived holy lives and have stayed true to God, you will have to admit that living for God is the best way to live.

Though the Christian goes through troubles and trials along life's road, the Bible tells us that it rains on the just and the unjust. You are going to encounter problems whether or not you live for God. Friend, if you will be honest, you will have to admit that you would like to have the same sweet peace in your soul that the saints of God have. So why is it that you are going on in your sins? Why will you die unprepared to meet God?

How Satan Works on the Child of God

As we look at the Scripture lesson, we can see that the Pharisees were being used of the devil to tempt Christ. Verse 11 says, "And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him." The Pharisees were allowing Satan to work through them. The devil is still working through people today, especially those who are unsaved. It is dangerous to live in an unsaved condition because you are opening the door for the devil to rob you of real happiness.

Even the saints of God must be careful and prayerful so that they do not allow the devil to work through them. In Matthew 16:23 you can read that at one point Jesus had to say to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Peter had gotten out of order. He allowed the enemy to work through him. You have to watch and guard against that.

Jesus said in Mark 13:37, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Friend, you must watch your attitudes and watch those feelings you allow to linger. You need to be careful of things you say in conversation. It is important that you keep close tabs on what is going on in your life.

When the scribes and the Pharisees came and began to tempt Jesus, I am sure they were doing it similar to how the devil tempted Jesus. We find recorded in the Book of Matthew, Chapter 4, that Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Just as Jesus was tempted, we will be tempted.

One thing that the devil used on Jesus was to question His divinity. You can read in verse 3 that Satan said to Him, "If thou be the Son of God. . . ." The enemy of souls works on every child of God. He sends discouraging thoughts to your mind and says, "If you were really saved, you wouldn't be having this problem. If you were right with God, you would be better off than what you are now." That is how the devil works on the saints many times. He might bring the thought, "If you are really doing what you ought to be doing. . . ." He tries to weary you by sending thoughts to cause you to doubt your salvation.

The devil will challenge your salvation. I can remember the night God saved me and I began to live for Him. The devil tried to make me doubt that I was a Christian. In the days that followed, he used that same technique many times. Before I was saved, he never once used that tactic. Before I went to church and yielded my heart to God, he never once came to me and said, "You are not saved." It was only when I prayed through to God and He changed my heart and life that the devil said, "You are not saved. If you were really saved, you would not have had that thought cross your mind." Thank God, the grace of God was present, and someone counseled me and told me that the devil

would try to make me doubt what had taken place. I have valued that counsel, because that is exactly what the devil did and still does.

Friend, anytime you try to make a move toward God, whether it is to be saved or whatever it might be, you can be sure that the devil will try to make you doubt. I say again, the devil never once came to me when I was out in sin and questioned my salvation. He just told me to keep doing the things that I was doing. It is only when you press forward and make ground with God that he will question your salvation.

I remember a story one brother told of a certain individual who had gotten saved one night in a Gospel meeting. As he journeyed home, the devil began to put the thoughts in his mind: "You did not really get saved. You did not really pray through." He battled that thought all the way home. When he got home and went to bed, the devil continued to trouble him. Finally, he got up, sat on the side of his bed, and said, "Now, listen here, Devil. If I did not get saved, why did you follow me all the way home, and why are you bothering me while I am trying to go to sleep? Now, get on out of here!" Then he laid down and got rest. Friend, sometimes you need to tell Satan to get behind you because you are living for God, that you are going to march on with Him, and that you refuse to be convinced otherwise.

The Giver of Every Good and Perfect Gift

If God is dealing with your heart and you are unsaved, He will save you. The devil will come and tell you, "This is not the right time for you. You cannot get saved." The devil will try to sow doubts and feelings of insecurity. He will try to do that before you even make a move. You need to remember that he is a loser and a liar. I do not know of anyone who would knowingly choose to put trust and confidence in someone whom they know would

lie to them repeatedly. I would not. I do not mean we cannot work with people to get such people converted. So why would you listen to the devil? He is just going to lie to you.

Jesus gave a good example of how to deal with the devil when the devil tempted Him and tried to make Him doubt. Jesus continually responded with the Word of God; that is how He got victory over the devil. The devil will work on you through your thoughts and try to weary you as he tried to weary Jesus. After Satan tried to get Jesus to doubt, we read in Matthew 4:8-9: "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

The devil knows that if he can cause you to become weary, distracted, and burdened down, then he will come along and offer you a "package of relief." Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world. What a lie! They were not the devil's to give. He did not possess them to start with. Just as the devil is not the possessor of true joy, peace, or a good life, he does not own the world. These blessings come from God. If you want a good life, you need to get in touch with God. James 1:17 tells us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights. . . ." Those gifts do not come from Satan. God is the One who can make your life worth living. He is the One who can give you what you need.

Whatever you are void of or would like to have, God is the Giver of those good and perfect gifts. Think about that. What would be better: to receive a gift that would work to your detriment or to receive a good and perfect gift? That should be an easy decision. God is the Giver of good gifts, and they come down from above. James went on to say in verse 17, ". . . with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turn-

ing." God is no respecter of persons. What He gives to one, He will give to another. He will bless you, friend. Why would you go on in rebellion when you could be living with these blessings?

Resisting the Devil

When Jesus was tempted, the devil said in Matthew 4:9, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Again, I say, those things were not his to give. Friend, you should never entertain the thought of falling down and worshipping the devil. If you entertain the thought of turning your back on light, you are entertaining the thought of worshipping the devil. If you are thinking about going somewhere else other than where God has placed you, you might just be falling down and worshipping the devil.

You may think, "I am tired of strict, biblical living." Well, there is an alternative: you can worship the devil. You are going to do one or the other. There is no in-between in this thing. When you look at the nominal religious world, you would think that it was acceptable to worship God on Sunday and to worship the devil throughout the rest of the week.

The Bible lets you know that you cannot love God and love the devil at the same time. You must take a position against one or the other. If you try to hold on to God and the devil, you will try to please the saints and look good among them and then entertain your worldly friends. That is misery. You need to be wise and tell the old devil to get out of your life, stand against him, and start loving God and serving Him with all your heart. That is what a wise man or woman would do.

The devil works on the saints just as he did Jesus. In Matthew, Chapter 4, Jesus persistently continued in the faith and responded to Satan with the Scriptures. What happened when He did that? Mat-

thew 4:11 says, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him." Thank God, the devil will have to leave you if you stand on the precious Truth. If you will resist the devil, James 4:7 says he will flee from you. It was so in Jesus' case, and it will be so in your case.

When the devil comes around, just tell him that you are standing on the promises of God. What a blessing to know that the devil will flee, but that is just half the story! The Scriptures state that the angels came and ministered to Him. God will allow the devil to tempt you for a while, but if you will be faithful and stay in the battle, the time will come when the devil will leave, and God will dispatch angels from Heaven to come and minister to you. What rejoicing you will feel after you get to the top of that mountain! What a blessing when God sends relief!

God wants to see if you are serious about serving Him. When I gave my heart to God, the devil said to me, "You did not get anything." Thank God, I resisted the devil. If you will resist the devil, you will notice that some miraculous things will take place in your life.

"Seeking of Him a Sign From Heaven"

Our Scripture lesson speaks against those who seek a sign. Now, Mark 16:17 says that some signs would follow those who believe. Friend, I will tell you one sign that followed me: I had freedom from the bondage of cigarettes. I was so glad when I began to breathe better, though I did not know what to do with my hands for a while. Sometimes I would reach for a cigarette, but it was not long until I did not reach for one anymore. God took the things that had me in bondage and set me free. Perhaps you have never smoked; nevertheless, you will still see signs following your conversion. Your spirit will change, and your attitude will change. Friend, things will be more beautiful to you than

they ever were before. Your old dog may even look better than he used to look.

Saint, you need to hold in there. You may be in the midst of trials, but if you will resist the devil, God will send sweet relief. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." However, thank God, He will forget your transgressions if you confess and forsake them. God remembers your work and your labor of love. He will reward you well for your labor of love, not only in this life but also in Heaven.

Jesus asked the question, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign?" Jesus had the power of God to do amazing things. Faith in God can move mountains and work miracles. Jesus could have shown a sign to those people mentioned in our Scripture lesson. The Pharisees tempted Jesus and questioned Him. They were causing problems and wanted to see a sign. Jesus could have done something that would have appealed to them had He wanted to, but what good would it have done to have taken the power of God and abused it? Jesus did not resort to that type of display.

To be saved and to be a part of the Church of God, one must have a change of heart. In order for that to take place, a person must submit himself to God wholeheartedly and let Him change his heart. If we were to rely only on miracles as a means to get someone's attention, we would have to keep doing miracles constantly to keep them. A brother once said, "If you use a chili supper to build the attendance of a congregation, and that is the only reason they are there, then you had better get ready to make a lot of chili, because you will have to keep feeding them if you want them to stay."

If we were to lay aside the Bible because Sunday night we were a little weary and roll back the pews and have a big game of basketball, no doubt we could get many people to attend. Then to keep them, we

would have to do it every Sunday night. However, sooner or later, even the basketball game would not be enough.

By the same token, it might be amazing if I were to jump up in the air thirty feet and touch a light fixture and come back down. Some may say, "Look at that power! I am going to get saved so that I can have that power." Suppose that was a sign they had been waiting for. Then every service I would have to jump back up there and touch the light fixture to keep them inspired, because that was what inspired them to begin with. Eventually, though, that would become commonplace, and the people would want me to do something more amazing.

If people were to come only to be thrilled and entertained, then something new and greater would be required to hold them. Had Jesus responded to the Pharisees by giving them a sign, they would have said, "Come on, Jesus, we want to see another sign from you. Do something! Set that rock on fire!" Had Jesus done that, they might have followed Him around for a week or two, but soon they would have begun to get a little bored and say, "Hey, Jesus, how about another miraculous event."

Have Faith and Trust in God

Jesus did not and does not want people who are just being strung along by what they can see. What does He want? He wants people to believe in Him and to put their faith and trust in Him. He wants people to give their lives to Him and live for God. Christ is our Savior! He is the Son of God! That is the reason we do what we do.

Friend, God does not want you to have an up-and-down experience. He does not want you to live by what you see with your physical eyes. I am not trying to take away from the many accomplishments that He helps us to accomplish.

In our Scripture lesson Jesus responded to the people's request

with a sigh, not with a sign. He was disappointed that those people came seeking a sign. In other words, they were hinging what they would do on whether or not they witnessed something miraculous or out of the ordinary.

Friend, if you are not saved, what are you waiting on? Why are you lingering in sin? Do you desire some miraculous thing to occur? If you hear the voice of God, you ought to respond immediately. Do not be as those who, when a pastor preaches a powerful, soul-stirring message, continue to sit back and wait for a sign. They want to wait until they see something great or out of the ordinary take place. That is what caused Jesus to sigh. No doubt, in the back of His mind, He was thinking, "Why can't these people just hear the Gospel and respond for the sole reason that the Holy Spirit is tugging at their hearts? Why can't they just realize that is the sign that God wants them to have?" The tugging at your heart is the indication that God wants to help you, friend. I can just imagine that Jesus dropped His head for a moment and wondered why they could not figure this out.

Jesus continues to give people health and strength and deal with their hearts day after day, hoping that might be the evidence or the sign they are looking for. That might be the drawing card that causes them to yield their hearts and lives to Him. There is a force that tries to hold us back, friend. I know because I have been there. There is an evil force that tries to hold you in your present condition, and it intensifies as the opportunity to pray becomes available. It will flood your mind with excuses to delay doing what you know you really ought to do. Why linger? Why do you not move when God is tugging at your heart's door? That is proof beyond a shadow of doubt that God wants to help you. He wants to give you a life that you will never regret. I do not know of one born-again Christian who would say he wished he had

never gotten saved. All the people I know say they wish they had done it sooner, and they regret the wasted years they spent in sin.

If you would give your heart to God today, your testimony will most likely be "Why didn't I do this sooner? This is wonderful!" This is often the testimony of people who experience this new birth. Friend, you should not linger and wait for a sign. Why do people seek a sign? The Bible says in Matthew 16:4, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Wickedness is something that God will not tolerate in His church. It will bar you from Heaven. One songwriter wrote, "Heaven is a holy place Filled with glory and with grace. Sin can never enter there." God is holy, pure, and just; therefore, you must abandon wickedness.

The Friendship of the World Is Enmity With God

I read in a newspaper on the front page of the religious section of someone who made the statement that no one can live perfect or right. Well, if it is not possible, then why did Jesus say in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The fact of the matter is, it *is* possible. You can be perfect in the eyes of God and free from all wickedness. Jesus was not talking about a perfection in the sense that you will not comb your hair wrong or something such as that. He was talking about a perfection where there is no more sin, or no more wickedness. You *can* be free from all ungodliness.

Friend, God does not want you to continue in wickedness. The Lord said in Ezekiel 33:11, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." God deems it precious when one of His saints passes on. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." The death of the wicked is not something He finds pleasure in. Why? Friend, when the wicked die, they go to a place of eternal

punishment, and God does not find pleasure in that.

It is wicked if you put anything before God. If you put something before God and refuse to live for Him, it causes you to be wicked, because that is evil. Jesus died for you and me. Friend, He loves you. Though Jesus never performed the first act of sin, He loved you enough that He was willing to die on the Cross for you. He gave His life and suffered much more than the physical pain of that wooden Cross. He suffered for your sins, my sins, and the sins of the world. He suffered more than we could ever imagine. When a person holds something more precious to himself than Jesus, such as a habit, a relationship, or the pursuit of this world, this causes that individual to be wicked.

James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Trying to be a friend of the world and a friend of God is another way of putting some worldly thing before God. In the sight of God, that is spiritual fornication. That is the reason people seek a sign. They are holding something in their lives that they are not willing to surrender. If you hold on to some worldly thing, no matter what it is, the Holy Spirit will point it out. God wants you to relinquish hold of all that you put ahead of Christ in your life.

Once I heard a story of how they catch monkeys. They set out a box and put something attractive in the box. The monkey will enter the box and lay hold of that item. Then they can take the monkey into captivity. That is what the devil is doing to many people. He gets them to hold on to some little worldly thing that they feel is so important, and he leads them down the path to destruction. Friend, the best thing to do is quit waiting for a sign or for someone else to make a move. The best thing you can do is to turn loose of whatever you have been holding and come to God. You must surren-

der your heart to Him completely. Friend, the sign that God has given is the preaching of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit calling you.

If you are unsaved, God is being merciful to you. Won't you turn away from worldly things? What a blessed thing it would be for you to really surrender your life to God and say, "Lord, take me. I want You to use me. Save my soul and put me in the work of God. I am forsaking all other things." Friend, you need to quit waiting for a sign, get saved, and then get busy in the work of God. Your sign is the preaching of the Gospel and God's Spirit being true to your soul. He wants to do a work in your life. If you have a need, won't you consider His plea?

(Cassette C-4991E)

Just to Think

A rich man was down at the river front waiting the departure of an ocean liner. He was joined by an acquaintance, who said to him, "You seem to be pleased about something."

"Yes," said the man, "I do feel unusually good today. Do you see that vessel: I have \$10,000.00 worth of equipment on it for a hospital in China, and I came down to see the vessel safely off."

"Well, that is interesting, and I am glad you made that gift," said the friend. "But you know, I also have a gift on that ship. My only daughter is on that vessel, going to China to give her life as a missionary."

The wealthy man looked emotionally into the eyes of his friend and exclaimed, "My dear brother, I feel as though I have given nothing as I think of what this sacrifice means to you."

Selected



Press Forward

I was stirred by reading the life of Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer. Many boast of the great sacrifices made by the reformers who risked everything, and then they turn right around and follow others who lead them to destruction in a most inoffensive, deceptive, and diplomatic manner. The devil tempts nearly everyone to drift back into the world, as many have done, but the drifting is so gradual and inoffensive that few recognize it until it is too late.

Sometimes entire congregations drift back into the world. You may say, "Our leaders do not think that we are drifting." A leader once said, "Every backslidden congregation backslides at the head first." Still, if one dares to see and proclaim this awful tide, he is branded as disloyal and a radical. Many people are too blind to see the falsity of it. Too many are taught that loyalty to the congregation is loyalty to God. By supporting men, you can neglect and then reject foundational and fundamental doctrines and standards.

No matter how tender and compassionate we are in our opposition to false preachers and false doctrines, we are branded as bitter and critical while our hearts are breaking and aching. Even men who claim to

be right are afraid to take their stand with Christ out in the open, lest they cause confusion and interfere with their own tranquility of mind, no matter what becomes of their own souls and the souls of others.

Who is leading people back across the bridge to the world and compromise and modernism? Sad to say, most of them were once real, true pilgrims of the Cross who have gradually sold out for place and prominence. Yes, the fence straddlers who know how to pet and appeal to both sides form the bridges across which many who once were a part of the true church drift back to the world. They know how to pat everybody on the back and tell both sides how to conduct themselves. From past history and experience, they know how to fit with people, and with their new experiences and driftings, they know how to fit in with the compromising, worldly minded crowd to which they really belong. They never come out in the open on either side when both sides are present, but it is then that they emphasize "true unity and cooperation." They emphasize general truths that all accept and stand against "worldliness" in general. While they smile and shake hands with God's people, those who are spiritually discerning can sense a feeling of rebellious opposition and condemnation.

They insist on loyalty to their organizations, programs, and institutions as evidence of loyalty to God, while those organizations and institutions have already drifted back to the world, to infidelity and hell. They claim to be loyal to the church, while they are leading people away from godly doctrines and standards. They know how to reinterpret doctrines and standards while they are forsaking them. They boast of the church's disciplinary standards, while they themselves are

forsaking them, backing others who are doing the same, and opposing those who dare to risk and lose all to defend their Bible convictions and standards. They push the worldly minded crowd to the front in every place.

They push aside the masses who support them and put more and more power into the hands of a few persons. My heart aches as I behold those who were once loyal to God and old-fashioned Bible holiness standards. Many are pushing to the front those who are too general in their standards and doctrines, pushing aside those who will not sell out for place or preference. God's Word says, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, follow Him, if Baal, then follow him." First people let down and let up, then give up and go back to the world. If you sell out to the devil and give up your God-given principles to gain certain places of influence, you will have to continue to sell out more and more to hold such prominence. Doubtless, the devil told Moses that if he would sell out and get on Pharaoh's throne, he could help his people and give them the best lands and homes in Egypt. Hebrews 11:24-26 says: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Most people sell out for the treasures, honors, and pleasures of this present world, most of which they never gain; then in a few moments they are in eternity.

Selected



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