

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits the 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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We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or items.

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Vol. 36 November 2006 No. 11

Guest Editorial

"When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God"

Deuteronomy 8:10-11

Do Not Forget

It is Thanksgiving time again, the season of the year that our nation has set aside for expressing gratitude and appreciation for God's bountiful goodness shown toward us. We are, without doubt, the most prosperous people on the face of the earth, blessed beyond measure with multitudes of material benefits. America has been endowed with great quantities of natural resources, education, and technology that far surpass other nations. The greatest blessing and privilege we have is being free to worship God without fear of being punished or arrested. God is so very good to us, and we must never forget His blessings that have been so bountifully bestowed on us, nor fail to give Him thanks.

Have you ever stopped to consider how blessed you truly are? Acts 17:28 tells us, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." It is because of our loving and merciful Heavenly Father that we are alive and able to breathe fresh air every day. He gives us the strength to rise from our beds each morning and go about our duties. He provides food for us to partake of that brings nourishment to our bodies. We have eyes to see the beautiful creation He has placed here for us to enjoy and ears to hear the delightful sounds of nature. All these physical blessings come from the boun-

tiful hand of God. It is so sad that His goodness is too often taken for granted. Multitudes are ready to receive but never think of saying "Thank You." Praise to the Giver is readily forgotten.

While traveling to Jerusalem during His earthly ministry, Jesus met ten lepers who desired to be delivered from their dreaded disease. In loving kindness He miraculously healed all ten from their leprosy. They all went happily on their way, but only one "turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God" (Luke 17:15). Only one stopped and considered what the Savior had done for him. In Luke 17:16 we find that this leper "fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks." You can almost hear him saying, "Thank You, Jesus, for Your loving kindness and mercy bestowed upon me." The other nine received healing of the Lord also but never thought to offer any praise or thanksgiving in return. Our Scripture in Deuteronomy instructs all of us to "Beware that thou forget not . . . God"

Forgetting to thank and honor God, who has so generously bestowed blessings upon us, can become very dangerous. We can so easily become as the nine lepers who received help, then neglected or simply refused to give praise, honor, and thanksgiving

[continued on page 22]

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

26 And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

How to Have a Happy Marriage



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Devil Is a Home Wrecker

We want to take our text from verse 24. The enemy has moved into home after home, wrecking the lives of children, mothers, and fathers and destroying all confidence people had in them. The enemy is at war as I have never seen before, getting into the homes of many. He would like to possess my home and your home if we would let him. God help us to lift up a standard against him! God help us to do the very best we can by the Spirit of God to cry out against that in a greater way.

I am not preaching this message because I feel my married life is flawless or does not need to be worked on. Everyone's marriage

needs to be worked on day by day. I have a concern for your home and mine. How I long to see the Spirit of God lifted up in a greater way in our home lives, for the congregation is no better than the people are at home.

We know that the enemy can be expected to work in the world. We know that homes will be split up and marriages will be ruined as long as sin becomes more open and the restraints are lifted. Yet, never should a home be split up where the husband and wife both profess to know Christ. How could anybody possess the love of God and divorce his companion when his companion also claims to possess the love of God? I know there are people in

denominationalism who profess to be Christians and separate, but it should not be among the people of the Church of God. No two real Christians ever get a divorce. The love of God will hold them together.

It is tragic when sadness and heartache can lurk in the homes of people who profess to be Christians. God is not pleased with it. God takes no thrill in seeing homes in chaos. It is sad to see couple after couple being shipwrecked and tossed upon the angry sea of this old cruel world, especially when they know the answer. People are so confused today, and there is a great lack of love among them.

Marriage is ordained of God. God said in Genesis 2:18, "It is not

good that the man should be alone." Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Genesis 2:24 tells us, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Marriage is a divine institution ordained of God. We should be interested in having God's approval and blessing resting upon us. There are certain righteous principles and guidelines that can help us better equip ourselves for marriage if we will heed the Spirit of God.

Courtship

Before a couple is married, there needs to be a courtship. The age to start dating varies. Some children are more mature than others. Do not set a guideline and say sixteen is the age for dating when this child is not as mature as that one was. When you set it up, you are bound by it. They will hold you right to it. Some children are more serious. Some children act silly at that age, especially around the opposite sex. It behooves every one of us as parents to know our children. As you try to get to know your child, seek God's face. He will help you and give you discernment. Some children are not mature enough to date, let alone to get married. There is responsibility in marriage.

If a young man wants to date, there are some things he should do first. He should go to the girl's house and meet her family. Mom, Dad, you are her parent, and you are responsible for her. You have a right to meet the young man she is dating. You should know how he acts, how he talks, whether he respects her, and whether he respects you as the parent.

You should also know where your daughter is going, when she will be home, and who she is going out with. Is the young man always trying to get her alone? Not everyone who acts saintly is a saint. Re-

member, wolves sometimes wear sheep's clothing, but they are destructive and sneaky. If the young man is true blue and it is true love, it will wait. He will not be in a hurry. He will keep his flesh under control, if he is a true Christian.

Young person, avoid sitting alone in a parked automobile with a member of the opposite sex, especially in a lonely spot. You are human, and the enemy of your soul would love to get your passions out of control. Your passions are just as normal as anybody else's. There is no one who is so saintly and so holy that he cannot be tempted to override the Spirit of God. First Thessalonians 5:22 says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." If something even appears to be evil, abstain from it.

Young person, keep your hands where they belong. You cannot override godly principles and get by. Some people may laugh and say, "We can control ourselves." Well, a lot of young people are not controlling themselves. Excessive and long passionate kissing will carry you beyond human reasoning.

Some people go so far in their courtship that there is very little, if anything, left to do after matrimony. They go so far in their courtship that the only difference is that matrimony puts a license on it. God is not blessing that type of a courtship.

Young man, young woman, when you are courting, or going steady, God is for you, and He wants to bless your relationship. Do not do anything that you will be ashamed of. People might not be around, but do not forget that God is there. God sees all. It does not matter where you hide or what lonely spot you are in, God sees you.

Resist Evil

Genesis 39:7-12 reads: "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife [speaking of Potiphar's wife] cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his

master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out."

Joseph had a strong conviction, and he hated sin. He said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" All sin is against God. There was a perfect opportunity for Joseph to sin. No one was around but him and her, but Joseph knew there was someone else watching. God was watching.

Again, Joseph said, "How then can I do this great wickedness?" and it is wickedness. Genesis 39:10 is the key to how he did it: "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her." Day by day he resisted, and instead of getting weaker, he grew stronger by resisting. Then the day came when he not only had to resist, but he had to flee; and he was able to do it because he had been resisting. Some people's resistance does not hold out very long, but Joseph kept resisting day after day. Then, he could no longer just resist; he had to flee. What a perfect example of a young man handling himself and of God coming to his rescue!

Too many people do not hate sin enough. They think too much of themselves, their pleasures, their passions, and their desires. They get themselves into trouble, and then they expect God to keep them in the midst of it. When you know better

and you overstep, do not expect the grace of God to keep you!

Guide and Teach

Parent, get involved in your children's lives and know what your children are doing. I am afraid the reason many parents do not get involved is because their children will not let them. That is sad! Young people need the guidance of Mother and Father, especially when they are courting. They need somebody to talk to. They need to be able to go home and tell Mother all about the date. That is what I call an instant replay. If there is something that young person needs straightened out on, the mother can tell him or her.

Parent, do you do that with your child, or do you just let him go and say, "God will take care of him"? No, God expects you to give some advice and get involved in that courtship. The parents need to sit down with the sons and daughters and talk to them about courtship, employment, marriage, and children.

Also, the mother should teach the daughter how to cook. You cannot live on microwave dinners. I believe some young ladies do not know how to boil water without scorching it. Mother, you need to teach your young daughter how to cook, sew, wash clothes, clean a house, and keep herself clean. If you do not teach her, who will? The world is not going to teach her. They do not have time for their own children. The mother is working, the father is working, and the children just take care of themselves.

Titus 2:3-5 tells us: "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Mom, Dad, you have a job on your hands. It is necessary that you be involved with that daughter or son. I would rather have my children confiding in me than keeping it from me. Do you want to know why many children do not confide in their parents? Mom and Dad do not have time. They say: "So you went here and you went there. I do not have time right now to listen to it." You had better take time, or there will be a day coming (and the day of some is very close) when you will wish that you had taken time with that child.

Marry in the Lord

Young person, is your courtship, or dating, what it should be in the eyes of God? If everything goes right, the next step after courtship is marriage. The Lord wants both of you to be saved. God wants you to marry somebody in the family of God. In the Old Testament Abraham, instructing his eldest servant on getting a wife for his son Isaac, said in Genesis 24:4, "... go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." Abraham meant for his servant to leave the Canaanite women alone and go unto his "kindred" to get a wife for his son Isaac. In Genesis 28:1-2 Isaac told Jacob not to take a wife of the daughters of Canaan but to go to his own kindred.

First Corinthians 7:39 says, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." Why does God want you to marry "in the Lord"? He does not want you to go out in the world and find a husband or a wife. There is a reason for it. The reason is so there will not be a division in the home. God does not like division.

First Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him" For example, a young Christian girl marries a man of the world. You

cannot tell me that man is going to go to revival services every night. The young woman enjoys it, but he does not. He is not used to feet washing services. That is foolishness to him. There might have been a time when he would have gone to church with her, but he has her now. My, how they change their tune once they get married! Those promises they made before marriage are often never kept. They say they are going to get straightened out after the wedding and they are going to settle down and have a nice home; but those are promises made in the flesh, and there is no power in the flesh.

That man is not used to Bible study. His wife says, "Honey, let's sit down and read a chapter out of the Bible." He says: "Are you crazy! Well, go ahead and read it if you want." He is not used to kneeling down beside his bed at night and having a good season of prayer. That is not becoming to a worldly man or a worldly woman, but the child of God is used to it. Right away, there is a division in the home. If people would heed the Spirit of God, that could be avoided.

Young ladies often overstep the Spirit of God and say: "I know he is not good for me, but I love him so much! I know he is not good. I know I am going down spiritually, but God understands." No, He does not! The next thing you know, that young lady is at an altar of prayer, heartbroken. Not only is she broken up, but the home is broken up also. Marry in the Lord, and you will be blessed of God. It is different with a couple in the world who do not know any better and one of them gets saved, causing division in the home. I am talking about people who have light and understanding and still overstep it. God is not going to keep you when you get in the devil's territory.

Work on Your Marriage Daily!

It takes the Spirit of God in the husband and wife to make marriage

continue as it ought to. It has to be worked at daily. It takes the Spirit of God working in both of you to overcome some things.

What can you expect of marriage? Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD." I can truthfully say it is great to be married; my marriage is a close relationship. Just as you walk with Christ and get closer to Him, so should the walk between the husband and wife get closer if it is working the way God wants it to work.

There are going to be problems in marriage. I have them, and you have them. Sickness will come. Disagreements will come. Sometimes finances become a problem. Two people are living under one roof, and their personalities are different.

Young lady, you may feel that there is not a flaw in that young man, but believe me, he has some human faults. You might not know about them yet, but you will find them out. They are not sin—I am talking about faults. He may snore a lot. He may talk in his sleep. He may toss and turn all night long until you do not think you can stay in the same bed. You might wind up sleeping on the couch.

That young man might not take care of his clothes as he ought to. He might throw his shirt down and grab another shirt. You might find one shoe here and another shoe out in the hall. He might walk right across that new carpet you just had installed with his shoes on. Those things happen. Here is where we need the Spirit of God. Living in that home, day by day, week by week, month by month, and year by year takes the grace and the Spirit of God to live holy. It can be done if people will yield to the Spirit of God.

A wife and husband should always be careful how they reprimand one another. Sister, watch how you call your husband down for something. Do not belittle him.

When the children come along,

the husband and wife should be in agreement on the discipline. One parent should not act as a lawyer. The husband and wife should back each other up and have unity in the home. Mother, if that child has done something wrong and Dad thinks that he ought to discipline that child, leave him alone and let Dad discipline him. When that child comes to you, tell the child he was wrong and Dad was right. Do not say that Dad is in a bad mood and he came home from work grumpy. Tell him Dad was right and he deserved it and you would have done the same thing.

"Therefore whosoever heareth
these sayings of mine,
and doeth them,
I will liken him unto
a wise man, which
built his house upon a rock."

Matthew 7:24



The children should not see Mom and Dad having disagreements. Mom, Dad, if you have a disagreement, step off into the bedroom or somewhere. Go in there and talk it over. Do not argue in front of your children. They will not understand.

Be steadfast in your living for God. Remember, you as the parent are the teacher and the children are your little congregation. They are being taught more in your home seven days a week than they are for an hour each week in Sunday school. If the pastor preaches something doctrinal, let them see you live it. Otherwise, you will ruin the faith in your children, and they will have no confidence in the pastor or the

church. They will think that no one lives right. Parent, you know the doctrine that is preached. Measure to it and be steadfast in your living. Be strong in the Lord.

Let your children look up to you. Do not let the children see you staying home during revivals. You are planting a seed. They will see that you are not really serious about serving God and that you do not get excited when you miss a service now and then, so why should they get excited? You have to instill the faith in those children.

Mom and Dad, how often have your children seen you kneel down and pray together? Invite them to gather around for prayer. Ask if your children have any burdens they want to express. It is needed. Jesus said that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1). Instill in your children the need of prayer.

Express Your Love

Let us look at some helpful tips for a happy marriage. Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Husband, tell your wife you love her. There is something special about that word *love*, even if you have been married for twenty or forty years. Show her you love her. Take her out to eat at a good restaurant once in a while. Say, "Honey, I cannot get along without you." Certainly, you have the Lord, but everybody desires companionship.

Often, I like to talk to my wife about my problems. I want to get her advice. When I am sick, I like her to be my nurse. Certainly, the Lord will touch me and help me, but I like my wife to come and lay a cold cloth on my forehead and say, "How are you feeling, Honey?"

Husband, you are the overseer in your home whether or not you want to take the authority. You may shun it, but God will hold you responsible for it. You are the one who should support and defend that home and see that God is present in

your home. You are duty bound. Joshua 24:15 says, ". . . as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua did not say, "I will talk it over with them," but he said, "We will serve the LORD."

Colossians 3:18 says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." I do not believe anything can throw a home out of the God-ordained plan like a woman who will not submit. That is bad, and God is not pleased with it. When that happens, the whole home is out of kilter. A wife should not make all the decisions, handle all the money, and once in a while say, "Remember, you can only drink one cup of coffee a day because the bills are tight this week." In some marriages the husband works five or more days a week and has a job on the side working and slaving while his wife doles out a little bit of money to him at a time. However, you will see her at the department store with a cart full of packages. She comes home with new dresses and shoes and so forth. God is not pleased with that!

The husband should not treat his wife as a slave either. God does not want that. He wants harmony in the home, and anything out of God's ordained plan takes the harmony out of the home.

Discipline Consistently

I have heard fathers threaten their children, yet never back it up.



They keep yelling at the child to quit bouncing on the couch, and the child just keeps bouncing. The child gets used to the yelling after a while. There is no authority there. Father, if you tell your child that you are going to spank him, then spank him and get it over with. You will not kill that child if you spank him the way you should, according to the Word of God.

When my children were in the home, I took no pleasure in spanking them whatsoever, but it was necessary to mold their lives. Just as God chastens you, you need to chasten your children. Do not keep letting them get away with this and that. Do not let them run around the church building. Do not let them run in and out of the seats and jump up and down on the seats. They do not do it at home, so why should they do it in the house of God! Of all houses to be revered, it should be God's house.

When my children lived at home, I wanted to know where they were at all times. They were not to be out in the church vestibule or outside in a parked car while the church service was going on. They were to be sitting right where I could look over and see them.

Parent, where is your child during worship service? If you do not know, the next thing you will be doing is asking the pastor to help deal with that child. You, as a parent, should take care of it while you can.

Children should not be allowed to run around during church services. Why? Because they are human. They can be tempted. They can get into somebody's automobile and go somewhere to have a good time. How tragic if they were killed in a car wreck somewhere, when they should have been in church.

Church, the only way to prevent our children from going out into sin is for them to live for God. They could go out in sin, but how much better we would feel when we get down to pray for them if we know we have done our best with

them. I would not want to think that maybe I helped my children go out into sin. I love my children, and I want to see them do right. I want to show them God in their dad's life so that they can teach their children.

Parent, keep the fear of God present in your home. God will reward you for it. Psalm 128:1-6 tells us: "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

Do not let the fear of God depart out of your home. Keep that reverential fear of God. Instill it in your children. You should teach your children; have Bible study with them. Gather them around, and go over the Sunday school lessons with them. Ask them if they have any questions. Reverence God in the home. Reverence His church, the pastor, and all the workers in the Kingdom of God. Hold them in high esteem in your home. Teach your children not to look around during prayer. Teach them to reverence God and hold Him in the high place that He deserves.

How Is Your Home?

Is the Lord blessing your home? Is your marriage happy, or are you just living together? Is the main reason you are staying together because you do not want anybody to know that you are having problems? Some say, "We'll just stick together until the children grow up." If you feel anything for the children at all, you will endeavor to have the love of God in your heart and stay together in love.

Is your home built upon Christ?

Is it built upon the Rock? Can it stand the winds that blow in the daily routine of life? It takes the grace of God to go to your job regardless of what you do for a living. The wife follows the same routine in the home, day in and day out, and unless your home is built on the Rock, she can never take it.

In our text the winds blew and the floods came, but the house stood. Why? It was built on the Rock, and only those homes that are built on the Rock will stand. Every-

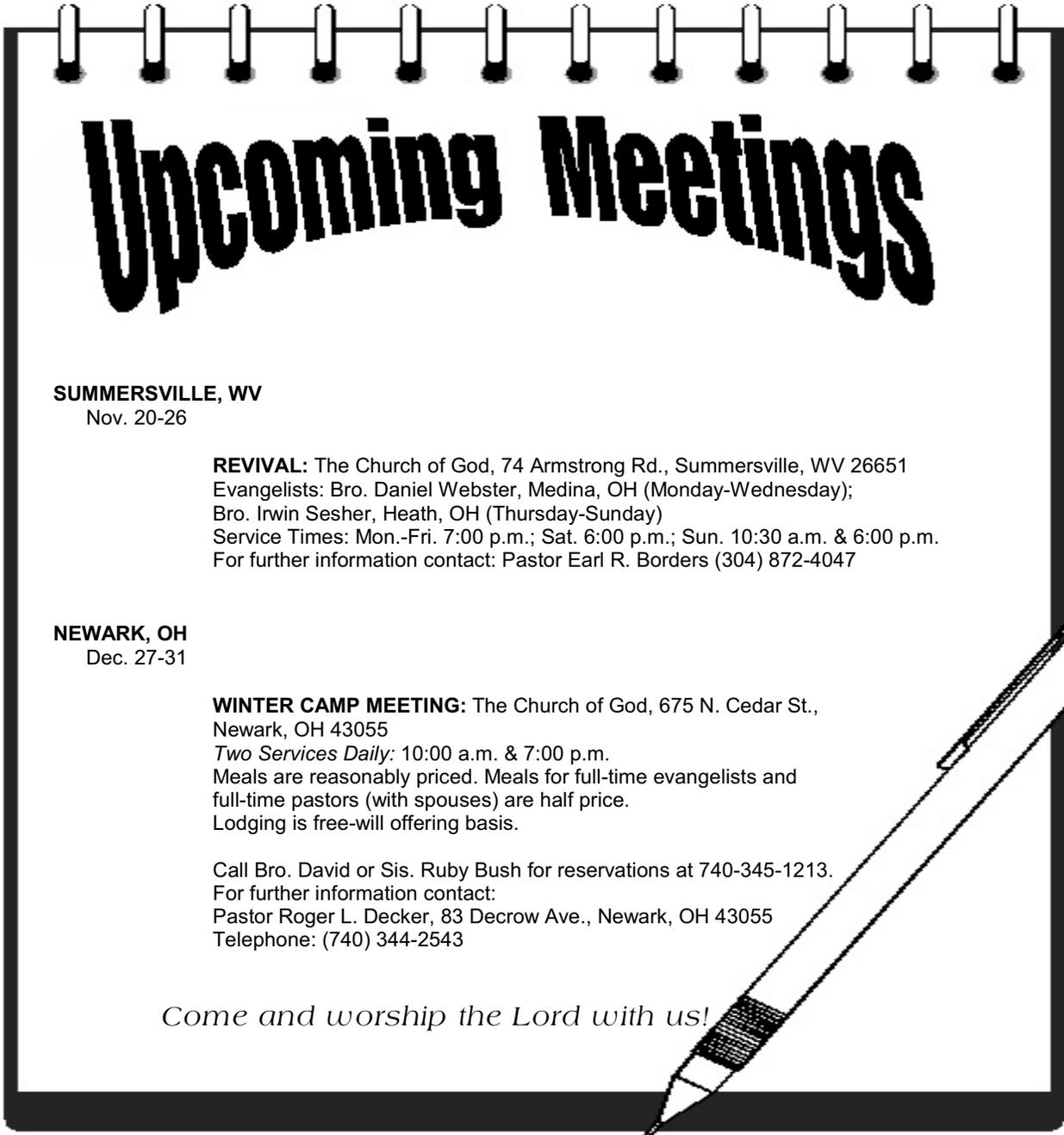
thing else will fall.

Husband, wife, is there anything in your heart against your companion? Did you have a fight today and you have not made it right? People might think that everything is sweet and great between you, but God knows the truth. He is not blessing that. Is your home a happy one? I can truthfully say from my heart that my home is happy. I enjoy my home. It is a refuge from the world.

God wants to help you through your courtship, as you marry, and

then as you go on and face the trials of life as man and wife. You will be happy if you put Him first. Dear one, build upon the Rock.

What is your house built upon? If you know your home is out of harmony, do not keep it that way. Things will not get better. They only get better when Christ is in the home. Does Christ dwell in your house? Is He in your home? If your home is out of order, let God put it back the way it should be.



Upcoming Meetings

SUMMERSVILLE, WV

Nov. 20-26

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd., Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelists: Bro. Daniel Webster, Medina, OH (Monday-Wednesday);
Bro. Irwin Seshier, Heath, OH (Thursday-Sunday)
Service Times: Mon.-Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Sat. 6:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders (304) 872-4047

NEWARK, OH

Dec. 27-31

WINTER CAMP MEETING: The Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St.,
Newark, OH 43055
Two Services Daily: 10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.
Meals are reasonably priced. Meals for full-time evangelists and
full-time pastors (with spouses) are half price.
Lodging is free-will offering basis.

Call Bro. David or Sis. Ruby Bush for reservations at 740-345-1213.
For further information contact:
Pastor Roger L. Decker, 83 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055
Telephone: (740) 344-2543

Come and worship the Lord with us!

Hebrews 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.



2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.

Immunization Against the Gospel

Brother Esau Brooks

Learn From Other's Mistakes

This is a very solemn and sobering message, which we need to take into close consideration. What makes this message so important is the fact that there are many in our time who are making the same mistake. We must be careful of the dangers of immunizing ourselves to the Gospel. I am using the word *immunize* in the sense of protecting one's self from the effects of the Gospel. That is the same understanding one gets from the thought of immunization regarding literal disease.

Hebrews 4:2 says, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them" When Paul said "unto them," he was speaking of another generation, not those who were around then. So we are not out of place as we go back to consider what has happened to generations of the past.

Winston Churchill once said, "The greatest tragedy of the human family is that we learn nothing from history." That is true! It seems people allow themselves to be deluded by the idea that what has happened to others cannot happen to them. We seem to feel that we are too smart for that. The fact that it has happened once establishes also the possibility of it happening again. That is why we find the author of the Book of Hebrews laboring with his congregation, trying to impress upon them two very important facts: the superiority of the ministry of Christ and the possibility of ones coming short of what Christ is offering mankind today.

Even though we have come a long way as far as material and technological progress is concerned, we have not outlived the possibility of ones coming short of what Jesus brought into this world for man's

good. This is why, when the writer undertook to write to the Hebrews, he used up no space with words of salutation or commendation. Rather, he came directly to the point. He began in Chapter 1 by getting the people's minds focused in the right direction by saying "God"; not Paul, not John, but "God." False religion is not some new, modern thing working. It has been around for a while. Deception is not a modern invention. It has been around. Paul was impressed with letting them know which God he was talking about.

God Is Speaking to Us!

Hebrews 1:1-2 says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir

of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." The same God who spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is now speaking directly to us through His Son. That was hard for those people to accept. They were holding on to the fact that there was no other man whom God had talked to as He had talked to Moses. They had been holding on to the fact that no other man had had the opportunity to fellowship with God as Moses did. They were being confronted with God in man, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

The Hebrew writer stated that God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son. Because of failures and contentious factors, people have developed skeptical conditions within them toward a message of God. Many are willing to subject themselves to that awful condition of immunizing themselves against the message of God. The same thing that happened to people in Paul's day is happening today. One thing is sure, if the Word of God is preached, we are going to have Bible results. We are going to have a condition that will resemble in every aspect that for which the Bible calls.

In too many cases today, people are taking the Bible and trying to get it to fit their condition instead of changing their condition to fit what the Bible says. Because of this fact, many are skeptical when they are confronted with a messenger, or a preacher. So, as it was in the days of the writer of the Hebrew letter, we must caution you that God is still speaking today.

Look on Jesus

Look again at Hebrews, Chapter 1. Verses 2-3 tell us: "[God] Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory" When you look at Christ, you look at the brightness of His glory. It is no wonder the songwriter wrote:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow
strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Get your eyes off the world and turn them to Jesus! I can testify that it is true. If you are having trouble letting go of the world and the pleasures of sin, turn your eyes upon Jesus.

When people began to get their eyes on John the Baptist, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Christ is still the One who takes away the sin of the world. Gabriel said that the Jesus of the Bible "shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Again, Hebrews 1:3 reads, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" You see the express person, the image of God, in Christ. When Christ was exhorting His disciples prior to His being crucified and one of them said, "Master, show us the Father," He said, in so many words: "What are you talking about? Do you mean that I have been here with you all this time and you have not seen Him yet? Thomas, he that has seen Me has seen the Father." Christ was the express image of God's person.

God Planned for Us to Have Victory

The Hebrew writer labored to establish in the people's minds the main characteristic of Christ, and the same is necessary today, for Satan is working now as He did in the morning church. That is why I am thankful that God put these things on record. What worked back then will work today. The same devil that was there is here today. If the Gospel whipped the devil back then, it will whip the devil today. God has made ample provision for the needs of the day. I do not care how much of a storm the devil is raising today. There is still a way whereby we can

overcome him. If you are bound by any bad habits that are mastering your life and keeping you in misery, you can be free of those things through Christ. You do not have to subject yourself all the days of your life by being in bondage to a corruptible body.

Paul testified, "I keep under my body." Someone might say, "That is more than I can do," but it is not more than what you can do. The devil is working as hard as he can to convince people that the Gospel will not work today and that it has lost its power and is a failure. However, it will still work as victoriously today as it ever did! All mankind needs to do is to get back where they can see God as the top and the bottom of this matter. This matter is salvation, not religion. The devil is working. My main concern is for us to let God work effectively in our lives to match what the devil is doing.

Give More Earnest Heed

When God sent Christ into the world, He sent John the Baptist first to prepare a people for His name. Now Jesus is about to come back again, and He has a ministry to prepare people for that coming. The Hebrew writer went on to elaborate on the exaltedness of Christ's position, that which had been accredited to Him by God.

We read in Hebrews 2:1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." The fact that God is speaking to us through so great an exalted Person as His Son is the reason we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard. He did not say that we ought to give *heed* but to give *more earnest heed*. That is where a lot of people today leave themselves wide open for the devil to work on them. They are just merely giving a casual heed, and the Gospel is not having as great an affect upon them as it would otherwise. You

would be surprised at how great a power we could be for God in this life if we would allow Him to fully use us. I believe the world has yet to see what all this great salvation can accomplish.

In the morning time, when God unleashed Christianity with a group of people who were following the "Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Revelation 14:4), the Bible tells us that their enemies credited them with turning the world upside down. The term *upside down* was used because the people using those words were upside down. They were looking at everything upside down. The revolution the Gospel was bringing about was being interpreted as being upside down when, in truth, it was turning the world right side up.

In too many cases the world today is upside down. Look at the work the devil is doing today. There used to be a time when men would dare to call sin what it is. If you stole, they would say, "You steal; you are a thief." The devil has worked it around now to say that you "embezzle." That sounds a little bit nicer. Some do not even know what the word *embezzle* means. There used to be a time when people committed fornication and adultery, and it was called as it was. Now they just say that they are "having an affair."

The world needs to be turned right side up again. People have their values all mixed up. A lot of this immoral stuff is called "the new morality," and its permissiveness is being accepted by people as legal. They say that one just "expresses himself." They will ask you, "What is wrong with a person expressing himself?" They say, "If you have it in you, let it all out and let it go." We need better counseling than that! That kind of counseling is taking people down the wrong road.

God is calling on us "to give the more earnest heed." The trouble is that many people will not give. If you are lost, you will never be saved if you do not give. If you are a

church member, you will never know what peace and rest in your soul means unless you give. Someone might say, "In what sense of giving do you mean?" Let go to God.

The devil is working today by every means to deceive man, and until you and I come to the place where we will give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, it will not do us much good. We are not behind on the preaching. We have good preaching, but the danger and trouble lies in that there is not enough response to the preaching. While people are restraining themselves from giving more earnest heed, they are subjecting themselves to becoming immunized to the Gospel.

Have You Been With Jesus?

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:1-4).

Here we have a threefold plan before us: God spoke; Jesus took up the refrain; and the Spirit of God bore witness of what Jesus spoke. The message that Jesus spoke was confirmed. Those who heard it confirmed it by producing it in their lives, so much so that people looked at them and said, "These men have been with Christ." They were producing the same life that Jesus produced, and they were having the same effect that Jesus had.

The Jews chastised the Apostles, beat them, threatened them, and put them in jail. They told them not to spread the Gospel anymore. They

set a certain day for a council, and when that day came, they sent a soldier to bring the Apostles to them. When he got to the jail, he found the jail intact. The lock was on the door and everything was there, but the Apostles were gone. No doubt, they went through all the prison searching and found that not one stone had been tampered with. The Apostles did not cut any holes in the wall. They did not dig a tunnel through the ground. They did not bend any bars to get out. But they were gone. While the council was scratching their heads wondering about the matter, someone came in and said, in essence, "The Apostles did not disappear; I just saw them down on the street corner preaching as hard as ever." The Apostles had been with Jesus. They were not easily scared off.

Present Your Body as a Living Sacrifice for Service

How different it is now than it was then! All the devil has to say now is "Boo!" and away some people go. In the Apostles' day they stood their ground, and one of the main contributing factors that enabled them to stand as they did was they loved not their lives. They had nothing to lose. They had already given up everything they had. Since they were not in love with their lives and existence, there was nothing left for them to sacrifice. They had already presented their bodies a living sacrifice. As a result, they could afford to be taken.

When Paul was about to be killed, he wrote to Timothy: ". . . be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:1-2). God help us to take the Gospel more seriously and not be satisfied with our progress thus far but, by the grace of God, look at the world as our goal.

Paul said that God confirmed the Gospel in them that heard it, and

then God bore witness by signs, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. God will bear witness today, too, by a full confirmation. Christ bore witness in the days of D. S. Warner, and He will do it today. I know that great things are being accomplished, and Christ is doing the best He can through what He has to work with. The burden of my heart is, let us give God more to work with.

Heedlessness Causes Hearts to Harden

After getting their minds solemnized to the responsibility that was theirs to give heed to the message, Paul went on and brought up Jesus and asked them to consider Him. He was faithful. Paul did not stop there, but he wrote on and told them not to forget the trouble their forefathers got into. What was the trouble? Hebrews 3:7-11 reads: "Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)"

Just as soon as people come short of giving the more earnest heed, a hardening process develops. You might think it is nothing to come to services, hear the message, and leave it right where you heard it. You might think it is nothing to be busily engaged in other matters and other affairs while the message is going on, but it is having an effect. A hardening is being produced. That is why Paul said in Hebrews 3:12-13: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The writer

continued telling them how their forefathers met disaster by refusing to give more earnest heed and letting their hearts become hardened by unbelief.

You do not give more earnest heed because you do not believe the Truth or accept the Gospel as a fact. This is what is going to ruin you in the end and cause you to fall short of the blessing that Christ has brought about on your behalf.

In the text Paul started by exhorting the people, along with himself, saying, "Let us therefore . . ." (Hebrews 4:1). I like to preach "let us." I am not immune to the devil, and how well I know it! I have to stay as close to God as anyone else if I am going to stay one step ahead of the devil. Every day new developments are coming about that cause me to lean stronger on Jesus. I cannot afford to lean on the arm of flesh, for it will fail.

Godly Fear Needed

Notice that Hebrews 4:1 begins, "Let us therefore fear . . ." If there is a main ingredient to the defeating of unbelief, it is *godly fear*. Unbelief and godly fear cannot abide in the same heart together. They fight one another. They cannot get along with one another. When Paul told them what it would take to get out of the condition into which they were dropping, he said that we all need to *fear*. I am not talking about a slavish fear that perfect love casts out; I am talking about a godly fear, a reverential fear that constrains us to do what God says.

Salvation does not leave you hanging in the air to fight off wrong on your own, but as it enables you to fight off wrong, it enables you to more deeply commit yourself to the Lord's service. If that work is not going on in your experience, you are headed for trouble. We should "fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1). We have the promise—Jesus said we would have rest. However,

Paul said that even though the promise has been given to us, we need to fear lest we should come short of it.

Let the Word Work

Hebrews 4:2 states, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [that perished] . . ." We might believe that we are the only ones who have had the Gospel, but past generations have had it too; and the Gospel was preached to them as it is being preached to us. Notice that verse 2 continues, ". . . but the word preached did not profit them . . ." Isn't that a startling realization? The Word did not profit them. One can sit under the Gospel and not be profited by it. You can be where the Gospel message is surrounding you and yet not profit by it. How many are under that condemnation?

Why did the Gospel remain unprofitable? Paul said, ". . . not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). The Gospel was not intended by God as a means of entertainment. God intended for the Gospel to do a work. Paul said that "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). This work in the righteousness of God is also working the wrath of God. Thus, we have to watch our steps.

Possibly in Paul's time people were doing as they are today, thinking they have to mix the Gospel with faith by them. Paul said no. The reason the message did not profit them was the Gospel, or the message, was not "mixed with faith in them." Your faith should couple along with the message and then produce the results in your life, but in too many cases, the Gospel is being mixed by people and by everything else. That is why it is being read ineffectively. Too many people do not allow it to work the will of God in them.

There is a difference between *a* Gospel and *the* Gospel. Paul had to deal with that in his day. He wrote

to the Galatians and said that some would try to pervert the Gospel. When you come up against the Gospel, you are kicking up your heels. You are going to make the same discovery Saul made when he was going down the road to Damascus and God struck him down. Jesus spoke to him and said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5). Saul had been pricked in his heart many times, but he had been kicking against it; and he brought more misery on himself. You can kick against the pricks, but you will be the one to suffer. Paul realized his wrong and gave in to God.

We have the Gospel. Why is that such a great privilege? It is the Gospel that rates our guilt. Jesus said in John 12:47-48: "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him . . ."

Another time Jesus told them, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39). Verses 40-41 tell us: "And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Jesus' message carried an effect, and the message is still carrying an effect. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

When our Lord was speaking to Nicodemus in John 3:19, He said, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The entrance of God's Word gives light, so it is a privilege to have the Gospel preached unto us. Our attitude toward the Gospel is what is going to determine our final state. That is why Paul referred to the

Gospel as the "Gospel of our salvation." To despise it is to despise God's power unto salvation, and you will be left hopelessly condemned before God. Bear in mind that as powerful and mighty as the Gospel is, it can become unprofitable to us, and that is a sure sign that we are becoming immunized to it.

In every message that God sends, there is some good to be received. This condition of spiritual immunization develops when the Gospel is preached to us all the time and yet we make no effort to allow it to affect us. Man has to put himself in a place where the message will affect him. Exposure to the Truth with no subsequent action on the part of the hearer will in the end affect that person adversely. We can give mental assent to the message or to any doctrinal Bible truth or Bible standard, but if there is not a personal commitment to that which we have heard, it is rendered unprofitable. It can only contribute toward our becoming immunized to the Gospel.

Enter the Kingdom Now

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1). Thank God for those who have made their abundant entrance into the kingdom. We are on the battlefield for the Lord. Our eyes are on Heaven, and we want to make it through to the end. We do not want to come short of it, so God has forewarned us. These are the days when every condition seems to be bent on causing many to come short, but you do not have to come short.

We will have to go through the Judgment before we may enter Heaven. Before you are admitted to a foreign country, you must go through immigration procedures. Before God admits us to Heaven, we have to go through the Judgment. ". . . it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"

(Hebrews 9:27). After death is the Judgment, and after the Judgment there will be a meeting out of the rewards according to your works.

In closing, let us look again at verse 2 of our text. It says, "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them [let us make sure that it profits us], not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). The Hebrew writer brought out that thought to show the danger to which they were exposed.

Let us make sure that what happened to them does not happen to us. How can we avert it? "Let us therefore fear." When the message is preached, too many times people just bar it off instead of letting it sink in and search them out. Put forth an effort to work on that which the message shows where you are short. Do not make a mistake about this matter. It is too important, eternity is too long, and your soul is too precious!

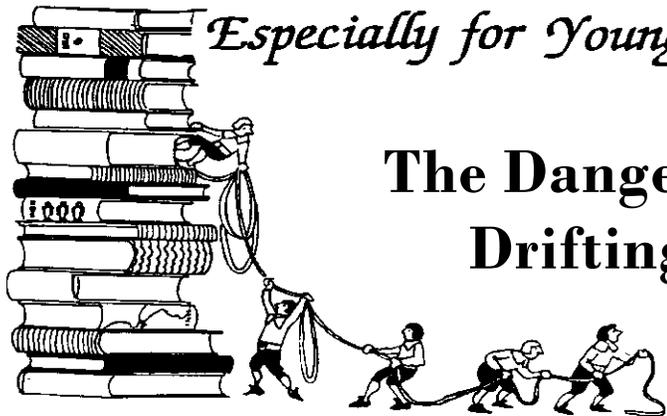


More Than I Can Do

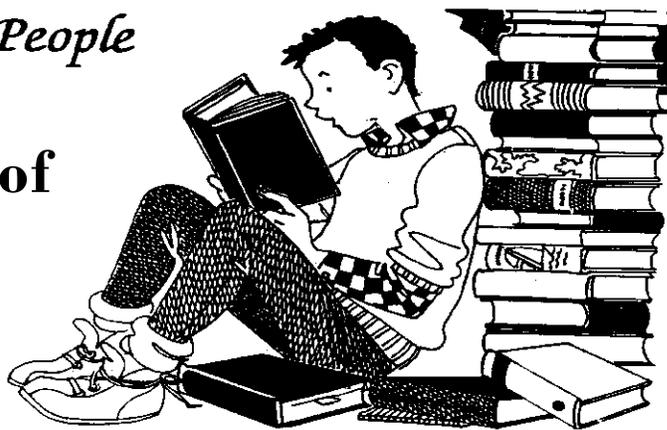
*Oh that mine eyes might closed be
To what concerns me not to see;
That deafness might possess mine ear
To what concerns me not to hear;
That truth my tongue might always tie
From ever speaking foolishly;
That no vain thought might ever rest
Or be conceived within my breast;
That by each deed and word and thought
Glory may to my God be brought.
But what are wishes? Lord, mine eye
On Thee is fixed; to Thee I cry!
Wash, Lord, and purify my heart,
And make it clean in every part;
And when 'tis clean, Lord keep it too,
For that is more than I can do.*

Thomas Elwood

Especially for Young People



The Danger of Drifting



From my earliest remembrance after I learned to pray, my heart was burdened for sinners. I also had a deep desire to accomplish something for my Savior. My conversion was at the age of eleven years when I received a sweet experience of salvation. How blessed to know that the dear Lord rewards every honest effort! My mother told me of the necessity of being baptized in order to follow Jesus and gave her consent when she was thoroughly convinced that I understood what the ordinance meant. Well do I remember the feeling of holy reverence that came over me at my baptism. From that time on I felt the weight of a responsibility upon my heart; especially did I feel the responsibility of being an example to my school friends. I love to look back and remember how God blessed me in every effort.

At the age of thirteen I was made to realize what it meant to give my whole life to the service of the Lord, and I determined to devote myself more to spiritual things. The taste of heavenly joys that I had already received made me more desirous for a life of entire devotion.

For the glory of God and in the hope that others may take warning, I will relate an experience I had. Especially do I desire to impress this upon the minds of those who are not established in their calling from God. By taking a step out of God's order I came very near to entirely upsetting my plans for the future, which I felt were a definite calling from the Lord. How necessary it is for us to remain entirely given up to the Lord that we may keep in His order!

At the age of eighteen I was in a missionary home and was preparing to obey the definite calling upon me. With a sad heart do I look back now and remember how I grieved the Spirit of God by neglecting prayer and other duties. This gave Satan a fair chance to take advantage of me.

In this home I was in constant company with other young people. Among them was a young man with whom I entered into a matrimonial engagement. We were congenial from the first of our acquaintance. The thoughts of love or matrimony had not entered my mind, and to me he seemed only as a fond brother. Different ones began to tease me about this young man, and I sometimes wondered if I really did care for him in that way. Then the thought came to me that, no doubt, such would be the will of the Lord, and others seemed to approve of it.

A decision was made to consent to such an engagement, but the minute I took this step, a strange feeling came over me, insomuch that I wished that I had not done so. I could not understand it. Instead of seeking the Lord earnestly in prayer, I concluded that the Lord had thus ordered it, but I did not feel satisfied. Therefore, I began to seek the Lord earnestly, praying that if there was a possibility of a mistake having been made, I should, at any cost, be hindered from taking the step of matrimony. Yet, I went on but soon found myself drifting away from God and becoming confused. I now look back and realize that the real cause of my confusion was that I had spent more time visiting than praying.

I became alarmed at my condition, humbled myself before God, and cried until He heard me. My heart cried out, "O Lord, I must get back to the place spiritually where I can feel Thy approval." I cared not what the cost might be. I was miserable, but oh, how I do praise the dear Lord for His loving kindness unto me! He heard my cry. How glad I am that I did not take that step! For many reasons I can never be thankful enough.

This young man proved later not to be what he professed, and unless he turns to God, he will, no doubt, fill a drunkard's grave. My soul rejoices in God for the witness of His Spirit that I am pleasing Him. How sweet is our walk with the Lord when our will is yielded to His will! I do appreciate the bright future that is before me in the service of the Lord. Since the Lord has so mercifully permitted me to escape a life of misery and trouble, my heart aches for those who are going ahead and taking steps for which they, no doubt, will have to suffer.

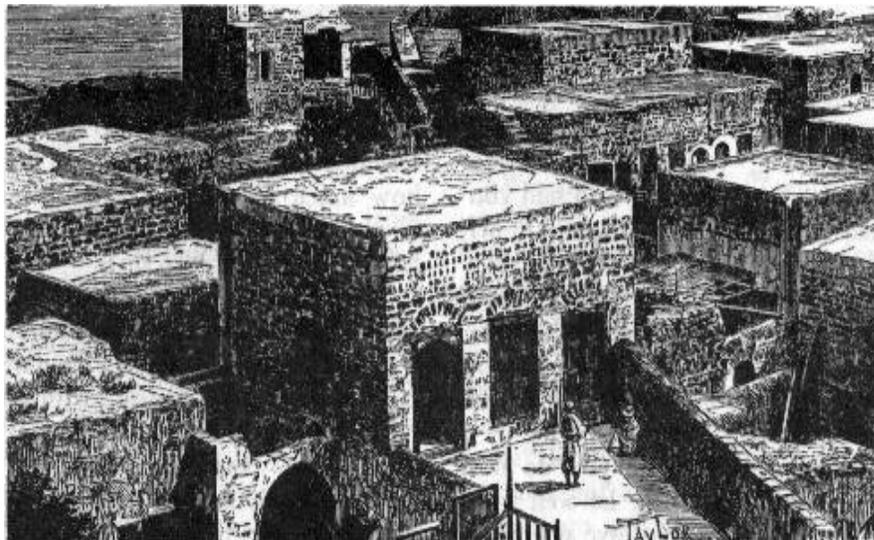
*I love to think my Father knows
Why I have missed the path I chose;
And that I soon will gladly see
The way He chose was best for me.*

*I love to think my Father knows
The thorns I pluck with every rose;
The daily grief I seek to hide
From the dear souls I walk beside.*

*I love to think my Father knows
The strength or weakness of my foes;
And that I need but stand and see
Each conflict end in victory.*

Selected

A Godly Battlement



Deuteronomy 22:8 When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

Brother Emerson A. Wilson

God Cares About Little Things

In reading the Scripture text, you might think that since that was a statute, or an ordinance, for Old Testament Israel, it has nothing to do with us today. However, please do not shut your mind in the matter, because God has some things to say to us from this Scripture.

To truly appreciate this text, we must remember that the houses during this time had flat roofs, and the lifestyle of the people caused them to spend much time on those roofs. God set it within His Law that they were to put up a battlement, or a railing, because if someone fell off and was killed, the householder would be to blame. They were to build their home for the safety of their family and those who would come to their home.

This text of Scripture reminds us that the great Omnipotent God, who is on the throne of this universe, has a will about everything that concerns human lives. All we have to do is read the Law that God gave through Moses and we find that God is concerned with the minute details of our lives. If you were go-

ing to be a part of God's people back then, you could not have the attitude of many people today: "I am building my house. I am furnishing the money, so I will build it as I want to, and it is none of your business." God does not do the big things and leave the details to be filled in just any way we want.

A commandment about a very little thing may be very important. A commandment about a very little thing, if you disregard it, could damn your soul to a lost eternity forever. Therefore, we might as well get it straightened out in our thinking that with God there are no great commandments and small commandments. He looks into all the details of our lives.

God is paying attention to a lot of things that you might not realize. Too many people feel they are going to make it to Heaven if they turn from some of the grosser sins; but when it gets to some of the finer points of God's Word, the devil has them sold on the idea that God pays no attention to those little things. However, He does pay attention. He has set up laws and governments that we are going to have to abide

by if we are going to be His people.

The Old Testament contains many spiritual lessons, and they carry right over into the New Testament. There are some things that God has never changed His mind about. Many people think that when He gave His Son on Calvary's Cross, God manifested so much love that He changed His mind about everything—that sin is not as black anymore and wrong is not as wrong. Sin is as black as it ever was, and wrong is just as wrong as it ever was in God's eyes.

He who guards the planets guards the birds' nests, as we read in Deuteronomy 22:6-7. It states: "If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam [the mother] sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young: But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days." Do not tell me God is not a God of minute details!

God was so concerned about the

bird's nest that He told them to take the young if they were hungry and eat them but not to kill the mother bird. You could take advantage of the mother bird because of her love for her young. You could not catch her any other way; but because she loves her young, she will stay right there and you can come right up on her. She will flutter at you and peck at you, but she will not leave her young. You will be able to capture her. However, God said you had better not do it. If you kill off all the mother birds, you will stop the species, and it will become extinct. On the other hand, if you let the mother bird go, she will mate again and bring forth more birds, and the earth will be replenished with the species.

God warned that if Israel did not obey this command, it would not be well with them and they would not live as long as they might otherwise. I believe a lot of people have died before their time because they handled God's laws carelessly.

What is the spiritual lesson for us as God deals with these minute details? It is this: we cannot stop wantonness when we please. He who wantonly destroys a bird's nest is starting something. Give him time, and he will cruelly break up other things just as he did that bird's home. The things that bring destruction and heartache have a beginning. You did not commit your first sin by robbing a bank. You broke a law of the home, a law of the school, a law of the city, or a law of God. You broke a small law, and that is all it took to start you walking down the wrong road to doing something much worse. Little tyrannies of childhood explain the big destruction we see in the more mature life of young people today.

Disobedience in small matters shows a very great contempt for God's laws, while obedience in small matters shows great respect. Who are the people with the most respect for God's Word? They are the people who keep up on the little things. James taught that to offend in one point was to be guilty of all the law.

Prevention Is Better Than a Cure

Our Scripture text teaches a great lesson that we need to be reminded of: prevention is better than a cure. There is a great lack in the home and in the church of preaching the message of prevention. There would not be so many sad happenings among us if there had been more teaching on prevention. Much is being said on the cure for sin, but how much teaching is being given to people to prevent them from going into deep sin?

God deals with prevention. That is what the battlement was for. In essence, God said, "Don't build a new house without putting a railing around the roof, because if someone falls off, his blood will be required at your hand." God's message was one of prevention.

Thank God for a second chance. God will have mercy and help people after they get into trouble, but God is so interested in our lives that He gives us a way whereby we can prevent some things from coming upon us if we will listen to His Word. There is an old proverb that says, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." God taught that prevention is better than a cure when He said to build a battlement.

Sadly, too many people are caught up with the spirit of the age. They wait to build the battlement until the danger appears. In other words, as the old saying goes, they lock the barn door after the horses have been stolen.

In the text God spoke of building a new house. When we build a natural house, we do not build expecting calmness all the time. We know that there will be times when the wind will blow hard. Thus, we put plenty of strong studs in the walls, and we put the rafters close together and nail everything down tightly. We know it will not be calm every day, so our houses must be built to withstand a strong wind or a heavy snow load—exceptional conditions.

In our Christian lives, God

wants us to build the same way. People get wiped out in a spiritual storm because they did not build to withstand the storm. During the calm times in their experience, people begin to feel that they do not need to pray or read the Bible and build themselves up. All the devil has to do is just blow hard, and they are gone.

When Noah was told to build the ark, it was not raining. Therefore, people thought he was a fool to build for a storm. Nevertheless, the storm came. Furthermore, the storms are going to come in your life and in my life. Mark it down. No one ever lived who did not come into a spiritual storm, and sometimes the storms come fast and furious. However, there is a God who loves us; and if we will listen to His Word, obey His statutes, and move according to His commandments, He will prepare us for every storm.

Jesus said: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock" (Matthew 7:24-25). There is a way to build for the storm. God wants us to build our lives for exceptional conditions, just as we build our natural houses.

The same thing is true in every avenue of life. For instance, ship builders do not build a ship for the calm sea. They build it for the roughest seas and the fiercest conditions the ship could encounter. Then, it has no problems at all when the sea is smooth and calm.

We are continually exhorted to be prepared for a crisis. This is what God meant in the text. When you build a spiritual house, build a battlement prevention; build for exceptional conditions. God wants us to expect the unexpected. He wants us to be sure of the uncertain. This Scripture, along with other Scriptures, lets us know that precaution is better than retrieval. In other words,

it is better to build a battlement and keep people from falling off the roof than to let them fall and need someone's surgical skills to put their bones back together, spiritually speaking.

Preventing your children from becoming dope addicts, drunkards, or bound with the many bad habits of life is much better than carrying a burden and breaking your heart trying to get them back to God after they get in that shape. You can build a battlement around your home so your children will not have to get involved in these things. You do not have to give up your children to worldly conditions and worldly habits if you will build according to God's eternal Word.

Thank God, I had a godly mother and father who built a battlement around our home. Through godly instruction, through keeping the fear of God daily upon the hearts and minds of the children, there was a battlement built that made the deep things of sin seem heinous and fearful.

Once I was called to the hospital emergency room where I found a woman and a man who used to regularly attend church services. They were crying and wringing their hands because their daughter had taken an overdose of drugs, and they did not know if she would live. How do children get into this stuff? Sometimes it happens because parents fail to keep up the battlement. You might shun it today and say: "I cannot do anything with them. I have turned them over to God." God expects you to do something. Your children are your responsibility, and my children are my responsibility. We will answer at the Judgment if we fail to keep the battlement around the home.

You need to have family worship. Some might say that we are in a different age and family worship is not necessary. To this I ask: "Where are your children? How did they get there? Could it be that you tore down the battlement and they fell off into deep sin that otherwise they

would never have become involved in?" The smallest details of God's Word are necessary, and when you and I get so wise that we think we have a better way of doing something than God does, we are headed for trouble and destruction. If more Christian homes in the past generation in our great America had kept the battlement up, a lot of sad conditions today would not exist.

To keep your children from becoming bound by the deep sins that many are in, prevention is needed. Wise parents (and I might add, wise Sunday school teachers) will not spend their entire time telling children of salvation from sin, but they will also spend time teaching prevention from going into the deep sin that is all around us. All who have children under their influence should impress and instruct them, thus raising a parapet of moral protection about them.

True Home Life Is Essential

Let us look at the Christian application of our text. Just as when we build a natural house, we must build it so as not to endanger in any way the ones who live with us or visit us; so we must build our spiritual lives. We must not lay any snare of destruction in the way of our families, our friends, or those whom we are in contact with.

The battlement needs to be set up in two ways. One way is as a defense against the devil and the things he tries to send into your home. The other way is as a protection to your family and those who live under your influence, protecting them from falling into many of the pitfalls and snares the devil has waiting for them.

There has to be some prevention because too many are falling off the roof. The only hope of preventing worse things from coming upon us is to get a battlement built.

We are living in a floundering world that is shaking to the very foundation. The devil is striking a deathblow at the home. If the home

was not so important, why have the moves of Satan in the last few decades been aimed at the home? In too many cases, it is just a house, not a home. It takes more than a house to make a home, and the enemy of souls has done much to destroy homes. He realizes that by destroying the home life, it is only a matter of time until the nation crumbles. Our nation is no better than our homes. Do you want to know why there is so much corruption in our government? Consider the conditions of the home life. Since no nation can rise above the conditions of its homes, the devil is working hard to destroy the home life; and in too many cases he has done it.

We are living in a time of broken homes. In most places, there are more divorces than marriages, and that is sad and disgraceful! If a godly battlement had been set up around the home, the home would have been protected.

If you will meet the conditions of God's Word, you can build your home on the Rock and it will be protected from the many snares of the devil. Even as God has only one plan for salvation, He has the only plan for a happy home. There are many people who claim to be Christians, yet do not have a happy home. They just live there. We can just disregard God's plan and do things our way, but we will never reap the benefits that God has ordained for us to enjoy. In this day of terrible destruction, there needs to be, as never before, a battlement around our homes.

Home Is a Place of Service

The housetop in Bible times was used for many purposes. In fact, Jesus even said to preach from it (Matthew 10:27). The people actually held services on the housetops. It was on the housetop that Peter was praying at noontime. The housetop was a place in those days where the family spent a good part of their time. Today, in many cases, the family does not have a

chance to get together, let alone spend time together.

The housetop was used by the people in Bible days for a place of service, or work. In the city of Jericho, when the spies came, Rahab was drying flax on the roof. The flax was dried, spun, and woven there. The women did a lot of their work on the housetop.

Just as a battlement was needed to protect those working on the rooftops in the Old Testament, a battlement is needed in the work life of the Christian today. In other words, do it in a way that God is pleased. There is no difference between the sacred and the secular. If you are a Christian, you are a Christian everywhere. If you are a holy man or woman, you are a holy man or woman everywhere. Every bush is a burning bush where a Christian is, and every foot of ground under our feet is holy ground, whether it is in the kitchen, the bedroom, the basement, the garage, the office, the factory, or the shopping center.

Life is not divided into the secular and the sacred. You need to be just as sacred in your secular life as you are in worship. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Sister, whether you are washing dishes, ironing clothes, changing the baby, or whatever you are doing, do all to the glory of God.

Young lady, when you come home from school, there is as much salvation in lending a hand and helping a tired mother as there is in singing in the choir or going on visitation. Many young people cannot keep an experience with God because they want to be religious in the services, but when they get home, they do not want to abide by the rules of good living. There is no use in singing, "Oh, how I love Jesus!" and letting a tired mother pick up your dirty clothes and wash them and make your bed when you are able to do it. God will not hear your song or bless you. The All-Seeing Eye is watching just as much in

the home as He is in the church services.

I have worked with enough broken homes to know that a large percentage of them developed problems because the woman did not know how to (or would not) keep house. Thank God for vocational schools, but this teaching is to be done in the home. We are living in such a time when people want to farm everything out. God did not say to put up a battlement on the schoolhouse. He said to put it up on the *home*. Furthermore, if you will put it up on the home and keep it up on the home, no matter how the school goes, you can keep your children straight.

Mothers need to teach the children how to do housework, even though it is easier to do it themselves than to show the children how. Otherwise, when they are on their own, they are not going to know how to do the necessary things. I have held still many times when I knew I could do a job a lot easier and quicker than watch my boys wrestle around with a wrench, because they had to learn. There might be a much easier way of doing a certain thing than God's way, but it will not produce what God intended for us. We must take whatever time is necessary to do it God's way. Sadly, many young people grow up and leave home with little or no instruction. A battlement was not built around the home. The necessary time was not spent with them.

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-14 and Titus 2:1-5 and you will understand that this is a part of old-time, practical home Christianity. It has to do with our living for God, and it is just as important as not drinking alcohol, not smoking, and not going to the movies. This fits in as another part of practical Christianity, and we cannot have God's blessings on our lives if we overstep it.

Young man, beware of the young lady who is lazy and spends all her time fixing herself up. Just looking at a pretty woman will not

put breakfast in your stomach in the morning. I read one time of a fellow who married a girl who had never been taught how to keep house or how to cook. She wanted to do it so badly, but she did not know how. The poor fellow about killed himself and got ulcers from trying to eat what she cooked. He came home from work one night, and she was crying. He asked, "What is the matter now, Honey?"

She answered, "I made a cake for you, but Fido got up on the table and ate it."

Her husband said: "Don't cry. I can get you another dog like Fido."

Home is a place of service. Much sadness would not have to exist, many hearts would not have to be broken, many homes would not have had to end up in despair and ruin if there had been a battlement lifted up around the home, if the home had been a place of service, and if all, especially Father and Mother, had filled their places in the home. The Bible tells us what to do.

Home Is a Place of Recreation

Not only is the home a place of service, but it is a place of recreation. The Bible tells us that David was on the housetop. Many people think he might have gone up there to pray, but he went up there for recreation and rest, and he fell into sin. Many preachers talk about David's sin, his fall, and his return, but not very many preach on Bathsheba's sin. Jesus said in Luke 17:1 that "offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!" God give us some honest-to-goodness, ordinary, everyday modesty. God expects the saints to raise up a battlement on modesty. Why? God is good enough to teach us modesty for our own protection. Modesty is a preventive. I have had parents become upset with me. They say: "What kind of a daughter do you think I have? Just because she wears shorts does not mean she is going to commit adultery." However, it is just one of the moves of Satan to move

her in that direction. When he starts getting you to let down on the standard of modesty, only God knows where it will stop. You do not know. You may have some scrupulous ideas that you will not do this or that, but you do not know what you will do when the battlement is taken down.

People today seem to think that just having a knowledge of the facts of life is all that is necessary. However, just a knowledge of life does not make people good. Many educated people have great knowledge of life, but on the average, they are no better moral people than any other class. Just a knowledge of the facts of life, without the fundamental principles of decency and morality that only godly advice can give, will not be protection. It will only open the door to let people go to hell in a faster way. There is a vast difference between an unsaved schoolteacher teaching your children about the facts of life and their being taught at a godly mother's knee. And there will be a world of difference in the effect.

The fundamental principles of decency need to be taught today. Many immoral things are going on in the world, but the child of God's home ought to have a battlement against them. Piety begins at home. If Christianity is not lived out and taught in the home, it will go no further. It can be preached from the pulpit, from the radio, from the television, or from any other means possible, but if it is not lived in the home, it will go no further.

God's way of salvation starts in the heart by changing you. Parent, when He changes you, He is beginning a work to change your home also. Your home will begin to take on a Christian atmosphere if God is allowed to work.

Why is God interested in our home life? Let us go back to the story of David. David could not help taking the first look at Bathsheba, but when He took a second look, a scene of lust was painted on the wall

of his brain. With each look, it took on greater color until, finally, that picture developed into actions. Dear one, if you have a television in your home, you are putting things right before the eyes of your children not only a first time, but a second time. Daily, weekly, and yearly, you are allowing things to be written on their brains. You can try to teach your children that the things they see are wrong, but how are they to believe that? If they were wrong, surely, you, as a Christian, would not have them going on in the home. It reverts right back to the battlement.

There has never been a television in our home, and I do not feel that our children have missed a thing. They are not behind on what is going on in the world, and I have kept them from many battles that

Many immoral things are going on in the world, but the child of God's home ought to have a battlement against them all.

they would have had in their hearts and minds by looking upon things that would have stirred their affections and turned their thinking in the wrong way.

There needs to be a battlement set up. It is your right to have a television set in your home if you want to, but I am going to be faithful to you by telling you just exactly what it will do for you. If you lose your children and they fall off the wall and break their necks in sin, remember, Dad, Mother, you are responsible for that home. (Also, going to the neighbor's house and watching their television is not any better.)

I know that television is here to stay. So is sin. However, I am not going to have a part in that which is wrong. Television is an evil. You do not need a preacher to tell you that. Sound thinkers in government positions have told how that television has wrecked and ruined many lives. Many schoolteachers have given

testimony that they can tell which of the children's homes have television and which homes do not. If I had a television, I do not know when I would watch it. If you get busy for the Lord and do the work God wants you to do, you will not have time to watch one either.

The home is a place for recreation, but we need to make it the right kind. We can make our home an enjoyable place to be.

While there are some women who will not keep a clean house, there are others who keep a house so clean you cannot even use it. The devil would like for us to go from one extreme to the other. We need to make the home enjoyable so that every member of the family will want to come there every time he can. Oh, the important place the mother holds! You can make home a place where the husband loves to come to after work and the children cannot wait to come to after school, a place where the married children rejoice in the privilege of visiting.

Wife, I will give you some pointers. Do not be an old grouch. Do not get the idea that because you stood before the preacher and signed a paper, you have your husband for life. It is a proven fact that he can get away from you. Love is something that must be won continually, and respect must be built every day. Let your husband come home and find the house cleaned up, you freshened up with a clean dress on and a smile on your face, waiting to give him a kiss when he comes through the door. There might be times when you are sick or something unavoidable comes up, but that will be the exception. Make the home a place your husband looks forward to coming to. I am talking about a battlement. There does not have to be some of the sadness that is going on if people would do a little more listening to what God has to say to us in His eternal Word.

Let us make the home happy.

Some children go home and eat and take right off. They find their happiness somewhere else. I remember that my father had a pony for us. It cost quite a bit to own one, but when people would ask him how he could afford to keep a pony for his children to play with, I heard him tell them: "It is the cheapest thing I ever bought. I spent ninety dollars for that pony, and my children are right here. I know what they are doing. If I do not entertain them at home, they are going to find entertainment somewhere else, and that begins to get costly to me."

The child of God is going to go through many trials. These are perilous times. Whenever you begin to feel as if the load is getting too heavy, read Romans 8:35-39. There Paul told of the many things the Christian can face, but should any of these separate us from the love of Christ? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors. If you are just a conqueror, you can make it through with a straight face, but if you are *more than* a conqueror, you can make it through with a smile. Paul said: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verses 38-39). God's grace is sufficient for us. If Christianity does not work at home, it does not work anywhere.

Home Is a Place of Retreat

The housetop was a retreat in time of battle. That was why David was on the housetop. He did not go to battle, but he was resting on the housetop. Every home ought to be a retreat from the battles of life. A man can stand almost anything in life if he has a good home to go to; but life's battles become almost unbearable to a man if he knows when he gets home there is going to be a battle there too. The whole world is a battlefield, and the devil would

like it to be a battlefield at home also.

God bless the faithful mother who stays home and has her castle ready for its comers! They rejoice in coming, and she rejoices in their coming. I am talking about a happy home. If you have a Christian home, a good house, food, and healthy children, you need to stop and realize how blessed you are. How very easy it is in this day and time to become sour. There is enough happening in our world to cause you to become sour. When the devil works that kind of work on you, you will be miserable to yourself and you will make everyone around you miserable.

I read once where a man got in that shape, and he said: "Nothing is right in the world. God did not do anything right. Look at that big pumpkin on that wee little vine. Look at that little acorn on that great big tree. There is not anything right." About that time, an acorn fell and hit him on the head. Then he thanked God it was not a pumpkin. God knew what He was doing!

You can get into such a shape that you are wrong but you think everybody else is wrong. It is very hard for a person to see his own faults unless he is truly honest before God.

The story is told of a man who often came home drunk, sat down in the living room chair, laid his head back, and snored for hours. His wife got so tired of it that one day she took a piece of Limburger cheese and laid it right on his mustache. When he got up, he said: "I cannot stand it in this house! The house stinks. Wife, why don't you clean this place up?" He got out on the street, and he said of the people that passed him: "Boy, do they stink! It must have been a week since they took a bath." He picked up a flower, smelled it, and threw it down, saying, "Even the flowers stink!" He went by the drugstore and bought expensive body lotion to put on, but he said, "Man, it stinks too!" He went back to the saloon, bought a

drink, and said to the bartender: "Isn't it awful? The whole world stinks." The trouble was with him! So many times it is just that way in people's spiritual lives. Most people who smell a stink are smelling their own smell. People who are so quick to find wrong in everybody else often have wrong in themselves.

Home Is a Place of Prayer

The housetop was a place of prayer. Acts 10:9 states that Peter was on the housetop at noon praying. I thank God for the privilege of being raised in a home where prayer and Bible study were laid before us. The Bible is the Book of Life, and it gives instruction on how to find a companion, how to get married, how to treat each other after you are married, how to look forward to childbirth, and how to handle a child. Everything that is needed to have a happy home is in the Word, if we will read it.

A person can go to hell from where a family altar has been raised, but he has a hard time doing it. There is a battlement there. I have said many times that when I get to Heaven and see my dear old dad, I am going to take him in my arms again and thank him for the battlement he set up in our home. That battlement was so set up that it put definite marks in my mind. Even when I was out in sin and overseas, there were many things that I never touched or indulged in because that battlement guided me and guarded me and prevented me from getting into a lot of circumstances that I could have gotten into.

Church, not a one of us knows enough to raise children the way we should, but it is wonderful what God can do with praying fathers and mothers.

Family discipline is a battlement. The Bible teaches very plainly that to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22). Behind all of the heartaches and miseries of our day is disobedience. I learned to respect through a wet dishrag. My sister

would often say, "Mother, I would rather you hit me with a club than hit me across the face with that dirty dish towel." "Well," Mother would answer, "don't talk back to me." She did not wait half the day, saying, "If you don't quit that, I am going to punish you." When we did wrong, wham! That dishrag came so quickly we could not get our hands up. Mother meant what she said!

There would be less trouble with young people in the congregations if there were more discipline at home. People have asked, "Should I make my child go to church?" If he is trained with family discipline, there will be no question about his going to church. He will get his good clothes on when it is church time. I am not talking about forcing a child into an experience, because if he ever gets saved, he will get saved on his own volition; but going to church every service is part of the training up of a child in the way he ought to go.

There needs to be a battlement raised up in the home of reverence for the Bible. Deuteronomy 11:18-20 reads: "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Unless you begin reading God's eternal Word to those little children in the home and teaching reverence for the Bible, they are not going to respect it when they get to be fifteen or sixteen.

We are living in a time of irreverence. There have been times I have had to quit praying for someone in the hospital because the nurse came in and pushed me aside to talk to the patient. When that happened, I knew what kind of a home that nurse came from by the way she acted!

The pastor can spend time before God to get a message, and it will be God-anointed and God-sent; but because of disrespect, young people talk to each other, laugh, and pass notes to each other right while the Bible is being preached. Where does all of that stem from? Do not lay it on the church. In the home is where the trouble lies. Teach them to respect the Bible at home, and they will respect the Bible at church.

A battlement of consistent Christian living needs to be raised. James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). The next generation, if Jesus tarries, is only going to have what Truth we give them, and if the devil gets us to cut corners and take some easier, more pleasant way, we are taking away the hope of our posterity ever having the Truth. God help us to look beyond ourselves! When we say no to God, we are putting no in our children's mouths, and our children will outdo us because they are fleet-er of foot than we are.

What Is the Condition of Your Home?

Our Scripture text says to put up battlements around the rooftop. The wise man said, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

I once read of a minister who ran a mission in Chicago. He dealt with people who were middle-aged and older, alcoholics, and drug addicts whose lives were wasted. After he brought them into the mission and fed them, he would say, "Let's get down and pray." He could tell by the way a man got down on his knees to pray what kind of home he came from and what kind of father and mother he had.

This is what the wise man meant when he said they will not depart from it. Parent, we have the privilege of setting up battlements. We have the privilege of making marks within our children's minds that will

stay with them. Wherever they may travel, it will cause them to turn back. May God help us to put up some battlements in our homes! Thousands of voices are calling our children. The enemy is working on every level, along religious lines as well as in the schools. Every kind of move is being made to kill the effect of home teaching.

Let us put up some battlements. Let us turn back to the blessed old Bible. Let us allow God into the minute things of life. Let us quit making a difference between the sacred and the secular. Let us permit God to be in the home as well as in our hearts and make the home a Christian home, a home where God's power and blessing are.

I purposely called your attention to the thought of a bird's nest. Consider what God put with that commandment—you need to obey this for two reasons. One, that it may be well with you, for if you overstep and hurt this bird, God just might allow hurt to come on you. Two, that you may live longer. To spare a mother bird might seem like such a little thing, but what we call a small commandment can be a big commandment with God and involve a lot of things.

Dear one, what is the condition of your heart? What is the condition of your home? May God help us to raise up a battlement around our homes so that we can prevent our children from falling into deep sin that they might never get out of!



Neglect

Miss Meant-to has a comrade
And her name is Didn't-do.
Have you ever chanced to meet them?
Did they ever call on you?
These two girls now live together
In the house of Never-win,
And I'm told that it is haunted
By the ghost of Might-have-been.

Selected



We heard of a dear old brother, who for many years took his stand, opposing the worldliness and drift in his church and community. His family insisted that things had changed and all was so different now that he should give in and go along with the trends. His wife wanted to wear pantsuits and cut her hair as the popular religious professors around her. The children tried to talk him into letting them install a television set in the home.

He was told that he and his wife should put on wedding rings now in their old age to prove that they were married. His girls wanted to wear short skirts, cut their hair, and wear jewelry. His boys wanted to wear long hair. They all declared that they loved the Lord as much as he did and that the popular was not so reproachful. He was troubled in his mind and wondered just what to do. It seemed there was no one who encouraged him to keep contending for the old paths.

Then one night he dreamed that he was carrying his cross. The cross was bunglesome, heavy, and painful to his back. In his dream, his family sympathized with him and suggested that he saw off a little of the cross. So, he cut off part of the heavy cross. It was lighter, but still somewhat of a burden; so again he listened to their persuasion and cut off some more of his cross. He then

found that his cross was less painful and much easier to bear. It also appeared less obnoxious to the family and friends.

Traveling on in his dream, he came at last to a chasm deep and wide. Jagged rocks jutted from its sides and murky waters dashed and roared below. He realized this was the River of Death. To cross it safely meant a landing on the sunny banks of sweet deliverance. To fail meant to be carried down to the eternal regions of dark damnation. His heart trembled as he contemplated the treacherous crossing. How could he make it? Then a voice seemed to say: "The cross. Use the cross that you carry."

He placed one end of his cross on the jutting rocks at his feet, then let it fall in an effort to span the gulf. He started to walk across, but alas, his cross was so short that it slipped off the edge on the farther side, plunging him into the dark waters as he screamed in despair, "If only I had not shortened my cross!"

Awakening from his dream, this dear brother fell upon his knees and promised God that he would never compromise or let down, even if he must go all alone.

"Be not conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

"Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James 4:4).

Selected

*Take up your cross
 And follow Jesus.
 Take up your cross, everyday.
 Don't be ashamed
 To say that you know Him.
 Count the cost,
 Take up your cross,
 And follow Him.*



[Guest Editorial continued from page 2]

to the Lord. When people conduct themselves like this, it grieves the heart of Almighty God.

In this world of materialism and humanism, so many people have the idea that they do not need God. Satan has very deceitfully convinced mankind that it is capable of caring for itself with no need of help from above. Nothing could be further from reality and the truth. Jeremiah 10:23 clearly states, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Without God's tender hand being extended, we weak mortals would be able to do nothing.

Considering the spiritual aspect of God's blessings, we well know that America has been given greater light and understanding of God's Word than any other nation. In many countries there is either no light of Truth at all, or the light is shining very dimly. We are greatly blessed to have this knowledge and understanding, and with that we are extremely responsible to others. Jesus, speaking in Luke 12:48, said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" God expects us to be thankful for these spiritual blessings and to verbally express our gratefulness to Him. The greatest expression of thankfulness to the Lord is shown by obedience to Him through honoring His Word and walking in the light. Thankfulness is more than just mere words from our lips. It calls for action in our daily living.

In Exodus 20:5 we are told that "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." He wants all His creatures to worship Him above all else. Do not forget the blessings God has bestowed upon you physically, financially, and most of all, spiritually. Demonstrate your thankfulness by living a life that is pleasing to Him, and praise Him continually with your lips from a truly grateful heart.

Selected

"Ye Are the Building of Christ"

2004 Bible School Story



We are all builders; we are soul house builders. Each one of us is building a spiritual house for eternity. Building our soul house is the most important building we will ever do. The Master Builder is Jesus Christ. He is the Great Architect. He has a divine plan for every boy and girl, and He says, "My plans are good!"

If you were to build a literal house, you would need to have a blueprint. You have to follow that blueprint to a "T" or things might go wrong. We have a blueprint for building our spiritual soul house. It is the Word of God. If you follow that blueprint, you can be a successful builder for Jesus Christ. If not, your efforts will all be in vain.

You cannot build a soul house in one day. It takes a lifetime of work and building. We are building every day, and we should count the cost, because we want to finish our soul house. There is nothing pretty about a half-finished house or a house that is falling down. We want to be successful builders.

This story is an allegory of two builders. We will call them the Wise Soul House Builder and the Foolish

Soul House Builder. First, our builders had to choose where to build. (The location for your soul house is critical, because you must start right.) One builder chose the city of Zion for his location. He thought it was beautiful.

Now there was a sign in Zion that said, "Ye must be born again." Both builders looked at that sign, and they wondered, "Born again?" They did not know what that meant. The sign also said that one had to be a citizen of Zion to build there. The builders thought,

"How can you be a citizen of Zion?" Brother Trueheart came along. He was so glad to help the two builders. He told them: "You have to dig deep to build in Zion. You have to get everything out of your life—all your evil habits, your ill will, and any bitterness. Dig deep! You have to hit the Rock!" One builder said, "It costs too much." The other builder said, "This is just what I've been looking for."

So, one builder rejected the Rock—Jesus Christ—and the other accepted it. The foolish builder walked along until he came to some sandy land—the sandy land of sin. He looked at it and said: "Oh! This looks good. I don't have to dig so deep. I will have a lot of time left over for self and pleasure. This is my spot—the sandy land." Do you know who owned the sandy land? Sir Beelzebub owned the sandy land. The foolish builder met Sir Beelzebub, and he asked, "What's the price?" Sir Beelzebub said, "Give me your youth, and I'll give you the land free." The young man said, "No strict building codes?" and Sir Beelzebub said, "Build it your way." The young man bought the lie and

bought the land. Sir Beelzebub (who is the dirty, old devil) loves to help build soul houses. The young man sold his soul to the owner of the sandy land, for he was a foolish builder.

Meanwhile, in Zion the Wise Soul House Builder began digging deep. He began pitching out the dirt, throwing out everything in his life that was dirty. He dug deep, but Brother Trueheart said, "You must dig deeper." Finally, the builder said: "I hit it! I hit the Rock!" Friend, when you hit the Rock, Christ Jesus, you will know it. Everything changes. You will come up off of that Rock with clean clothes, a new name, a new heart, and a new spirit. What a change!

With the gift of salvation came a plot of land in Zion. It was free! The builder received a deed to the land, and he automatically received a building permit because he had been born again. He now knew that being born again is asking God to forgive you, to repent, to say: "I'm sorry for my sins. God, forgive me." God takes a big eraser (the blood of Jesus Christ) and erases every sin. The blood of Jesus goes deeper than the stain of sin has gone. There is deliverance for every sinner. You have to hit the Rock (Jesus). That is the important thing. This soul builder is now a new creature in Christ Jesus.

The foundation of our soul house is critical. It has to be solid and strong, for it is going to bear the weight of the whole building. It has to be square and level. There is only one true foundation to build on, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah said, "Behold [in other words, stop and think about it], I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah 28:16). God wants everyone to build on the sure foundation—Jesus Christ. It is the only way to build.

Then, the Wise Soul House Builder began to drive in stakes. Sometimes people go to church, move to an altar, and you never see them attend church services again.

Why? What happened? They failed to drive those stakes. You must drive those stakes deep. Some of these stakes are called:

Determination: "I am going to live for You, Lord, forever."

Commitment: "Jesus, I am committed to You and Your cause forever."

Steadfastness: "I'm not giving up; I'm not turning around. By the grace of God, I'll wear a shining crown someday."

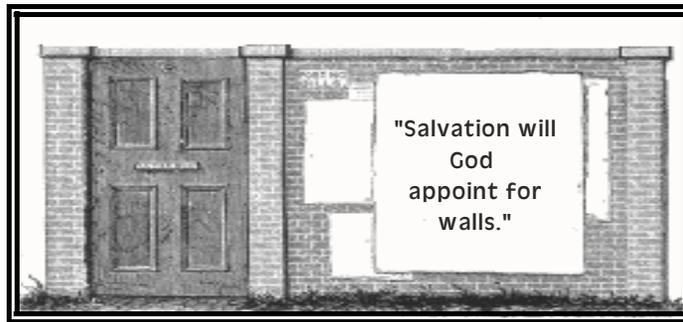
A child of God must drive those stakes deep, deep on the Rock. As the Wise Soul House Builder began to build, he looked at the blueprint and saw that it said, "Take heed, or be careful, how you build thereupon." He thought, "This is serious." So he went to the Everlasting Store (the Word of God). He needed some building materials, and in God's Word we can find just what to use for our spiritual building. The Wise Soul House Builder found the best materials. You cannot get anything better than the materials that are in the Everlasting Store.

So, one builder began to build on the Rock (Jesus), and the other began to build on the shifting sand (sin). One went by the Bible blueprint, the other had the attitude, "I'm going to build it my way." They started framing their houses. The first plank to go in the Foolish Soul House Builder's house was self-confidence. He thought he knew everything. He thought he knew how to build. You could not tell him anything. Then, in went the planks of self-pleasing, disobedience, bad words, hatred, lies, and all the worldly, sinful character traits of a foolish builder.

However, the Wise Soul House Builder took the first planks (holiness) and placed them all around the perimeter. Without holiness no man can see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). He began putting in good, solid, sturdy character traits—Christian character traits. The first corner stud was a threefold stud, strong and

sturdy with prayer, Bible study and church attendance. What a sturdy stud to put in that house! Right behind that went obedience (we must obey the Word of God). He had the "Do-Rights": honesty, cheerfulness, and kindness. His top plank was faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

One of the planks in the Foolish Soul House Builder's house was "Good Works." It was a seemingly sturdy plank. Yet, this plank of "Good Works" did not make this soul house acceptable to the Lord. Other "good" planks one may build with are "Obeying the Law" and "Paying Your Bills," but they do not make a soul house acceptable to the Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand, what if just one sin goes into



the Christian's soul house? What does it do to the soul house? It mars it. Just one sin will mar a soul house. One sin is not acceptable to Jesus Christ. You can repent and tear that plank of sin out, but sometimes it will cause a weakness in your soul house. You will have to fortify it. That is why you need to keep all sin out. Sin will condemn your soul house. You do not want that. You want to keep it clean.

Concerning the walls, Isaiah said, "Salvation will God appoint for walls" (Isaiah 26:1). The Wise Soul House Builder took precious truth stones out of the Word of God (that is where you will find your truth stones), and he began to work those truth stones into his walls of salvation. He used the mortar of love to put them in. You must love the truth! You must buy it and sell it not. Living for God is based on love.

It is not based on "have-to," but it is based on love: "want-to." Those truth stones made the walls of that soul house strong and sturdy. What a beautiful soul house!

The Foolish Soul House Builder did not go to the Everlasting Store for supplies. He went to the salvage and junk yard whose owner was Sir Beelzebub. Sir Beelzebub said: "Come and buy [he is out to get every soul house builder]. Cheapest prices in town. You don't have to do this and that. Just come and buy." He showed the foolish builder pre-fab walls. "They're cheap. I threw in a little self-love, a little self-indulgence. Come and buy!" The foolish builder said, "What is the price?" Sir Beelzebub said, "You can have these walls if you let me help you put them in." The Foolish

Soul House Builder bought his lie, and he thought, "What a deal!"

It did not matter that the walls were imperfect; it did not matter that the walls were rotten. The builder said, "What a deal!" The devil is quite a salesman, the best you have ever heard. He will sell you

a bill of goods. Too many times, people know it is not the right thing to do, but they buy from him anyway. Then they are building on the sandy land of sin.

Now, the walls of both houses are up, and the roofs are completed. One house is covered with blessed assurance. (We all need insurance, but there is something better than insurance. It is blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!) The other house is covered with selfishness, because it was all about self. So, both builders have completed their houses.

Let us look inside these two soul houses, for it is the inside that is so important. What is on the inside comes outside. The Foolish Soul House Builder is busy. He says: "I am having a good time! I'm free!" His house is filled with cigarette smoke. (Would Jesus live in a house full of smoke?) He says that he is

free to do as he pleases, but he does not know that he is bound by the chords of his sins. He gets up in the morning and says: "I have to get a cigarette. Oh, I've got the shakes. Where's my next drink?" Yet he says he is free. What deception!

The Foolish Soul House Builder spends his life partying, having what he calls a "good time." These habits are robbing him of his health, but that does not matter to him. He begins to bring in dirty magazines, R-rated movies, and other corruption into his soul house, and it becomes so dirty. The corruption of the world is filling his soul house. What is the whole problem? The heart is the problem. It is full of self and sin. Number one is sitting on the throne of his heart, and there is no room for Jesus. This house has no light, because Jesus is the Light. Since there is no light, it is dark and cold. There is no fire, just smoke.

Yet, this builder still says, "I'm free!" Can you see the lie that the devil is feeding him? His soul house is corrupt, but he thinks he is free. The poisonous fruits of drink, drugs, and cigarettes are killing him, but he goes on because he bought the devil's lie. The devil is a liar, and he has no mercy. He will trick every one of us if he can. The foolish builder has made his soul house a refuge of lies. Yet, he feels secure.

Brother Trueheart paid the Foolish Soul House Builder a few visits. He asked: "Won't you give your heart to God? Won't you repent?" but the builder refused. "No! I don't want any part of that." Stubbornness and rebellion were in that house. "Leave me alone! I'm not interested! I'm going to do it my way."

Let us look into the house of the Wise Soul House Builder. What a difference! Wisdom helped build his soul house. Understanding helped establish it, and knowledge has filled his rooms with treasures. Not only is Jesus Christ his salvation, but Jesus is the light of his soul house. It is clean and bright. Of course, to have the light, the soul builder had to be hooked into the Higher Power

(Jesus Christ). His house is warm and cozy. The fire is burning brightly. That fire represents the Spirit of God.

Young person, keep the fire burning in your soul house. Keep it hot, on fire. We find the Wise Soul House Builder spending the evening with his close companion, the Word of God. He is eating of the fruit of the Spirit; he is partaking of the grapes of joy. There is joy in serving the Master! He is eating the bananas of longsuffering and an apple of goodness. The fruit of the Spirit is filling his house. Peace is within his walls. What a wonderful salvation! This is not the hard way. Sin is the hard way. This is the wonderful way.

Unless the
Lord builds
the house,

its
builders
labor
in vain.

Psalm 127:1



This builder's heart is full of Jesus. There is no room for anything but the love of God. It fills his heart. His soul house is overflowing with the love of God. He wants to keep it clean. That is why he is reading the blueprint (God's Word). It not only tells him how to build, but it tells him how to keep his soul house clean. This is his safe haven. What a difference! The Bible says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). God wants us to be His temple. How wonderful that the great and mighty

God of Heaven would condescend to come down to live in my heart and in your heart!

This soul house has some smoke too. That soul is sending up the sweet incense of prayer and thanksgiving. He says: "Thank You, Lord, for saving me. Thank You, Lord, for helping me to build my soul house. Thank You, Lord, for the sure foundation—Jesus Christ." That sweet incense of thanks is going right up to the throne of grace. His door becomes a door of praise to God. He is giving thanks always.

Both soul houses will have the rains and the storms of life. The Wise Soul House Builder has a great enemy—that dirty, old devil. The devil likes to inspect soul houses. He will look for cracks of neglect. He wants to get into the Christian's soul house, and he is ever inspecting it, looking for holes, looking for a place where he can get in. It is the little foxes that spoil the vines. The devil hates these precious soul houses. He never gives up. He comes in many disguises, faces, and voices.

One day, the Wise Soul House Builder was feeling lonely. The devil knew it, and he began to whisper: "No one cares. No one called you today. You are all alone. Why don't you just give up and throw in the towel?" The little soul began to feel lower and lower, and he did not even know why. Pretty soon the devil got bolder, and he knocked on the door. The little soul said, "Who's there?" The devil (in disguise) said: "I'm Miss Free Spirit. I've come to visit with you today. I want to be your friend. Will you open up your door?"

The Wise Soul House Builder said: "No! Not for the joy of my soul!" Even in temptation and trials, the Christian can still have deep-seated joy in the soul.

However, the devil does not give up. "Just open that door. Just break free. You're too strict. Break free and have a good time. Come on. Open that door." The little soul said, "No!" but the devil did not go away. He said, "Is it a sin to have fun?" The

little soul thought, "Well, no." Then the devil said, "Is it a sin to have friends?" Again, the little soul thought, "No."

So, the devil kept talking. "Just open up, just a little. I can make you popular. I can give you lots of friends. You will have such a good time. You will be with the 'in' crowd. You will not have to be lonely anymore."

Here comes peer pressure through the devil's talk. "Come on. Be part of the crowd. Just one cigarette, just one drink isn't going to hurt you." The devil is ever pressing on that soul house. Friend, you need a strong soul house to withstand peer pressure.

Miss Free Spirit says: "Break free. You can have fun like me." Child of God, when you are in the midst of temptation, what should you do? Go to the Word of God; get on your knees and pray to the Master Builder, saying: "God, I need Your help. I can feel the pressure of temptation. Please help me, Lord." That is what the Wise Soul House Builder did. He went to the Word of God and read that to follow Christ, you have to love less father, mother, sister, brother, and friends (Luke 14:26). Jesus Christ has to be first.

The Wise Soul House Builder said, "O Jesus, I will not give in!" He had prayer, and through prayer the Master Builder strengthened him. He got out the sword (the Word of God), and he saw dirty tracks around his house. He saw the devil's tail, and he realized that Miss Free Spirit was really a dirty, old wolf (the devil). He struck out with the sword, saying, "Thus saith the Word of God." The Word of God is what the Christian must use on the devil.

The devil was furious, but he had to leave. As he left, he said, "I hate Christian soul houses!" He wants to move into every soul house, but the Christian's soul house is built on Jesus Christ. His walls are salvation; he has the precious stones of the Word of God. The devil cannot get in as long as the Christian stays close to the Master Builder.

Now, the devil does not give up. Sometimes, he knows he cannot just move in the Christian's soul house, so he tries to come in inch by inch. He will try to get the Christian off center, just a little here and just a little there. He never gives up. The child of God must stay pleasing and obedient to the Master Builder. The Word of God says, "... blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments" (Psalm 112:1). God's commandments are not hard. They are blessings. God's commandments will keep your soul house.

Next, we see the devil approach another soul house, the house of the Foolish Soul House Builder. The devil loves soul houses like this. He looks all around, but he does not knock at the door. Why? Because that soul house already belongs to him. Ruthless and mean, he brings in a storm of rain and hail. He huffs and he puffs. The little soul has no power, no strength against the cravings of sin. He would like to give up the alcohol and the cigarettes, but a flood comes against his soul house—a flood of craving, a flood of devices. There is no one to help him. The walls of that soul house begin to shake and tremble. He has no power under this onslaught, and the walls begin to crumble. In time the entire house falls down, and the devil cries out, "GOTCHA!"

Dear one, if you only knew how the devil mocks and laughs at you when you buy his lies. The devil says, "You are foolish!" and he laughs. He says: "You bought my lies. You believed what I told you." The devil was a liar from the beginning. He mocks and laughs, and another soul is lost. Speaking of that house, the Bible says, "Great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:27). Why was it a great fall? Because the soul went into eternity lost. Friend, there is still a Heaven, and there is still a hell. You are going to one of the two places.

The soul went into eternity saying: "What a fool I have been! It's too late to rebuild. It's too late to salvage

my soul house." He cried for help, but there was no help because he had refused the Rock, Jesus Christ. You must have Jesus in your house, or you will be lost forever.

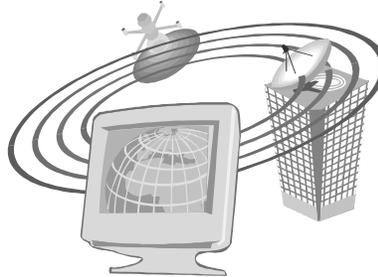
We read in Psalm 127:1, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Jeremiah 22:13 says, "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness . . ." Oh, how we need Jesus Christ! He loves every one of us. He knocks at our heart's door, saying: "Won't you let Me come in? Won't you let Me come and dwell in your soul house?" Sadly, many people say, "No, Jesus." He is a gentleman. He will never knock the door down.

What kind of soul house are you building? What kind of builder are you? Are you a wise soul house builder, or are you a foolish soul house builder? The good news is, we can all be wise soul house builders, for Jesus came to this world so that whosoever might be saved. The ground at the Cross is level. There is room for all. You can build the right way through Jesus Christ. That is the good news of the Gospel—everyone can build a sturdy, beautiful soul house that will last forever.

Sister Karen Wilks



Web Site News



BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE WEB

"The Many Mighty Miracles of Jesus Christ"

2006 Bible School at the Church of God, God's Acres, was held September 19-24. The theme was "The Many Mighty Miracles of Jesus Christ." Sister Karen Wilks did a wonderful job each night telling stories of the miracles of Jesus. The children heard how Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, walked on the water, and forgave sins. Sunday's Bible School program included several songs about the miracles of Jesus. During one song, six-year-old Mateo Martinez testified of God healing a tumor in his brain. His last doctor's checkup showed that the tumor was completely gone! Thank God, He is still in the miracle business!

The forecast for several nights and for the Saturday picnic was rains, winds, and storms. The children joined us in praying for God to take care of the weather, and He did! Saturday's forecast, especially, was foreboding, but God was faithful to take care of it. We had a beautiful day, and only after everything was over and the children were safely home did the rains come.

You can view pictures from this year's Bible School and previous years on the Web site. Go to ChurchofGodYouth.com and click on "Local Bible School Information."

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