

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Newark,
Ohio 43055.

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price;
however, it is partially maintained through the gifts
and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the
expenses being paid by the local congregation.

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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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Vol. 36 April 2006 No. 4

Annual Financial Report

A WORD OF THANKS

We want to take this opportunity to express a word of thanks to all our readers for their faithful support to *The Gospel Trumpeter*. We are grateful to you for your prayers, your thoughtful giving, and your letters of encouragement. Because of the combined efforts of prayer, labor, and finance, *The Gospel Trumpeter* continues to be mailed to thousands of homes, businesses, and institutions across the United States and into many foreign countries. First of all, we are deeply indebted to God for the ability and strength He gives us, and then to our readers and the many faithful helpers who give of their time to publish the good news of the Gospel through the printed page. Certainly, the work of the kingdom is a great work, and it is especially rewarding when we receive reports of how it is helping and has helped other souls. We are thankful for the privilege God has given us to be a small part in His great work.

Putting out a religious publication is not always an easy task. There are many aspects to it. For instance, selecting the helpful messages and the short articles we feel God would want used in *The Gospel Trumpeter* involves time and consideration. It requires searching for the right material that will provide good spiritual food for the souls of our readers that will strengthen and encourage them. Finding the proper way of exposing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost so they may be saved is always a great concern. It certainly takes the Lord to guide and direct. Since this periodical

has been in print, we have heard from many who have been won to the Lord because they have read an article that brought an awakening to their souls. Thankfully, they turned to God for mercy and pardon. Having a part in winning souls for Christ brings great rewards to each worker, and never forget that everyone can have a part!

Locating and securing the best prices to purchase paper and other materials always present a challenge. As you well know, the rising cost of materials and postal rates must also be considered. The Bible teaches that we are not to be slothful in business matters; therefore, we do strive to be as frugal as possible in our buying habits. By the way, have you moved recently? If so, have you sent us your change of address? When someone moves and fails to inform us about it, the Post Office returns that issue to us and then charges us for the return postage. This return postage at one time cost ten cents per copy. It has now risen to seventy-five cents for each copy that is returned. We sincerely ask you to send your change of address to us as quickly as possible so we might keep the additional cost to a minimum.

Also, we kindly ask that if you submit a new name to be placed on the mailing list, please be sure that individual truly wants the paper. There have been times when we received letters from ones who were not interested. Their words were, "I don't know who turned my name in, but please remove it from your files."

[continued on page 27]

1 *Thessalonians 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:*

2 *But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

3 *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:*

4 *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

5 *For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness:*

6 *Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.*

7 *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:*

8 *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

9 *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*

10 *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:*

11 *As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children,*

12 *That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*



Our Daily Walk

Brother Roger L. Decker

Shamefully Entreated at Philippi

When Paul wrote this letter to the church at Thessalonika, it was obvious that he had come against slanderous reports. Opponents at Thessalonika brought false accusations, and these opponents were doing their best to hinder the Gospel. Paul told how he had suffered abuse at Philippi. He stated in verse 2, "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at

Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention [difficulty or strife]." Much contention existed because of the slanderous reports. No doubt, the opponents of Paul used that opportunity to slander him. They could have used what happened at Philippi to say that he was a criminal, that he had a criminal record, and that he was running from the law. Paul said he was shamefully entreated at Philippi.

What was the Apostle Paul referring to? Let us go to Acts, Chapter 16, and read the account of the Apostle Paul at Philippi. Verses 14-24 read: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened [that is when a soul is easy to work with; it is just like feeding a little bird—she was ready to receive the Gospel], that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she

was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit [not to the woman, but to the spirit], I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

Here we read the account of Paul and Silas being beaten and thrown into prison. Paul said they were shamefully entreated. The shame of the treatment was that it was wholly undeserved. They did not deserve such punishment. It was contrary to the law in that it was accompanied by circumstances designed to make their punishment as humiliating as possible. The magistrates did their very best to humiliate, embarrass, and make them appear to be great fugitives from justice. The Thessalonians knew this.

Charges Against the Apostle Paul

In verse 3 of our Scripture text we find at least three charges mentioned against the Apostle Paul: "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile." In that verse it is implied by the slanderous report that he was a deceiver, that his motives were impure, and that he was hypocritical. In verse 4 Paul stated, "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts." This verse indicates that he was accused of seeking to please men rather than God.

Paul said in verse 5, "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness." Then in verse 9 Paul said, "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." Both verses 5 and 9 hint that some people said Paul was preaching the Gospel for what he could get out of it.

Paul said in verse 6, "Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." This Scripture indicates that Paul was accused of seeking personal prestige. What a list of charges awaited the Apostle Paul at Thessalonika!

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5 we read that the Apostle Paul said, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only [in other words, it was not for personal prestige; it was the Gospel that God sent], but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

Paul declared that the Gospel did not come to them in word only, but also in power. It was not the Apostle Paul that God sent as much as it was the Gospel; God sends the Gospel. This is where people get

mixed up. Someone may say, "Who does that preacher think he is?" Well, if he is sent of God, he is sent for one reason, and that is to declare the Gospel.

In verse 7 of our Scripture text Paul stated, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." It is hinted that Paul was charged with being harsh, or with acting as a dictator. Sometimes people have a tendency to think that the preacher is harsh when the message is strong; however, people need to separate the Gospel from the man who is delivering the message. They must distinguish between the two. Ministers have different ways of bringing the Gospel. Some really get into it, while others may present it more gently; nevertheless, God wants all people to hear the Gospel.

"Walk Worthy of God"

With all the slanderous accusations against the Apostle Paul, what did he do? He lived right, and no one can report against living right. People may slander you all they want, but God will back up the life of one who lives right. Paul went on to say in verse 10 of our Scripture text, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves [where?] among you that believe." Oh, what a need of walking right, or of living right! Friend, God is interested in your daily walk, not just your talk.

When the Apostle Paul was on trial, he let the church know that since he had lived a holy life before them, was gentle to them, and nourished them, they were witnesses of how he had lived. He said in verse 11 of our Scripture text, "As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." He let them know that they also had a responsibility before God.

Paul continued in verse 12, "That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom

and glory." Dear one, you cannot do anything against living right. Someone may slander you, but if you are living right, God will back you. The Apostle Paul answered all those charges, but that was not enough. He could have answered them all he wanted, but had he lived unrighteously, they would have thought that he was speaking lies. Paul answered the charges and lived right.

There are some things you cannot settle at a conference table, but you can live right. Someone may falsely accuse you, slander you, and spread gossip against you; but that person cannot stop you from living right if you have the grace of God in your life. The proof is in the life. You can live some things down. God is concerned about your daily walk. The power lies in your daily living, or your daily walk. Some people wonder why they do not have any power with God. They need to ask themselves, "How is my daily walk?"

You may make great boasts and profess to be highly spiritual, but if your life does not back your claims, there is no witness of the Spirit and it is to no avail. Several people may stand and witness for you, but you need the witness of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God.

Paul not only denied the accusations but also lived in such a way that it brought acceptance of the Gospel. The enemy was working to hinder the Gospel; that is the devil's motive. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul said, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." What was Paul telling them? In essence, he was saying that God gave him audience to preach the Gospel, and they received the Gospel right in the midst of all the slander and negative reports.

The convincing part of salvation is the Christian's daily walk. You may go around and trumpet, "I'm saved, I'm saved" all you want, but your walk needs to back what you say. You may sing beautifully, preach outstanding messages, testify, and shout in the aisles; but if your daily walk comes short of holiness, then it is not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Living in such a way that you please God should be your greatest desire. You should want to please God and to be accepted of Him.

Walking With God

Hebrews 11:5 says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Enoch pleased God. How did he please Him? It was not just the fact that Enoch offered sacrifices to God or that he was a good person, but rather that he walked with God. In Genesis 5:22 the writer said, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Enoch walked with God three hundred years.

Today it is difficult to get people to walk with God three weeks, and for some that is stretching it. Enoch had no Bible to read, no pastor, no saints to call upon, and no one to have prayer with him; yet he walked with God three hundred years. What does the Bible say? "He pleased God."

You can read of another Old Testament patriarch who walked with God in Genesis 6:9, which reads, "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations [or he was perfect in what God required of him in that day], and Noah walked with God." Noah walked with God so closely that God saved Noah and his family from the Flood. Both Enoch and Noah lived so that their lives honored and pleased God. The

Bible lets us know at that time the world was full of corruption. It pleased God that those men considered Him first. It really pleases God when individuals put Him first yet today.

Let us consider our daily walk. To walk with God is to honor Him. When individuals walk with God, their affections change. The change in their affections is so drastic that many people just scratch their heads and wonder, "What happened to those people?" Also, people's priorities change when they are walking with God. They make God a top priority by putting their walk with Him ahead of everything else.

In Colossians 3:1-3 the Apostle Paul wrote: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." What was the Apostle saying? To paraphrase that, he was letting one know that if he is dead to sin and has been resurrected a new man, then he is different. That is making it very simple. Something is different about you if you are dead to sin.

When a person dies physically, you do not see the spirit leave the body, but you see the effects. By the same token, when someone kneels at an altar of prayer and gets saved, you do not see God's Spirit descend into that person, but you see the effects. That individual is no longer the same when the Spirit of God is dwelling in him; he is a changed person. He acts differently, talks differently, and walks differently.

Christian Values

The heart of the Christian must be set on higher things. Before he was saved, he thought serving God was all rules, regulations, and commandments. However, when he got saved, a change took place. When the Holy Spirit is living on the inside, his heart is changed. The old disobedient spirit is removed, and

God puts in a right spirit; He puts in His Spirit, and one's desires change.

When a person gets saved, he does not withdraw himself from all activities of this life. He still has to work and mingle with people, but the things of this life seem so trivial when put alongside eternity. Earthly things lose their value; they seem so cheap and vain. The things that he thought were of great importance when he was in the world lose their glitter when he becomes a Christian. Ambitions that dominated his life when he was in the world seem so empty and void after he becomes a follower of Christ. He is still in the world, but he uses the things of the world in a much different way. He puts giving above receiving, serving above ruling, and forgiveness above revenge.

The Christian's values will be those of the Lord's, not men's. The Christian puts love above hate, and he puts obedience to the Spirit of God above the desires of the flesh. The Christian puts modest apparel above worldliness. Oh, how the Christian desires to dress right. If there is any question, the child of God will give God the benefit of the doubt. Also, the Christian is concerned about the welfare of others.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colosse in Colossians 3:5-9: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds."

What was Paul saying? These are attributes of the old man when he is living in sin. People do not continue to do these things when they are saved. Paul continued in verse 10, "And have put on the new

man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." The Apostle Paul said in verse 5 to mortify your members; in other words, you must put them to death. The word *mortify* in this verse means to deprive a thing of its power and destroy its strength. You should not use any member of your body to sin against God.

To gratify a sensual appetite is to give it the very food and nourishment by which it lives, thrives, and is active. The appetite increases with the indulgence. If you have a habit such as tobacco, you need to cut it off completely. You should not set aside one cigarette so the devil can tempt you with it; that will cause you to become discouraged. The next thing you know, you will be back to smoking the whole pack again. You need to cut off that habit entirely.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:12, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." What was Paul talking about? In this verse sin is represented as a king, a ruler, or a tyrant that has the desires of the mind and the members of the body under his control. By influencing the passions, sin governs the whole body. Paul said not to let sin reign or have any place in your soul. Wherever sin governs, it is in control, and it will take you captive. You will become a slave to this tyrant that will demand more and more of you.

How is sin known? It is known by evil influences in the mind and evil acts in the life. Wherever sin is felt, it has dominion, because sin is sin only as it works in action or passion against God. Sin cannot be dormant. If sin is not working, then there is no sin at all. Wherever sin is, it has to work. Paul said do not let sin reign, or control you; in other words, do not let it be your master. How is that possible? Paul said in Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

A man cannot live physically just because he is in the air, but He also must have the air in him. The same is true spiritually. Unless you are in Christ and Christ is in you, you cannot be alive unto God. You must have Christ in you, which the Bible says is the "hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Turning Away From That Which Is Against God

We want to look at some things the Apostle Paul said would accompany the Christian's daily walk. He stated in Colossians 3:5-15: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

"But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."

There are some things that Paul mentioned that we used to be part of. The Apostle Paul said to put off those things. The Gospel demands

that you completely turn away from everything that is against God. The Apostle Paul mentioned fornication, or illicit sex. Sexual appetite is something that must be controlled, not gratified. You can do some things to help protect yourself. One way is, do not be alone with the opposite sex in a house or an apartment or a parked car. If you do, you are opening the door to your desires and passions. You can pray all you want, but God is going to ask you, "Why are you there?" Sexual appetites are to be controlled. God put them in you, but He has given you an outlet through marriage.

The Apostle Paul also mentioned uncleanness, inordinate affection (or lust), evil concupiscence, covetousness (or greediness with a desire for what a person has no right to have). Verse 7 says, "In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them." In other words, that used to be a part of your life, or your everyday walk before you were converted. Then you were a child of disobedience, and you were under the wrath of God. What did Paul say? "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (verse 6). Friend, if you are walking in disobedience, you are under the wrath of God. He is displeased with you. You cannot walk with God and have the things that Paul mentioned active in your life.

Traits of the Old Man

The Apostle Paul went on to mention other fleshly things that need to be put away in your daily walk. He said in Colossians 3:8, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." He talked about anger (bursts of temper, or uncontrolled temper). The only time some parents discipline their children is when they are out of control.

Next, Paul mentioned wrath, or long-lasting anger. Some people get angry and either they will not speak

at all or they will only engage in minimal conversation. Paul said to put off these things. It is a hindrance to you spiritually, and it is a hindrance to the Gospel. Someone may say, "Well, they did this, and I am not going to have anything to do with them." Nevertheless, Paul said to put these things away from you.

Then Paul mentioned malice (or viciousness of mind), blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth (nasty, foul talk or telling nasty stories or using foul language). He said to put these things away from you. Some people cuss and take God's name in vain. That is blasphemous.

I do not understand how anyone can watch or read something that has cursing in it. I am talking about television and love novels. How do you think God feels? The best thing you can do is to put it away from you. Someone may say, "Don't you know that television keeps people off the streets?" It never kept me off the streets. What I learned there, I took to the streets.

Next, Paul mentioned lying, which includes so-called white lies, little lies, and shading the truth. Let me clarify what lying is. You may report something that you thought was the truth, but that is not lying. Lying is when you tell something that you know is not true. Paul said to put lying away from you. Some young people lie to their parents so their parents do not find out where they really were. All liars, whether they are involved in telling little lies or big lies, will end up in the lake of fire, according to the Bible. These things are traits of the "old man," when you were a child of disobedience. These things are not to be included in your daily walk as a Christian.

The Binding Power That Holds the Church Together

Paul said now that you have put off all these things, you have to replace them with bowels of mercies (or pity), kindness, humbleness,

meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering (or patience). These are attributes that some people need to really improve on. They do not have much patience with others. When people get saved, it may take a while before they get all these things put off. You need to be kind and long-suffering and patient, just as God is with you.

If you were raised in the church, then you would not know what it is like to be engulfed in the world. So it is going to take a little more long-suffering, patience, and understanding. When you get impatient, just remember how patient and long-suffering God has been with you. He said in Colossians 3:13, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." The Christian must forbear and forgive, and he does so because God forgave him. Moreover, only the forgiving can be forgiven.

Then the Apostle Paul mentioned charity. He said in verse 14, "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Charity is the "cement" that holds the body of Christ together. Children of God are expected to get along. Charity is a binding power that holds the body of Christ together. Without it the body would soon drift apart. Love will hold the body of Christ in unbreakable, unshakable fellowship.

Paul went on to say in verse 15, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Literally, the first part of this verse means, "Let the peace of God be the umpire of all things in your heart." If the peace of Jesus Christ is the umpire in one's heart, when feelings clash and ones are pulled in two different directions at the same time, the decision of Christ will always keep us in the way of love. If you will follow Christ and let the peace of God rule, it will always lead you in the direction of love.

The way to do things right is to have Jesus Christ as the arbitrator of conflicting emotions in our hearts. We should take the problems to

Jesus. One thing is certain, Jesus will not amplify the flesh and cause you to act carnally. When He umpires a decision in your life, it will be in that which makes peace and in the way of love.

As I bring the message to a close, I want you to consider the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:17, which reads, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name

of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." This is the test of your daily walk with Christ. If you bring every word and deed into the presence of Jesus Christ, your life will please God.

How is your daily walk? As God looks upon you, is your walk pleasing Him? That is how you must walk if you are going to make Heav-

en your eternal home. If your walk is not pleasing to God, it can be. The Lord sends the Gospel, not so that you will turn and go another direction, but so that you will know there is help for you. There is help for every soul whose walk is not what it needs to be in the eyes of God.

(Cassette C-5422E)

The Prayer of Meditation

Meditation is dwelling on a subject in thought, revolving any subject over and over in the mind. We shall here speak of meditation as used in the contemplation of God and the truths of the Christian religion. Meditating on God and His law is of great importance; it is really the foundation of the whole prayer life.

The devout Psalmist understood something of the importance and benefits of right meditation when he prayed, "Let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord." Speaking of the godly man, he says, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." This is the ground and secret of godliness and godly living. With respect to his meditation he said: "Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation"; "While I was musing, the fire burned." "Musing" on the things of God is a private devotion that usually results in the love of God being enkindled in our hearts. Again, he says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet"; "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips when I meditate on thee in the night watches"; "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word."

Meditation is prayer. It is sometimes called mental prayer to distinguish it from the prayer of petition.

Meditating prayer is not asking God for anything, but it almost always ends in such a prayer. Suppose you open your

Bible to Isaiah 6:3 and read, "And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." You begin to meditate upon the holiness of God. You view His holy acts in creation and in redemption. You see His holiness as revealed in His law. The Spirit aids you, and you get a clearer conception of God and His holiness; you see its beauty more clearly; and you throw yourself lovingly, confidently into His bosom and cry from an intense inward desire, "O God, let thy holiness be upon me." Thus, the prayer of meditation ends in the prayer of petition.

Meditation is not study. The study of God's law is good, in that it produces intellectual results, but meditation on God's law increases the love and devotion of our hearts. Nevertheless, meditation is carried on by the action of the mental faculties. You can see that the mind is more actively employed while you are contemplating the character of God as revealed in His Word and His works than it is when you are merely asking Him for what you need. Very little mental effort is required to ask the Lord for that which we may need. This is why meditative prayer is denominated mental prayer.

We should study the Bible that we may from an intellectual standpoint rightly divide the Word of Truth; but we should have a higher aim than merely gaining an intellectual knowledge of divine things.

The different tissues of our bodies need food. The mouth and the stomach prepare food and supply the different constituents of the body. Should the stomach retain all the nutrition of the foods, it would have a supply of foods, but their strength and life-giving force would never be felt in the other parts of the body. Our souls need food. It is the mind that is to supply the soul with the food it needs. If the mind retains all the nutrition of truth, we may have much intellectual knowledge even of divine Truth, but the soul is not built up. In the spiritual being there is a process whereby the truth prepared by the mind can be conveyed to the soul, imparting life-giving force and increasing the soul's warmth and strength of devotion.

Meditation is an aid to the will; and all our progress in spiritual life is made through the choice and the power of the will. It is only those who will that can drink of the water of life. That a sinner may be able to come to God, he must be moved upon by something that acts as a stimulus to his will. Many sinners have a will to come to God, but sin has such a power over them as prevents them from acting. The Apostle Paul at one time willed to do good; but evil being present with him, he could not do the good that he willed to do. The sinner hears of the love of God, and this love, reaching his heart, arouses latent forces of his will and enables him to come to the fountain of life.

It is the love of God all the way through that is constraining power in the Christian's life. A person may do a great many things to be seen of men, have much enthusiasm in service,

[continued on page 26]

John 1:32 And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.

33 And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.

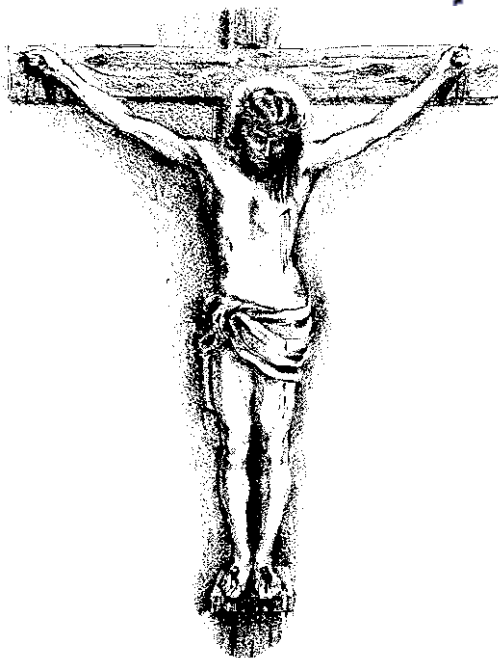
34 And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.

35 Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;

36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

37 And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Behold the Lamb of God



Brother Esau Brooks

A Marvelous Declaration

Those people in our Scripture text had quite a privilege; but I am glad that we do not have to be deprived of the same joy, happiness, and thrill that they experienced. Jesus is not here in a physical body, but He is still alive and just as real as He ever was. John made a very marvelous declaration, calling those people of his day and also future generations to behold, or consider, the Lamb of God. That may not mean much to people today, be-

cause most people do not deal with lambs. Today many people have never been around a lamb, but the people whom John was addressing were steeped in a religion that offered sacrificial lambs. When John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," those people knew exactly what he was talking about. When John cried out "Behold," he was saying, "Take a really good look at God's Lamb."

From the time God led the Israelites out of Egypt to the promised land, the land of Canaan, He instituted a religion that dealt with

the offering of sacrificial lambs. Therefore, He was calling upon those descendants to go back in their thoughts to what they had been taught concerning this religious rite of offering lambs for sacrifices. They were accustomed to those sacrifices from the time God gave the command to Moses to their present time. The offering of lambs was quite common to them, but no doubt many people were merely going through the formality of the practice without any intimate knowledge of why they were doing it. John was

telling them that God's Lamb had appeared.

I want to encourage church-going people to become reacquainted with the Lamb of God. It hurts me so much to see the way religion is being corrupted and watered down in our day. Many people know nothing about salvation. The only thing they know about serving God is attending church services and carrying their Bibles with them when they find it convenient. They have never experienced the thrill, the joy, and the blessing of genuine salvation. It is foreign to them.

You need to consider the Lamb of God carefully. You might have read about Him in the Bible, but that is not sufficient. Many people fail to realize what beholding the Lamb of God truly means to every man on the face of God's earth. God made His Son a sacrificial Lamb to be offered for our sins.

When I was but a boy, people had greater feelings in their hearts toward the things of God than they do today. When I was about five or six years of age, while attending church, even the older men used to go to church with their families. When those older men sang and I looked up into their faces, even in my childhood, I wondered what made them so joyful. The words of the songs thrilled their souls. When God saved me, He opened my understanding, and I experienced what they were singing about; then I understood what the preaching of the Gospel was all about. Since then, I have never been satisfied with nominal religion.

The Cost of Living Right

Real salvation is demanding, and it changes you so that you willingly conform to what God demands. Nowadays many people look upon and regard any old way of living as Christian. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. . . ." That is the way it was after God found me.

Many people today do not even know what sin is. They see the ravishing of sin every day, yet they do not fully understand what it is. That is the reason people flirt so much with sin.

Today most religion has become so watered down that people do not even have the slightest desire to become Christians and serve God. If you were to take a poll, you would probably be surprised about how many people would disagree with this. They would say, "He is too conservative." Today people label religious individuals as conservative or liberal. When I was growing up, there were only "Christians," and in reality there are still only "Christians," despite what people say. Sometimes you hear people talk about a "good sinner" or a "bad Christian"; that is how mixed up people are today. There are no such classifications in God's eyes. You are either a Christian or a sinner. Either you have an experience of salvation or you do not have it.

Many who call themselves Christians have fallen so far below the expectation of God that it is alarming. People gathering in a building and singing a few songs together does not make them Christians. If you have Christ dwelling within you, you are living a holy life. Again, Paul said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." I exhort you not to settle for cheap religion. Remember, what is cheap is not good, and whatever is good is not cheap. Today people have become "bargain hunters" when it comes to religion.

False religion has multiplied. Look at all the so-called churches in the world today and the effect they are having on the population. Sin and all kinds of ungodliness are increasing. Multitudes fail to see the evil of homosexuality. Friend, it is sin! People are not born that way. A man is not born a homosexual any more than one is born a thief. One becomes a thief after he is born. God

does not create thieves, and He does not create homosexuals. False religion may ordain them and exult them, but as far as God is concerned, homosexuality is an abomination in His sight!

People need to take another look at the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for our sins. Generally by the standard of the religious world today, it costs very little to be a Christian, but the price is going up every day; the price for living right is getting higher. You may hear much about the cost of living and the cost of this or that rising, but no cost is increasing as rapidly as the cost of living for God. That is the reason true followers of Christ are not increasing; they are decreasing. More families are raising children for the devil than for God. I pray that God will help you to behold the Lamb of God more earnestly.

While talking to my wife some time ago, I said, "The trouble is not so much with religion or with what some churches preach or teach, but the real trouble is that too many people are not getting a genuine experience of salvation." You talk about an endangered species! A genuine child of God has become an endangered species, yet some statistics indicate that more people are attending church now than ever before. Our world is full of so-called churches, but where are the true children of God? May God help us.

Many people have lost sight of the vision they once had regarding salvation, and they are trying to water down the experience of salvation. This is the reason fewer people see the need of committing themselves to God. Have you noticed there is not much commitment being practiced anymore? Far too many people seem to be satisfied to live with a superficial experience.

When I was a young convert, the older brethren used to say to the young converts, "You need to sell out to the Lord and go deeper." One brother used to sing a song that says, "You need to dig a little deeper yet." Those brethren have passed

away now, and so have their exhortations. Today people tend to say, "Do the best you can, and God will understand." Dear one, if you search the Scriptures, you will not find anything like that. God does not say things such as that. Jesus said in John 3:7, "Ye must be born again." You may say, "You should not be so hard on people." It is not a matter of being hard on people; it is a matter of adhering to the standard of the Word of God.

The Purpose of Christ's Coming

Let us look again at the Lamb of God to see what is intended concerning our spiritual good. I want you to focus your attention on three specific parts of this proclamation. First, I want you to consider the title of this message: "Behold the Lamb of God." Second, you need to consider the purpose of Christ's coming: to take away, not to cover, the sin of the world. Third, you need to give the attention these words are demanding. When God deals with what affects mankind, He deals with it, not in the plural sense, but in the singular.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 53:5-6, speaking of Christ: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Dear one, you need to take a closer look at these important teachings in the Word of God.

In our Scripture text John was calling on the people to "Behold the Lamb of God." What was there to see? Was Jesus just an average man walking along? Was it to notice how sanctimoniously He lived? It was none of those things. In the Old Testament when they talked about a lamb, they were talking about sacrificing a life. They sacrificed a lamb as an offering for sin. Therefore,

when John said "Behold the Lamb of God," he wanted the people to notice the One sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

Jesus is not just any lamb or another lamb, but He is the Lamb of God, the One to whom all the other lambs were pointing. He represents the sacrifice God was making for us to get rid of sin. Do you think that shaking a preacher's hand, signing a decision card, or trying the best way you can to serve God is all that God requires of us? Friend, that is far from the truth. All other lambs that were sacrificed down through the years were symbolic of the One who was to come. God sacrificed His only begotten Son. John 3:16 states, "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."

There is more to serving God than the average person thinks or believes. You may say, "Well, I know I am a Christian, and I do not have to do all those things." What kind of Christian are you? Are you affecting this generation in the right way? Are you affecting the world in any way? God sacrificed His Son. Romans 5:6-8 reads: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth [or recommends] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

To see the value of those words, look at it in the terms of our living. As hateful as some people may be, Christ died for them. As ungodly as you might have been living, He died for you, and He stands ready to embrace you and claim you as one of His children if you will yield to Him with all your heart.

Love So Amazing and So Divine Demands Sacrifice

The experience of salvation is something that many people are not

seeing today in the religious world. You need to distinguish in your mind the difference between the religious world and the Church of God. The Church of God is not merely a church among other churches; she is not just another church. People are fighting as hard as they can to bring her down to their level, but thank God, God still has those who dare to lift up their voices against that which is false and cry out as John did in his day: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

One song we often sing says this about Jesus: "*Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.*" Love so amazing and so divine demands sacrifice. Religious organizations today are geared toward making less demands on people. Many people mean well, and I am not after them. I am after the one whom they are serving: Satan. I am angry with Satan for what he is doing to many precious souls. Seeing what is happening in the religious world today is sad.

As a Lamb, Jesus represented innocence. His life was perfect, His nature was spotless, and His conduct was unblameable. How many people are striving to that end today? That is where the problem lies. Christ is going to affect you in some way. If you see Christ as God intends you to see Him, you are going to try to be like Him.

With all the good qualities about Christ, He died for us on the Cross. When John cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God," as a lamb He became an emblem of meekness, patience, and long-suffering. When they heaped cruel indignities upon Him, He took it all and was led away as a lamb before the priest, before Pilate, and before Herod; yet He opened not His mouth. I am talking about the Christ of God. He did not go through all of that because of His sins, for He had no sin. What He did was for the sins of all mankind. He died as a lamb without one word of complaint. If you search your Bible,

you will not find one instance when Christ stood up to the Father and said: "Father, I cannot do this for them. Look how they are mistreating Me. Listen to what they are saying about Me. Look at how uninterested they are." No, He did not do that.

Isaiah 53:7 reads, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth [in protest]." Nowadays one can hardly make any demands on people to do anything for the Lord.

In the New Testament you can read that God struck Saul of Tarsus down to the ground as he was on the way to persecute Christians. When he got back up, Acts 9:6 lets us know that the first words he spoke were, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Today what words do people say? "What do I have to do?" They are more interested in what they do not have to do. No wonder one songwriter wrote: "*Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came, Ruined sinners to reclaim. Hallelujah, what a Savior.*"

If you are going to get rid of sin in your life, you must do much more than what you are doing now. You may say, "But we are not saved by works." No, we are not saved by works, but we cannot be saved without works. If you are saved, you will produce good works. You will do something for God, not because you have to, but because you want to.

Sister, you will not wear long dresses because it is the style but because God wants women to adorn themselves in modest apparel. God only asks you to do what is necessary for you to do. He does not make unreasonable demands.

What Does God Demand of Us?

When John said in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," notice that he said "taketh away," not "covereth." He positively takes

away the sin of the world. If you ever behold Him, you will agree completely. By Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross, He took away the curse of sin. You may say, "There is still a lot of sin in the world." Yes, that is because people are not doing what God says to do. Many times when a man of God preaches the Bible standard of the church, people do not want to measure to the message. They say they see no need to do all of that. What about all that Jesus did? John said in 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. . . ." He did it to take away the sin and the guilt of sin from our lives. There is no such thing as trying to do your best. He brings you to the place where you feel that you cannot do enough for Him. The more you do, the more you want to do. That is the way I have found it to be.

The Lamb of God takes away the pollution and the corruption of sin from the world, from your life, and from my life. There is no other way for man to get rid of sin and be saved from sin except by Him. You may join every church in the world and shake every preacher's hand, but you will never get rid of sin until Jesus takes it away. Attending church services, learning a catechism, or trying to do your best cannot take away sin. Only Christ has the power to take it away. What is the demand that is made upon us? God is calling for us to behold the Lamb of God. Peter and Andrew heard John speak, and they obeyed. They went home and spent the night with the Lord, and by the next morning, they were winning souls. Next, they found Philip, and Philip went and found Nathanael. Philip said to Nathanael, "We have found the Messiah, the Christ of God."

Nathanael asked, "You did? Who is He?"

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

Philip did not argue, He just

said, "Come and see." Just as they saw with their physical eyes, you can see with your spiritual eyes. You cannot look upon Him with your physical eyes, but you can obey the Holy Spirit in His direction.

Let us behold Him in the mystery of His incarnation. I want you to consider how lowly He stooped to find you and me and how humbly He reached down and lifted us out of sin. Behold Him in the wonders of His life: how holily He lived, how sorrowful His life was, and how He lived a life of self-denial. Then behold Him in dark Gethsemane as He faced the bitter cup. He said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Let us behold Him dying on the Cross. The song I quoted previously continues, "*See, from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down; Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*" We should behold Him with more reverence, more humility, more shame, and more contrition than we are beholding Him. Then we need to behold what brought Him down from Heaven and caused Him to die on the Cross. When the soldier took his spear and pierced Jesus' side, out came water and blood. The centurion looking on, said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). He was convinced.

Friend, God is asking you to behold the Lamb of God. Look upon Him with more thankfulness and more appreciation. Won't you seek the Lord to get deeper in the things of God? You need to let God baptize you with power, glory, and grace that will enable you to be a better witness for Him in this life. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." May God bless you.

(Cassette C-5228E)

If you would master temptation,
let Christ master you.

My Personal Testimony

I am so thankful that Jesus opened His door for me! In early January 2005, I became so tired of sin and of the pain that it was causing me. I just wanted to give my soul back to God. The words "I'm sorry" were easy words for me to say, but proving that I was sorry was what I needed to do to give my soul back to God. So, after twenty-five years of alcohol abuse, January of 2005 was my last taste of alcohol. By mid February, I still felt that I was not proving myself to God. Next, I put aside one of the dirtiest habits there is—smokeless tobacco. Rubbing snuff was the harder of the two habits to break.

By May of the same year, I felt that I had sufficiently proved to God that I was sorry for turning my back on Him. I started to seek God on *my* terms. By early summer I became ill with chest pains. The pain would move around. Also, I had pain in my arm and my legs, and my stomach was upset. I just knew that I was having heart attacks.

I was admitted to the hospital for observation. They ran tests, took x-rays, and did blood work, but they found nothing wrong. I continued to be sick even after they sent me home. I changed doctors and took many different medications. I spent thousands of dollars, yet the doctors told that my heart is in good shape. None of the doctors I saw could explain what was wrong with me or why I was having those attacks.

By this time I had dropped my terms for getting right with God and was ready to accept God on His terms. You may ask why there was a sudden change in my attitude. It was because I thought I was going to die. I was so scared that I did not want to go to sleep at night because I was looking at spending eternity in hell.

I began praying to God to have mercy on my soul. I told Him that I was sorry for having turned my back on Him. I knocked on His door, but there was no answer. This was early in August. Seven months had past, and I felt so alone. There was no answer from God, and I felt that God had spoken by turning His back on me. I thought, "I have nowhere to turn; I have waited too long, and now I am doomed to hell!"

I do not know the hour of the night, but one night I was asleep and the Lord Jesus awakened me and said, "Jeff, the door is open. Come on home!" I jumped out of bed and ran down the stairs to the couch. There I fell on my knees and poured out my heart to God. Right then, Jesus came in!

A little later, as I was sitting on the couch thanking God, the devil began to work on my mind and say, "What are you doing? Look at all the things you have done. A little couch crying is not going to set you free. There is no way you can be forgiven of your sins."

I looked over at the end table, and there was a Bible. I picked up the Bible for the first time in many, many years. The Book of Deuteronomy stood out in my mind. I turned to Chapter 30, and as I read that chapter, I became the bride. I kept saying, "I do! I do!" With every "I do," the devil was fading away, until he was completely gone.

I began looking forward to the first church service that I could attend. I remember telling my dad the news of my experience and how it happened. He did not say, "Congratulations!" or "That is wonderful!" or "Thank God!" Not Dad. He said, "Did you pray through? Son, did you really pray through?" I said, "Oh, yes! I did!"

The fall camp meeting at the

Church of God, God's Acres, was approaching, and I was looking forward to it. One of the things in life that is a pleasure for me is farming. I have always baled hay during the camp meetings in the past, but this year was different—I was going to camp meeting!

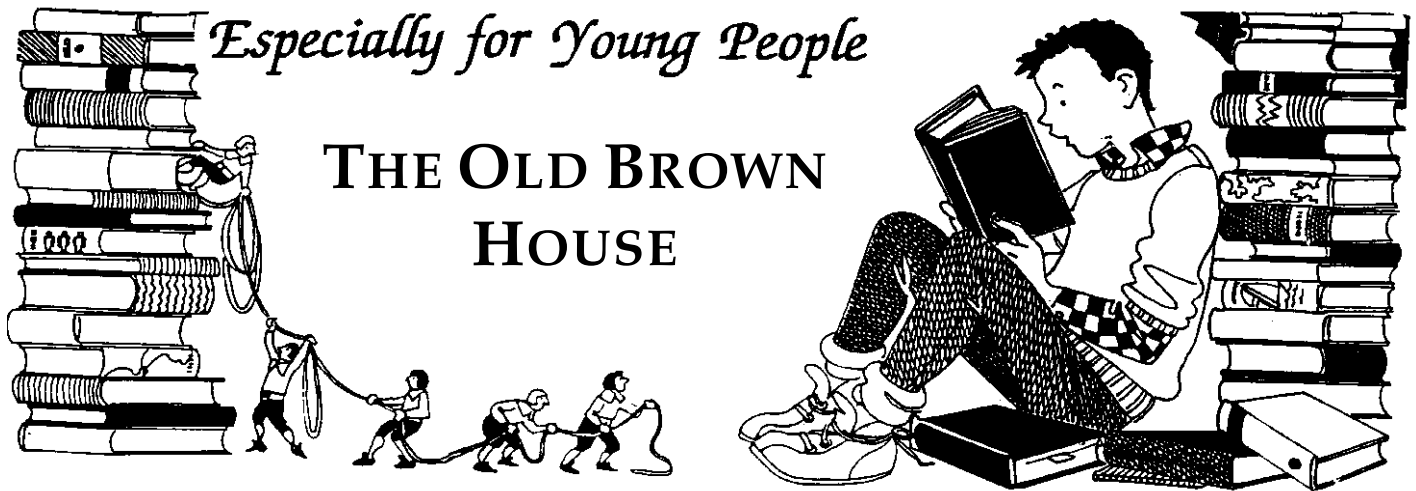
The weather radar showed really nice weather up to two days before the camp meeting. The camp meeting was four days away, and I was working on my last fifteen-acre field of hay. The hay was perfectly dry, and I was raking it into windrows for baling. As I was working, I was rejoicing and singing, "I'm going to camp meeting." As I was coming down a hill, the tractor began to shake and jerk, and the tire from the rake went rolling past me. After getting the tractor stopped, I found the tire and discovered that the center hub was missing. Without the center hub, the tire has nothing on which to ride. The hub is six inches around and three to four inches thick. Somewhere in all that hay was the hub. You talk about a needle in a haystack!

I called my wife to tell her that I was going to the dealership to order a new hub. I knew they would not have a new hub in stock. The bottom line was that I would not get the hay done before the camp meeting.

As I was talking on the phone, I saw something small and black laying in the hay. I walked over to it, and there was the hub! I was so shocked that I did not touch it. I just looked at it. Then I noticed something was laying to the right of the hub. It was a small spring, one-half inch round by two inches, and laying beside it was a gear. I installed a new bolt in the hub, put in the gear and spring, and was back to raking hay an hour later. Again, I was rejoicing and singing, "I'm going to camp meeting!" I believe the Lord truly wanted me to attend the camp meeting.

It feels so good to be back in Father's house!

Jeff Wells



It was very old, low-roofed, and weather-beaten, standing quite a little stretch from the road, and you might have supposed it deserted but for the thin column of smoke that wound slowly above the roof. So desolate did it look, but it was inhabited, and could you have pushed aside the creaking door, you might have seen an old woman, wrinkled and gray, sitting by the silent hearth, stirring the dull fire or looking absently from the window.

It was Aunt Ruth Jones, as the neighbors called her, of whom little was known, except that she was an odd old woman—a sort of hermit, living all alone in the neglected old house. It had come into her possession, with a small farm adjoining, by the death of her parents some thirty years before.

At first the neighbors were curious to see the new occupant; they found a tall, spare woman, then about thirty-four years of age, little given to gossip, shy, and cold. Some affirmed that she was proud, and others said that her life had been one of disappointment. None had succeeded in drawing out her story, and gradually the old brown house and its occupant were left to themselves.

Years had wrought changes; the walls were now darkened with smoke, the windows dingy, the floor sunken in; there was nothing cheery in the ill-kept room or in the face of Aunt Ruth. Some natures become

shriveled and cramped when left to themselves, and hers was such an one; I am afraid it was also narrowed and hardened by being shut off from humanity, with none to share her joys or grief or to care indeed, if she had any.

As the days came and went, they brought nothing to her but a little round of chores, a bit of patchwork, or straw braiding, and occasionally a walk to the village store to buy the few articles she required.

The gay dresses and pert stare of the village girls, the glimpses of happy homes caught through the windows, and the noisy stir of life, only made more striking the contrast of her own lonely lot. Gladly would she hasten back to her own silent fireside where the cats, at least, were glad of her presence. Old Brindle knew her step and tossed her head impatiently for nubbins of corn or the pail of slop with which she was wont to be treated. The hens cackled merrily and scarcely stirred from their tracks as her dress brushed their shining feathers.

The care of these creatures was a kind of company, and on frosty mornings Aunt Ruth might be seen watching them eating so greedily, while her own breakfast was yet untasted and her feet and fingers benumbed with cold.

Though none shared her heart or home, yet there was sometimes one bright presence within those dim walls, a childish, questioning voice

and sweet laughter.

It was Bessie Lane. One June day on her way to school, a sudden dash of rain had driven the child there for shelter. Ever since, the happy little girl, with flaxen hair and clear eyes, would go to the forsaken old house to chat with Aunt Ruth. As that springing step was heard, and the latch lifted, there would come a gleam of brightness to the faded eyes, and a smile to the thin mouth.

The child found ready entrance to the lonely heart; children will, you know, they are so "queer," as wise old heads sometimes affirm.

"What in the world makes you visit that old hermit?" said Eliza Ray, her schoolmate, one morning. "Bridget, our hired girl, says she is sure such a looking old hag must be a witch."

"Witch or not, I like her"; and Bessie Lane tossed up her hat and pranced off after a fox squirrel just down the road.

So Bessie kept up her visits, and the two would sit and talk together by the hour, Aunt Ruth showing her long-treasured trinkets, relics of years gone by, and detailing their history, till Bessie's eyes would dilate with wonder.

On this wintry morning, in which we have introduced her to you, sitting by the dull fire and looking from the dingy window, the time of Bessie's absence had been longer than usual. The sky was leaden and the wind whistled down

the chimney and shook the casements.

Suddenly Aunt Ruth starts and peers through the window. There is a bright little hood and blue cloak approaching; she sees that, but not the carefully wrapped parcel Bessie is carrying, for she hurries to brighten the fire and brush the hearth.

"Good morning, Aunt Ruth. It has been ever so long since I have been here, hasn't it?"

"Yes, a long time for a lonesome old body like me; but this is no place for the young and happy, I know."

"Oh, yes it is, dear Aunt Ruthie. You must not say so. I like to come really well, but Uncle Jake has been so sick. He sent for Pa and Ma, and I went with them. It is such a long way off, I thought we never would get there. And oh, Aunt Ruth, I have not told you yet"—and the chubby face sobered.

"What is it, child?" Aunt Ruth asked, picking up bits of litterings from the floor. Somehow she always did so when Bessie was around, the hands involuntarily moved in little touches of order and neatness. The room was good enough for her; for the child it seemed dismal and must be brightened a little. But Aunt Ruth was unconscious that she was being called to a better life, or that a love for light and beauty was awakening in her weary heart.

"Well, I will tell you; we are going to move away. I declare, I think it's too bad to leave all the girls just as I began to like them, and you, too, Aunt Ruth. I don't want to go one bit," tears rolling down her face.

"Going away, my little girl going off?" said Aunt Ruth seriously.

"Yes, and Mamma said we couldn't move Chip. It would be such a bother, so I have given poor birdie away to Allie Smith," tears flowing afresh. "I let Amy Wells have my kitten, but I haven't found a place for my poor little rose. See," said Bessie, going to the table and removing the wrapper from her parcel, "isn't it a beauty? You will keep it to remember me by, and take

care of it always, won't you, Aunt Ruth?"

The little blossoms were out in full and seemed to smile a benediction upon the old woman.

"Yes, yes, child, I will keep your rose; no harm shall come to it." The little plant seemed to carry her thoughts away, for she began talking absently to herself, then recalling her musings she said: "So you are going away; and you'll forget all about poor Aunt Ruth with so many new friends. Well, well, it's natural."

"No, no, indeed I shall not," said Bessie, giving her a hearty hug, "and sometime I will come to see you." They talked a long time, but at last, with a good-bye kiss to Aunt Ruth, and to the pet rose, she was gone like a flitting sunbeam.

Then the shadows seemed to come back to the inmate of the old house; but as her glance fell upon the little flower, she began clearing a place for it to stand in the warmest corner, musing to herself the while: "Just such roses I used to carry in my hand to the old stone church in Amsden when no bigger than Bessie. It seems like yesterday, but ah! It is a long time. Maybe if I could do like that again, it would not be so dark and lonesome like." I think I'll put the rose here by the south window, then if the child ever does come, she will see it from the gate."

Bringing a little pine stand, she carefully placed the plant upon it. In doing so, she chanced to glance at the window. "Bless me! It never looked quite so dirty before"; and Aunt Ruth moved with new life, as she cleansed, rinsed, and polished the glass. This being done, the old muslin curtain seemed dingier than common, shading the clear glass; so it was taken down, and another finer one unpacked from a drawer and put in its place.

The next morning, as she ate her lonely breakfast, she placed her chair to face the window and the rose. The sun was shining, and as the rays streamed across the room to the opposite wall, she marked the cobwebs. That day the cobwebs

were swept down, the other window washed, and the floor cleaned. The old house had not been so neat and cheery for many years.

Near the close of the week she went to the village, this time putting on a dark delaine, instead of the snuff calico with a yellow flower. Somehow the gay dresses and curious glances did not disturb her as much as usual. A pleasant recognition was passed with a neighbor whom she had not spoken to for a year.

A strange feeling had come over her,—a feeling that she was one of the great human family after all, and the icy mountain of reserve began to thaw just a little. Her purchases made, she concluded to take another road home. This route lay past a church. It was lighted, though early, and a few real worshipers had met to pray before the regular service.

They were singing now, and Aunt Ruth paused, as a clear, triumphant voice bore up the strain,—*"Plunged in a gulf of dark despair."* Spell-bound, she listened to its close, never stirring from her tracks till a group of people passed near, then slowly walking on, you might have heard her talking again to herself:—

"O Ruth Jones, where are you? I used to sing that too, in the same old church where I carried the roses, only it was years after. I used to pray too. I wonder if God would hear me now."

That night, and many nights after, she could not sleep; the words of that song kept ringing in her ears, bringing up the old scenes and associations, till the great deep of her soul was broken up.

In her darkness she felt gropingly, feebly, for the old paths, and the good Spirit was all the time leading her back to the light. I cannot retrace for you all the way that she came. I only know that gradually, surely, the night wore away, and the Sun of peace shone upon her soul. She went to the church, where the song had that night staid her footsteps, and listened to the words

[continued on page 27]

Isaiah 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the

dead?

20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Wizards, Spirits, and Witchcraft



Brother Allen Polston

"Your Adversary the Devil"

When the Apostle Paul was preparing to leave a certain coast, he told the saints in Acts 20:27, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." God has counsel for us today. He has designed a way for mankind to live. If you will line up with His way, you will experience the best life possible in this world, and in the end you will go into eternity in a wonderful way.

I want to speak to you about something that is creeping into our nation and our world in a greater way. God is not silent concerning this subject; He has something to say about it in His Word. We are living in a day and time when witchcraft has become quite popular. Many people are giving themselves over to this evil practice, and it is becoming more accepted by the world. It is something that the devil is using; therefore, being warned about it is important. Peter said in 2 Peter 3:1,

"I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." While remembering and giving heed to what God says, you can receive help for your soul and you will be blessed.

As I was in the waiting room of a hospital to visit someone who was going to have a surgical procedure done, many people were watching the television. I could not help but overhear what the man on the screen was saying as he informed his audience that he was about to call up someone from the dead. This is a

very serious evil, and you need to realize that messing around with the occult is very serious. I did not even want to be in that waiting room to hear what he was saying. It is my burden to warn you of that danger. Supposedly, the man on that television program began to call up spirits from the dead.

Not long after that, a local newspaper had a large article about that same subject, and the writer told how witchcraft is sweeping the nation. Many people are turning to that kind of wickedness. Later I learned that someone I know had visited a psychic. God began to burden me along this line, and I feel it is time to cry out a warning against that ungodly practice.

As we study the Bible and consider these things, you need to remember that the devil is after your soul. The enemy is out to destroy you, and he will stop at nothing to accomplish his task. He does not take a vacation or even a day off. He will come against you in one way or another to try to destroy your soul and cause you to miss making Heaven your eternal home. The Apostle Peter spoke words of caution in 1 Peter 5:8, which reads, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Dear one, you need to be sober. You should not jump into things or become so wrapped up in something that you lose your ability to think seriously. The devil is behind many things, to try to ensnare you and draw you away from righteous living. Often he will try to get you really worked up and wrapped up in things, but God warns you in His Word to be sober.

You may think of being sober as abstaining from alcoholic beverages, and certainly that is important. However, there is more to being sober than just refusing alcoholic beverages. You ought to refuse anything that would carry you away and occupy too much of your time. God is warning you to be sober and vigilant, or watchful.

Hold the Beginning of Your Confidence Steadfast

You have to watch when wrong attitudes or bad feelings try to work in your heart and mind. Feelings will fluctuate and work on you. Maybe someone did not shake your hand or said something in such a way that it came across wrong to you. You need to watch your feelings. Also, you need to watch your yearnings, or desires. You have to watch that you do not begin to want more and more until there is no end to it. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." God's people should not desire more and more worldly possessions.

In Luke 12:15 Jesus said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." There is more to life than having an abundance of possessions. The world has many people deceived through the things they are listening to and watching. They think that in order to be happy, they have to acquire more and more. Jesus let us know that it is not that way.

You need to remember that the devil is your adversary, and he "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." He is looking for someone who is getting a little careless in his prayer life and who is reading other materials more than he is reading the Bible. The devil will use any means he can to hinder you, and he does not get discouraged easily. His goal is to destroy your faith in God.

A Scripture that has always been dear to me is Hebrews 3:14, which states, "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." You are a child of God only if you hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast. You must not surrender your faith to the devil when he comes at you with trials and tribulations. Satan would like to

get you to give up, but you have to keep the faith and hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast.

What does the Scripture mean by "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end"? To explain, we need to go back to when you first became a child of God. What did God require of you to enjoy His blessings in your life? You did not negotiate with God and say, "Lord, I want to hold on to a few things that I shouldn't, but I will try to serve You." Were you able to work out a deal with God? Is that what the Scriptures say to do? No, but that is what some people try to do. They try to take salvation on a trial basis. They go to God and say, "Lord, I am willing to try it, but I'm going to hold a little in reserve so that I can run back if I don't like it."

Friend, God will not accept anything less than complete surrender. He requires you to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You cannot go to God and negotiate a deal or make a bargain so that you can hold on to a few worldly pleasures or sinful habits. To be saved, you have to count the cost and not hold back anything from God.

You need to say, "Lord, I am ready to give myself to You completely and walk in the light that You shine on my pathway." Friend, you cannot go to God and hold reserves in your life. You must be willing to lay aside every weight and let God take control of your life. That is the beginning of your confidence. When you go to God, you must be willing to surrender all; then He will wash you in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. He will cleanse you from all unrighteousness and set you free, and you will become a new creature in Christ Jesus. Friend, any other way will not be acceptable.

If God were to permit you to hold on to something that He said to lay aside, there would be no standard of holiness and no true church. People would have their own little vices or areas where they would

hold back on God. Friend, you have to lay it all down before the Lord.

Having Faith in God

Many people make a religious profession, but they do not go very far because they are not willing to lay it all down; therefore, they do not become a partaker of Christ. This life would be miserable without Christ. If you are not partaking of Christ, you cannot live this Christian life; He is the One who makes it all worthwhile. He is the One who brings you joy and puts a smile on your face when you roll out of bed with troubles pending. He is the one Friend who makes life a wonderful blessing. Being a partaker of Christ is what makes this life enduring in the midst of fiery trials, heartaches, and hardships. Christ can keep you steady. Oh, what a blessing it is to partake of Him! How wonderful it is to share a little of God each day!

When you lay down your life and start partaking of Christ, you will not give up easily. You will be like the man spoken of in Matthew 13:44 who found a treasure in a field and, for the joy that he had discovered it, sold everything else to buy it. When you partake of Christ, you will not give Him up tomorrow or the next day. You will want more of His divine nature so that you can stay rooted and grounded and stay in the race, because it is a wonderful way to live!

The Hebrew writer let you know that you have to hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast to the end. This surrendering of your will must continue through all the days of your life. God wants you to keep your trust, your confidence, and your faith in Him. He wants you to fight the good fight of faith. The Apostle Paul said in his closing testimony in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Friend, that is what you have to do. You must hold the beginning of your confidence steadfast to the end.

Someone may ask, "Why are you

saying these things in relation to your subject?" Well, wizards, spirits, and witchcraft are ways that the devil is using to take a jab at your faith. He is working through these means to get men and women to believe in other things rather than to believe in God. Let me explain what I mean. People are prone to believe things only when they see them. If I were to tell you that I have a set of car keys in my pocket but I never did anything to prove it, you might question it. On the other hand, if I were to hold up my keys so that you could see them, you would believe me. Since people are prone to believe only the things they can see, often they have a battle when it comes to living for God, because it is a walk by faith. Jesus Christ has already made His earthly appearance, and He has gone back to be with the Father in Heaven. God sent the Holy Spirit to comfort and guide us.

Having faith in God is easy when everything is going well, but when circumstances take a turn and things seem to fall apart, the devil will say, "Are you sure you are what you think you are? Are you sure you are really saved? Are you sure God is still with you?" It is then that you have to walk by faith and press on. Little by little, you must keep pressing and believing God's Word.

Seek the Lord for Your Needs

The devil will try to get you to look around, and then he will say, "Look at the affliction on your body and the problems you are having. You are not going to receive any help from God for this." Satan will try to get your eyes on your circumstances, but you have to keep your eyes on Jesus. To receive healing, deliverance, or help from God, you must get your eyes off the things around you and look to Jesus. God is the Creator of the universe, and He is still in control of all things. He still is the One who is in command. He tells the devil what he is allowed to do and what he is not

allowed to do.

The devil is using witchcraft, wizardry, and evil spirits to sow seeds of doubt in people's minds. I know what I am talking about. I know someone who professes to be saved, yet that person went to see a psychic. I repeat, when people see and hear certain things, they are prone to believe them and give themselves over to those things.

Friend, you should not give yourself over to everything you see and hear. You should not dwell upon every thought that comes to your mind. You should dismiss some thoughts as quickly as they come to your mind. You can do that by singing a good, old hymn or by reading your Bible. You should not allow every thought that enters your mind to stay there, and you should not perceive some things as being genuine or of God. I receive mail in my mailbox that I do not even bother to open. I rip it in two and throw it in the trash because I do not want to consider it. It may be for a home loan or refinancing advertisement or an automobile advertisement gimmick.

We read in verse 19 of our Scripture text, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?" This Old Testament Scripture gives very good admonition in stating that people should seek God for the needs in their lives. Too many people are turning to other avenues to try to find remedies for their problems and needs.

People should really seek God for the needs they face. When a need arises, that should not drive you away from God or from the Kingdom of God. We all are going to face needs from time to time. In fact, God allows various needs to come along so that we might remember that we need to seek Him with all our hearts.

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 29:13, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall

search for me with all your heart." Sometimes God may allow you to get to the end of your rope, so to speak, to cause you to pray and search your heart and say, "Lord, help me with this thing. Show me where I can move and what You want me to learn so that I might be closer to You than I have been." Our Scripture text, written hundreds of years ago, introduced an accurate way of living and having your needs satisfied without turning to things of this world.

People often forfeit good, godly principles to follow something they can see. One reason is that it is easier for individuals to believe in something that they can verify without operating faith. It is much easier because there is no suffering to it.

"The Just Shall Live by Faith"

Sometimes there is a little suffering in living this life of faith. You must be willing to suffer a little if you are going to make Heaven your home. Sometimes God does not give you assurance right away that He is still with you; but friend, if you have not strayed, if you are standing strong in the faith and serving God, He is standing by your side. He said He would never leave you nor forsake you.

I have heard people make the statement that, because of what they had seen with their eyes, what they had seen had to be right. Some people have said, "How can so many people be wrong?" They see so many people doing something, so they become convinced. My burden in this message is that you not allow things that you see to cause you to go astray. You cannot base your decisions primarily on what you see or hear. Exodus 23:2 says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil."

Romans 1:17 tells us, "The just shall live by faith [in God]." If you are going to be a just individual, you have to live by faith. God wants you to do what you do because He has

revealed it to you from Heaven by the Word and the Spirit, not just because others are doing it.

God wants you to have a revelation from Heaven. Matthew 16:13-17 reads: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Jesus said Peter was blessed because God revealed this to him.

God wants you to live by faith in His Word and believe in Jesus Christ, even when the way becomes rough and you have to suffer for a while. The Bible lets you know it is only for a season. God knows when you need to suffer a little. When you go through those times, He wants you to hold on and be steadfast.

Giving Heed to Seducing Spirits

Someone may ask the question: "What about the undeniable results of witchcraft? How do you explain it when people walk in to see psychics and the psychics supposedly tell them things they should not know? How do you explain these things?" You need to keep in mind that is not of God.

Second Corinthians 11:14 states, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." An angel of light would appear to be right. We know that Satan is evil, yet the Scripture tells us that Satan is transformed, or changed, into an angel of light. He is walking about, "seeking whom he may devour." If by changing himself into an angel of light, he finds you in a weakened condition, he may deceive you. The devil has power to impersonate,

trick, and seduce.

First Timothy 4:1 reads, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Satan has the power to work through individuals just as he did through Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers in the days of Moses. You can read in Exodus, Chapter 7, that God made provisions for Moses and Aaron to convince Pharaoh that God had sent them. When Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh, and Moses cast down his rod and it became a serpent, Pharaoh called his sorcerers and magicians, and they did the same thing. Whatever God's man did, they did likewise. Their enchantments and magical methods were instrumental in hardening Pharaoh's heart.

Friend, if your heart becomes hardened, your faith in God will begin to waver, and that will interrupt the confidence that you once had in God. That is the reason you need to watch, be vigilant, and be sober. One can witness results from witchcraft, but they are not from God. God is neither supportive nor pleased with such things.

In our Scripture text verse 18 states, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion." This verse is speaking of Christ and His children. God has a church, and He has a remnant of people who are not mean spirited and cold-hearted. His people have not given themselves over to the ways of this world. Jesus Christ is alive forevermore, and the Word of God is the means by which God has provided for you to receive instruction, counsel, and direction in your life.

Matthew 5:14 says, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Sometimes we sing a song that says, "Where could I go but to the Lord?" That is all God is asking of you, friend. He does not want you to give yourself

to other things. He wants you to remember to take your burdens, your needs, your cares, and your concerns to Him. The Lord wants you to turn to Him for all the things you need in life.

Hebrews 4:16 lets you know that you can "come boldly unto the throne of grace" every time you have a need. Friend, if you are confused and unsure of what to do in a situation, you can take it to the Lord. You do not have to do it shyly or ashamedly, but you can go to Him boldly. It does not matter what people think or say. If you have a need, God wants you to take it to Him.

Walking in the Counsel of the Ungodly

Many people are turning to the ways of the devil, basing their lives on horoscopes, witchcraft, black magic, Ouija boards, and other wicked things. You need to let God be your guide and allow Him to instruct you. Verse 20 of our Scripture text says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." People are turning to worldly means in search of answers, but there is no light or wisdom in them.

The Church of God has the light of God's Word. When the light is available, we do not have to go away into a catacomb to read the Scriptures. We have the light of God's Word available to us. Friend, you need to turn to Him with all your heart so that you can find Him. The result of many people wholeheartedly seeking God will send a revival throughout the land. Human strength cannot bring it about. Only the Spirit of God can bring conviction upon the unsaved, and only the Spirit of God can encourage and help precious individuals with problems in their lives. People need to seek God and not turn to other things.

The people in Isaiah's day were seeking familiar spirits rather than looking to God. What causes people

to turn to seeking such? Verse 20 of our Scripture text lets you know they are void of light. Consider King Saul in 1 Samuel, Chapter 28. He was right with God when he started to reign as Israel's king, but he did not hold the beginning of his confidence steadfast. Although he was once on the right track, he veered off course.

Verses 3-7 read: "Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. [That needs to be done today. That is what I am trying to do, not by physically removing them but by preaching the Gospel to remove their influences on people.]

"And the Philistines gathered themselves together [they were getting ready for battle], and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

"And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor." King Saul sought a witch at Endor. One who is involved in witchcraft or fortune-telling is not of God. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 1:1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."

When King Saul went to visit the witch at Endor, it seemed that she really did bring the Prophet Samuel back from the grave, but she worked through deceit. I say again, it may seem that witchcraft, wizards, and evil spirits in the world have results that can be witnessed, but it is through deceit.

God's method of helping people is through counsel from a man of God or through the preaching of the

Gospel. First Corinthians 1:21 says that by the foolishness of preaching, God will save those who believe. God may send you help through a saint of God who has lived a dedicated, consecrated life to God. God's way of helping people is not through the devices of the devil. God wants you to refrain yourself from those evil things.

Seek the Lord While He Is Near

In Isaiah 8:11-17, the verses preceding our Scripture text, you can read that because of situations going on among the people, the Lord hid His face from them. Again, verse 19 of our Scripture text states, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God for the living to the dead?" Friend, you ought to humble yourself and call upon God for help. Today we have so much technology and alternative methods that old-fashioned prayer is becoming a thing of the past in too many cases. Getting down on bended knee and praying through is something that is disappearing from many people's lives. Should you not seek the Lord your God? Should you not turn to Him and search for Him with all your heart for your needs?

Child of God, you should not want to be as the world is. They turn to worldly means for joy and temporary satisfaction. Alcohol sales are skyrocketing and drug usage is running rampant. Many people are turning to the things of this world. Should you not turn to God? Should you not take time to seek the Lord? How long has it been since you really poured out your heart to Him and asked Him to come down and revive you? How long has it been since you talked to the Lord? How long has it been since you really got serious and sought God for the needs that you are facing?

Many needs are in our land. Many people are sick and in need of prayer. Because there are so many

needs, you should seek God for these needs. God will hear and answer prayer when you really get serious and pour out your heart to Him. In Luke 18:1-5 you can read of a widow woman who went before the unjust judge continually until he avenged her of her adversary. She did not give up with one try, but she kept going back to him.

Do you remember reading about when Elijah prayed for rain? He sent out his servant to look and see if it was coming seven times before he returned with the report that he saw a little cloud about the size of a man's hand. The devil was probably telling the servant that Elijah's prayers were fruitless, but after the seventh time, he came running back with the news of a little cloud, and soon the rain poured down.

Friend, God can still pour out His Spirit in revival. No doubt, we all have people we would like to see saved, and we all can move closer to God. He can still move. Our world is plagued with many problems, but I still believe the Bible. The Bible says in Romans 5:20, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Sin is binding many souls, but the grace of God can much more abound.

You may not know God, but I want to invite you to yield your heart to Him. You might have gone into the depths of sin. You might have wrecked and ruined your health, but we have a Savior who can help you. You should not continue to look to the things of this world as many are doing, but you should yield yourself to God.

Do you wonder what one would really say if he were raised from the dead in a seance? I can assure you that he would not be advising you financially or telling you how to prosper materially. If one really could come back from the dead and speak to you, he would not be concerned about earthly things. He would be like the rich man spoken of in Luke, Chapter 16, who died and awoke in hell. He was not concerned about the riches he had

left behind or what became of the inheritance he had left to others. After begging for a drop of water to cool his tongue, he pleaded for someone to go and testify to his brothers, lest they should come to that awful place of torments. He wanted someone to tell them that they needed to seek God and to get serious about their souls and to tell them that time is fleeting and eternity is drawing nigh.

Friend, do not continue to live in sin. You need to make your calling and election sure. If someone could come back from the dead, he would not be telling you the names of your relatives or telling you what school or college to attend. He would tell you to seek God while you still have

an opportunity. He would say, "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near."

Our Scripture text lets you know the time will come when God cannot be found. A day is coming when He will not be near. You need to seek Him while you can reach Him. If you are not what you really ought to be, God's Holy Spirit bids you to draw nigh and seek God. You should not turn to the things of this world, such as witchcraft, wizards, and evil spirits. Seeking those things is all in vain. You need to seek God and ask Him to help you in every area of your life. Won't you seek the Lord while He may be found?

(Cassette C-4983E)

The Alabaster Box

*While in the shadow of the Cross,
And death was stealing on,
Jesus knew He soon must die
And that He was nearing Home.
There were but a few friends
To lend a helping hand
But there stood a little woman
To bless this dying Man.
She opened up her little box
And poured it on His head
She put it upon the living Christ
And not upon the dead.
There is no one so selfish
As he who has much to spend,
But keeps it all to himself,
And puts none upon a friend.
There is father, mother, sister, brother;
Some of these may be left;
So why not put a bit on them,
And not all upon yourself?
There lies within your bosom
A word that would give the weary, Rest;
Give it now while there is time
Lest it may die within your breast.
When you look upon that face
In front of the preacher's stand
Can you say, "I did my part,
I gave Him a helping hand?"*

Selected

FORGIVEN, THEN FORGIVING

A moving story was told of what happened some years ago at the time of the Mau Mau rebellion. The terrorists kept coming to a Christian couple, pressuring them to take the oath and join with them against the white man.

The husband's reply was substantially the same at each approach: "You know us. You know we are Christians. You know we cannot deny our Lord. We changed once, from darkness to light. We cannot change again, from light to darkness." On one occasion the husband said, "If you want to give us a ticket for a quick trip to Glory, just use your gun on us!"

Then came the showdown. The Mau Mau men said, "We have come to kill you." The husband said, "I will pray for you." He prayed, "Father, You know these men. You love them. You know that they don't know what they are doing. Give them time to repent, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

The wife joined in the "Amen."

Unsoftened by the prayer, the men took him, hung his body up in his own sleeping room, and, instead of shooting him, they commenced to beat him to death. Then they ran, leaving the wife, surprisingly, unharmed.

That was 1954. In the late 60's, at an immense gathering of Christians, numbering approximately 11,000, a man was giving his testimony. "I was a Mau Mau terrorist," he said. Then he went on:

"I helped murder many Christians. It could be that some woman is here whose husband I helped to beat to death in his house in 1954. If she is here, I want her to know that I have met Jesus, who has in His wonderful grace forgiven me, and I want her to forgive me as well."

A lady got up and began making

her way through that throng. She finally reached the platform. Facing the man, she said: "I am that wife whose husband forgave you before he died. I now give praise to God, with all these Christians who are here, that you have tasted God's wonderful, forgiving love in Jesus Christ."

While tears were glistening on the black faces of hundreds of people, many scores stood up to say that the Spirit of God had melted their hearts, and they, too, had sins to confess, both to God and to man, for whose forgiveness they stood in need.

Reconciliation, both toward God and man, became the glad order of the day. The unforgiven were forgiven, and the forgiven joined the ranks of the forgiving.

Another incident involves a man who had been a Christian only a short time. The man who was now his pastor had spoken the right word in a sermon. It had unlocked an inner door, and into this man's life Jesus Christ had walked, but then, a little later, tragedy had struck the young businessman. Somehow, under its shattering impact, he felt that his pastor had let him down. As a result, contrary feelings struggled within him. The impulse to blame his minister was at war with tender memories of that saving sermon that came from his lips. In the end he went to him and was open with him about the hard feelings he harbored, the resentment that at times had him all churned up on the inside.

The pastor, for his part, had explanations to offer, but no apologies. That produced, for the young Christian, the real crisis in the whole affair: would he be forgiving toward the minister without insisting that the minister ask for forgiveness from

him?

Forgive he did, with a forgiveness that was not his own, but Christ's. This was his comment: "I realized that I had to get all the venom out of my own soul or I would not be able to have the victory. To have left bitterness in my heart would have wrecked my Christian experience completely."

The problem that this incident points to arises so often. Unsundered resentments are poisons that seep through the soul. Unforgiving attitudes are toxins that invade and infest the mind.

How utterly this contradicts the authentic Christian spirit may be seen by studying one of the early communities of believers, known in the New Testament as the church in Corinth. It was a quarrelsome group. A lot of things needed forgiving by forgiving people. They were plagued with "envying and strife" (1 Corinthians 3:3). Instead of practicing Christian reconciliation, they would "go to law before the unjust" (1 Corinthians 6:1).

By the time the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to this congregation, he found it useful to explore in depth the tremendous Christian doctrine of reconciliation. The classic treatment of it is in 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. God has reconciled us in Christ, Paul argued. Beyond that, God "gave us the ministry of reconciliation." Then Paul said something, the full force of which, I fear, rarely comes home to us. He said to those quarreling, divided, resentful Christians: "We beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

In effect, Paul was saying, "How can you engage in the ministry of reconciliation unless you offer, in your own action, patterns, a model of reconciliation?" In the Apostle Paul's view, the redeemed people of God should be a reconciling community. They should declare forgiving love, to be sure; but they should do so in the knowledge that unless it also demonstrates forgiving love, the declaration will be no more impressive than a clanging gong.

Selected

Isaiah 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the

LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people,

make mention that his name is exalted.

5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

True Thankfulness



Brother Irwin Seshier

"Remove Thy Foot From Evil"

When I was living in sin, there were things in my life that I am not proud of. Child of God, no doubt, you did things when you were living in sin that you are not proud of. The enemy did not give you a chance to dwell on those evil things when you were living in sin. He kept you busy, trying to take in the pleasures of this sinful world, but the one thing he did not want you to think about is what you will face later in life.

The enemy wants you to live for the moment. The flesh desires instant gratification. The enemy will say, "What does it matter how your actions affect others? Just live your

own life." That is how the enemy works when you are living in sin. If you are living in sin, the Lord is angry with you. He was angry with me. He could have easily cut me off without mercy. I could be in hell right now, but God was merciful to me. He will be right there for you all the time, and He wants to see you do well. God does not want to see anyone die and go to hell. Friend, He has something better for you to do, and that is to live for Him. You should be thankful for what He has done for your life.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." None of us is excluded. All have sinned before God. Until I was born again, I came short of the glory

of God. Unless you have a heart change, you cannot have the glory of God in your life. You may listen to a lot of preaching, but until your heart has been changed, you cannot expect the mercies of God in your life.

Before I was saved, I had no desire to live for God. When someone said, "Let's go to church" that was the furthest desire from my mind, but now my desires and my thoughts are different. I want to be in the house of God and do the things that show God that I love Him.

In order for God to have mercy on you, you must turn your back on sin; that is when the Lord will bring comfort and compassion. He can see

down in your heart and life if you do not want to live in sin anymore. More people would receive help in their souls if they would confess all at an altar of prayer. Friend, you must get rid of *all* sin, not just part of it. You cannot hold onto sin and hold onto God at the same time; that will not work.

God will not bless you over the top of sin. Many people think they can do what they want, say what they want, and act any way they want to act and the Lord will overlook all of that and continue to be a part in their lives. Friend, if you believe that, the enemy has deceived you. The enemy has sold you a bill of goods that will cause you to end up in hell one of these days.

Proverbs 4:24, 26-27 reads: "Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. . . . Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

Guard Your Spiritual Well

Verse 2 of the Scripture text reads, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." That is plain and simple. In this verse are three words that stand out: strength, song, and salvation.

Saint, you need to place more trust in God. You need to quit going your own way and let Him lead in your life. When you put your trust in God, He is more willing to work with you. Body builders work out with weights because they have seen what lifting weights and following a workout routine has done for others. What about your spiritual strength? The most important thing in your life is your spiritual strength. One song says, "It is no secret what God can do. What He's done for others, He'll do for you." The Lord is no respecter of persons. He will supply your every need, and He will give you the strength to fight your battles. Also, He will give you the

wisdom to know how to handle situations. He will give you the words to say in certain conversations. You should not get the idea, "Well, I will give him a piece of my mind!" Is that what the Lord expects of you?

We all need strength in our lives. We receive the strength for the physical body through the foods we eat. We receive spiritual strength through communion with God. You might have seen or heard the saying, "Seven days without prayer makes one weak." There is much truth in that statement.

In order for true thankfulness to radiate throughout your heart and soul, you have to know what it is like to be thankful. You must have a thankful spirit dwelling in your heart and life. When you are truly dedicated to the Lord, being thankful is more than just a word. Thankfulness will be a way of life in your walk with God.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." So many people in our world are unthankful. Nothing suits them, and nothing satisfies them. They have no appreciation whatsoever. Some of those people call themselves "Church of God." A spirit of unthankfulness should not be in the Church of God. We each ought to be thankful every day for how the Lord has blessed us, for what He has given us, for what He has shown us, and for how far He has brought us. Christian friend, you should not even think about going back into sin. There is nothing out in the world.

Being a thankful congregation goes a long way in helping the pastor and in making his job much easier. I want to make my pastor's job easier. I do not want to be a burden or a stumbling block for my pastor. I want to be thankful for what the Lord has blessed me with. Some people would rather sit back and find fault with the pastor, and when they get through picking at

the pastor, they pick at the song leader, the Sunday school teacher, or someone else. They are never satisfied. No one can please them, but the Lord has their number. He will deal with them.

With thankfulness comes joy. A thankful person is a joyful person to be around. Basically, those two attributes go together. Salvation is in abundance when there are wells of it. However, you must carefully guard your spiritual well. The enemy would love to come in and taint your spiritual well. He wants to rob you of your joy, your thankfulness, and your peace. The enemy is constantly planning and scheming to taint your spiritual well. He would love to toss in a pinch of envy, a dose of bitterness, a cupful of jealousy, and a handful of malice. Sad to say, he has already thrown those things in many spiritual wells.

Is the Lord Your All in All?

In verse 4 of our Scripture text we read, "And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted." This Scripture is so very true. Sometimes getting an amen out of people during a message is difficult, not to mention giving praise to God. When you are thankful, you want the Lord to know that you are. Your attitude should be, "Lord, I am thankful for what You have done. I am thankful that You helped me through this situation. Thank You for working out that situation in my life." You should let the Lord know that you are thankful, and then let others know about it. If the Lord works out situations in your life and you are blessed of God, you will want others to know about it. It seems that some people are ashamed of what the Lord has done for them; that ought not to be.

Mark 8:38 says, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed,

when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." This verse points out very clearly that if you are ashamed of Jesus, He will be ashamed of you.

First Peter 4:16 states, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." One who professes to be a child of God should never be ashamed of Jesus Christ. Are you ashamed that Jesus Christ took the beatings for you so that you could go free? Jesus was beaten almost beyond recognition so that you could be saved. When someone asks, "Are you a Christian?" do you hang your head and walk away? That shows a spiritually weak individual.

If you were in the army, they would not put up with your being ashamed of your country. You should be thankful that God has done so much for you. You should never be ashamed of Jesus Christ. You would be amazed at the number of people who are ashamed of Him.

Isaiah 12:5 says, "Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things [He has done excellent things because He is an excellent God]: this is known in all the earth." What "earth" was Isaiah talking about? He was speaking of this house of clay, the flesh. He did something excellent for you and me one day. He came down from Heaven to save our most unworthy souls from sin. That is something to be thankful for! Sinner friend, He wants to clean up your life, establish your goings, and place you on the highway of holiness. That is something to get excited about!

The last verse of our Scripture text says, "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." The Lord is great! I cannot give you an illustration of anyone greater than Jesus Christ. He is the greatest of all, and He can be the greatest in your heart and life, if you allow Him. Can you honestly say that you are thankful for your Lord and Savior?

In Psalm 75:1 David penned, "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare." His works are marvelous. What a wonderful God we serve! In the perilous times in which we are living, we have One to whom we can turn for help in times of need. I do not know what people do without Jesus Christ in their lives. They have no direction. They are like a ship without a rudder. Saint of God, you should not get to the point where you think you can do this all by yourself. You should not think, "Well, I'll just go to the church services and let others do all the singing and all the praising." Child of God, you have a part in the services of God. We all have something to do. You should not expect others to do it all for you. It takes work to be a Christian. You put forth lots of effort to do certain things when you were living in sin. There should be no excuse now that you are living for God. The reason many people backslide is that they

are not working at their experience.

You have to put yourself out in certain situations. You have to put yourself above some things that you face on the job. The enemy would love to use some things that happen on the job to drag you down. He will let you hear comments made by the boss to try to drag you down. Remember, down in your heart and soul, you can have victory. There is victory in Jesus Christ. Are you experiencing it? Do you want more victory in your heart and life? It is available if you yield to Him.

Are you thankful? People need to be more thankful. We need to have true thankfulness in our hearts for what God has done. The Lord has healed bodies and saved souls. I never want to get to the point where I am not thankful for what God has done. There is too much unthankfulness in our land. If anyone should be thankful, it should be the people of God. If you have a need, won't you seek the Lord?

(Cassette C-5271E)

PRAYER

*"Pause awhile in the toil of the day,
And lifting your heart to the Father, pray!*

*And the task that is hard you can easily do
Because it is God who is working in you.*

*Pause awhile in the stress of the day
And lifting your heart to the Father, pray!*

*The anxious thought and the strain and care
Will slip away when you bow in prayer.*

*Pause awhile in the pain of the day
And lifting your heart to the Father, pray!*

*For the oil of healing He will give
And your soul, refreshed, shall arise and live.*

*Pause awhile in the grief of the day
And lifting your heart to the Father, pray!*

*The Master passed through Gethsemane
And you may be sure He will pray with thee."*

Author Unknown

[The Prayer of Meditation—continued from p. 8]
service, study hard that he may excel in intellectual strength, but if he has not the fulness of the love of God, he will not be able to live in heart-to-heart communion with God. It is through meditation that love is increased, and the ardor of love serves as a tonic to man's will and enables him to pray. Many would love to pray more and often resolve to do so, but they are hindered. They cannot overcome indifferent feelings and a disposition to neglect and postpone. They are always going to do, but never doing. They need their hearts touched by the constraining power of love. It is by meditating on the goodness of God, on His love to us, on His dying to save, that warms our hearts with love. This will enable us to suffer for His sake. It gives power to the will, so that man can pray in secret. Love energizes the will and enables man to do and to endure for God. A soldier's will was feeble before the conflict; it almost failed. He thought of a loved wife and children at home. Then love burned in his heart; it aroused and stimulated his will; and the soldier went bravely into the battle. The Christian has many conflicts. Sometimes he finds it a conflict to pray; he feels dull and indifferent. He then thinks of the love and goodness of

God. As he meditates, his heart warms with love, his will is revived as with a tonic, and he hastens with delight to the secret closet for prayer.

Meditation is needful, but meditation alone will not suffice. It should end in prayer. Beholding the love of God in silent thought should move us to pray for that love in our hearts. The Holy Scriptures furnish subjects for meditation on every page. Take, for example, the Sermon on the Mount. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" On reading this you will think of God's being your Father, a real Father, One who is living and ever present with you. You will see the care He has for all His creatures. You will see His sympathy, His love, and His pity. It is your Father that never forgets nor neglects the "fowls of the air." If He will do so much for them, will He not be mindful of His child? What if some have ceased to love you? What if friends have forsaken you? What if loved ones have misrepresented you? Your Father loves you and cares for

you. You see Him very near to you, attending to your slightest need. Now you cannot be troubled about anything tomorrow, because you see the care that your kind Heavenly Father has for you. A depressing feeling may be over you, a cloud may be eclipsing the sun, but this cannot disturb you, for you realize your Father's care. When you see Him thus in His Fatherly love and care for you, then have child-like boldness to come to Him and ask Him for all you need.

Never leave the place of meditation without firmly resolving to practice what you have learned. Decide never to take any thought for the morrow. Ask God to help you to live just such a free and happy life, and then believe that He will do it.

Such meditation will loosen any and every dependence you might have had upon any earthly thing. It will cause the affections to let go of every earthly thing and become centered upon God. Oh, how your heart will burn within you as you think of your Father's kind care. In your meditation you will catch glimpses of His holiness in His care for all His creatures, and you will feel constrained to walk softly before Him. Take time for meditation and prayer in some quiet place.

Charles E. Orr

Meeting Announcements

Summersville, WV

April 5-9

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651

Evangelist: Brother Allen Polston, Mechanicsburg, Indiana

Service times: Wednesday-Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders. Telephone: (304) 872-4047

Niles, MI

May 4-7

REVIVAL: Niles Church of God, 1305 Fort Street, Niles, MI 49120 (located at corner of Fort & 13th Streets. *Evangelist: Brother Matt Schwartz, Bladensburg, OH*

Service times: Thursday & Friday 7:00 p.m. , Saturday 10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. (with lunch & fellowship), and Sunday 10:30 a.m. Everyone Welcome!

For further information contact: Pastor Burt Cheney, 607 N. 15th St., Niles, MI 49120 Telephone: 269-687-1045

[Annual Financial Report—continued from p. 21]

Dear one, we do not want to refuse any soul from receiving this paper, but we do feel that God expects us to be wise as to where and to whom we send it. Unfortunately some people simply are not concerned about spiritual things, nor are they interested enough in their own soul's eternal welfare to read this religious periodical. Endeavoring to send the paper to them may only aggravate them and result in causing the Gospel to be evil spoken of.

There are many honest hearts out there who are seeking and searching for the good news of the Gospel. There are ones who are asking for the old paths, who look for the good way so they may be able to walk in the Truth. Be assured they are out there. It is going to take the Spirit of God to lead someone to where they are. Allow me to remind you that this is a united effort. We all are workers together with the Lord for the purpose of winning souls to Christ. Please do not ever feel

that your efforts or help is unneeded, unnecessary, or insignificant. Many hands are needed to accomplish the task, along with much prayer. May God guide and direct those who are financially able to support this work.

When this life is finished and the rewards are given, each one will be grateful to have had a part in winning men and women to Christ and to His true church. Our desire and intention is for this publication to be a means to "proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isaiah 61:1b), to cry aloud "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city . . ." (Revelation 14:8), and to see the people of God "stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Revelation 15:2).

If you are not already carrying a burden for this work of publishing the good news, we sincerely ask you to join us now. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated! Again, we say thank you.

[Especially for Young People—contin. from p. 15] of life.

Her life became a blessing, for her nature was broadened, deepened and purified. The sick and the needy learned to be glad at her coming, and little children ran to meet her.

And did Bessie Lane ever come again?

Yes, when June smiled upon the earth, the childish figure once more paused at the gate, but the blue eyes gazed bewildered around. "This isn't the place. Aunt Ruth must have moved away." Well might she think so; the house was neatly painted, the yard fence repaired, and up and down the path all sorts of flowers were blooming. Just then Bessie caught sight of a neatly dressed old lady tying up some vines.

"Can you tell me where Aunt Ruth Jones has gone that used to"—Bessie stopped, and with one bound sprang into the woman's arms, for it was Aunt Ruth herself.

"It is so beautiful here! How did it all happen?" cried the delighted child.

Aunt Ruth smiled brightly, and taking Bessie by the hand, passed into the neat, cheerful room, and up to the south window, where the carefully tended rose was putting forth beauty and fragrance.

Bessie fairly danced with delight at sight of the rose, but Aunt Ruth seated the child gently by her side, and told how it had happened; how the little flower had at first whispered to her heart of the long ago; of the holy song that would not let her sleep; and, lastly, of God's good Spirit that had so tenderly led her straying steps to the sun-gilt path of peace.

Statement of Condition

for 12 months ending
January 31, 2006



	Income	Expenses
Supplies		\$ 29,889.44
Labor/Payroll Taxes		31,519.07
Donations/Offerings	\$16,695.00	
Miscellaneous		3,577.87
Equipment Purchased		15,179.26
Postage		54,600.00
Maintenance & Repairs		<u>5,975.12</u>
Subtotals	\$16,695.00	\$140,740.76
<i>Balance paid out of the general fund of the Church of God congregation at Newark, OH</i>		\$124,045.76

Selected