

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

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world for Christ through the printed page. Our burden is to reveal
the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error,
war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding
traditions of men that have no biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Guest Editorial

*"Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy
father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add
unto thy days fifteen years."*

Isaiah 38:5

LIFE EXTENDED

Hezekiah was one of the good kings who reigned in the land of Judah. The Scripture tells us that he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. During his reign, he fell seriously ill, even nigh unto death. God called for the Prophet Isaiah to go to the king and tell him to set his house in order, for he was going to die. This grieved King Hezekiah deeply because Judah was in a great conflict with Assyria. The king turned his face toward the wall and began to call mightily upon the Lord. He expressed how faithful he had been to God throughout his life. He said, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight" (Isaiah 38:3). Verse 3 also tells us that "Hezekiah wept sore."

Hezekiah's prayer certainly must have touched the heart of God that day, because we find that God took pity on him. As Isaiah the Prophet was about to pass into the middle court, God called for him to go back and take good news to the king. God saw the heaviness of Hezekiah's heart and the grief that had come over him. God let him know that He was going to heal him and extend his life fifteen years and also deliver him from the hand of his enemy, Assyria. What an uplift that must have been to Hezekiah that day!

As we think of the goodness and mercy that God showed to Hezekiah, we think of how the Lord has so often extended mercy to each individual in this lost and dying world. Instead of sending destruction on mankind because of their rejection and wickedness, He has extended mercy and long-suffering. In 2 Peter 3:9 we find these words penned: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, now willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The only reason God does not destroy this world is simply that He desires to give mankind ample time to turn to Him in real repentance.

Although God has extended His love and mercy to countless millions, one cannot help but wonder just how many have taken advantage of His goodness. What kind of an effect does this have on the unregenerate world? There are a great many mockers and scoffers with the same attitude as those mentioned in 2 Peter 3:4. Their words were, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Many people believe that the world is going to go on forever, but these thinkers are in for a big surprise.

Christian friend, what about you today? How do you feel about having your time extended?

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Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man prove his own

work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

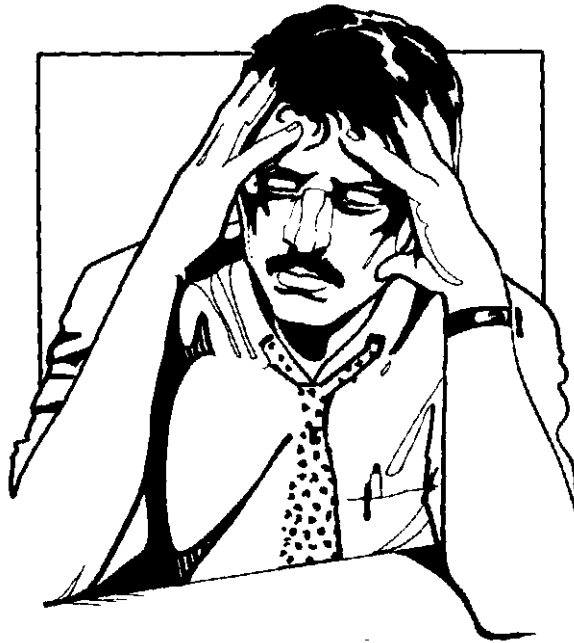
8 For he that soweth to his flesh

shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

The Danger of Growing Weary



BROTHER ROGER L. DECKER

Being in Captivity to the Strong Man

The Book of Galatians is considered by many to be one of the greatest and most influential books written by the Apostle Paul. In this epistle he highlighted the separation taking place between Christianity and Judaism. This epistle played a key role in explaining justification by faith and not by works of the law.

In Galatians 2:16 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Knowing that a man is

not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." You cannot work yourself free from the bondage and the power of sin. It takes the Lord Jesus Christ to free you, and it takes Him to keep you free. It takes faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ; He is the sacrifice for your sins.

The Word of God lets you know that sin is compared to a strong man. When the strong man gets into your life, he takes complete control, and his goods are at peace. In Luke 11:21-22 Jesus said: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

What was Jesus talking about when He mentioned the strong

man? If you back up a few verses, you will find that He was talking about Satan, or the devil. The devil is stronger than the natural man. Without Jesus Christ you are no match for him. Satan will control your thoughts, your affections, your spirit, and all your earthly members; they become his goods. As long as he has control of you, his goods are at peace. However, when the Stronger than the strong man comes, Satan has to give up his goods and Christ takes over the palace. It stirs Satan when a person is delivered out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. The devil is not going to turn out the light and go to bed when one has stirred him.

Many people are in the state of wanting to do right. The Apostle Paul tells about being in that state. It is a familiar Scripture, but it fits the lives of so many people. In Romans, Chapter 7, Paul gave his testimony about his condition before his conversion. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, and under the Law. At that particular time, he did not have New Testament salvation.

Verses 14-21 read: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me."

These verses of Scripture are a perfect example of one in captivity to the strong man. The Apostle Paul said evil was present; in other

words, he was under the control of the strong man. Verse 11 says, "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."

Look what sin did to the Apostle Paul. It deceived him, made him carnal, made him unable to perform that which was good, and left him in a state of bondage. What does that tell you? Sin is nothing to play around with. Dear one, do not try to get on the very edge of it. You should stay as far away from sin as you can. It carries with it deception, carnality, and bondage. If you give in to sin, it will take you into confusion.

How Can You Be Delivered?

The only way to be free from the strong man is to go to Someone stronger. That is what each one must do. Without Christ a person is helpless, because he is held captive by Satan. An individual is in bondage until someone tells him, through the Gospel, that Jesus is stronger than the one who has hold of him. The Word of God says that Jesus Christ is stronger than the strong man. Jesus can take away confusion and release one from bondage. Also, He can take away the deception, and then He will help that person to be spiritual. Praise God for His goodness!

The Apostle Paul cried out against those who were trying to get the people of Galatia to go back under the old sacrifices of the Law. Nothing else can deliver one from sin. There is nothing else that anyone can put alongside Jesus Christ. He is head and shoulders above anything the natural man ever had hold of. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 3:1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" In other words, Paul was asking, "Who has fascinated you by false representation and led you away from walking in the Spirit to

walking in the flesh?" Many people who start out in the Spirit try to go on in the flesh. Christian friend, you have to continue the same way you started: in the Spirit. Paul said that Jesus Christ had been preached plainly before them. He went on to say in verse 3, "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Dear one, it is foolish to try to fight the good fight of faith in the flesh. After one comes to Jesus Christ, that is a danger. Do you remember the struggle you had getting to Jesus? Sometimes when people get to Jesus Christ, they have a tendency to relax. Jesus paid it all as far as the sacrifice is concerned, but once you accept that sacrifice, you need to do some things. You cannot relax and coast along. Do you remember the motivation you had when you first came to Christ? That is the motivation you need to continue to live for Him.

Paul said that Jesus Christ had been preached plainly before them. Paul, writing to the Philippians, said in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Paul was convinced that the same One who started the work of salvation could complete it, and He will do just that if you let Him. God help each of us to be controlled by the Holy Spirit in a greater way. What a blessing it is in the services when the Spirit of God has His way!

God help us to rely more on the Holy Spirit. If you are a good singer, you need to be careful that you do not switch over from being led by the Holy Spirit to being controlled by the flesh. You need the Spirit of God to be effective for Christ. It is very easy to switch over to following after the flesh.

Stand Firm in the Faith

Many have left the arms of Jesus Christ because they have grown weary in the battle. Our Scripture text says in verse 9, "And let us not

be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Friend, do not lose heart and grow weary in the battle. You need to serve God with all your heart.

The enemy likes to single out the Christian by telling him that his temptation is unique. He will tell you, "No one has ever gone through what you are going through. Your trial is different." Friend, the devil is a liar. First Corinthians 10:13 states, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Another translation clarifies this verse a little more. It reads, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man, but God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted above what you can bear; but when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." Jude stated in Jude, verse 3, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

The devil is a master when it comes to harassing the saints. He will make them feel that they should do certain things when they do not need to, by harassing them. First Peter 5:8-9 says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Another translation says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour." It also says to "resist him, standing firm in the faith because you know that brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering."

Your temptation is not unique, Christian friend. You are not the only one going through that temptation. Others have suffered the same temptation and have maintained victory. The word *steadfast* means "to stand firm." The word *resist* means "to withstand." You need to withstand temptation firmly and steadfastly. You should not give in to the enemy of your soul when he harasses you.

"Withstand in the Evil Day"

The enemy will tell you that you are not saved and that you need to do this and that. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:13, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Dear one, you do not have to give in to the devil. He will try to get you to confess things that you are not guilty of so that you can try to get him off your back. When it is the enemy, you will never get him off your back. He will bring up the same things repeatedly, even the things that you have just prayed about. That is not God; He does not harass His people and beat them down. He gives the saints grace to stand against the strong man.

Oh, how the enemy likes to work on the saints! Child of God, he will single you out and make you think that you are all alone in the battle. He will tell you that he has you and that no one knows what you are going through. That is foolishness! Jesus Christ knows your every thought. The enemy will try to destroy you through your thought life. What does the Bible say in Psalm 94:19? "In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." The psalmist had a multitude of thoughts. All he had to do was think upon the thoughts of God, and comfort came. That is the reason the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things

are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The Lord will give you strength.

The enemy will do his best to destroy you. Child of God, when you got saved, that stirred the devil. If you testify, preach, sing a special, sing in the choir, or do anything in front of people, the devil is going to work on you. He wants to bring you down because you have more influence when you are in front of people. An old saying is, "Bringing down a big tree in the forest brings down a lot of little trees with it."

When you serve the Lord, it involves more than just going to church; this is a spiritual battle. You have to work at being saved and put forth much effort. I have lived for the Lord for more than thirty years, and it has not gotten easier because I am getting older. It takes more effort today. There are more spirits loose in our world today than when I was first saved. There are evil spirits that are being backed up by the government and by many people in our world that you have to stand against. It is the same devil working, and he would love to get hold of the United States government and have them back him up. God help us. We are in a real battle.

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

Paul said in Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We are going to reap what we sow. It is part of God's Word, and it is a solemn warning spread throughout the Old and the New Testaments, with many examples of those who sowed to the wind and reaped whirlwinds. Many people have tried to get around this law, only to find that God's Word is true; His Word is unchangeable.

Some people have the idea, "If I mess up, God will take me right back." The next thing they know, that gets to be a habit. Then they

have the attitude, "I know I am going to mess up tonight, but God will forgive me." Friend, you need to watch presumptuous sinning. You should not presume upon the grace of God. The grace of God was given to keep you *from* sin. It is the strength of God, or the power of God.

When a farmer sows a crop, he does not go out ignorantly at harvesttime and act surprised at what came up. When he plants wheat, he does not expect oats or barley. He knows what he put in the ground, and he knows what to expect when that crop comes up. It is the same way spiritually. If you sow to the wind, you are going to reap a whirlwind.

Have you read about Belshazzar in the Old Testament in the Book of Daniel? When he saw the handwriting on the wall, it made him tremble. Belshazzar had enough sense to know that he had not been sending up anything spiritual. Therefore, he knew the judgment that was coming down from God was not going to be a blessing; that is what made him tremble. He knew he was under the wrath of God.

Dear one, if you sow to the flesh, you will reap corruption, and God will send the reaping in His time. Often people think that because God does not do something right away that He has forgotten. No, God is not a man; He does not forget. If something happened a thousand years ago, to Him it is just as though it happened yesterday.

The Bible says that when Belshazzar saw the handwriting on the wall, his knees smote one against the other. He had lived after the flesh, and destruction was on its way. Also, he knew that no one in that palace could stop it; not even the Babylonian army could stop the judgment of God. You see, when a person sows to the flesh, he has to deal with God. God may use other means to bring the reaping, but one has to deal with Him. God is not mocked; no one can snub His law.

Sometimes the Christian can

become weary, discouraged, and depressed in the battle. Why is that? At times the battle is a long one, and the reaping of the harvest seems far in the distance. Christian friend, do not lose heart.

God's Word Is True

What God says will come to pass. Let me give you an example. We read in the Book of Daniel about the prophecy of the birth of Jesus Christ. In Daniel 2:45 the writer stated: "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

We know that Christ is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, signifying the Virgin Birth. He was born under the Law, and He broke down every kingdom that opposed Him. Every prophecy about Him is certain. The reaping will come at God's appointed time.

Dear Christian, you need to be encouraged. God has not forgotten you. You did not get lost in the shuffle. God sees everyone, and He sees everything that happens. He sees every tear you shed, and He hears every prayer you pray. He knows the burdens of your heart.

God sees the struggle that you are having, and He sees the desire within your heart to serve Him. He will not cast you away. If you are going through a struggle, God will be right there like a real father to help you, uplift you, and get you going again.

It is not always easy to be a Christian. There is much opposition to doing good. Many times in the factories, if you do not get into the check pool, they think you are an oddball. When you become a child of God, you do not get in the check pools or buy lottery tickets. Someone may say, "Well, I wanted to strike it rich." If you are a Christian,

you are rich, spiritually speaking. You are far richer than any of those people who have won the lottery. Usually those people end up in trouble.

When you do what is right and sow to the Spirit, you have Jesus with you, even in the schools. You may be the only child of God in the classroom. Perhaps others are carrying on in the halls and fooling around in the classrooms, but if you do that which is right, Jesus will be with you. God will take care of the other things. God was with Jesus, and He will be with you too.

In Acts 10:38 we read, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." When you do that which is right, you stir the devil. You do not have to go into a shopping mall and shout, "Hey, I am a Christian!" You do not have to run around with a sign lifted up in the air to let others know that you are a child of God. All you have to do is live right. The sign of the Holy Ghost in your life is that you live a holy life. If you do what is right, that will be the greatest convincer to a lost and dying world.

The world is sick of nominal religion. They have had enough of it. Today people are willing to put forth great effort to worship a shrine or a statue or someone who has gone into eternity, yet they are not willing to put forth much effort to worship Jesus Christ.

Endure to the End

When you do that which is good, you stir the devil. Saint, do not give up. You must stay true to the end. It will not be much longer. Just because you are young is no sign that you are going to live to an old age. Jesus could split the clouds. Some say, "Wait a little longer, please, Jesus," but it is not to get their loved ones in. It is so they can continue to fool around in sin.

One of these days, it is going to be over; however, many people do not believe it. Do you know why? One day follows another, and everything continues as it was. No doubt, the people thought the same way in the days of Noah. Nevertheless, the Flood came according to God's promise. Those who were close to the ark when the door was shut were just as lost as those who were twenty miles away.

Sometimes when one gets saved, he will say, "When I was unsaved, I did not have as much trouble as I do now that I am saved." There is a reason behind that. Why should the devil have given a person trouble when he was unsaved? He already had him. When I was first saved, I worked in a factory in a department of approximately thirty men, and I surely did receive persecution, although I had it coming. I had persecuted someone else before I was saved. Before I was converted, the men knew that I had been quite a drinker, that I had smoked tobacco, and that I had a filthy tongue; so that is what the enemy used to work on me.

Sometimes at work when I walked away from the machine that I was working on, someone would lay a cigarette on my toolbox. My co-workers knew what brand I smoked when I was living in sin, so that is what someone would lay there. When I walked back to where I was working, I always picked up the cigarette (the men were watching me to see what I would do), walked over to the trash can, smiling, crumbled it up, and dropped it into the trash can; then their heads went down. After a while, they stopped doing that. Some of the men even asked me to pray for them.

Friend, you can live this Christian life. You will have to endure some suffering and persecution, but it will be as nothing compared to what Jesus had to endure. You need to keep that in mind. You will never have to suffer as He suffered.

When I was promoted to super-

vision, my boss came up to me once and said, "Roger, we are having a party over at Wendell P's (a local barroom). You don't even have to do any drinking. Just make an appearance and have a sandwich and say hi."

I said, "I'd rather not. What if somebody were to see me walking out of there? They wouldn't know why I went in there. That would destroy my influence. I would rather not even be there." So I did not go. I was the only supervisor who did not attend out of about thirty to forty people who were invited, and I never heard another word about it.

After you get saved, you will be tested and tried. People will ask you, "Why don't you wear this?" or "What's wrong with that? Everybody's doing it." No, not everybody is doing it. Dear one, you must endure to the end, and then you will be saved. As you go along, the more you resist temptations, the more God will help you, and the stronger you will get. You can become a strong Christian. Do not give in; do not give up; do not quit. You will please God when you resist the devil.

Remember, when you are being persecuted, mocked, or laughed at, Jesus sees it all. He knows just how much you can bear, and He will make a way of escape. If you are a Christian, people are going to persecute you. Some people are going to say things about you that are not true. When they do, you should just go on and live for God. He will take care of it. If you are being persecuted, be thankful that you have enough salvation that you stirred the devil. People out in false religion are not under the fire. Those who have genuine salvation are under the fire.

Matthew 10:19-22 reads: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the

brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved."

Man's Greatest Privileges

God is going to keep His Word, and He will take care of you. God will be with you. He will not forsake you or leave you, but rather He will be with you and strengthen you. Sometimes the battle may be long and difficult, but God will deliver you.

There are some privileges that God has afforded us along the way to help us stay saved. In the Old Testament you can read of Daniel who was thrown into the den of lions, but God delivered him. Before Daniel was thrown into the den of lions, he had a privilege to enjoy. Daniel 6:10 says, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." He did not let the pressure deter his worship.

Saint, God has afforded you one of the greatest privileges given to mankind: the privilege of prayer, or the privilege of talking to God. The world does not have the strength or the blessing that God provides for His own. As a child of God, you always have that blessing. You can talk to God right in the midst of the temptation, the trial, the threat, or the persecution, and no one can stop you.

Also, God has given you His Word. Psalm 107:17-20 says: "Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their dis-

tresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." You also have the privilege of having God's Word to comfort and strengthen you.

Young person, it would be well for you to read a verse or so of Scripture before you leave your home in the morning to go to school. Many times people become stirred in revival meetings, camp meetings, and conventions. They remain stirred for a week or so, but then they quiet down and go back into the same old habits they had before. Friend, you have to work at staying saved. You are not a robot. You are a free, moral agent, and you have to choose which way you are going to go on a daily basis. God is not going to make you pray, read the Bible, or attend the worship services. He will remind you when you do not pray or read the Bible, but He will never make you do these things.

You do not know what you are going to face during the day, but God knows, so it is good to seek Him early in the day. Some pray as soon as they get out of bed. The main thing is to make sure you talk to God and read the Scriptures. That is your privilege. Sometimes when you read the Scriptures, you might not understand much. You may think, "Why am I even reading this?" God will help you, and you never know when you might need it.

As a child of God, you have another privilege: you can gather with the saints of God. The world does not have this privilege. In Psalm 122:1 David wrote, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." In essence, David was saying, "I was just waiting for somebody to tell me it was time to go to the house of the Lord." When you go to the house of God, you should go with the attitude, "I'm not just going to receive. What can I put into the service? What can I do to help?" The Lord may want you to testify, sing a song, or pray.

Christian friend, do not lose

heart. You should not quit serving God. If you stumble, do not go out into the world and try to get victory. If you do that, you will just keep stumbling. You need to get up, go to God's house, and get right back to the basic essentials of Christian living that helped you in the beginning: praying, reading the Word of God, and worshiping at the house of God. You might have a lot of problems, but it is better to be in the house of God where you can receive help than to be out in the world

where those problems would become magnified.

Saint, do not grow weary and lose heart. If you are a young person in school, do not get discouraged. You can go there with victory in your soul, and God will help you. You must seek His face before you go; seek Him in the morning. If you will talk to God, He will listen to you.

(Cassette C-5390E)

Give of Your Best to the Master

Give of your best to the Master;

*Give of the strength of your youth;
Throw your soul's fresh, glowing ardor
Into the battle for truth.*

Jesus has set the example;

*Dauntless was He, young and brave;
Give Him your loyal devotion,
Give Him the best that you have.*

Give of your best to the Master;

*Give Him first place in your heart;
Give Him first place in your service,
Consecrate every part.*

Give, and to you shall be given;

*God His beloved Son gave;
Gratefully seeking to serve Him
Give Him the best that you have.*

Give of your best to the Master;

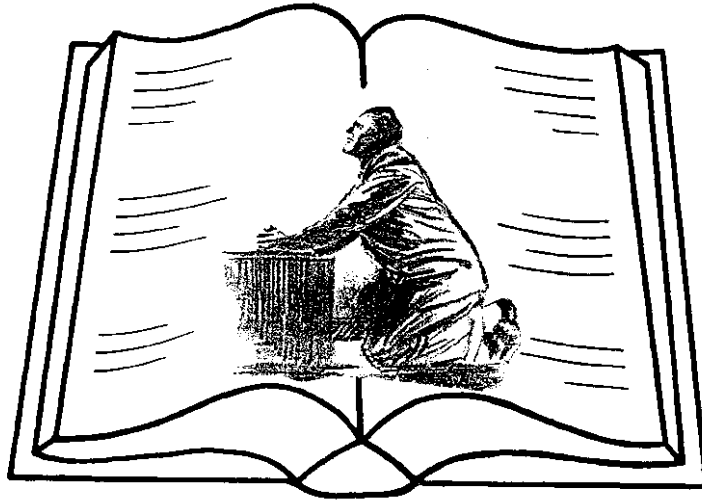
*Naught else is worthy His love;
He gave Himself for your ransom,
Gave up His glory above;
Laid down His life without murmur,
You from sin's ruin to save;
Give Him your heart's adoration,
Give Him the best that you have.*

Give of your best to the Master;

*Give of the strength of your youth;
Clad in salvation's full armor,
Join in the battle for truth.*

Mrs. Charles Barnard

Do You Have Evidence of Genuine Religion?



Brother E. David Stegmeier

God Cares for His People

When I was in the military service, I carried a little Bible with me so that I could read it often to keep my mind where it should be. We need to keep our minds where they ought to be. The battle is in our minds, and we are in a terrible battle today. I have never seen the like, but we need to stay in the battle. When I was a boy, I played football, and my football coach often said, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Christian friend, if you will stay in the battle, God will reward your efforts. He is in control of all things. You cannot change the principles of God's divine Word; His Word will stand.

Sometimes you may feel deserted, but you need to remember that God will never forget you. Isaiah 49:15 says, "Can a woman

forget her sucking child, . . . they may forget, yet will I [God] not forget thee." A song entitled "Count Your Blessings" reads: "*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear? Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly, And you will be singing as the days go by. Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done; Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done.*" God will take care of our burdens. He is concerned about us.

Some time ago I was carrying such a heavy burden that I could hardly sleep. When I finally did go

to sleep, I was dreaming and struggling and felt that I was just about to die. My wife reminded me of a story concerning Martin Luther. Martin Luther was going around with a long face, so his wife said, "Martin, God's dead."

He said, "Don't say that. You're speaking as a foolish woman."

She repeated, "Martin, God's dead."

He said, "Don't say that again, wife!"

"Well," she said, "you're acting as though He is."

God is alive, and He cares about His people. As I was walking through an airport once, I thought of the billions of people whom God will judge one day, and then I thought, "God knows every one of them. He is even concerned about the birds." Have you ever thought about that?

Be Strong in the Lord

There is a lot of religion in the world today. Some people may not like to use the term *religion*, but it is a biblical term. There is a difference between genuine religion and false religion. A tremendous amount of false religion is being taught today. I want you to look into the Word of God and see what the requisites of genuine religion are.

In our Scripture text James wrote to the saints of God who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire to encourage them to stay in the race and to be strong in the Lord. He also gave them some good advice for godly living. James 1:1-2 reads: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy [sometimes I try to think about that when I am in difficult places] when ye fall into divers temptations."

Truth brings out the best in people, and error brings out the worst. When you are tried for the sake of righteousness, it will cause you to become a beautiful person if you will take it, leave it with God, show the right attitude, and keep your spirit right. God is painting a picture, and He is the best artist there is. If you will yield to Him 100 percent, He will help you to become an awesome person.

Henry Varley, a very close friend of D. L. Moody, once said to Mr. Moody, "It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself wholly to Him." When Henry Varley said that to him, D. L. Moody said, "Well, I will be that man."

James 1:3-6 reads: "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. [When rearing children or working through problems, I say,

'Lord, I need wisdom; please, help me and give me more wisdom.'] But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." God wants us to stand. One song says, "*Never yield a step in the hottest fight, God will send you help from the realms of light.*" Saint, you need to stay right in the battle.

Verses 7-14 state: "For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted: But the rich, in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [God will keep you in each temptation that comes into your pathway, though unannounced; however, if you invite temptation, you are going to have a problem]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." You should not allow yourself to be drawn away. When that first thought enters your mind, you should say, "No!"

Pure Religion

James 1:15-27 reads: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of

his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: [You know how embarrassing it could be if you were to fail to look in the mirror in the morning before you went out. Likewise, you need to look in the spiritual mirror to make certain that you are attired as you ought to be.] For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

The evidence of genuine religion does not consist in joining a church. You will never hear a true Church of God minister ask you to join the church. To some, the evidence of having genuine religion is being sprinkled with a little water or being immersed in water. Others say that the evidence is going through catechism classes. When I was a very young boy, my family was taught the catechism. After one took a test, he was inducted into that church. Was that the evidence of real religion? No! What does the Bible say is the proof of having genuine

religion? How can you know that you really have it? All the things that I have spoken of are false refuges. They are lies in which people have been taught to trust. The evidence of genuine religion is an experience of the new birth, which inducts you into God's wonderful family.

Power to Reign Over Sin

If you have genuine religion, 1 John 3:14 says that you have "passed from death unto life"; therefore, you are producing the works of God. Have you been resurrected? Is the old man dead? When you get saved, that is when the old man is crucified, not at a later time. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The old man is crucified when you become a child of God. Has that experience happened to you? John said, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Do you love the brethren? Do you love everyone, even your enemies? When you become a new creature in Christ, His love is shed abroad in your heart.

James 1:26 states, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." If a man has genuine religion, he is careful about what he says. He does not open his mouth and spew out any old thing, whether it is gossip or whatever. No, he weighs his words very carefully. David said in Psalm 141:3, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips." I want to be sure that I say only that which I ought to be saying. When a person has pure religion, he has been changed. Real religion gives you power over the tongue, and the tongue is one of the most unruly members of the body.

Do you reign over sin? The evidence of genuine religion is that you have power to reign over sin.

The Bible lets us know there are people who go to church, but they merely have a form of godliness. The Word of God has no power in their lives. Therefore, they do not have power to say no to the devil, so they have to succumb to all that the devil says. When you truly become a child of God, you will have the power to say no to the devil and yes to God. I do not like sin, do you? I hate it!

This brings to my mind a story that I have told before, but it bears repeating. The story tells of a little boy whose father did not take him to church. The little boy came home after Sunday school and the father said, "What did you learn? I see that you stayed for Sunday school and the general service."

The son said, "Yes."

His father then inquired, "What did you hear today? What did the preacher preach about?"

The boy replied, "Oh, I remember, he spoke about sin."

"Well, what did he say about it?" the father asked.

"I'm not really sure, but I know from what he said, he sure didn't like it." As a child of God, you ought to hate sin. You should detest it.

I heard another story of a little boy whose father was trying to awaken him to get him up for Sunday school. The little boy said to his father, "Daddy, did you go to Sunday school?"

"Oh," he said, "yes, when I was a boy, I used to go."

The little boy looked really sad and said, "Well, I can see where it didn't do you much good. Why should I have to go?" This is pretty sad, is it not?

Having genuine religion gives you power in your life to keep a pure mind. There are evil things to look upon all around us. I have been trying to exercise more, so I have been doing some bicycle riding. As I was riding down a highway, I saw something very evil. In my mind the devil said, "Go back and be sure that you really saw that." I said, "You old devil, I am going to keep pedaling

down the road." Keeping a pure mind is important. I value my walk with God, don't you?

Living Your Life to Please God

One song entitled "There Is Power in the Blood" reads: "*Would you be free from the burden of sin? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. Would you be free from your passion and pride? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Come for a cleansing to Calvary's tide; There's wonderful pow'r in the blood.*"

Pride is a terrible thing! Some people are too proud to go back and say, "I'm sorry. I did the wrong thing." Sometimes people need to have a reverse gear and be willing to say, "I did wrong. I'm willing to own that I made the wrong decision. I'll be a man [or woman] about it and say 'I'm sorry' and go back to where I got off track." I have worked with people in penitentiaries who have done that, but they have had to pay very dearly for the choices they have made. One must go God's way to be clear in his soul. You should not wait for someone to tell you. You ought to be man [or woman] enough to go back to where you got off track, make things right, and get back on track, just as Pilgrim did in *Pilgrim's Progress*. We are admonished in Philippians 2:12 to "work out your own salvation with fear and with trembling."

The song continues: "*Would you be whiter, much whiter than snow? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Sin-stains are lost in its life-giving flow; There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. Would you do service for Jesus your King? There's pow'r in the blood, pow'r in the blood; Would you live daily His praises to sing? There's wonderful pow'r in the blood. There is pow'r, pow'r, Wonder-working pow'r In the blood of the Lamb; There is pow'r, pow'r, Wonder-working pow'r In the precious blood of the Lamb.*"

When I was a small child, I thought, "I want to be like Samuel. If

I could just live in some room in the church, Lord, as Samuel did, it would surely be much easier for me." However, God does not want us to live that way. He wants us to be witnesses for Him.

In closing, I would like to ask you a few questions. Are you very careful of what you say? Do you weigh your words? Are you careful not to wound, offend, or spread gossip? You should not say something that would be a problem to someone. Do you have control of your tongue? Do you live a life without sin? "Oh," you say, "that's too perfect." Jesus said in Matthew 5:48,

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This means that you are to obey God. Are you doing all that you know to do? Do you have love in your heart for everyone? Do you truly love others? To truly love them, you must go beyond mere words; you must show them by doing something for them. Do you pray for them? Are you living your life to please God and not self? Is the whole tenor of your life to please God?

You should not settle for anything less than genuine religion. You may say, "Oh, I want to go

where thousands of people worship." You mark it down, if thousands of people attend there, then the Gospel is probably not being preached in its fullness. I want to go where the pure Word of God is preached and practiced in love. If you have a need, won't you bring it to the Lord? You should not settle for anything but the very best that God has to offer. God wants to give you His best, but He can only do that if you obey His Word in its entirety. You must do all that you know to do.

(Cassette C-4827M)

If You Criticize Others . . .

In the 1950's a boy returning from Korea phoned his wealthy mother in New York. After a moving exchange of loving words, the boy made one simple request.

"Mother," he asked, "do you mind if I bring home a buddy who has lost an arm and a leg?"

His mother replied, "Son, we have always tried to make your friends feel welcome in our home. I don't mean to be unkind, but surely you know what it will mean to bring someone who is deformed.

"You know what our friends will think of us for entertaining such an unsightly guest. Please spare us this embarrassment."

He did.

Two days later, he committed suicide, for *he* was the boy without an arm and a leg.

The record for this case could read, "Murdered by his mother."

She killed him by rubbing caustic criticism into raw wounds of tragedy and discouragement. True, she did not mean her deadly remarks for her own son. However, deadly remarks kill. *What* they are meant to kill does not remedy the crime of making deadly remarks.

Some say, "I am only reporting facts about others."

Yes, and the facts may be spotlessly true, but facts like tools can be handled to accomplish vastly different purposes. A knife can be used to peel potatoes or it can be used to stab a person in the back.

God is not impressed when you use "disinfected" facts to do a dirty job on the character of another person.

You judge the character of a person every time you pass facts about him. The way you use the facts shows

whether you judge him to be good or bad.

Jesus warned, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matthew 7:2).

Every judgment you make in life will boomerang and come back into your own lap on the final day of reckoning.

How will you stand if your words . . .

ruin the character of a boy whom God planned to use in the ministry of the Gospel?

hurt a new Christian and cause him to be lost?

drive a wedge between a husband and wife that ruins their marriage?

At some places in the Alps, guides warn tourists to be extremely quiet. Cars are banned from these places because they might cause the smallest vibration necessary to upset a delicately poised mass of stones on the mountain and send an avalanche crashing to tragedy in the valley below.

Some people today carry such a weight of secret burdens and problems that one unkind criticism may upset a delicate balance and destroy them.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1).

You have a right to judge. "But judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13).

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10).

Then we will answer for any unkind words of ours that destroyed others. Now is the time to repent of unjust criticism and learn to "speak the truth in love."

My Personal Testimony

My Very Own Divine Healing



It all started one evening in early October 2004. After supper I stood up to clear the table, and it felt as if I had a cramp in my left foot. I did not think much about it, because it is common for muscle cramps to occur. However, during the month of October, my foot began to swell, and I could hardly walk on it.

On November 3, 2004, I went to a podiatrist, who examined and x-rayed my foot. She said that it looked as though what I had was easy to treat and that within two weeks I should really notice a difference. I surely did—*it got worse!* She gave me anti-inflammatory drugs, to which I had an adverse reaction. I called her right away, and she had me come back in to her office. By that time, I could hardly stand on my foot.

On the next visit I was fitted for an Unna boot, and I was given instructions to wear this for seven to ten days. The doctor was sure by that time that I would be able to tolerate the pain enough to wear regular shoes and that the pain would dissipate over time. The boot did help some, but the pain continued. Once the Unna boot was removed and I began to bear weight on my left foot, the pain returned and the swelling was increasing. I continued to limit any weight bearing on this foot. On the next doctor visit nothing new had happened; my foot was still the same. The doctor ordered an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) to rule out any further pathology. The results of the MRI

showed an increased erosion of the left heel. Additionally, it showed that my heel had been broken, that two clusters of cysts had formed at the lateral aspect of the ankle, and several synovial cysts were noted throughout my foot. The doctor ordered me to use crutches and put a hard cast on my foot so that the broken part of the foot could heal.

The following visit entailed removing the hard cast and re-evaluating the left calcaneal fracture. At this point the doctor was unsure of my progress (there was not any), so she ordered a bone stimulator that was to help with the healing, and I was to follow up in two weeks. It was during these two weeks that a lump about the size of a golf ball appeared on the inside of my left heel. Half of it was on the side of the foot; the other half was under my foot where all the pain had been.

By this time, I was into my third month of what was supposed to have been a quick healing. I continued using the bone stimulator, which I placed on my foot for ten hours a day. Also, at this time I had begun falling several times throughout the day. My husband helped me get out of bed at night when necessary, and my children helped me during the day.

On my next doctor's visit, the cast was removed and a CAM boot was applied. This was to prevent me from falling and to enable me to be a little more mobile. Again, I was told not to put any weight on this foot. I

laughed to myself and thought, "Right! With a family and everything that needs done around the house, I am really going to be able to stay off of my foot."

Two weeks later, moderate to severe pain was occurring, and I was desperate to find anything that would make this foot condition better. The pain in my foot became so severe that I was continually unstable on the foot while standing, and dizziness began to occur. I was sent to get another MRI so that the doctor could see in greater detail exactly what was going on with the foot. The results were that nothing had changed. The doctor scheduled an appointment for me to get an opinion from a surgeon.

That Saturday I met with the surgeon, and he stated that surgery was necessary. By this time, I was in my fifth month of pain and suffering with no real help. Nothing was working to heal my foot. A date was scheduled for my surgery. For various reasons, this was rescheduled three times. Throughout this process, blood tests were taken and the results showed abnormalities, some too high and some too low. I began to become scared at this time. I was so frustrated with all the surgery cancellations that I sought another opinion from a different surgeon.

At this appointment, the surgeon stated that he could not handle such a case because there was only a

[continued on page 25]

Especially for Young People

The Stolen Orange



"Mamma will never know," thought Flora Marshall to herself as she took a large orange from the piled up dish on the table, and putting it in her pocket, went hastily upstairs.

She was expecting two or three friends to spend the day with her and had been busily arranging the doll her kind mother had given her; but while lingering about, waiting for them to come, she was tempted to take one of the oranges that had been placed on the table ready for dinner. She hurried from the room, but had not reached the top of the stairs before her brother's voice stopped her, calling, "Flora, Flora, make haste! I see some of your visitors coming in at the gate"; and directly after, there was a knock at the door, and she could hear the voices of Kate and Effie Somers.

Flora ran quickly downstairs, but her face was flushed, and she felt miserable and ashamed as she met her young friends and took them to the parlor to speak to her mamma.

Flora tried to laugh and talk as merrily as any of them, but she could not forget how wrong she had been; and the dish of oranges setting right before her on the table kept her fault ever in her mind. Besides this, not having been able to eat lest she might draw it from her pocket with her handkerchief, and thus be covered with shame in the sight of her young friends.

Poor Flora! She had sinned

against God and against her kind mother and had spoiled all her afternoon's pleasure for the sake of an orange. At dinnertime she could not raise her head to meet her mother's glance, who saw that something was wrong with her and who said very kindly, "Flora, dear, you are scarcely eating anything. Are you not well?" This made Flora ready to cry with shame and repentance. Her conscience was too tender to allow her to be happy while her fault remained unconfessed.

All the afternoon they had merry games in which everybody joined. They played "Hunt the Slipper" and many more such games, winding up with "Blind Man's Bluff." After this the little girls went home, and Flora was left alone with her papa and mama while the younger children were getting ready for bed.

Several times she had fancied she had dropped the orange in some of the rough movements of the games and had gone more than once quietly into a corner of the room to feel in her pocket if it was still there. Yes, it was quite safe enough. "How could I be so wicked and so greedy?" thought Flora. "Mama always gives me as much fruit as is best for me, and yet I have made myself a thief, and after all have not eaten the orange, or been able to put it back, and it has spoiled all my pleasure." She sat still, miserable and unhappy for a little longer, and then

her resolution was made. She would tell her mama before she lay down to sleep that night.

With a slow step and a beating heart, she went toward the window where her mother was sitting. "Well, Flora," said her mother kindly, "you seem tired and out of spirits tonight. Have you come to wish me good-night?"

"Oh, Mama!" sobbed Flora, "I have come to tell you how wicked I have been and how very sorry and miserable I am," and hiding her face in the folds of her mama's dress, she told the story.

"Here it is, Mama," she said, drawing the orange from her pocket, "and I think I shall never see an orange again without remembering this bad afternoon."

Very gravely, but gently, her mother spoke to her about her sin, and the consequences it had brought upon her. "I shall not punish you, Flora," she said. "Your own conscience has been a sufficient punishment. I have watched your pale, troubled face all afternoon and should have wondered what was wrong with you had I not seen you take the orange as I passed the door, which was slightly open. Knowing what you had done, I was not surprised that you seemed unhappy."

"But can you forgive me, Mama, and believe that I will never do such a thing again?"

"I will forgive you, Flora,

because you have told me of your fault; but remember there is One above whose forgiveness you must seek as well as mine, Whose eye is always upon you and Who is grieved when you do wrong. You must ask God to pardon you and

cleanse you from this and every other sin for the sake of His Son, our Savior Jesus Christ."

With a sorrowful, repentant heart, Flora, kneeling there, asked God to forgive all her sins and to help her for the future to resist

temptation; but it was a long time before she forgot the stolen orange and how miserable she had been that afternoon.

Selected

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

Are you taking advantage of the opportunity to reach the lost? Are you carrying a burden for your own family members who are lost in sin or still worshipping in Babylon? Does the precious commodity called *time* make you, as a saint of God, more aware of your need to draw closer to God? Or will it be with you as it was with Hezekiah in his latter end? During the time that was extended to him, he lived foolishly and carelessly, and at the end of his time, his soul was lost. These are questions that each individual ought to seriously consider.

Here we are at the beginning of another New Year. Is it possible that this could be the year that our Lord returns? One never truly knows. However, one thing is for certain—we all ought to live soberly and righteously. Surely we realize that His appearing is closer now than ever before. As we look around, we can see sin and ungodliness being manifested on every hand. Many of the same ungodly conditions that were present when the Lord destroyed the antediluvian world and, again, at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are prevalent in our world today.

This is certainly a sobering

thought, and it ought to alarm each of us. Think of the reality and the finality when we hear God say, "It is enough!" When that time comes, all mankind will be ushered into God's presence and demanded to give an account for all the deeds and actions done in the body, whether they were good or evil. My friend, that is going to be a solemn, sobering time.

Those who have rejected the mercies of God will realize the great error they have made by putting off the most important issue in life, the issue of obtaining an experience of salvation. Much weeping and wailing will be heard as sentence is pronounced upon the multitudes who failed to make their peace with God when it was so graciously offered.

Dear reader, are you in that group that will be placed on His left hand, to be cast forever into the burning lake of fire? Time and opportunity to be saved continue to be extended to you. You need to take advantage of it now!

Permit me to say a word to the saint of God, God's elect. Are you really awake to the reality that is awaiting each of us in just a little while? Is your life being lived in the sober manner it ought to be? Will the Lord find you awake and alert,

working and laboring for Him when He returns or when death calls you? As a saint of God, you need to have your heart challenged. The Apostle Paul, writing in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, said, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." At a time when men least expect, the Lord will come. Paul went on to say in verse 6, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." This man of God saw the need to stir the saints' minds because it is easy to become overcharged with the cares of this life, becoming too involved with things that are not truly important.

You must realize that your time here is short and there is yet much more to be done for the Lord and lost souls. You have no assurance that God will extend time. Whatever you are going to do for the Lord, you need to do it quickly. If you are yet in sin's bondage, take heed and lay aside your ideas and hindrances. What are you doing with this time extended to you? Are you taking advantage of it or are you becoming numb to the reality that faces you on Judgment Day?

Selected

WANTED: PARENTS WHO WILL INFLUENCE THEIR CHILDREN

Some parents say, "We will not influence our children in making choices and decisions in matters of religion." Why not?

You can rest assured that the ads in all the media will try to influence your children. So will the movies, the neighbors, and their friends. You use your influence over your coworkers, your relatives, and your friends. Shall you ignore your own children? May God forgive you if you do.

Acts 3:13 *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.*

14 *But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;*

15 *And killed the Prince of life,*

whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16 *And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.*

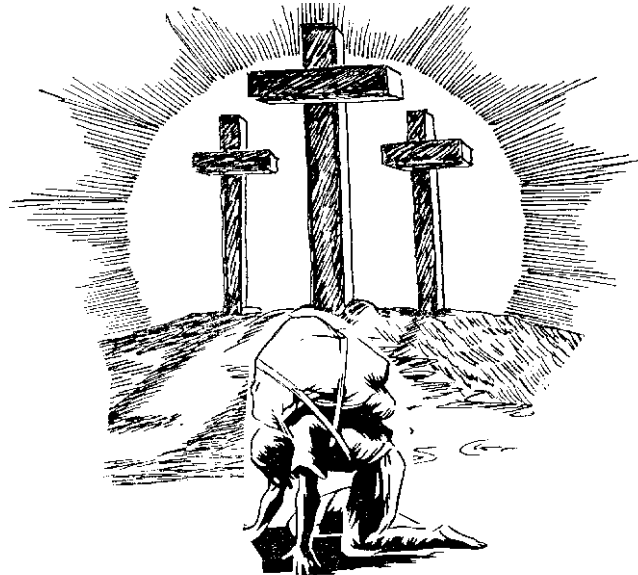
17 *And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also*

your rulers.

18 *But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.*

19 *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

Have You Had Your Sins Blotted Out?



Brother Esau Brooks

The Faithful Are Gathering Home

One song in the *Evening Light Songs* hymnal entitled "From Babel to Zion" begins, "Now to the holy city The faithful gather home." The church is the home of the faithful. To be a part of the church, first you must be saved; second, you have to be faithful. When Jesus was speaking about the end of everything, the premise upon which those who will be allowed into Heaven was put forth

like this: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." We are living in a day when, if people are good, they are unfaithful. In many cases, people who say they are faithful are not good. The faithful are gathering home to Zion. Verse 1 of the song continues, "To Zion's mount of glory With songs of joy they come. Jerusalem the golden, Jerusalem the free, With joyful hearts and voices The ransomed come to thee."

Church of God songs are

unique. They are not like the Methodist's songs, the Baptist's songs, or the Pentecostal's songs. The reason that not many congregations sing the songs of Zion anymore is that they cannot sing the Lord's songs in a strange land.

Verse 2 of the song says, "Now eye to eye beholding The waymarks on the road, All bound in love together, They're coming home to God: One mind and mouth possessing, They speak with one accord, And in the heights of Zion

They shout and praise the Lord." I thank God there is a church today where you can find pure, undefiled love. It may not be where you go to church, but in the Church of God there is love one to another. In John 13:35 Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." You see, I can have love *for* you but never show it to you. However, I cannot have love *to* you without your knowing it and seeing it.

The church possesses one mind. When people who call themselves the church become so split that each one has a mind of his own, that is not the church. You may ask, "How is it possible for everyone to have one mind?" We must have the mind of Christ. That is the reason the Bible says to let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is more to church than just getting yourself all fixed up and going out for a walk. If you think only the world has a good time, you are missing it. If you think you have to smoke marijuana or take "ecstasy" to feel a thrill, you have missed it. Thank God, there is ecstasy in serving God. Glory be to God!

Notice that part of verse 2 reads, "*They speak with one accord.*" Whenever people sow discord, they are not the church and they are not saved. Thank God, shouting the praises of God is not old-fashioned. It is as much up to date today as it was back in the days of the sixth seal. You need to beg God to put a shout in your soul. When some people want to be critical, they say, "Well, he only wants to hear noise." One sign of being alive spiritually is that you make a joyful noise unto the Lord. So, "*in the heights of Zion They shout and praise the Lord.*"

Do the people do that where you go to church? One could not have despised shouting more than I did before I got saved. You see, I was raised a Methodist. We had a saying back home: "I was born a Methodist, I was rocked in a Methodist cradle, and I am going to die a Methodist." Since I got saved, I added one more

thing to it: I say, "You will go to hell a Methodist too."

Nowadays people say, "There is one thing I have against those people: they make too much noise." Well, there were those disciples who could not stand it in Jesus' day either. Someone walked up to Jesus and said, "Master, speak to those children. Shut them up, Lord," as they were crying out, "Hosanna, blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." Jesus said if they kept quiet, the rocks would immediately cry out. So which would you like to hear, the rocks shouting or the children shouting? Thank God, there is some life to serving God, and the quicker you realize that, the better it will be for you.

Verse 3 of the song reads, "*Sing glory to the Savior, High over all the world; On Zion's heights forever His banner is unfurled. God's church can be no longer Obscured from human sight; For see, on yonder mountain, A city filled with light!*"

Verse 4 says, "*No longer Babel's bondage The bride of Christ can hold; God's children now are holy, And free from Babel's fold: For it is fallen, fallen, And it shall rise no more; We cling alone to Jesus, As did the saints of yore.*" I thank God Almighty that I am free! I am free to live right, free to talk right, free to think right, and free to do right! That is Church of God. Many people have been led astray. They think just because someone has taken a little black paint and has written "Church of God" over a door, that makes the people Church of God. Friend, it takes much more than writing the name on a sign outside the building to produce the Church of God.

God's children do not make any image to the beast, and they do not worship the beast and his image. The last line of the song says, "*We cling alone to Jesus, As did The saints of yore.*" When that song was written, they knew nothing about me, yet in the closing days of this world's history, I am rejoicing in the song and praising the same God. I want to encourage you to make it a point

to find out more about this business of serving God than what you have learned so far.

Looking for a Little Fun

I have not always been Church of God. As I mentioned earlier, before I got saved, I was a Methodist. Today people walk around and say, "I am a sinner saved by grace." How did they get that combination? Where did they get that idea? If you are a sinner, you are not saved. If you are saved, you are not a sinner. A person is a sinner because he commits sin. That is one reason I could never be a Baptist, for to be a Baptist, you must sin more or less every day. Sad to say, in these days many are sinning more than less. No doubt, some nice people go to those places, but that is in spite of their being Baptists. You do not do good because you are a good Baptist.

I want to tell you a true story. This happened more than fifty years ago. A friend of mine came by my house one morning and invited me to go to a church. I asked, "For what?"

He said, "Well, they are having a prayer meeting today."

"They are having a prayer meeting on Monday morning? Thanks, but no thanks."

My friend insisted, and to persuade me, he said, "Let's go, man. You're going to have fun!"

If someone was going to talk about having fun, he had me hooked. So I got ready, and we went to the church service that morning. When we got there, I said, "We are going to sit in the first seat we get to by the door or I'm going home."

"Okay. Let's go."

Well, we got in there, and those saints began to sing and wave their handkerchiefs over their heads. I had not seen that in the Methodist Church, so we started to laugh. I was beginning to enjoy it, but someone got up and said, "Let us pray." I did not even kneel. I just stooped between the two benches, and my friend did the same.

Next, someone started to pray. I have never heard such prayer before nor after. Not long after that person was praying, I began to tremble as a green leaf over a fire. If you do not know anything about that, you should try it. As if that were not bad enough, tears began to flow down my face. I said to myself, "Oh, my, now this is bad." So I started to hide my face from my friend.

I did not want him to see me crying, because back in those days we thought one was a sissy to cry. We considered being called a sissy so terrible that, if you wanted a fight, all you had to do was call one of us a sissy. There I was, a young man crying out in the open. I was ashamed of myself, so I fought it; but the more I fought it, the more the tears flowed.

I wondered about my buddy, but I could not look at him. I decided to cover my face and open my fingers, so I could look through them to see what shape he was in. When I looked at him, I saw that he was in just as bad a shape as I was. He had his handkerchief out and was wiping his eyes, but I had not taken mine out as yet. We looked at each other, and he would wipe his eyes, and then I would wipe mine. We did that until they said amen. By that time, I was not stooping anymore, I was kneeling on both knees.

"Jesus Took My Burden, and Left Me With a Song"

When they said amen and we got up from that prayer meeting, no judge going to hell could have been more serious than the two of us. All the lightness, the making fun, and the laughing were gone. I suppose they noticed from the platform that something had happened, so they started to sing a song of invitation. The moment they started it, I knew they were after us. I said to my friend, "Let's go (meaning to go to the altar)." Well, he was probably feeling the same way, so he said, "You go first, and I will come too." I thought it was easy, but when I tried

to get up and go, it seemed as if I were chained to the bench. As I looked over at him, I said, "No, you go first, and then I will go." There we were, polishing the seat of that bench and going back and forth saying, "You go," and the other saying, "No, you go."

The brethren saw the predicament we were in, and someone left the platform, walked back to where we were sitting, and I only heard these words: "Young men, why don't you . . ." I broke from that seat, and I was ready to carry the house with me, not just the bench, as I made my way toward the altar. Just before I knelt, I remembered my friend, because after all, he had gotten me into this; so I looked back to see where he was. When I looked back, he was coming faster than I was going, so I just moved aside and he hit the altar and then I hit the altar behind him.

The brethren came over and began to deal with us. It seemed as if every hand in the whole island was on top of my head. They said, "Pray." I did not know anything about praying, because in the Methodist Church you do not really pray. We said prayers such as, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep," but that is about it.

Now, if I have offended you, it is not because I intend to do that. I am just trying to give you my personal testimony. (Once I was flying on a plane between Cayman and Honduras, and the weather conditions were bad; it was serious. The flight attendant came to me and said, "Oh, we need to pray!"

I said, "Yes, ma'am, we need to pray."

She said, "Well, I am praying, 'Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep.'" That was all the prayer she knew to pray.)

After the brethren had prayed a while, they stopped and asked me, "Do you believe you are saved?"

I said, "No."

They said, "Well, let's pray again," so they prayed. After another five or six minutes, they stopped

and said, "Do you believe you are saved now?"

I said, "No." I was not going to allow anyone to cause me to say something that I did not know anything about. They said, "Well, we believe you are saved; get up and testify."

I said, "No."

They were somewhat grieved because they thought I was there just to make fun. However, one thing I knew when I left that church building: I had something that I did not need, and I needed something that I did not have. So I left and went home, prostrated myself on the floor, and I stayed there until Heaven opened up on my soul. I can still remember that day, and I will remember it if I live to be a hundred years old. That was real! I had to look down to see if I was still on the floor, because it seemed as if I were floating around in the air. I did not shout, but I did not know anything about shouting. I went to church that night, and they did not have to ask me to testify. I jumped up and sang, "Jesus took my burden and left me with a song," and I have been singing ever since.

A Divine Revelation of Truth

Friend, if you did not get salvation where you are, you should do something about it. I was not about to leave the Methodist Church to go to any other church, so I decided that I would go one Sunday to the Methodist Church and the next Sunday I would attend the Church of God services. I kept that up for a while, until one morning as I was sitting at the Methodist Church, a voice seemed to say to me, "What are you doing here? Do you know that every time you come here, you are worse than you were before?" I just reached over, took hold of my hat, and out from the Methodist Church and Babylon I went.

Before I left, I decided, "If there is anything You will help me do, Lord, let me get back in here and tell them about this." A few years later,

we were having an all-day meeting, and the Methodist preacher came over and said to me, "Brother Esau, you have quite a crowd of people here, and the building is not big enough. Why don't you come over to the Methodist Church? We would be glad to let you use our building. Will you accept it?"

I said, "Yes."

I told the brethren, "We are going to the Methodist Church tonight to have service." When we got there, the preacher said, "This is the way we are going to do this thing. We will have our service first, and then you can get up and go on with yours." Since we were already there, I decided to go along with it. We sat for quite some time, and no one was saying anything, so I said to the preacher, "Aren't you all going to sing?"

He said, "You go on," so the brethren started, and we sang a song that says, "*Without spot and blameless, O Savior. What a glorious church thou hast built!*" I want to tell you, they sang! After that song was finished, I paused for a few minutes again to see if the Methodist people would take over the service. They did not, so we sang another song. After that song, I said, "Are you going to start now?"

He said, "No, you go ahead."

When I got up, I opened the service with the song, "The Church Triumphant." One verse says, "*Tis not in the church of Jesus That people yet live in sin; But in the dark creeds they're joining, And vainly are trusting in.*" I preached, and when it was time for the altar service, I said to the Methodist minister, "Are you going to give the invitation?" I did that because it was in his building, and all his people were there.

He said, "No, you go ahead."

I started the altar service, and his people lined the altar. To make a long story short, when we left there, we left with about three quarters of that congregation. Those people who left took a stand for Truth, and the Methodist preacher never invited me back. I give this testimony

because I want people to know that I am not Church of God because someone talked me into it or because I am following someone. I am Church of God through and through, from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, because God gave me a revelation of Truth. That is the reason no one can confuse me about the church.

Repent and Be Converted

Having the Lord forgive your sins is wonderful, but it is more wonderful for God to blot out your sins *and* to forgive them. If He wanted to, He could forgive your sins and allow them to remain on the record, but instead He blots them out, and it is as if you had never sinned. When God saves you, there is nothing to go back to; you burn the bridge behind you.

In the Scripture text the Apostle Peter was speaking to a people who were guilty of crucifying our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter was striving to tell them about the only way to deal with sin. If you are a sinner, you need to give up the idea of believing that shaking a preacher's hand or joining the church of your choice will do anything about your sinful condition. You must do as Peter told those people in Acts 3:19, when he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Salvation does begin with repentance, but conversion must follow it. Peter was telling the people that this is the one and only way that God deals with people's sins. You cannot get rid of sin by observing or practicing religious rites, but many people depend on these things to bring them salvation. The formula to be saved takes a combined work between God and man. For man to cease from sin, he must have a work performed on his heart by God.

Joining church, signing a decision card, or shaking a preacher's hand cannot bring salvation to you. God must do a work on you. You must repent and

be converted. Many people think they are Christians, but salvation converts you from one life to another. Paul told the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is [not he *will be*, but he *is*] a new creature. . . ." Your face may look the same and you may comb your hair the same way, but you will be a new creature in Christ Jesus. A new creature is a new creation. When Paul said "a new creature," he meant that one would be changed completely.

When I was a child, we were raised in Sunday school, but when I became a young man and got a job, I decided that I would no longer attend Sunday school. I intended to find out what sin was all about. One Sunday evening as I was on my way to a dance, I passed a denominational church where they were singing a song I had learned in Sunday school, and that song hit me like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky. I staggered and had to go to a light pole and hold on. Had those people had salvation, I would have gotten saved right then. I could not move a foot. All my early days came before me, and I looked at myself and thought, "Here I am going to a dance on a Sunday evening." When they finished the song, that feeling wore off, and I went on to the dance.

A New Creature in Christ Jesus

When you are saved, your desires are changed. When an individual truly becomes a Christian, it changes his life and his outlook on life. Undoubtedly, that is the reason so many people call the people of God fanatics. To that I say, "I am not a fanatic, but I am a fan of Jesus'." You have probably seen how people carry on over their favorite ball teams. When you are a ball game lover, you are called a fan. There is a world of difference between being a fanatic and being a fan.

When I first walked on the campgrounds at God's Acres in 1962, I sat down in the old barn where the camp meeting services

were held. As I listened to Brother Emerson Wilson preach the Gospel, I was astonished, because he was preaching the same Truth that I was preaching in Honduras. Before that time, I knew nothing about Brother Wilson, and he knew nothing about me.

If people would leave themselves in God's hands, things would be much better. If you are growing weary of God's laws and practices, it is only because if you had Christ, you have lost Him. Before I was saved, I loved dancing, but after I was saved, I never attended another dance. Also, I never went to another movie theater.

This experience is real, friend. Too many people are drinking from Babylon's cup, and they have become drunk on her wine. The wishy-washy message that Babylon is passing on to the world cannot satisfy the sincere soul. It is a comfort at night to look toward Heaven and say, "Good night, Lord," and then awaken in the morning and look heavenward and say, "Good morning, Lord." Being a Christian is different from being worldly. Being born again will take the love of the world out of your heart. The world might call you old-fashioned, but there is an old saying that says, "The old broom is what sweeps the cleanest." Today we have modern machines that can clean our dishes and our clothes, but God has not modernized His way. Salvation is the same today as it was when Jesus brought it into the world, and it will always be that way. It will cleanse you inwardly and outwardly. There are yet quite a number of people around the world who still believe the old-fashioned Gospel. That keeps encouraging me. Young person, if you really want to know what it is to be alive, then you need to get saved. If you want to know what real satisfaction is, you need to get Jesus in your life.

Sometimes people say, "One reason I do not want to get saved is that when people get saved, they cannot do this and that." They say,

"You cannot go to the movies or dances, and you cannot smoke cigarettes or take drugs." Friend, if you get saved, you will not *want* to do those things. I am living right because I want to live right. I do not have to have a preacher threaten me with a club and tell me that I have to do this and that. Salvation will take the love of the world out of your soul and cause you to be an example to others. What better way to live! Often the world admires the Christian. So many people have come to my wife and me and asked, "What church do you go to?" They see something that they do not see in others.

God's Remedy for Sin

In days gone by, people legislated laws to try to get people to cover themselves and dress decently, but all they really need to do is get saved. In Bible times the only people who did not wear clothes were those who were possessed by demons. Do you remember reading about Legion? As long as he was possessed by demons and living among the tombs, the people could not even keep chains on him, let alone clothes. However, when Jesus cast out the devils, people came back and saw him clothed and in his right mind. So whenever you do not put on clothes, it is due to your not being in your right mind.

In our Scripture text Peter gave God's remedy for sin. Salvation is not merely a cover-up, or whitewashing. It will wash you white, but it will not whitewash you. You may ask, "What is the difference between being washed white and being whitewashed?" When you are whitewashed and a downpour of rain comes, it will wash away the whitewash and reveal the old devil that possesses you. On the other hand, when you are washed white, you will be the same after the storm. The cure for sin must go down to the very roots of sin and destroy it completely. It is all right to feel sorry that you have sinned, but unless you

are converted, you will go back into sin. A lot of the backsliding is due to people not being fully converted. Back in my early days of serving God, the devil often tried to convince me, "You cannot make it. Let it go! Go back!" What kept me going was the thought, "If I let it go now, whenever I did intend to live right, I would have to go right back and begin where I would have laid it down."

Child of God, if you are thinking about backsliding, you will have to come right back and take it up where you left it, if you can find it. Many people cannot find it anymore. I thank God for salvation. Unless a man is truly converted, he will soon go back into sin. Too many are depending on a shallow profession to take care of their spiritual needs, but all it is doing is making hypocrites out of them. Salvation is more than a religious profession. The reason people backslide and go on professing is that God did not give them a profession; He gave them salvation. They took on a profession after they got salvation; then they lost their salvation and held onto their profession. You cannot be saved without a profession, and you cannot be saved with just a profession. You are not saved by good works, but you cannot stay saved without doing them. You can go back and study God's Word and research it for yourself.

Take Up Your Cross and Follow Christ

Peter told those who crucified Christ to repent and be converted. Notice that he did not say to be converted and repent. No, repentance will not follow conversion; conversion follows repentance. Repentance is more than kneeling beside your bed every night and saying, "God, forgive me for my sins. Forgive me for the ones I committed today and for the ones I committed yesterday and for the ones I am going to commit tomorrow." That is not repentance; that is a delu-

sion. Godly sorrow is necessary for repentance. In 2 Corinthians 7:11 Paul said, ". . . yea, what clearing of yourselves . . . yea, what vehement desire. . . ." Salvation is wonderful! All that the devil has to offer does not appeal to me. I am content where God has placed me. If you pray through and really get what it takes, it will fit you to live anywhere God places you. One reason the church does not have many missionaries today is that few people want to endure hardships and suffering. They do not want to make the sacrifice. Several years ago there were missionaries who were willing to go out and suffer hardships, and they counted it joy to suffer for Christ. Consider David Livingstone, an American who went to Africa to evangelize the natives. He did not have to do it, but the burden he had in his soul for the lost caused him to do it. Today it is so different. People mark out the way they want to go, and false religion is behind it all.

Too many people have their eyes on false religion and follow its practices. Thank God, there are still places where you can hear the old-fashioned Truth of God's Word. This was the trouble back in Jesus' day. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Some people say, "You should not preach that to people until they get saved." On the contrary, it is better for them to know what they are getting into before they get saved than to spring it on them after they begin to progress, lest the rent is worse (see

Matthew 9:16).

God can satisfy your soul. You do not have to yearn for things that the devil has. The Christian does not want to have anything that will corrupt him, because he does not want to be corrupted. I would not exchange salvation for anything else. Mark 8:36-37 says: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Going to church occasionally, feeling religious, or speaking of religious things cannot remove sin from your life. You must be converted to get rid of sin. Have your sins been blotted out?

The Way to Life

Notice that Peter did not tell the people to join the church of their choice or to shake a preacher's hand. He said to repent and be converted. Jesus said in Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." This experience of salvation that Jesus gives reaches deeper than the stain of sin has gone. Dear one, if you are unsaved, you need this so much! It is the only thing that can keep you from being destroyed by the world and sin, but to get this experience, you must repent and be converted.

Do not let the devil confuse your mind. Thank God we are living in places where we can read the Bible. God is still on His throne, and you can go to Him and ask Him to show

you the way to life. So few find the way to life. One reason people are missing the gate is that they are confusing the wide gate with the strait gate, and that is a stumblingblock to many. You cannot find the way to life by walking the broad way.

Another reason that so many are missing the way to life is that false prophets are leading them astray. In Matthew 7:15 Jesus said, "Beware of [or be on your guard against] false prophets [then He gave some characteristics of false prophets], which will come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." In other words, they have another purpose in mind. We are living in a time when one hardly knows who to trust to preach in the pulpit. Hearing the plainness of speech is better than being deceived by sweet words.

Friend, you know that you need Christ. What is robbing you of your joy? What is robbing you of victory and power in your life? Why do you find it so difficult to give yourself to God unreservedly? As God speaks to your heart, won't you obey Him? Before I got saved, I thought salvation was only for old people, because there were no young people around the church where my family attended. I thought one had to be walking with a cane to be saved, but soon after God saved me, I learned that even young people can find more joy in serving God than in what the world could ever give. You may be afraid to get close to God because you think He might cramp your style, but He will not. Whatever He should ask you to do would be for your good. I have spent most of my life living for God, and I do not regret a mile. I am satisfied to be a child of God.

Sinner friend, why don't you hearken to the voice of God and get saved? Again, as Jesus said, "Except ye be converted . . . ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." May God bless you.

How to Grow As a Christian

- Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7).**
- Read God's Word regularly (Acts 17:11).**
- Obey God consistently (John 14:21).**
- Witness for Christ by your words and your life (1 Peter 5:7).**
- Trust God for every detail of your life (Matthew 4:19).**
- Holy Spirit—allow God to control and empower your life (Galatians 5:16-17).**

(Cassette C-5052E)

Proverbs 13:1 A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth: but the soul of the transgressors shall eat violence.

3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

5 A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

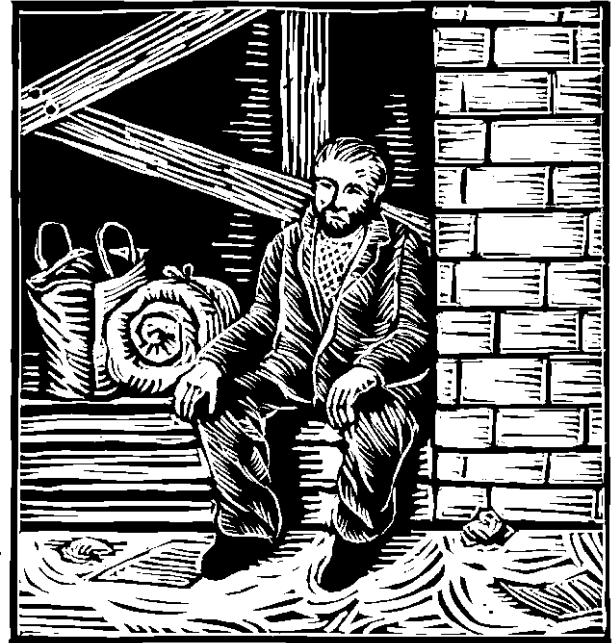
6 Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

8 The ransom of a man's life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.

9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

The Ruinous Effects of Sin



Brother Calvin Foster

True Success in Life

I want to call your attention to verse 6 of our Scripture lesson, which reads, "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner." In other words, the writer was saying that wickedness will be the downfall of the sinner. Wickedness will wreck and spoil the life of a man or a woman. Sin ruins lives. The word *ruin* means "to destroy completely." Man was not created to live in sin, as many do. You cannot do wrong and get by. No matter who it is, doing wrong

will ruin a person's life.

Wickedness will cause a man to lose his health and his character. God's Word is true. Sin will destroy your life. To keep this from happening, God's Word tells you that you need salvation. You need Jesus in your life, friend. You need to turn away from wickedness and be the kind of man or woman that God has ordained you to be. The longer you rebel against God, the greater the destruction will be in your life. You need to be saved, and then you need to walk uprightly before God Almighty, your Creator. God sent His Son Jesus Christ to die for all our

sins, and He gave us the glorious Gospel to live by. It is a glorious opportunity to have salvation from sin and to live a life that is pleasing in the sight of God!

Again, the first part of verse 6 of our Scripture reading states, "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way." Righteousness keeps the upright. It guards and protects him in the way of life. God intended all people to live righteously. Living righteously and holy before God will keep you from trouble and guard you from the ruinous destruction that sin can bring to one's life. Sin will cause a man to

lose his health, his character, his job, and possibly his mind.

Many are in hospitals and penal institutions because of the ruinous effects of sin upon their lives. Sin is ruining the lives of our fellowman; therefore, we preach against sin and preach righteousness. God's Word is true. You have the choice to be overthrown by wickedness or to go God's way. God gave you the ability to make that choice.

Beware of Covetousness

Luke 12:13-21 reads: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?"

"And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." True success in life is based on having an experience with God Almighty through His Son Jesus Christ.

Again, our Scripture text tells us in verse 6 that "wickedness will overthrow the sinner." If you do not want to be overthrown and if you do not want to lose your character, your health, and your soul, you need to find God before it is everlastingly too late. Jesus said that a man's life does not consist in the

abundance of the things he possesses. People are continually thinking about how many material possessions they can obtain, how much money they can make, and how much pleasure they can get. Jesus spoke a parable about a certain rich man. The rich man had so much that he had no room to store his goods, so he decided that he was going to tear down his barns and build larger barns. Then he said, "I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." That was his mistake right there. He determined that he was going to do what *he* wanted to do.

Friend, you do not know how long you are going to live. No one knows when he is going to die. Only God knows that. In essence, the rich man said to himself, "I've got it made, so I can take it easy. I have enough laid up for many years. I'll just eat, drink, and be merry." Unfortunately, he forgot about God; therefore, God said to him, "Thou fool." God called that man a fool! I do not like to call anyone a fool, but if God says you are a fool, then you are a fool. Then God said to him, ". . . this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Treating the Things of God Lightly

God wants you to be prosperous in your soul and to be rich toward Him. Most people do not value being rich toward God. They treat the things of God too lightly. I am reminded of another Scripture in Mark 8:36-37, which reads, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Jesus spoke another parable in Luke 14:16-24, which reads: "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his ser-

vant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Many people treat the things of God so lightly. They have all kinds of excuses about why they cannot serve God. They say they are too busy to serve God and listen to His Word and consider what God has done for them. I want to remind you again that God said in our Scripture text that "wickedness overthroweth the sinner" (verse 6). Dear one, sin will ruin you. You will get yourself in big trouble if you do not pay attention to God. God's Word is not going to fall to the ground. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

If you are too busy to serve God, you are too busy. If you are too busy to go to the house of God, too busy to do the work of God, or too busy to fall down on your knees and ask God to forgive you for your sins, you are too busy.

The nature of sin is to defeat you and destroy you. Sin has never been man's friend. From the beginning, when man sinned against God in the

Garden of Eden, one could see the effects of sin. God will not put up with sin. Adam and Eve were put out of the Garden of Eden because of their sins. That ought to let you know that you should not mess around with sin. It will defeat you and destroy you. Sin causes one to have self-destructive behavior, and it will ruin the true purpose of your life. It will cause you to hurt yourself and your family. You must fight against sin on every hand. You should hate sin but love God.

Wickedness Overthrows the Sinner

The purpose of Jesus Christ's coming into the world was to save people from sin. Therefore, I am trying to warn you about the ruinous effects of sin. You should not play around with sin in any form. Sin is against you. The devil has thousands of years more experience than any of us. Do not play around with the devil or try to negotiate with him. You should not try to talk to the devil. He is determined to cause you to lose your soul.

In John 10:9-10 Jesus said: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The devil is a thief. He comes to rob people of all that is good. He wants to destroy your soul. If you are saved, the devil wants to steal your salvation, destroy your influence, and destroy your life. You should never trust the devil.

In John 10:9-10 Jesus said: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The devil is a thief. He comes to rob people of all that is good. He wants to destroy your soul. If you are

saved, the devil wants to steal your salvation, destroy your influence, and destroy your life. You should never trust the devil.

Jesus was tempted of the devil, but He overcame him by the Word of God. That same Jesus Christ is living in you, Christian friend. You do not have to be defeated by Satan. You can obey God and be what He would have you to be. If His Spirit is dwelling in you, you have the life of Christ. The devil is a thief, and he came to kill and destroy.

Notice again that verse 6 of our Scripture text states that "wickedness overthroweth the sinner." You may ask, "Who is a sinner?" A sinner is a man or a woman who lives in violation of God's law. Friend, God has a message for you today. If you are a sinner, wickedness will be your downfall. In other words, the same wickedness that you are holding onto and love so much and put before God is going to turn on you and destroy you. Sin will do you wrong.

Psalm 50:14-17 reads: "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee."

Do you understand what God is saying to the wicked? He is saying, in essence, "What are you doing quoting Scripture? You won't even listen to Me. You hate instruction and cast My words behind you. You are being a hypocrite."

Some people go to church and yet tell lies, steal, and curse. They do not get along with other people, and they hold grudges. Some have family members to whom they have not spoken in years. What are they doing quoting Scripture? What are they doing trying to declare God's statutes, seeing they hate instruction and cast God's Word behind them? They want to interpret God's Word the way they choose to interpret it.

They do not want to listen to God. They want to have their own way. Wickedness will overthrow the sinner.

The Terrible Cost of Living in Sin

Nothing good will come out of sin. The terrible cost of living in sin is having to spend eternity in hell's fire. I am trying to keep you from such a fate. That is the reason I am preaching the Gospel. Jesus said in John 8:21, "I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come." If you let sin ruin you and you die in your sins, you will go where Jesus cannot come. I do not know about you, my friend, but I am determined to spend eternity where Jesus is. While I am here in this life, I want to be among His people, where the Word of God is being preached and the love of God is shown forth. I want to be where Jesus is now so that when I die and leave this old world, I can be where Jesus is then. If you die in your sins, you cannot go where Jesus is.

Sinner friend, you must clean up your life to keep from being ruined by sin. In James 4:6-8 James said: "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." If you do not want sin to ruin you, you must do exactly what this Scripture says to do. If you will draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to you. However, you must first cleanse your hands, purify your heart, and not be double minded.

There is good news for the sinner if he will come to God. In Luke 15:1-7 you can read about the love of God: "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man

receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine

just persons, which need no repentance."

Can you see the love of God in that parable, my friend? Here the shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep to go after the one that was lost. That shows us how much God cares about one lost soul that God is looking for. He does not want sin to overthrow you. He is coming to help you and to rescue you. There will be joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents, more than over the ninety-nine just persons. God loves your soul. He does not want you to choose to go to hell. He will not force you to serve Him. He is calling

for you to repent before it is everlastingly too last. Do not allow covetousness or the material things of this world to keep you from serving God. Our Scripture text says that wickedness shall overthrow the sinner. Won't you obey God's Word? Remember, sin will take you further than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay. Sin is destructive. It will ruin your life and cause you to lose your soul in hell. Won't you seek God today? May God bless you.

(Cassette RC-139)

[My Personal Testimony—cont. from p. 13]
20-50 percent chance that the surgery would be successful. He really made my day when he told me that I might not ever walk right again. He wanted me to go to a surgeon at the University of Birmingham. He stated that this man was the only surgeon worldwide who dealt with problems like mine. He was a world-renowned surgeon, the only one who had researched and written dissertations on this condition.

When I left to pay my bill, the receptionist told me that she had scheduled an appointment with this surgeon at the university. I told her not to bother, because I knew a surgeon who could take care of it permanently and that I would walk normally again. By this time, I was in my sixth month of treatment and pain, and I had begun to think that the pain would never go away.

One Sunday afternoon I was talking to Sister Helen Henry. I asked her to have a handkerchief

anointed and prayed for and sent to me. On the Wednesday before Easter, this was done by the brethren with an agreement of prayer from the saints. When I went to bed that night, my foot felt a little different. On Thursday morning I jumped out of bed, and there was no pain! I sat down and examined my foot and found that the swelling was gone. I checked on the golf ball-sized lump, and it was completely gone!

My faith had reached out, the prayers of the saints had gone up, and I received a divine healing that no doctor could understand or ignore. I called my podiatrist and told her I would need no other visits because Jesus had come on the scene and healed my condition completely.

A week later the receptionist from the professor's office called and wanted me to come in. I was going to be another research patient. I told her I did not need to come in because my foot was

healed. She continued to try to convince me to come in just so that the professor could look at my foot. I told her that would not be necessary, because all he would be looking at was a normal foot, and that would not help his research at all.

To sum it all up, I had received two soft casts, three hard casts, four cortisone shots, two contacts with surgeons, three different foot boots, a bone stimulator, crutches, and two MRI's. Also, I had suffered falling and dizziness. Finally, when I took my case to Jesus, He took a look at it and healed it immediately.

God is still in control of our lives and infirmities. He is still in the healing business. There is a little clause in Genesis that says, "God looked after Joseph." I applied that as my promise that God was looking out for me, and He was. Praise His name!

Kay Cochran

**WHAT WE WEAVE IN THIS WORLD
WE SHALL WEAR IN ETERNITY.**

I Thought I Was Saved!



The Place: The Great White Throne of Judgment. **The Lord speaking:** "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

Lost Church Member: "Surely there must be some mistake; I thought for sure that I was saved! After all, I did everything the preacher told me was necessary for salvation. I believed that we all had sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). I believed that God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). I believed that the wages of sin were death; and the gift of God was eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). I believed the Bible meant what it said, that if we would confess our sins, He would be faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). I confessed the Lord Jesus with my mouth, and believed that God had raised Him from the dead (Romans 10:9). Then I joined the church and was baptized.

"I believed and did all these things, and the preacher said if I really believed them, then I was a Christian. I must confess though that I did not really feel any change in my life. I still had the same old desires; although I did my best to live as I thought a Christian should live. When I continued to do things I felt a Christian should not do, I admit, it disturbed me greatly. I talked with the preacher and many others in the church who were supposed to be soul winners and know the way of salvation. I asked them what was wrong that I still had fears and doubts and did not feel there had been any real change in my life?

"Each one went over the same Scriptures I have just gone over and told me that if I believed these Scriptures

and did not believe that God could lie, then I was a Christian. I can see now they were only lulling me into a sense of false security, and there was more to it than that. Woe is me! Because I have believed a lie, I must go to the regions of the damned!"

There will be many such scenes as this one as the lost church members pass before the Throne of Judgment, one by one. Who are the ministers and what is the preaching that is damning these souls in hell?

It is not the preachers who are preaching "God is dead" or the modern theologians, who are trying to do away with the cardinal truths of the Bible, such as the Virgin Birth, the blood atonement, the Resurrection, and many other truths. These men do not even appear to be ministers of righteousness, but they stand out for what they really are: infidels.

In 2 Corinthians 11:15 we read that Satan's ministers are transformed as the ministers of righteousness. The word *transformed* means they preach so near the same truths as God's ministers that it is almost impossible to tell them apart, and only those who have hungered and thirsted after the Truth of God's Word are able to tell them apart. In fact, these ministers of Satan actually think they are God's ministers; for they, too, stand before the Lord and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied [preached] in thy name?" Then will He profess to them that He never knew them (Matthew 7:22-23).

They preach all the cardinal truths of the Bible; they even preach about being made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Then they come out with such terms as: worldly Christians, saved but not living for God, carnal Christians (those who

live after the flesh), and sin-more-or-less Christians.

These teachings are the reason that multitudes go to church and have never repented of their sins. The one point of doctrine, and the most important one, that has been left off by these preachers is the doctrine of true repentance. Repentance, and the fruits of it (which is, the wicked forsaking his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turning to God who will have mercy upon him, according to Isaiah 55:7), comes when we have that godly sorrow for sinning against such a good God, who gave His Son to die for us while we were yet His enemies (2 Corinthians 7:10; Romans 5:8).

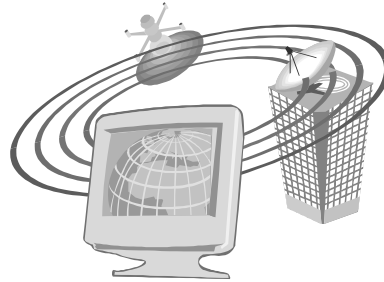
If you will only read the Scriptures that I am about to give, you will see the Word means what it says about letting no man deceive you with vain words (Ephesians 5:6; 1 John 3:7; Galatians 6:7). God is not mocked, my friend. He that soweth to his flesh shall reap his wages in hell. The only ones who reap eternal life are those who sow to the Spirit (Galatians 6:8).

The only way you can sow to the Spirit is to be born of the Spirit, and after you are born of the Spirit, you will no longer sow to the flesh. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

I trust that you will not hold on to the words of lying preachers another day, but say, with the rest of God's people, that only the pure in heart shall see God. Only when you have been made pure in heart by the transforming power of God can you then serve Him. Today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Selected

Web Site News



Have you had the opportunity to visit one of our Web sites? Several years ago, we began developing a Web site with the burden to have *The Gospel Trumpeter* online in its entirety. That endeavor has grown, and not only is *The Gospel Trumpeter* available for download but also we have other Web sites that we trust will be a great help and blessing to you. Our Web sites are as follows:

- ❑ **GospelTrumpeter.com** – Here you can read *The Gospel Trumpeter* each month, visit the memorial pages to read about some of our ministers who have passed on, and view many past issues of *The Gospel Trumpeter*.
- ❑ **GodsAcres.org** – This is our main Web site for information concerning the Church of God at God's Acres. For information regarding worship times, directions, publications, biblical doctrines, and much more, be sure to visit this Web site!
- ❑ **RevelationExplained.com** – Do you find the Book of Revelation difficult to read or understand? In a day of much confusion concerning this subject, God has a clear message for His people. Many study materials are on this Web site to help you gain a greater understanding of this book.
- ❑ **SaveMeLord.com** – Are you a new Christian? Or are you working with a soul? This Web site has wonderful information concerning finding a real experience of salvation, maintaining your salvation, and finding a place to worship.
- ❑ **ChurchOfGodYouth.com** – Coming the first of 2006! This Web site is for youth, along with parents and youth leaders. It features illustrated Bible stories, life lessons, and articles written especially for young people. This Web site is a great tool for Sunday school, family devotions, and youth services.

**Be sure to check our Web sites regularly,
as we are adding new content each month!**