

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

Guest Editorial

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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"Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

Ezekiel 18:30-32

Why Will Ye Die?

God's attitude toward the lost has never changed. His desire is for transgressors to see the error of their ways and turn back to Him. God has no pleasure in men and women going through life being separated from Him and then die in a lost condition. Over and over down through the ages, God has asked the question: "Why will ye die?" Why do you choose to be lost when there is a pardon awaiting just for the asking? Peter tells us the Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God's power is the same today as it has been since the beginning of creation. His power can still save the vilest sinner, and it is strong enough to break every chain that would bind the soul of man. You might have slipped into great depths in sin, but God's arm is not short that it cannot reach down and lift you out. Dear reader, there is hope for you if you will only turn to Him in true repentance. You need to see Him with outstretched arms, beckoning you to come to Him.

In Luke 4:18 we read the words of Jesus as He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the

blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." These words of our Lord ought to bring hope and encouragement to all who have wandered away. If you will turn to the Savior now, He will not refuse you. In John 6:37 Jesus tells us, ". . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Every Scripture in the Word of God that pertains to salvation is in your favor and lets you know that God is able, willing, and ready to grant you full pardon. There is no slackness on God's part, and there is no weakness that can prevent Him from delivering your soul from destruction. He is able to perform all that He has promised. With all His promises being "yea" and "amen," please note, then, that any failure to find forgiveness is on the part of each individual. There is no reason for anyone to be lost!

The long suffering, mercy, and patience of God waits in anticipation for each man, woman, and child to make the decision to surrender and serve Him. Beware, dear one, there is danger in procrastination! There can be great calamity to those who put off their soul's salvation. Why? Because one ever knows when death will come and cut off all possibility of being able to get right. Remember that every day you remain under sin's dominion, eternal doom awaits you. Today is the accepted

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Numbers 33:50 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying,

51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan;

52 Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places:

53 And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it.

54 And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the

tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit.

55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.

56 Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.

The Way of Victory



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Only Way to Peace and Happiness

I want to focus on verse 52 of our Scripture text, which reads, "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places." I want to speak to you about driving out the enemy. In our Scripture reading the Lord was speaking to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan River. He gave an explicit command to the children of Israel concerning

their journey into Canaan. They were on the east side of Canaan, ready to pass over into the promised land.

The Lord told Moses to tell them to drive out all the inhabitants. He let them know that when they arrived in Canaan, they would have to drive out their enemies. He said if they did not drive them out, their enemies would vex them and become thorns in their sides and pricks in their eyes. He commanded them to destroy all the enemies' pictures and molten images, to pluck down all their high places, and to dispossess the inhabitants in the land; then they could dwell therein and divide the land by lot. If the Israelites failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land, God said He would become their enemy.

In this lesson Israel was looking forward to their journey into the land of Canaan. While they were in the wilderness and looking ahead to Canaan, they were kept separate from all other people. God kept them from the way of temptation; then they were to pass over the Jordan River, and once again they would be in the way of temptation.

Moses instructed them to carry out the will of God by driving out the enemy. He told them the only way to peace and happiness.

The same is true yet today. To obey the will of God is the only way to peace and happiness. When one gets out of God's will and begins to direct his own path, it is not long until he loses the peace of God and becomes troubled and vexed. It is like having thorns in one's side. I repeat, to carry out the will of God is the only way to peace and happiness. The command was to drive out all the Canaanites and all their religious practices and faiths. Why? Their very presence was dangerous to Israel's faith and to their lives.

The command came from God, who is holy and jealous. Because of God's holiness, He cannot tolerate perversion of faith or loyalty to other gods.

Exodus 20:2 says, "I am the LORD thy God." Exodus 20:5 commands, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." Exodus 34:14 states, "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." God commanded the people, "Then ye shall drive out *all* the inhabitants of the land." They were to destroy and pluck down.

How to Win the Battle

In looking at Israel of old, you can learn a lesson right in this day and age. Christian friend, you play a big part in your walk with God. He wants everything destroyed that He reveals to His people. To receive the inheritance will take complete obedience. Being submissive to the will of God and destroying all that God has shown you is the only way that you will come into an inheritance that will not fade away.

Salvation is a gift. No one can dispute that. Second Corinthians 9:15 says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Though salvation is a gift, you have a big role in the plan of God. You have to put forth

great effort to serve God. Many people are not putting forth enough effort to serve Him. Again, I want to emphasize that salvation is a gift. You cannot be saved by works, and you have done nothing to merit it. It is a gift from God, but even so, you must do some things.

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. John 3:16 amplifies that thought: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The whole world is not saved, but whosoever believes in Him is saved. Isaiah 53:1 says, "Who hath believed our report?" Not everyone believes the report.

We find in Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The Gospel is preached to many people, but only those who believe receive help. You might have been sitting under the Gospel all your life, but if you fail to believe it, it will not do you an ounce of good. If you do not do something about it, you will still be damned.

In our Scripture lesson Israel was ready to cross over into Canaan. They had been in the wilderness for many years, and they were positioned on the east side of the Jordan. They were getting ready to step over into Canaan. Therefore, God gave them a solemn warning through Moses. He said, in essence, "When you cross over into Canaan, there are going to be some enemies in that land, and you must drive them out. I am going to give you the power, but you must do it. You must do something to win the battle."

While it is true that God took down the walls of Jericho, the people of God had their part to do. They had to march around the walls as the Lord had commanded them. Some people lay back and want God to do it all. No, they have some things that they must do.

Consider the prodigal son.

Though he came to himself and thought about his father's house, God did not save him down in the hogpen. No, he came to himself and said, "I will arise and go to my father" (Luke 15:18). Only when he arose and went to his father was he reinstated as a son.

God told Israel to drive out the enemy. Dear one, if you are away from God today, do not wait for God to do something great in your life before you get saved. No, there is something you must do. If you know that you are wrong, then you also know what you need to do to get right. You have to make a move: you must repent. The prodigal was not reinstated as a son until he got up and made the move to return to his father's house.

"Let Us Cleanse Ourselves"

In our Scripture text the Lord told Moses to tell the children of Israel to drive out the inhabitants and take possession of their land. Why did the Lord command them to *drive* out the inhabitants? Notice that He used an action word. He knew that the inhabitants would not go easily.

Today people have some strongholds in their lives that they need to drive out. In other words, they have to take action and put some work into it. Friend, you cannot merely say, "Leave me alone." You must *drive* out the enemy. Again, I say, salvation is a gift, but you have to put forth much effort to stay saved. God said to drive out the inhabitants. Friend, you need to drive out those things that inhabit your dwelling place, or your temple. God will give you the power, but you must do it.

You may ask, "Do you believe in two cleansings?" I believe in more cleansings than that, but the first cleansing is done by God; then you have some cleansing to do. I will prove it to you by the Word of God. The Apostle Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Certainly, when an individual comes to Christ in the initial work, God reaches in and takes out the old stony heart and the old disobedient spirit; then He gives that one a heart of flesh, makes him a new creature, and gives him an obedient spirit. However, He does not stop there. He gives that person His Holy Spirit. After the individual has been cleansed at an altar of prayer, he has some more cleansing to do.

Some may say, "I think Jesus does it all." No, He does not. Certainly, salvation is a gift from God, but you have some things to do. You have to drive out some things in your life. The Apostle Paul said, "Let us cleanse ourselves."

How Do We Cleanse Ourselves?

Philippians 2:12-13 tells us: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." God works salvation in, but you must work it out.

What was Paul saying? When the Lord saves you, He says, "Work out your own salvation." In other words, you must bring it to completeness. Do not stop halfway, but go on until the work of salvation is fully wrought in you. God works in you the desire to be saved, but the continuance of your salvation depends on how well you obey the Word of God. You need God's help on every level of your life. You need His help to continue to serve Him. Without God you will not have spiritual progress. The end of your salvation is with God. It begins with God, it continues with God, and it ends with God.

There is another side to salvation, and that is your part. This is right in our Scripture lesson. God can bestow His goodness upon you, but it will not do you an ounce of good until

you do something about it. God can move on your soul and the Holy Spirit can trouble your heart and draw you, but it will not help you until you own your true condition and come to God. God does not save anyone against his or her will. He will not make you serve Him. There is a part that you must do.

The offer of salvation is for every man, but no man receives it until he answers God's appeal and takes what God offers. There can be no salvation without God, but what God offers, man must accept. God never withholds salvation; it is always man who deprives himself of it. God extends salvation to each and every one. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, but man deprives himself of the gift of salvation.

Some people have heard the Gospel preached for many years, but still they are unsaved. Why? They have a part that they must do, and they fail to do their part. God has been faithful to their souls, but another part has to be done. What is it? Man has to take faith in the Word of God, denounce sin, and come to Christ. If he fails to do these things, he cannot be saved, and he will die lost.

The Apostle Paul said to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The Christian must have continual evidence in his life daily that he is working out his own salvation. The sad part is that today many people are not any further than when they started. They are not working out their salvation, and they are not driving things out of their lives. They are just as they were when they first started.

Christianity Is Progressive

What are some things that people need to drive out of their lives? Some are slaves to habits. They fall over temptations and have the same failures repeatedly. Christianity is a continual journey toward God. There are some things that you have to drive out of your life when God reveals them to you. God is a

just God. He will give you time to take action, but He expects you to do something.

The reason some people are no further with God than when they took the initial step is that they are not driving out those things that hinder them. The same things that troubled them before are troubling them now. Why? They have not driven out the things that God's Spirit has shown them to drive out. Consequently, they have stalemated.

Since they did not drive out the "inhabitants of the land," the enemy still possesses the land because he was not driven out. He still has it, and he is the sole owner. Those things that they have failed to drive out have become pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides, and they are vexed by them. They are always walking around with vexation of spirit. God does not want that!

Friend, if that is your condition, God wants to help you. He has the power, but He expects you to drive out the "inhabitants of the land." Paul said to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling." This is not a fear of punishment or the type of fear that a slave might have of his master. It is not a fear that drives one to hide from God, but rather it is a fear and trembling that drives one to seek God. We each need God's help.

What did Paul mean when he said to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? This fear is from a sense of your own powerlessness to deal with life triumphantly. You fear and tremble because you cannot handle things yourself. You need God to help you. This type of fear and trembling will cause you to draw near to God. Why? You know that the temptations and the trials are more than you can handle; they are more than you can stand, so you go to God with fear and trembling. Because you cannot stand in your own strength, you need to come to God so you can be triumphant in the trial.

If you really love God, you are not afraid of what He could do to

you, but rather you are concerned that you might grieve Him. First John 4:18a states, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment." You need to consider what your sin is doing to God. How does God feel about it? If you have committed sin, you are hurting Him. Do you not have any feelings toward God? Christ died for your sins. When you commit sin, making it a practice, you are continually putting Christ right back on the Cross every day. Every time you commit sin, it is as the blows of the hammer that drove the nails into His hands and His feet. If you really love God, you are concerned about what you are doing to Him. A Christian does not want to crucify Christ afresh. He wants to drive out the inhabitants.

Diligently Obey God's Commandments

Deuteronomy 11:22-28 reads: "For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.

"There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." This is a promise that you

can stand upon. If you will keep God's commandments, walk in all His ways, and cleave to Him, you will have a richer experience. He said you will possess greater nations and mightier than yourself. There is nothing but victory for you, child of God, if you will walk in the light as God reveals it to you.

The Lord, speaking to Joshua, said in Joshua 1:3, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." Joshua had a part in the victory. What was his part? His part was to walk in obedience to the Lord and to walk by faith. Your part is to obey the Word of God. You must walk in all His ways and cleave to Him, or stay close to Him. The reason that some cannot drive out the inhabitants is that they try to stand in their own strength. If you try to stand in your own strength, you are going to fall. You need the Lord to help you in a special way.

Some people wonder why they never gain any ground with God. They are the same today as they were years ago. They are always defeated, cast down, and continually overhauling their experiences. It could be that they never got in the work of God as they ought to have. When God saves an individual, He does not save that person just to occupy a seat. When one gets saved, he needs to get in the work of God. If the devil had his way, no one would work for God. To work for God, you must put forth effort. Working for God brings great rewards. It is a pleasure to work for Him.

Sometimes people go to an altar of prayer and supposedly get saved, but they back off. Friend, if you get saved, God will make you a new creature. You will become a member of the New Jerusalem, the holy Jerusalem, and then you need to get in the work of God. Too often when people come to God, they want Him to do everything, but that is not what God told Moses to tell the children of Israel. He commanded

them to drive out the inhabitants. There is something that you need to do.

Consider the Ant

The wise man, Solomon, spoke to the sluggard, or the lazy man. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 6:6-11: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."

The words of Solomon speak to the one who loves to sit at ease, who lives in idleness, who does not get involved in anything, or who is careless concerning his salvation. As a Christian, you can learn much from the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the smallest of insects on the earth. Solomon said to consider the ant's ways. She provides meat in the summer. If you are going to do anything for God, if you want to go to Heaven, you need to prepare yourself. Just as the ant that works in the summer, you need to work to lay up treasures in Heaven. You need to prepare for eternity.

The ant works in the heat of the summer to prepare for the winter. In the summer when the weather is hot, the ant does not fool around as the grasshopper does. The grasshopper sings and has a great time hopping around. What happens to him? He dies in the winter. The ant is always hard at work in the heat of the summer. She does not allow idleness to take hold of her.

You are not going to stay on this earth forever. You need to prepare for eternity. You need to labor in the work of God. Why? Eternity is right out ahead. You are going to answer to God for the deeds you have done in your body. The wise man said to consider the ant. You need to take a

good look at the little insect who has no guide, no overseer, and no ruler. She works out of instinct. God put the instinct within the little ant. Today we have ministers, teachers, parents, and the Holy Spirit to guide us. We have many things going for us, yet some are lazy, or sluggards. God said to consider the ant, one of the tiniest of insects. There is no ease for the little ant; it is continually at work.

Some fail to drive out the enemy because they procrastinate. If the ant were to procrastinate, it would die in the winter, but it does not do that. The wise man said, "How long wilt thou sleep?" In other words, he was saying, "When are you going to arise? When are you going to get up and go to work? How long are you going to sleep?" God is not going to do it for you. You will do it or it will not get done. The Lord said to drive out the inhabitants of the land.

Spiritual Poverty

The lazy man will come to spiritual poverty. Again, Solomon said in Proverbs 6:10-11: "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." It is certain that if you are a lazy Christian, you are going to come to spiritual poverty. Some get saved and say, "I am not reading and praying as I ought." Well, God is not going to do it for you. He will give you the power, but you have to do it. You need to drive out the inhabitants of the land. You need to keep your flesh under when it wants to rise up. You have to go to God in prayer to bring the flesh into subjection.

God is not going to read the Bible to you. He will woo you and remind you, and He will help you to understand the Word when you read it, but you have to do it or it is not going to get done. God is not going to do your Christian duties for you. No doubt, some people would like to have God do that, but He will not. You need to drive out things such as

laziness and slothfulness. If you do not, they will inhabit your soul, and you will become spiritually destitute.

In our Scripture text in verse 52 we read, "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places." In so many words, God was saying, "Do not let anything remain in your life that I have shown you to get rid of. If you allow any of it to remain in your life, you will not have victory, and you will progress no further with Me."

What happened many times in the wilderness when the children of Israel allowed things to get into their camp? They became stalemated. That is what is happening in too many Christians' lives today. They are allowing things to remain that God said to drive out. Christian friend, if you fail to drive out the enemy, you cannot go a step further in your Christian experience. If God says to destroy something, do not let it remain.

Halfhearted Service

First Samuel 15:1-9 states: "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

"And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy

you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."

What God says to destroy, you need to destroy. King Saul got in trouble. He knew exactly what he needed to do. God made the command very explicit through the Prophet Samuel. King Saul had understanding, but he wanted to save the best part. The Scripture says Saul and the people spared what God said not to spare. Friend, God will give you the power, the anointing, and the blessing; but you have some driving out to do.

In verse 23 of the same chapter, Samuel said to Saul, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." Look at the reaping King Saul had for not wholeheartedly following the Word of the Lord.

Why does God want you to drive things out of your life? One reason is, it will turn your heart from serving Him. First Kings 11:1-4 reads: "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

"And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." Verse 6 says, "And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father."

If you do not drive out those things that God tells you to drive out, if you do not refrain from those things that God says to refrain from, it will cause you to be halfhearted in serving God. Solomon's wives turned away his heart from serving God in his old age. God used him to write the Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiastes. He was the wisest man in the Old Testament, but he let down on the Word of God, and it cost him. Solomon stirred God to anger, and it cost him the kingdom.

If there are things that God says you need to drive out of your life, you need to get rid of them. Why? They will turn your heart from following the Lord. You will try to serve God and serve the object at the same time, but you cannot do it. Verse 9 tells us, "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which appeared unto him twice."

Satan's Strongholds

Let us consider a few more things that need to be driven out of one's life. Verses 52-53 of the Scripture lesson read: "Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it."

There are some things that you might have allowed when you were living in sin, and if you do not watch,

they can carry over into your Christian experience. When you were in the world and had a worldly spirit, those things entertained you. Now that you have come to Christ and put on Christ, you must get rid of those things in your life. They are strongholds that need to be driven out. You need to go to God in prayer to drive them out of your life.

Rock music is a stronghold, and it is a habitation of Satan. Many of those lyrics are filthy, indecent, and antichrist, or against God. If you are a Christian, Satan will use rock music to try to pull your heart away from God. To where will he pull you? Right to the rock stars. You need to pull down those images, or those pictures of the rock stars. Why? They are antichrist. They are dope fiends, and they commit adultery. They are backed by the headquarters of Satan. You can hardly turn on the radio anymore without hearing something ungodly. Sometimes you cannot even understand all that they are saying. If you could, you would be surprised.

The Beatles, who came over to the United States from England, were antichrist; they were anti-God. They had no use for God or the things of God or God's people, yet some of God's people play their recordings. Rock 'n' roll is a stronghold. Christian friend, you need to drive it out of your life. Why? If you do not, it will inhabit you. It will turn your heart from serving the Living God, and it will vex your soul. It will be as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides.

What about country music? The music often speaks about adultery. Sometimes it is sung by old drunks who can hardly stand up. There might have been a time when some of that music was not so bad. I do not know; I cannot remember when it was not. One country singer who had a song on the top ten chart was put in jail for about the third time for drinking and driving. Another one got drunk and shot another guy, and then he was convicted of it and had to go to prison.

Country music is a stronghold, and it will wrap its tentacles around you; therefore, you need to drive it out or it will vex your soul. It will introduce thoughts into your mind that you have no business thinking about. It will generate obscene thoughts and obscene feelings that will vex your soul, and it needs to be driven out.

Be Not Conformed to This World

Something else that you need to drive out is worldly pleasures and worldly apparel that are not conducive to Christianity. The Scripture says not to be conformed to this world. You have to stand against it. You may say, "Well, I will look like a square." In whose eyes will you look that way? In God's eyes or in the world's eyes? People seem to care more about what the world thinks about them than what God thinks about them. I could care less what the world thinks. I want to please God.

You may ask, "What is worldly attire?" It is split skirts and tight clothing that lures the opposite sex and draws them into temptation. Such apparel causes the opposite sex to have the wrong thoughts. If you dress that way, you will be held accountable for it. You need to dress right, act right, and sit right. First Timothy 2:9 says that women are to adorn themselves in modest apparel. Worldly apparel is a stronghold, and it will vex you.

Christian young people need to watch whom they date and whom they marry. As a Christian, if you date and marry an unsaved person, you are overstepping the Word of God. The Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 7:39, talking about the wife, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." Another translation says, "... provided the marriage is within the Lord's fellowship."

You have to watch whom you date and be careful of whom you

marry, Christian young person. Second Corinthians 6:14 says, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . ." If the marriage brings forth children and you are married to an unbeliever, then the children would be born into a divided home, and your chances of losing them to the world will be ten times greater. There will be the pull of the world versus the pull of the Holy Spirit. If you are a Christian and you date unbelievers, that is a stronghold that needs to be driven out.

Someone may say, "I will win that person to the Lord after we marry." The chances are that you will not, and more than likely you will backslide. Many young people who failed to take this admonition are no longer saved, and they are reaping. If you will heed the warning from God, He will save you from much heartache. Marriage can be very trying with God in your life, let alone without Him. Christian young person, you need to heed the Word of God. Some are suffering the remorse of a broken home because they overstepped the Word of God. They thought they could handle the situation themselves, but they could not handle it. Friend, your only chance of handling any situation is to obey the Word of God.

Heed the Word of God

Others have strongholds that are habits that need to be driven out. Sometimes these habits carry over from the world. They can be strongholds, but God has the power to break them instantly. Oftentimes the urge or the temptation will come at a time of weakness. You need to go to God and drive it out of your life. Some have spirits that need to be driven out that try to work to get into the heart, such as "pity me" spirits and selfishness. God will give you the power, but you need to drive them out. I am sure those spirits have worked on every one of us at one time or another.

Some people need to drive out unfaithfulness in attending Sunday

school and the worship services. You need to get rid of unfaithfulness. When the doors are open and the church is gathering, you are duty-bound to be there. You should not choose what services you are going to attend. You need to drive out the spirits of unfaithfulness that work. You ought to be faithful to your position. Do not grow lax in any position wherein God has placed you. The spirit of lukewarmness will try to work on every one of us. You need to guard against it and drive it out when God so wonderfully shows you. The promise is there if you will drive it out. The promise is, you will receive an inheritance. On the other hand, if you do not drive these things out of your life, they will be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they will vex you. You will become depressed, and you will always have something working on you, such as discouragement. Why is that? You have to drive such things out of your life when God shows you that you need to get rid of them.

Dear one, victory can be yours, but you have a great part in God's wonderful plan. God will do His part; His part is sure. You need to be sure to do your part. God cannot lie. He said that you will divide the inheritance, and every piece of ground that the sole of your foot steps on will be yours. God already owns it, and He wants to give it to you. Nevertheless, there are some things that you have to do, child of God. You have to drive some things out of your life. What things are they? The things that the Holy Spirit reveals to you. I might not have mentioned anything that is hindering you, but the Holy Spirit will reveal them to you. If some things in your life are causing you not to have victory, you need to drive them out. Nowhere does the Lord say that those things will go easily. You have to put forth effort and *drive* them out of your life. When you do that, and God sees your willingness to drive them out, He will come to your rescue and give you the victory you

stand in need of.

The Lord told Israel that when they got over into the land, there would be lots of Canaanites. Then He warned them not to adapt to their ways. He commanded them to drive them out and get rid of them. Friend, God will supply all the power you need, but He will not do it for you. You have some things to do to be victorious.

If God has shown you a need, if He has shown you some things that you need to drive out of your life, take faith in the Word of God. Come to God and let Him help you. He wants to help His people and bless them. God has put before you a blessing and a curse. Won't you choose the blessing rather than the curse? Won't you let God help you?

If you have been slothful in your Christian experience, you need to talk to God about it. If you will turn your heart toward God, He will give you the victory.

(Cassette C-1123E)

Pray

*I got up early one morning,
and rushed right into the day
I had so much to accomplish
that I didn't have time to pray.*

*Problems just tumbled about me
and heavier came each task;
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered,
He answered, "You didn't ask."*

*I wanted to see joy and beauty,
but the day toiled on, gray and bleak,
I wondered why God didn't show me,
He said, "You didn't seek."*

*I tried to come into God's presence,
I tried all my keys at the lock;
God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."*

*I woke up early this morning
and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish
that I had to take time to pray.*

Louise Dawson

James 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither

tempteth he any man:

14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren.

Temptation



Brother Allen Polston

How to View Temptation

In the beginning of Chapter 1 in the Book of James, James' view concerning temptation may seem to be different from what it was in verses 14-15. Verse 2 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Sometimes counting it all joy when we fall into divers temptations is a difficult task. Verses 14-15 let us know that yielding to temptation brings forth spiritual death.

God would not have us to blindly accept that which leads to spiritual death. He has called a ministry to stand against things that pose a

danger to the Christian, spiritually speaking. It takes a true and faithful minister who loves your soul to declare the Gospel to you, regardless of how well you receive it. To deal with Scriptures and doctrines that could well be met with opposition, it takes one who is really concerned and who has your best interests in mind. You should be thankful and appreciative when someone stands in the gap and preaches the Gospel to your soul, because not many are doing this today. Most ministers are more interested in numbers and in material gain than in souls. They are more covetous than spiritual. Some people will not take the Truth when

a true man of God stands and preaches "Thus saith the Lord."

When you find a minister who really upholds Bible truths, you will not see overnight success. I would certainly like to see a huge revival break out in my area. It is going to take time, patience, effort, labor, and much prayer.

God's ministry stands against that which is wrong, that which leads to spiritual death. Someone may ask the question, "How can one count it all joy when he falls into divers temptations when the end results could be so detrimental?" Well, that is what I want to study with you about. One thing I can say

for certain is that verse 2 and verses 14-15 are *not* contradictory. God does not contradict Himself. Sometimes the devil tries to get people to think that God says one thing in one place and something else in another. If you come up with contradictions, it is not God who has it wrong; it is you.

When the tempter comes to you, he does not detail his plans to work havoc in your life. He does not tell you that his ambition and purpose is to destroy your soul and cause you to go to hell. Temptations are designed to catch you off guard. Therefore, God sends messages to warn you to be careful, to be sober, and to watch. You should not become careless or carried away with this world, because in doing so, you could easily be overtaken.

The Trying of Your Faith

Falling into divers temptations does not mean that you have fallen from grace. Some individuals are thoroughly confused along this line. The devil has convinced them that because an unclean thought has entered their minds, they have committed sin, but that is not so. Temptation is not sin. You are going to be tempted, and I am going to be tempted. The Bible lets us know that every man and woman is going to be tempted, but there is no need to get discouraged and think that you have done wrong when a wrong thought passes through your mind, because temptation is not sin.

The Hebrew writer wrote in Hebrews 4:14-15: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Jesus was tempted in all points as we are tempted, but He never committed one transgression. That

made Him the only worthy candidate to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was spotless, blameless, perfect, and without sin, yet he was tempted in every way.

You can read in Matthew, Chapter 4, of how the devil tempted Jesus. You can read of many other times when Jesus went through various situations, and while He was going through them, the enemy of His soul was tempting Him, yet He never committed sin. You have to be careful, because the devil will send an unclean thought to your mind and then turn around and say, "If you were a Christian, you would not have had that thought." However, John 8:44 says the devil is a liar and the father of lies.

You are going to be tempted, but you do not have to commit sin. You cannot stop thoughts from crossing your mind. No doubt, you would like to, but you cannot. Your job is to make sure that you do not dwell on those thoughts. You need to labor to dismiss them.

Some knowledge about this subject is quite essential to your success. James said in James 1:2-3: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." I am glad for the understanding that James gave concerning temptation. Without this understanding we would have more trouble comprehending why we are tempted.

Sometimes radio stations sound a long beep, and an announcer will say, "This was a test. . . ." Well, that is what we need to think when the devil tempts us. We need to remember that it is just a test. We are going through testing times, but the test will not last forever. God will say when it is time for the test to end.

In school sometimes students have to take tests that they only have so much time to complete. If they do not budget their time carefully, they might not be able to finish the test. The Bible lets us know that we will not be tempted

above that which we are able to bear, but with the temptation God will make a way of escape.

Your faith is tested for your own benefit and also for the benefit of others. As we learn some things about temptation and as we understand more about trials, it helps us. The knowledge God gives us through His Word helps us. We need to have regular examinations, spiritually speaking. We are going to have our love tested. James said in James 1:3, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

A Test of Your Love

Galatians 5:6 says, ". . . faith which worketh by love." When you are going through a test, often God is testing your love. He wants to make sure that you are still on fire spiritually. God is the One you must love supremely, and you must make sure that nothing else creeps in and gains a foothold in your life. You must love God more than anything else in the entire world. That is the requirement to make Heaven your home, and that is the requirement if you are going to be a part of God's church.

God is not going to put up with your affections being split. You must put Him first. God will not accept halfhearted service. You have to love Him supremely or not at all. So from time to time, He will test your love, and it is for your benefit as well as others.

God knows where you stand. He knows where you are all the time. You may fool people, but you cannot fool God. No one can fool Him. God allows temptations to come upon you because He wants you to know where you are so you can do something about your shortcomings. If He did not let you know, then you would go on blindly, and you would feel that you had an excuse at the Judgment. God is faithful, and He allows you to be tempted, tried, and tested so that you might realize exactly where you

stand with Him.

You cannot be a saint one minute and a sinner the next. He will not tolerate your holding hands with the church and the world at the same time. There is a separation between the church and the world.

The church does not blend with the world. She is still marching with Jesus Christ, and she is peculiar and separate. I thank God for that. I do not want to be as the world is. This old world is in a mess. Many people's lives are in terrible shape. I do not want to go back to that. I was in a wretched condition at one time, and I know what that condition leads to. I am glad to be out of it. I am glad to be in God's church, and I want to stay in God's church, where Christ is the head. Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation.

The Bible says in 1 John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." God will not make an exception for you or me. If you start to love the world and set your affections on the things of this world, you are going to be that "any man." You cannot love the world and love the Father at the same time.

Temptations and trials test your love for God. He will test you to see if you love Him. You have a choice concerning whether or not you want to be saved. You cannot save yourself. God has to do the saving, but He looks for a willing heart. After you are saved, you must continue to make choices all the way through to the end. When temptations come, you can choose to love God and keep your affections on Him or you can choose to go after something else.

Contentment

Today we are living in very dangerous times. We may not face martyrdom, but the enemy is fired up and working without any re-

prieve. He is laboring to destroy souls, so you have to be careful.

James wrote in James 1:4, "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." This is the benefit that you receive through being tempted and tried. He said to let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. What would be attractive about the church if she were unhappy and restless? What would be a drawing force if the Christian were not content and satisfied? Sometimes we sing, "I am satisfied in Jesus, What a sweet soul rest I feel!" We also sing the song entitled "It Satisfies My Soul," and salvation does satisfy the soul! This salvation is still rich, and it still has satisfying power. It still has the ability to bring sweet soul rest to an individual, unlike anything else in this world.

If we, as the people of God, were not happy and contented, then we would be restless. We would always be looking for some new thing to exalt the flesh. Thank God, that is not the path of God's church. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Praise God!

Contentment should be, and it is, a major drawing force of the Church of God. As people look on, they see contented people. The world looks on and sees happy individuals being the church, and they do not understand it. They begin to wonder, "How can that be? How can those people be happy when they do not do anything that is fun? They do not get drunk or go dancing or smoke weed and get high. They do not gamble or tell dirty jokes. How do God's people have fun?" Well, I will tell you. Jesus is in our hearts and lives. The world does not know what fun is. One songwriter wrote, "I've just started living! I've found a new life. I've changed my direction, and put away all my strife." Thank God! You do not know what fun is until you start serving God.

God's people are a contented,

happy people. We sing a song that says, "Happy in the Savior, Happy in the Savior, Happy in the Savior, I am happy in the Lord." We do not just sing that to pass the time. We sing it because we mean it. Praise God! We are glad to be serving God, and we are happy in the Savior! I thank God for His goodness!

Enduring Temptation

Having God in the soul brings sweet peace! That is something the world cannot obtain. Christian friend, temptations and trials may seem grievous for the moment, but they are working a greater work in your life, something that will benefit you and others. We can be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, enjoying sweet soul rest and satisfaction. James went on to say in verse 12 of our Scripture lesson, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." When God says something is blessed, you can count it so.

The world holds various events and attractions, and they post signs here and there to advertise them. They try to make the event appear as though that is where the good times are, but many times if you attend one of those attractions, you find that it is not as great as it was promoted to be. They try to make it seem as though that is the place to be, but often it is a let down when you get there. I will tell you something, God will not let you down. When God says something is blessed, you can count on it being that way.

Again, James wrote in verse 12 of the Scripture text, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation." We must endure the temptations that we go through. If it were left up to us, we would avoid every trial that comes our way. However, we do not have that ability.

James wrote in James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Your trials may not end immediately, but there are some things that you can do. If you will

submit yourself to God and resist the devil, then the devil will flee from you. Both parts of that equation are important. You must do those two things together.

In 1 Peter 2:23, Peter, talking about Jesus, penned, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." When you are going through a hard place in your life, you need to keep yourself closely committed to God, who judges righteously. If you do not, the enemy will start working in an even greater way against you. You need to resist the devil, submit yourself to God, and commit yourself to Him. God will take you through.

Temptation is a time of testing and endurance. What causes us to endure hard places? It is love that holds us. First Corinthians, Chapter 13, contains a wonderful lesson on charity. Verses 7-8 declare that charity "Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth." It is the love that we have for God that causes us to endure the trials and the temptations. James confirmed this in our Scripture lesson in verse 12 when he said, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Enduring temptation is proof that one loves God. Love for God will cause us to endure temptation.

Guard Your Affections

Real love will cause a husband and a wife to work through their differences of opinion. They will work through hard places that come. My wife and I are from different backgrounds. We had different upbringings and different things that we were exposed to. Things will come along from time to time that we see differently, and we evaluate those things differently. However, we do not run out and end our marriage just because we have differ-

ences. Our love for each other causes us to look for solutions rather than to separate. We find some way that we can work through our differences and negotiate. Our love causes us to endure.

I preach against things that can steal your love for God, because if your love for God is gone and a temptation comes, you will be unable to endure it. Our love for God is the reason that we endure trials and temptations. We know what God has done for us, and we know how good He has been to us. I love God for what He has done for me. I did not deserve what God has given me. I did not deserve my pretty wife and my precious children. I did not deserve to be saved, to have my sins washed away, and to have peace in my heart. Yet God has given me these things, and I love Him for what He has done. Not only has He given me all these blessings, but He has promised me that if I stay true, I can go to Heaven when my life here has ended. I did not deserve Heaven, but God has promised it. I love Him for that. I repeat, love for God causes us to endure.

If you are not careful, worldly things will get hold of your affection and steal it away from God. I know of a dear lady who was married and had beautiful, healthy children and a nice home. Her husband had a good job, and she had a good job, but she started flirting around, and her home was broken. She lost her marriage, and her life took a dramatic turn the wrong way.

I received word that she told another person, "You know, I never meant for it to go that far. I was just being friendly and flirting around a little." She was employed at a construction company, and one man on the crew began to flirt with her. Before long they started seeing each other and her marriage was destroyed. Now she is dealing with things that she never had to deal with before, and never would have had to deal with, had she guarded her affections.

If you are married, you should

not have eyes for anyone else, and you should not flirt with anyone else. If you are married, that kind of life ought to be over. When you get married, you make a very serious vow before God, and you should stay true to it. You should not go out to dinner with anyone of the opposite sex without your spouse. Also, you should not invite the opposite sex into your home unless your husband or wife is there.

Do not become overly friendly with anyone of the opposite sex. You should not put your hands on someone of the opposite sex. That is the reason saints of God do not go around hugging others of the opposite sex. Otherwise, the devil will enter into that picture and cause your love to be affected. There have been some good married people who were truly in love who became careless and began to flirt and fool around. Before long, infidelity entered the picture, and they were separated and divorced, and many problems followed.

A person who loves his or her spouse would be foolish to go out and take such a risk. That, if nothing else, is reason enough to preach against night clubs, dance halls, and places of that nature. In those places all that goes on, at least a big part of it, is lust. Someone may say, "I do not believe that happens in every case." It may not, but it is too dangerous to risk it.

Do Not Give Place to the Devil

If you love your husband or wife, you should avoid those things, serve God together, and live for each other. Be a family as God would have you to be. If you are married, you have no business fooling around with others.

I will tell you what I do. We have some teenage girls who live in our neighborhood, and sometimes my wife invites them in, but they do not come into my house when she is gone. That would be inappropriate. Why? Because that would give the enemy an opportunity to work. Paul

said in Ephesians 4:27, "Neither give place to the devil." You should not give the devil any place to work. When you make a marriage commitment and say those sacred vows, that is it.

I know of two people who were not in a Church of God congregation, but they claimed to be Christians. The woman wanted to go to country and western square dances. She said she did not think it would be wrong. She wanted to take her husband with her, so they started going.

People told her, "You had better leave that alone; it is too risky," but they went anyway. Before long, the dances went from being held in a small gymnasium to being held in a local bar. After a while, she said, "So-and-So asked me to dance, so I will oblige him," and you can guess the rest of the story. Their marriage ended terribly, and the husband is a very sad man today. She has gone on with her life, but he has never gotten over losing her, and that has been years ago.

We warn against things that will interrupt your love for your husband or wife, so why should we not warn against things that will interrupt your love for God? If your love is interrupted for your husband or your wife, you do not have that enduring ability. When you really love him or her, you will endure things. However, if your love has been interrupted, weakened, or destroyed, then you are no longer willing to endure things anymore. That is how it is with your love for God. If you are not careful, the enemy will so work to cause your affection to become set on something else, and you will not be able to endure temptations, and then you will lose out with God.

Keep Your Love for God Strong

We are living in a time of high technology. Technology has made tremendous progress in the last few years, and many new things have been developed. We have to sort

through it all and choose what is appropriate and what is not. We have to be very cautious and evaluate things biblically and make sure that our love does not become affected. God does not have a church that loves Him halfheartedly. His people love Him supremely or they are not His people at all.

Warning against these kinds of things requires judgment preaching. Isaiah 1:27 says, "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." In Revelation, Chapter 15, you can read about people who were standing on the sea of glass. They got there because the judgments of God were poured out. God loved them enough to tell them what to stay away from. They were singing songs of victory, but not just by lying around doing nothing. Someone had been preaching the Gospel to them, and it enabled them to have a hallelujah time, singing songs of victory and rejoicing. Victory was theirs.

Again, James said in James 1:12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." You need to keep your love for God strong. You have to watch those things that can creep in and take over your life. You had better watch your interest in sports. Sports can get a big hold on you. I like to see my favorite team win, but I do not want to get carried away with my interest in sports. I do not want to get carried away with the things of this world. If you are not careful, things can get hold of you and become more important to you than the Word of God or serving God and keeping your life committed to Him. You must be careful.

Our Scripture text says if you will endure temptation and keep your love for God strong, then God has promised you a crown of life. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

"Do Not Err"

As a child of God you can enjoy living here on this earth even without the many things that others have. You do not need to have a million dollars to be happy. You do not even have to have two nickels in your pocket. If you have God blessing you with a crown of life and bestowing upon you rich, abundant, spiritual life, you can be happy.

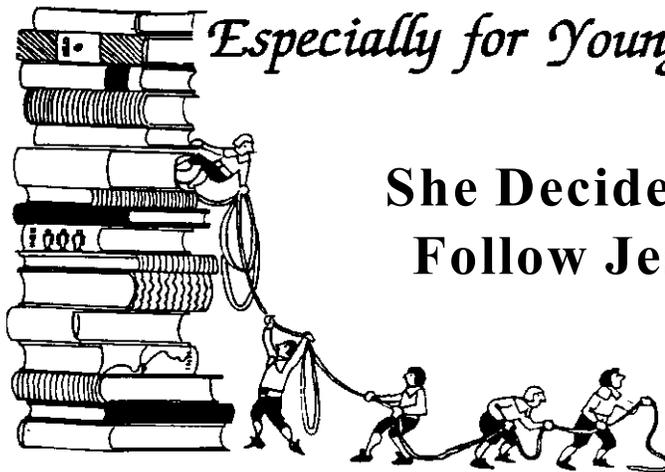
James said when you endure temptation, you will receive a crown of life. One with a crown is reigning. Abundant finances do not make people happy. Having perfect health and being fit and trim are not the recipe for happiness. It is life from God that makes the difference. As long as you have Jesus, you can be very happy and enjoy life and have a home in Heaven.

You must endure temptation and not give in. In verse 16 of our Scripture lesson James said, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Dear one, the devil is working to get you to err in judgment. In other words, he is working to get you to go along with something or get involved with something that will cause you to err. You must be very careful or you could end up losing your soul.

Temptation is not sin. Everyone is tempted, but God has grace for the Christian to overcome temptation. Matthew 4:1-2 says after Jesus had fasted forty days and nights, the Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted. It was not God who tempted Him, but the Spirit led Him there, and He was tempted of the devil. The Spirit of God also allows each of us to be tempted. God will help us to endure and lead us to greater victory. Temptations are going to come, but you do not have to be defeated. You can stay true to God. Do not err. God bless you.

(Cassette C-5327E)

Especially for Young People



She Decided to Follow Jesus



A young girl was sent away to a "finishing school" by her wealthy parents. There she learned science, art, dancing, and other things. One night she went to church where a revival meeting was in progress, and at the close of the service, she accepted Christ as her own personal Savior. She found what her empty heart needed, so she yielded her heart and life to Christ and decided she would dedicate her whole life to missionary service.

She wrote home to her father and told him of her decision. He went into a rage and wrote her immediately, saying, "Daughter, get on the next train, come home, and we shall talk this foolish religious business over."

She obeyed and returned to her home. As her father met her, he said, "I did not send you to school to get religion. That is all right for poor folks and half wits, but not for a child of your stratum of life. I sent you away to learn how to take your place in society, someday to get

married, and carry on the family name. You will have to get this religious notion out of your head. If by tomorrow morning you have not decided to give up this foolish notion of religion, you may pack your suitcase and leave this home. I am not going to have a religious fanatic around my household."

When the interview ended, she went to her room with a heavy heart and fell upon her knees before God. It meant a great deal to leave home. It would mean loss of love, culture, money, and prestige. There on her knees, she fought it out, and the next morning after packing her suitcase, she started for the front door. Seeing no one about, she stepped over to the piano, and as her fingers ran over the keys, the Lord brought this hymn to her mind and to her lips:

*Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt
be:*

*Perish ev'ry fond ambition,
All I've sought and hoped and
known;
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and Heav'n are still my
own!*

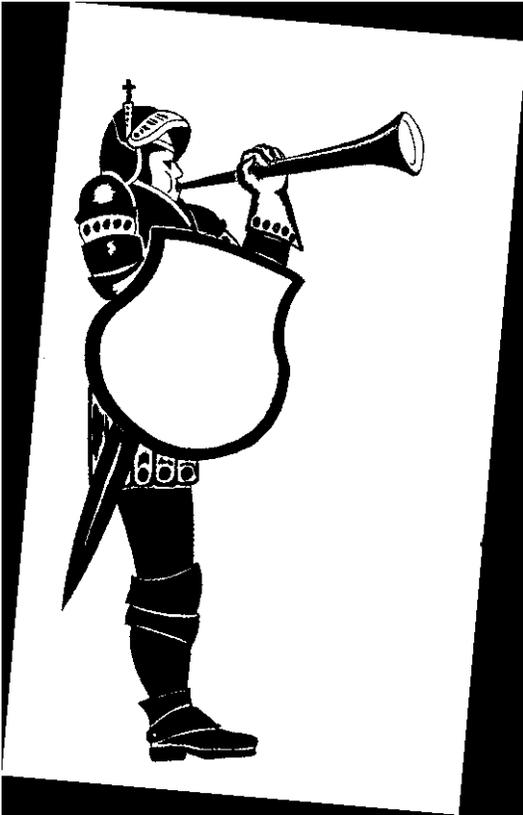
She arose, and with tears streaming down her face, turned toward the door.

Before she could open it, her father stepped out from behind the curtain where he had been listening to her play the piano and sing, and with emotion he said: "Wait! I did not know that Jesus Christ meant as much to you as that. I did not know that you were willing to give up father, mother, home, and prestige just for Jesus. Daughter, forgive me. I must be beside myself. If such a great love can take hold of your heart, there must be something in it. Daughter, sit down here and tell me how I can be a Christian."

Selected

It is only the fear of God that can deliver us from the fear of men.

Isaiah 62:10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.



Lifting Up the Standard of God

Brother E. David Stegmeier

Going God's Way

The great man Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5:1, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." You should want to give earnest heed to the Word of God. I want to reason with you about the very important subject of lifting up a standard.

Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 1:18-19: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool [this is the key to really enjoying life]. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."

The majority of the world is not willing to go God's way. Isaiah said,

"If ye be willing. . . ." You see, there is a contingency to the promises of God. I want the very best life possible, and I believe I am living it. I am happy serving the Lord. I am a very fulfilled and contented person. You may ask, "Do you have concerns?" Oh, yes, I have things that concern me. I have loved ones whom I want to see brought to the Truth, and I have neighbors and friends and school children whom I work with from day to day that I would like to see saved; nevertheless, I am a very contented person because I know the Lord.

Jesus said in the latter part of John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Those who are walking in complete obedience to God's will are the happiest, the most contented, and the most

fulfilled people in all the world.

Again, Isaiah said in Isaiah 1:19, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." I do not believe that the "good" necessarily refers to temporal things. I believe it means the things of God, the things that we get from the Spirit of God such as love, joy, peace, contentment, and right standing with God. What is more important than standing right with God and being clear with God and mankind? What greater privilege is there than that? There is no greater privilege.

I want to be clear with God more than anything else in my entire life. It takes much effort and a lot of work, because self wants to get in the way. You are your greatest enemy. In most activities of life (I believe this is true about the vast majority of men and women in this

world), people are living according to their own will rather than the will of God. However, in Luke 11:2 Christ taught His disciples to pray this prayer: "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." The majority of people are out to do what they want to do, to do what pleases them, and to do what seems right to them, never referring to the Word of God, which is our true standard.

Measuring Your Life by God's Standard

I want to talk to you a little about measuring your life according to God's standard. Once in a while I think about the Titanic. As it was going down, all the frivolity and the lightness and the dancing came to an end, and the band played "Nearer My God to Thee." Dear one, you never know when the time will come when you must stand face to face with God, so you need to be ready at every moment. You ought to be your very best for Him. The Apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." You never know when that will be; therefore, you need to live every moment as if it were your very last.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:10-11: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

You may say, "You are too serious." No, I have some light moments and play with my children, my grandchildren, and my students. Sometimes we laugh and have a good time. However, when it comes to the Word of God, it is a very serious time. The most impor-

tant decision that people make is regarding their eternity-bound souls. You will be making decisions as you read this message. I weigh my words prayerfully, because I realize that by my words, I will be either condemned or justified, so I have to be very careful. I do not want to be a hypocrite. Hypocrisy is running rampant today in the pulpits and in the pews. By the grace of God, I will not be a hypocrite.

Again, Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:11, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Saint, wherever you go and whatever you do, God wants you to be an example of Him. When you receive change at the grocery store and it is too much, what do you do? Should you speak a little too harshly to someone, do you back up and make it right? Are you living up to the standard of Jesus Christ, measuring up to Him in your actions and in your attitudes? That is quite a sobering thought, isn't it? God is looking at the way you treat your spouse, your children, your pets, or any other animals that you might own every moment of the day. Have you ever read in the Bible where it lets you know that a good man will treat his animals right? It says that.

One dear older saint who has gone on to be with the Lord said one reason he was won to the Church of God was that he was watching two men work with a team of horses in Kansas when he was a boy. One religious man whipped his horse and cursed and swore and carried on something terrible. Along came a dear Church of God man with his horse and a wagon hooked to it, and that man worked with his horses so kindly. He said, "That convinced me that those Church of God people have something we did not have." The standard is Jesus Christ.

What Is the Standard of God?

To answer the Apostle Peter's question concerning what manner of

persons we ought to be, I would like to quote a Scripture written by the Apostle Paul. In Titus 2:11-12 he said: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts [this is the standard], we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Do not forget that my subject is lifting up the standard of the Word of God. I want to go where God's Word is lifted up, not pulled down or compromised or watered down. I am continually measuring myself according to the measurement of Jesus Christ.

We are living in a day of humanism, when man decides for himself without ever referring to God. Institutions of men decide answers to life's questions without ever opening the Book to find out how to settle those problems. How often do you get into the Book to find answers? Today people rationalize things in their minds and give excuses for why they do not live without sin.

Hebrews 12:14 tells us, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." We have a moral obligation to God. Where do people get their standards? Some people get them from neighbors, friends, the world, loved ones, or famous movie stars. God wants people whose characters are flawless, spiritually speaking. He wants people to be honest and upright, with high ideals, who live by high and noble principles, whose minds are open and receptive to His Word and His will. Are you that kind of person?

We should be people of great purpose and strong determination. God's people are shrouded with fervent love toward God and their fellowman, truly obedient to God in all things at all times.

People have all kinds of excuses concerning why they cannot live holy. If they do not think of excuses themselves, some religious leader will give them excuses. When Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery, "Go and sin no more," He meant

that. He would never ask anyone to do something that he or she would be unable to do without His help.

When I was in the military service, I had quite a confrontation with one Army officer who was a chaplain. He said, "Christ knew that the woman taken in adultery could not live without sin. He was just telling her to do that." No, He meant what He said, and He said what He meant. Through the grace of God, we can live without sin. People do not realize that a mastermind is behind this whole business of making excuses for sin, and it is the devil.

The devil will give you an alibi and an excuse for doing what you are doing, but you need to consult the Word of God. You should live by very high and noble principles and by standards based upon the Word of God. We all are to be held to the same standard: the standard of holiness. Where do you get your standards?

Do You Have Vain Religion?

If we were to run an opinion poll and ask people the questions: "What is your greatest concern?" and "What is America's greatest problem?" what would be people's answers? I have listed some things that I thought they might say. The list would read something like this: terrorism, school violence (but if people take God out of the schools, what can they expect?), drugs, the economy, abortions, mercy killings, and balancing the budget. On the other hand, if we were to look to God and ask Him, "What is Your greatest concern?" I believe He would say, "The lack of fervent religion, the lack of real Christianity, and the lack of a people who really love Me and My eternal Word." Those other things are only symptoms of a deeper and greater spiritual need and malady in our country.

The majority of religion today is what the Bible calls vain religion. It is cheap religion. We sing a song

that says, "Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe." People do not want to give up much, and consequently, they do not possess much, spiritually speaking. This kind of religion is powerless, second-rate, and counterfeit. God wants us to be the very best of His creation.

The Bible standard applies to every facet of our lives, including how you treat your spouse, how faithful you are, what kind of father or mother you are, and how respectful you are of authority. It applies to everything about us. James spoke of vain religion when he wrote in James 1:26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." In other words, it is useless.

You should want to go to church where the highest standard is lifted up. People are so concerned that their children attend the school that holds the highest standards, but how about going to the church that holds the highest standard? School standards are important, but where do you rank spiritually with God? Isaiah said in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD. . . ." God measures each of us by our degree of obedience. He wants top-notch people, those who are fully obedient. The Word of God is the standard by which the church is measured.

How Do You Measure Up?

John said in Revelation 11:1, "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."

I want you to read a few short quotes that I have gleaned from periodicals. One periodical says this: "The standards are clear. We have specific expectations measuring quality, excellence, and proficiency." This is the standard by which God is ever measuring us.

Another quote from *Time* magazine states, "Eager to toughen the

standards in public schools, [How about toughening the standards in the churches of our country? That is a pastor's responsibility.] politicians are calling for an end of social promotion." There is a lot of social promotion around the churches today, but you should not look to someone else to pat you on the back. You should look to God for approval. How do you measure up? Are you pleasing God? I want to be so obedient that His smile of approval is upon me, do you?

In *U. S. News & World Report*, the title of one article reads, "Higher Standards." "Quality Education" was the topic. It was speaking about a high school in the inner part of the city of Detroit, and I think it applies to the church. It began, "We try to reflect the school's attitude about high standards. [People do not like to talk about standards of behavior or standards of performance. Often men do what is right in their own eyes, but God has a much higher standard. I want God's standard, do you? You should not quibble or complain about it; it is reasonable. Sometimes people are coming to the standard, but mature Christians should be close to being what Jesus wants them to be.]

"Educational excellence is a preoccupation in that school, something that they are so concerned about. [We ought to be concerned about reflecting the standards of God's eternal Word. We have a responsibility to live right, to act right, to speak right, to dress right, and to go to the right places. The Apostle Paul said that no man lives to himself and no man dies to himself. Each of us influences many people.]

"The alignment of all elements of school life toward emphasizing high standards is a cornerstone of educational excellence. [We could put the church in there and say, 'The alignment of all the activities of the church toward emphasizing high standards is a cornerstone of excellence.'] Many high school researchers say that some schools do not adopt high standards only for some

students for several reasons.

"First of all, the principals are uninspired [that is not true in the true Church of God; the pastors are inspired]. Some schools set their sights too low. [Spiritually speaking, some places set their sights too low. Our sights should be on Jesus Christ and eternity. I thought as I was studying, people are so obsessed with education. I am not against education, but something far more important than education is living for God and being all that God wants you to be.]

"Often out of tradition these schools have multiple missions, some academic and some not, and have become houses divided against themselves [this is talking about the educational system]. The educational aim is clearly to prepare students for top colleges [a real man of God is to prepare people for eternity; all is in vain if a pastor is not doing that]. It is this high school's aim. They are the highest rung in pushing for excellence." That is where the Church of God is.

Come Up to God's Standard

Isaiah 62:1 says, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace. . . ." I think this verse can also mean this: "For the sake of the church, for the sake of your influence, you ought to be your very best for God." You should be your very best for God every moment of the day.

I want power in my life to serve God. The reason so many people succumb to temptation and sin and do evil is that they do not live according to the standard. The standard gives us power and protection. Women dressing modestly is part of their protection. It is just reasonable. If you want the glory of God, the power of God, and the strength of God, then you must measure to the standard. Isaiah 62:1 continues, ". . . and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness [the way we live, the way we act, the way we dress, and everything about us] thereof go forth as brightness, and

the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." I love the standard of God's eternal Word, and I am measuring to it. That is the standard we all should be measuring to; it is God's standard.

Verse 6 says, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls [the pastors], O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night [as a pastor, you should never hold your peace until a matter is taken care of, until the people's influence is what it should be]; ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence." Verse 10, which is our Scripture text, reads, "Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway [too often it is put down]; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people."

Verse 12 says, "And they shall call them [a future tense verb, and that is what the church is called], The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." The Bible gives us an all-encompassing standard in 1 Corinthians 10:31, which reads, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

I read an article as I was studying about a happening in the military about a certain unit that met with defeat. They were defeated, and a soldier said to the captain, "Shall I bring the colors back to the company?" The captain said, "No, let's bring the company up to the colors." So it is with the church.

We are always working harder to come up to the standard of God's eternal Word. However, the move in 99 percent of the places is to bring it down. Church, we ought to lift up the standard of God's Word so that we can see the Church of God go forward. It is not a standard of our own choosing, but a standard that has been set forth by God Himself.

Holding the Highest Standard

I want you to read a memo from an insurance company that

students in a speech class were to read and then answer questions on a worksheet. The subject of the memo is: "Standards of Appearance." We talk about appearance in the Church of God, and often people tune us out. What is the difference? "Our appearance standards helps establish and maintain credibility with our customers by strengthening our image as a professional company. [Couldn't the same be applied to the church? Why are people so sensitive when it comes to ministers preaching on the standard? Think about it. Why? People are too fleshly; they display too much of self.] Attire and attitude go hand in hand [they have learned a few things].

"As might be expected, there are differences in this standard for men and women [they are wanting to be more alike all the time]. Common sense tells us there are some things that should not be worn on the job. . . . Managers and supervisors are charged with administrating these standards, so they will be your very best resource if you have any questions." If you have any questions about God's standard, you can refer to His Word.

I want you to read Scripture that applies concerning the standard. Much is said about women and their appearance, but men have to work on their appearance too. First Timothy 2:9-10 states: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." Also, men of God professing godliness should be careful.

If worldly companies can require high standards for their employees, what should the standard be God's people? Should it not be higher? That is the way I see it. God wants the very best.

When I was in the military, if you wanted certain positions, you had to meet certain requirements

and standards. If one wants to enter West Point, he has to meet the academy's very high requirements. As I thought of all this in studying, I thought, the Church of God has the highest standard, but not many people will adhere to it.

Are You Giving God Your Best?

For a while when I began pastoring in Oregon, I worked at a certain company during the summertime. I was required to take some tests to be in Quality Control. In Quality Control we checked all the products. At the end of the assembly line, we did not have near the number that started at the beginning. All kinds of things were put on the belt, but at the very end, not as much was left because of quality control. Church, God is in charge of quality, so He wants the very best.

I want you to read a poem that someone gave to me entitled "My Mean Parents."

*Why do my parents have to be
So very, very strict with me?
They wouldn't ever let me do
All the things I wanted to.*

*They took the responsibility
To be good parents seriously.
They said, "We have set our standards
high.
And you will understand if you try.*

*Still I often found it hard to see,
And I followed their rules reluctantly.
I sometimes envied my friends who
had
A less demanding Mom and Dad.*

*But time has passed and now I have
seen
My mom and dad weren't really mean.
I think this world would be so fine
If every parent were just like mine.*

We should not measure ourselves by one another or put down one another. Sometimes parents require something a little different of their children, but we should not work against one

another. We all ought to have very high standards, and we should help one another. As parents, my wife and I were very inexperienced when we had our first child, and we are still working at it.

Let us lift up the standard. The Bible says to lift up a standard for the people, and that is what I

am endeavoring to do. I want my children to go to good schools, but most of all, I want my children to go to a church that holds the highest standard, because it is going to take our very best to make Heaven our eternal home.

(Cassette C-4268M)

Instances of the Power of Prayer

The instances in which, in answer to prayer, God has sent remarkable deliverances to people are numerous and striking. In the days of Queen Elizabeth, the terrible Spanish Armada was scattered or destroyed in answer to fervent prayers offered by the people of God in England. In 1746, the French armament of forty ships, prepared under the Duke d'Anville against the American colonies, was, in answer to prayer, totally ruined by the tempest. The leaders of the expedition were so overwhelmed at the suddenness and completeness of their disaster that both of them committed suicide.

But God can save his beleaguered people without destroying their foes. LeClerc tells us that when, in 1672, the Dutch were expecting an attack from their enemies by sea, public prayers were ordered for deliverance. It came to pass that when their enemies waited only for the tide, in order to land, the tide was retarded, contrary to its usual course, for twelve hours, so that their enemies were obliged to defer the attempt to another opportunity, which they never found, because a storm arose afterward and drove them from the coast.

How wonderfully God has answered prayer in behalf of good institutions founded to alleviate human misery. Of this we have a striking instance in the Orphan House at Halle, founded by Francke. His school was unendowed. In 1696, he had not money to support the school a week longer. When the last morsel was about to be consumed, a thousand crowns were received from an unknown source. At other times of distress he received, in answer to special prayer, twenty, thirty, and fifty crowns. He said, "Another time all our provisions were spent, but in addressing myself to the Lord, I found myself deeply affected with the fourth petition of the Lord's prayer: 'Give us this day our daily bread'; and my thoughts were fixed in a more especial manner on the words 'this day,' because on the very same day we had great occasion for it. While I was yet praying, a friend of mine came before my door in a coach and brought the sum of four hundred crowns!"

Mark 10:17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

18 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.

19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.

21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.



Having Eternal Life

Brother James Lovingood

Eternal Life Is in the Son

Our Scripture text tells of a young man who inquired about the matter of eternal life. It is quite apparent that the Law could not bring life. If it could have, that person would not have asked Jesus, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" In Matthew, Chapter 19, you will find the same account. Jesus said in verse 17, "... if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Jesus said in John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

The young man in our Scripture text had been relying on keeping the commandments to obtain eternal life. He said in verse 20, speaking of the commandments, "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." However, verse 21 states, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor. . . ." You may ask, "Was Jesus letting us know that each of us has to go and sell every material object that we have in life?" No, He was speaking of getting rid of whatever hinders one from being spiritual and

having God in his life.

No matter how much of a profession a person makes or how many times one approaches God, except that person repents of sin and the Holy Spirit comes in, he cannot have eternal life. Jesus let the young man know that he lacked one thing. Friend, it would be well for you to open your heart and let the Spirit of God look at its contents. You might have a tendency to overlook something, but God never overlooks anything. If you go to Him with an honest and sincere heart, He will point out to you the contents of your heart.

Eternal life is not based on rules or prescribed dogmas of men. First John 5:12 states, "He that hath the Son hath life." God is no respecter of persons, but you must have Christ in your heart and life to be His child. No greater honor can be bestowed upon anyone in this world than to be a child of God. It is a far greater honor than being the President of the United States or a member of Congress. John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If you do not have the life that is in His Son, if you have not been born of the Spirit of God, you will perish. The world is perishing, all in need of a drink of the Water of Life. It can only come through the Word and the Spirit of God. Romans 6:23 reads, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Sin Is Man's Enemy

In Genesis 2:7 you can read that when God created Adam, He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Adam was created innocent, and then God gave him a law. He wanted man to be a creature of choice: to live for Him by choice and to love Him. Adam disobeyed God's law when he chose to overstep it. Therefore, God put him out of the garden, and he became lost and void of fellowship with God.

Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." God found you and me in sin. Sin always takes man down, and the longer one persists in sin, the further down he will go. Ecclesiastes 12:1 admonishes, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." When is it that people begin to say, "I find no pleasure in sin, neither in where it is taking me nor in what it is doing to

me?" When one lives in sin, he will reap for the life of sin that he has lived. Thank God, Isaiah 42:3 says, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." Christian friend, when you cried out to God, He forgave your sins and came into your heart. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, ". . . he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Because Jesus lives, we can live.

We have something far beyond this old world. We may contend with troubles and heartaches, but Psalm 30:5 tells us, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, and when the Spirit moves into your heart, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost bring life to you. It still takes the old-time sounding forth of the Word, anointed by the Spirit of God, to be drawn to Him. Matthew, Chapter 13, sets forth the parable of a net that was cast into the sea, and it drew forth of every kind. When the Word of God is preached in the Spirit, it will draw the souls of men, the young and the old alike, to God. It will point out the condition of your heart, and when you cry out to God, He will forgive you and save you.

Matthew 7:13 reads, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Sin is no respecter of persons. It will take down anyone who flirts with it. If you are not careful, the enemy will instill an idea in your mind that you can progress so far with God that you cannot be touched. Having a religious profession does not mean that you are right with God. First John 5:12 states, "He that hath the Son hath life."

"Few There Be That Find It"

Jesus said in Matthew 7:14, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto

life, and few there be that find it." Jesus was speaking of God life: spiritual life or eternal life. He was not saying that when you get saved, you will be put in a straightjacket. No, He will set you free from what has hold of you. He will loose you just as Lazarus was resurrected and loosed when he had been dead and in the grave. Jesus cried with a loud voice in John 11:43, "Lazarus, come forth." When Lazarus came forth, Jesus said in verse 44, "Loose him, and let him go." How could He do that? Jesus is the resurrection and the life. When He resurrects a person, He brings him to life. Ephesians 2:1 says, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." He has quickened and brought you to life, child of God. This is the best thing that could ever happen to anyone.

I want you to notice what Jesus said concerning eternal life. He said "few there be that find it." The devil tries to cause disturbances in religion continually, and it is just a ploy to drive away souls. Romans 1:16 tells us that the Gospel is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." There is perversion of this around the world. Paul said in Galatians 1:6-7: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." Some people try to pervert and change the Gospel. The enemy never comes out in the open. He works in an undermining way, and his purpose is to deceive people and draw them away.

Ephesians, Chapter 1, lets us know that the initial experience of salvation comes by faith in the blood of Jesus. Verses 4-6 read: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his

will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." How did we become accepted? Second Corinthians 5:21 tells us, "For he [God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God cannot look upon sin. When Jesus bowed His head and said in John 19:30, "It is finished," He was speaking of the great plan of redemption. It was finished in His sacrificial offering on the Cross as He died for fallen man.

"Redemption Through His Blood"

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." I want you to notice where the blood is applied. Hebrews 10:29 reads, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant . . . an unholy thing . . . ?"

Hebrews 9:17 tells us, "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." Jesus brought the New Testament into force with His life and the shedding of His blood. He made it possible for man to be redeemed. Prior to that time, sin could not be forgiven, but thank God, one day the Lamb of God came and shed His blood at Calvary so that we might obtain redemption. The church is a redeemed possession; she is bought with the blood of the Lamb. God made it possible that whosoever will can come to Him. With the Spirit comes eternal life, the Son of God, and God the Father.

You may say, "Ephesians 1:11 speaks of being predestinated." God did not predestinate *who* would be saved, but *how* one ought to live when he gets saved. He predestinated that we be conformed to the image of Christ and that we bear His name. In all of this, He gives us life, and He gives it to us more abundantly.

John wrote to the church in 1 John 5:6, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." Jesus is the Spirit of Truth. John 16:13 reads, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Sinner friend, the first thing Jesus does is convince you that you are lost and in need of salvation. Then, when you yield to Him and repent, He will come into your heart by the Spirit and bring life. John said, "This is he that came by water and blood." The blood cleanses the sin and the water is a type of the Water of Life.

The Life of God in Us

After the Holy Spirit comes in and brings life, that life must be sustained. Nothing will sustain it but the Word of God by the Spirit of God. John said in 1 John 5:7-8: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said in Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come [the kingdom had not yet come at that time, but soon it was to come on the scene]. Thy will be done in earth [or in these earthen tabernacles], as it is in heaven."

The heart and mind is where the will of God is done in your life, and your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, Christian friend. However, there is some cleaning up that you must do. God will cleanse you. You cannot cleanse yourself, but there is a setting apart that you must do. John stated in 1 John 5:8 that "there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Which one is it that they agree in? It

is the Spirit of God; He is the One who gives life.

John said in 1 John 5:9-10: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: [The witness is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit moves into every child of God. The Bible is the recorded Word, but when it comes into your heart by the Spirit, it becomes the Living Word, the Word of Life.] He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." If a person does not believe the Word and allow it to convince him of his wrongdoing, there is no hope for him. It is a wonderful blessing to have eternal life, the life of God in us.

As I was studying, I thought of some of the things that God's people have withstood throughout the annals of time. For example, in the Dark Ages as many as sixty-million people died as martyrs. We do not know what we will be called upon to go through. I suppose if we did, we might have a tendency to become fearful, but God does not want His people to be fearful. The Apostle Paul said in Hebrews 2:8c, "But now we see not yet all things put under him." Paul went on to say in verse 9, "But we see Jesus. . . ." When Jesus dwells in your heart, it will be well with your soul, no matter what you go through and no matter what you will have to withstand. In the history of our nation, I have never read of a more crucial time than today. Thousands of people are living in sin. Some time ago, I read an excerpt of a message that Billy Graham had preached in Central Park in New York City. He told the audience about salvation, but when he got down to the end of his message and gave an altar call, he said, "We all are sinners." What kind of message is that to a lost and dying world? Friend, the Word of God will save you, give you life, lift you out of the

quagmire of sin, set your feet on the Rock, and establish your goings.

Sin Brings Spiritual Death

We read in Luke 16:19-22: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried."

Lazarus was in dire need of food, raiment, and perhaps medical care, but when he died, he "was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Physical death is the gateway out of this life and into eternal life.

Revelation 2:11 reads, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Sin brings death. No matter who commits sin, it brings spiritual death. It is only through the blood and by the Spirit of God that you can have this life, and have it more abundantly.

You can read the end result of the rich man who died and was buried in Luke 16:23, which states, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." People get in such dilemmas that sin takes them down to where, just as David of old said in Psalm 116:3, "The pains of hell gat hold upon me." David was talking about something that gets down inside man. Hell is the final destination at the end of the sinner's life. Those who die lost without God will have hell to greet them. People do not hear hell mentioned much; nonetheless, it is out ahead of the lost. Often the word *hell* is used in such a light, chaffy manner, yet people are going

there every day. A few years ago, a man who came to church where I pastor made a profession of salvation and got up and sang to the congregation. He had a wonderful singing voice, but a year or two after this, he went back into sin and became addicted to alcohol and abused it terribly. Eventually it caused his death. As I was peering into the truck, oh, what a horrible sight to see him drunk and a preacher praying over him as he was dying, strangling on his own blood. Sin is a terrible thing. The wages of sin never go unpaid. Although people continue to live in sin, hell will be their final doom.

Going back to the account of the rich man, we read in Luke 16:24-25: "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Christ Died for the Ungodly

Time is a precious commodity. Second Corinthians 6:2 says, "Behold, now is the day of salvation." It is now that men need to come to Christ and repent. The devil never tells a person not to get saved, but rather he tells that one to put it off. He gets him or her to procrastinate, and after awhile, time runs out and all opportunities are lost. I know of a man who allowed sin to take him down until his mind was nearly gone, leaving him lost and undone, without God. Oh, how grateful you ought to be if God has saved you and given you new life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The rich man went from living sumptuously every day to a place of torments after death. There is a Heaven to gain and a hell to shun. First John 5:11-12 tells us: "And this is the record, that God hath given to

us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Eternal life is not in the new birth. You must be born again, but you obtain eternal life because Jesus lives in your heart. When you are born again, through the Holy Spirit, God the Father brings life into your being. Romans 2:7 tells us, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life."

Everyone has an eternal soul, but having an eternal soul does not mean that one has eternal life. "He that hath the Son hath life."

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:53-54: "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Paul was not talking about physical death, but of the power of spiritual death that sin brings upon people.

Paul wrote in verse 55, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Ezekiel referred to old Israel as a valley of dry bones. The Lord asked Ezekiel to prophesy to them. They were not in a literal valley of dry bones, but they represented Israel's spiritual condition. It takes the power of God to raise people up and deliver them. Ezekiel 37:12 reads, "Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel [or the land of the living]."

Again, Paul said in Ephesians 2:1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." He made us alive! Eventually, physical death will take you out of this life, but you do not have to undergo spiritual death. You can have spiritual life. At one time, saint, we all were dead in trespasses and

sins, but He saved us and gave us new life. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. First Corinthians 15:57 reads, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul, speaking of his life as a Pharisee before he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, wrote in Romans 7:9, "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Thank God, on the road to Damascus he met Jesus. When Christ comes in, He brings life; He is our life.

In Romans 5:6 Paul said, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Earlier I mentioned what happened to Adam. When Adam was yet innocent, God communed with him; but when he fell, he was put out of the garden and could no longer have fellowship with God. People who are dead in sin have no fellowship with God and no spiritual life.

Your Only Hope of Eternal Life

The Bible lets us know that as one comes to the age of accountability, there is no strength to keep that person from going down the broad road of sin. Some may go further than others. Sin is stronger than any man who is living without Christ. Man living in sin has no control over his life. He may exercise a little will power in a few things and lay down some bad habits, but he cannot lay down sin on his own. No, it takes the power of God and the Gospel to save a person from sin. Romans 5:8 tells us that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

When we were in sin, we were enemies, not only with one another but also with God. We were hostile toward God. I remember how I felt in my heart, what sin had done to me, and how it worked hatred, malice, envy, and strife in my life. It will still work those things in you if you do not stay close to God, pray, and

realize that prayer is vital to your having this eternal life. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son [it took His death to bring life], much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Your only hope of eternal life is with the mighty presence of God's Son in your life.

I want you to notice what Paul said to Timothy concerning eternal life in 2 Timothy 1:6-10: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest [more than 2000 years ago] by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ. . . ."

Too many people are looking for an appearing in the future. Friend, He appears today to every honest heart that cries out to Him. He may not solve every problem the moment you bring them to Him, but He will give you grace to stand and that which is needful in the hour of temptation and trouble. He wants you to live for Him. When does He appear? He appears when you meet in prayer and in the preaching of His Word through the Spirit of the Living God. His appearance is to give you strength and grace.

Verse 10 goes on to say, ". . . who hath abolished death [spiritual death], and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." We are living in a time when people will not stand for the straight preaching of the Word of God. Why? People want to retain things in their lives that are contrary

to sound doctrine. After a while, spiritual life just seeps out of them.

Friend, the Bible assures you that God will not dwell in an unclean vessel. He wants you to be clean from your head to your feet. There is some setting apart, or sanctifying, that you must do. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection [to the Word of God]: lest that by any means, . . . I myself should be a castaway." Having eternal life depends on your having fellowship with God and the sweet abiding of Jesus Christ in your soul.

"The Day of the Lord Is Near"

In John 10:24 the Jews asked Jesus, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." In verses 25-28 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me [God's people, or His sheep, are marked in the ear and in the foot; in other words, they hear His Word and follow Him]: And I give unto them eternal life; [To have eternal life is to have peace down in your heart that surpasses all understanding. Jesus said in John 14:27, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'] and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

No man can pluck you out of His hand, but you can take yourself out of the hand of God and walk away from His presence. God does not want you to do that. He wants you to continue in well doing and continue in the work of God, laboring together. When we compare time to eternity, time is but a drop in the bucket. James 4:14b says, "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little

time, and then vanisheth away." In some areas you may notice that a veil of fog hangs over the land in the morning, but when the sun comes up, it vanishes away; so it is with life. One day each of us will be gone from this earthly stay to be with the Lord, if we stay with Him in this life. An old song says, "I've come too far to look back," and surely we have.

We read in Joel 3:14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision." Perhaps you have not fully decided to go with Jesus. You may say, "Preacher, it will cost me too much. It takes up my time and gets in the way of things that I want to do." You need to consider Lazarus and the rich man. The Bible says the rich man fared sumptuously every day, but he died and was buried, and in hell he "lift" up his eyes.

Before this day ends, many will

go into eternity. I remember the testimony of a man who was lost. He called for the preacher when he was sick. The preacher went and prayed for him, and he got better. The preacher then said, "I guess you'll be giving your heart to the Lord."

"Oh," he said, "I just bought another farm over the way. Next spring I'll give my heart and life to the Lord."

The Lord had honored the preacher's prayer and the prayer of the man's wife and had lifted him up physically and helped him. However, in a couple of months, he was down again, and his wife called for the preacher. As he came near the house, he could hear the man crying out, "Too late! Too late! Too late!" I know sometimes that young people have a tendency not to think about getting older.

People do not think much about it until they get there, but young

person, you need to know for certain that the enemy will take your life at a young age if he can. You should not place yourself in that position. You need to live for the Lord and stay with people who will guide you and be a mother to you.

The mature side of the church is the mother of us all. There is an infinite part of the church. Isaiah, Chapter 66, likened the church to a mother as she takes a babe in her arms, dangles it on her knees, and holds it to her breast. The church holds the babes in Christ in love and care and does everything she can to promote the furtherance of their Christian lives. To live for Christ is to know Him, and to know Him is to go home with Him someday. Won't you enter into eternal life? May God bless you is my prayer.

(Cassette C-5288E)

A Burning Zeal

A man or a church without zeal is of necessity ineffective. What is the temperature of your zeal? Does it let you go for months without speaking to a soul about his salvation? Does it permit you to rest easy while others are toiling, praying, and sacrificing? About how much time on an average do you spend each day praying for souls or for the progress of the Kingdom of God on the earth? About how often do you pray definitely for some of your neighbors, your friends, or business associates? About how long has it been since you invited someone to Christ? When did you pray with someone for his spiritual needs? When did you give someone a tract? When did you write a letter filled with spiritual advice or help? How much sacrifice are you making for the cause? How much time, labor, or money have you expended for the kingdom in the past year? Is your zeal dead or is it in fervent activity? How much does the salvation of the world mean to you?

Behold the zeal of the advocates of some of the false movements of these days! See how they pour out their money like water. See how they never can be satisfied unless they are laboring for their

movement. Are you as zealous as they? If not, why not? If you have the Truth and know that you have it, should that not be enough to fire your zeal till it would not let you rest while there are others in darkness? Almost in sight of you, or perhaps within a stone's throw, are people who do not know the Truth. If you do no more than you have done the past year, may they not live and die there and never know it?

Zeal does not ask for excuses. Zeal is never satisfied till it has gone full length in labor. When one man was asked what was the secret of the marvelous success of the early church in its fight against heathenism, he replied with just one word: "Zeal." The same sort of zeal will produce results today. Zeal must, of course, be enlightened. It can succeed only when guided by wisdom. Blind zeal is like a blind horse: it is likely to run in any direction regardless of results. So be wise when you are zealous. If you are truly wise with that wisdom "which cometh down from above," you will also be zealous.

Upcoming Meetings

MEDINA, OH

September 5

LABOR-DAY MEETING: Medina Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256
Service times: 10:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m. Meal will be provided by the local congregation.
For further information contact: Pastor C. H. Dickerson, 215 Montview Drive,
Medina, OH 44256.
Telephone 330-725-6853 or 330-725-5993

SUMMERSVILLE, WV

September 14-18

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Brother E. David Stegmeier, Canby, Oregon
Service times: Wed. -Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Sat. and Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders
Telephone: 304-872-4047

MINERVA, OH

Sept. 26-Oct. 2

REVIVAL: Mt. Zion Church of God, Minerva, OH 44657
Evangelist: Brother Roger L. Decker, Newark, Ohio
Service times: Mon.-Sat. 7:00 p.m.; Sunday School 9:30 a.m.,
Morning Worship 10:30 a.m. & Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Sister Hafley.
Telephone: 330-868-6831

SUMMERSVILLE, WV

November 20-27

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Preaching nightly from the Book of Revelation
Service times: Mon. -Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Sat. 6:00 p.m. and Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders
Telephone: 304-872-4047

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

time. ". . . behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7-8).

The decision rests with you, dear friend. You have the right to choose how you prefer to live in this world and to choose much of what you do in this life. If you choose to continue to live your own sinful and rebellious way against God, be assured that you are making the greatest mistake in your life. As you choose to walk contrary to God and refuse His pardoning love, you also are choosing to spend eternity in the regions of the lost.

One must understand that he or she cannot become a Christian or depart from sin just anytime he or she feels like it or gets ready. If salvation is ever gained, it will be when God is ready, or when He invites that one. John 6:44 tells us, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath

sent me draw him. . . ." The time to be saved from sin is when God calls to you, or when He is speaking to your heart. God speaks through His Spirit and through the preaching of the Gospel to bring conviction to your heart and mind. Conviction makes you aware of your lost condition and brings knowledge that you have grieved the heart of God. Just as the prodigal son, when he realized his deplorable condition, arose and went back to his father, so must every lost soul return to his Heavenly Father. One must forsake his way and return to the Lord. There is mercy and pardon awaiting all who will come.

A great mistake some people make is that of trying to get saved on their own terms. For some reason, there are those who think they can dictate to God certain conditions that He must agree to before they will get saved. They think they can bargain with God by telling Him, "I'll get right if You do this or that or if You allow

me to do this or that." Friend, that will never work! Isaiah 55:7-8 informs us: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. . . ." One's surrender to God must be unconditional.

Dear one, it is your privilege to seek God while He may be found and while you have the opportunity. God loves you, but He is angry with your sin and rebellion. In Deuteronomy 30:19 these words are penned: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." It is your choice, friend. Why will you die when there is no valid reason?

Selected