

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

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PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:

Roger Decker, Pastor  
83 Decrow Ave.  
Newark, OH 43055

Email: [pastor@church-of-god-online.com](mailto:pastor@church-of-god-online.com)  
Phone: 740-344-2543 or 1-888-730-0461  
Fax: 740-344-4737  
Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

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

Brother Roger L. Decker . . . . . Editor  
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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**Vol. 36 September 2006 No. 9**

# Guest Editorial

*"Behold, there went out a sower to sow; And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up. . . . And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it. . . . And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit. . . ."*

Mark 4:3-9

## The Parable of the Sower

In this text of Scripture Jesus spoke to the multitude through the means of a parable. A parable is a story-like illustration or a comparison, using natural or human elements to portray a spiritual lesson. In Matthew 13:37 we read, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man [or Jesus Christ]." Mark 4:14 informs us that "The sower soweth the word [or the seed]." Verse 15 reveals, ". . . the word . . . was sown in their hearts [the ground]." The sower is Christ, the seed is the Word of God, and the ground represents the hearts of all mankind.

First, in this parable we find a heart that Jesus likened to wayside ground. The wayside ground is soil that lays beside an area that has been plowed and made ready for seed to be planted. This ground has a very hard surface and is caused from people walking over it and tramping it down. Therefore, the seed is unable to penetrate the crusty surface. This is a picture of many hearts and how resistant each one is to the Word of God. A wayside heart has no regard for spiritual matters. The lost condition of their souls is of little or no concern to them. Hearing the Word of God at a funeral service or an occasional visit to the house of worship makes no lasting impression. These dear ones have heard the Word, but it is to no avail, because as Jeremiah 12:11 states, "no man layeth it to heart." James worded it this way in James 1:22, "But be ye doers of the word, and

not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Great multitudes have had their hearts hardened to the Gospel through careless living, excessive sinning, and constantly rejecting the Word (the seed) sent to help them. This is so sad, because this refusal can leave ones in a state of being beyond help. The Word, which is sent to bring life to the soul, can be rejected to the place where there remains no hope for repentance. This is the reason Jesus said in Mark 4:9, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The seed can be sown today by the most godly ministers or demonstrated through the deepest spiritual Christians, yet it makes no real impression on the hearts of those who are so hardened. The Truth cannot find entrance to this lost soul.

Yet, still a more pitiful sight to see is that of those who trod the precious seed under their feet and consider it to be nothing of lasting benefit. They not only refuse the Word, but often they speak evil of it, mock it, and even mock those who faithfully sow the seed.

Many do not realize there is an opposer of all that is good standing by ready to hinder anyone who tries to hear or heed the Word. Just as the literal fowls of the air swoop down to pick up the natural seed on the ground, the "opposer" patiently waits to snatch up any Truth and take it away. Satan has many agents in his employ, some of which are false ministers. These blind guides often

*[continued on page 13]*

John 3:1 *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:*

2 *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

4 *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter*

*into the kingdom of God.*

6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8 *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

9 *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

10 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

11 *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not*

*our witness.*

12 *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

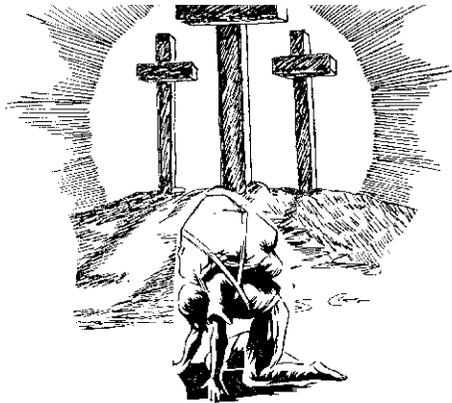
13 *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

14 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:*

15 *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

16 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

# Being Born Again



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **Earth's Best Standing Face to Face With Heaven's Best**

If you were to study the life of Jesus, you would find that multitudes of ordinary people often surrounded Him. Luke 14:25 says there were "great multitudes with him." Mixed multitudes followed Him daily. Luke 15:1 says, "Then

drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." In Luke 17:12 ten lepers approached Him. In Matthew, Chapter 19, we find that Jesus departed from Galilee and went into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan. Verse 2 says, "And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there."

In our Scripture text Jesus was

not dealing with multitudes or a large crowd, but rather one man. One aristocrat of Jerusalem named Nicodemus came face to face with the love of God. Nicodemus was very wealthy. John 19:39 says he "brought [for the body of Jesus] a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight," which only a wealthy man could bring.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. There were about six thousand Pharisees at that time, and they pledged to spend their lives observing every detail of the scribal law. They wanted to keep it right down to every jot and tittle. To the Jew, the Law was most sacred. They believed it to be the perfect Word of God. To add or to take away one word was a deadly sin in the eyes of the Pharisees. That is the reason they had such a problem with Jesus. They thought He added to the Law or exalted Himself to be equal with God. This was a great problem. They accused Him of blasphemy. They believed it to be a deadly sin to add to the sacred books of the Law. They also felt that the Law contained everything a man must know to live a good life. They believed if one was brought up under the Law and kept it, he had it made.

Jesus said in verse 10, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Verse 1 says he was a ruler of the Jews. The word *ruler* comes from the Greek word **archean**. A Jewish ruler was a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the land, which had seventy members. That supreme court ruled every Jew in the world. The Word of God says he was a master and a ruler of the Jews.

With Nicodemus' background it was a wonder that he went to Jesus at all, but he went to Him by night. In 1 Corinthians 1:26 Paul wrote, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." It was better for Nicodemus to have gone to Jesus by night than not to have gone to Him at all.

Nicodemus had to overcome much prejudice to go to Jesus. The Sanhedrin had the final say in all the Pharisaic religion. There was another reason that Nicodemus went to Jesus by night. The rabbis declared the best time to study the Law was at night, when a man was undisturbed. Multitudes followed Jesus during the day, so the best

time to be alone with Him was at night. It would have been difficult for Nicodemus to speak to Him during the day. There was earth's best (Nicodemus) standing face to face with Heaven's best (the Son of God).

### **"All Our Righteousnesses Are as Filthy Rags"**

Psalm 39:5 says, "... verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." The very best that man can do is vanity at his best state. Man could not have come up with any one better than Nicodemus. He was wealthy, he had prestige, he was a keeper of the Law, and he was a member of the high court. He was a man with great social and religious influence. Nevertheless, the best that man could come up with was not good enough.

The Apostle John took great pains to explain who Nicodemus was. Notice how John started Chapter 3. He began with the qualities of the man who came to Jesus, because he wanted us to know who he was. John pointed out that Nicodemus had two great qualities: he was a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews. I repeat, Nicodemus was the best that religion had to offer, but it was not good enough. We could take the best that man has to offer today, and it still would not be good enough. All man's religious and righteous garbs are as filthy rags. A man could join every religious organization in the world and take the best of the works of men and wrap all of them together, but it still would be as Isaiah the Prophet wrote: "... as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). If we were to gather all that men can do, what would it amount to? It would amount to nothing more than self-righteousness and filthy rags in the eyes of God.

Nicodemus did not go to Christ to discuss political affairs or the morals of some men of the Sanhedrin. He went out of concern for his own soul. The Psalmist said in

Psalm 42:1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Psalm 119:131 states, "I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments." When Nicodemus stood before Jesus, in reality, he was panting for the Word of God.

### **The Need of All Mankind**

Every man needs God, and every man has a soul that longs for God. Friend, if you do not have God, you need Him. Nicodemus was a man who had everything that religion could offer, and he had everything the world could offer; yet he still had a void down in his soul. He still needed God.

Nicodemus knew some things about Jesus. Verse 2 of our Scripture text states, "The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Nicodemus called Jesus "Rabbi," which means "great man." It signifies a great, honorable man. He knew that Jesus was a teacher, that He came from God, that He could work miracles, and that God was with Him. Other Pharisees knew who He was as well.

Look at how Jesus handled such words of flattery. He did not say, "You are right. I did come from God, and I am a teacher. Yes, I have done many miracles. It is true that I am a master." Instead, He immediately addressed the need of Nicodemus and all mankind. Jesus answered in verse 3 of our Scripture lesson, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

After Nicodemus had spoken words of flattery and heard Jesus' answer, he was almost speechless. No doubt, he thought: "Who is this man? What is He talking about? I praised Him and told Him that He was a master and a teacher sent from God, and all He said to me was that a man must be born again or he cannot see the Kingdom of God?"

This caught Nicodemus by surprise. In verse 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

Whether it was Nicodemus or the woman taken in adultery, it made no difference to Jesus. All men and women have the same need. Friend, it makes no difference what your status is, whether the world looks upon you as a down-and-outer or high society, you have the same need. In John, Chapter 3, Jesus addressed Nicodemus' need. In the next chapter, He dealt with the woman at the well. All people need to be born again. John 2:25 reads, ". . . for he knew what was in man."

In essence, Nicodemus said, "I know that You come from God. I know that You are not ordained of man but of God. You speak under the inspiration and anointing of God. I realize that God has sent You with a message, and I can see that I have a need in my soul. What do I need?" Jesus told Nicodemus what he needed. The same need lies in the hearts of all mankind yet today. You are not going to make it, friend, if you are not born again. You are not saved if you have not been born again. Unless you have been born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God, and you cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

Jesus let Nicodemus know that with all his pomp, splendor, wealth, and position, he still needed to be changed. Nicodemus might have looked good in the eyes of the Pharisees, but he needed to be changed through the new birth. Nicodemus might have thought he was in God's kingdom, but the truth was, he could not even see it. Jesus let him know that he could not even enter the kingdom until he had been changed. What a thing to tell a Pharisee! One could never accuse Jesus of withholding the truth. Everyone knew where he or she stood.

Is it any wonder that people have so many theories concerning the Kingdom of God, trying to

explain something they cannot see? Today people are trying to preach that the Kingdom of God is somewhere out in the future. Dear one, if you have been born of the Spirit of God, you are in the Kingdom of God. What is the Kingdom of God? It consists of every child of God who has let the King come in and reign in his or her heart. If you truly get saved, your eyes will be opened to what the Kingdom of God is. It is not meat and drink, but it is peace, joy, and righteousness in the Holy Ghost. I am amazed at how many people write so many different theories concerning the kingdom. What does it come from? Most of the writing comes from the carnal hearts of people who do not see the kingdom, because they are not in it.

### **The Born-Again Experience**

I want you to study the born-again experience for a while. Jesus said, "Except a man. . . ." That statement takes in you and me. The expression *born again* in the Greek means "born from above." When you were born of your earthly mother, you had an earthly birth; that which is born of the flesh is flesh. On the other hand, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; it is a heavenly birth.

In our Scripture text in verse 4 you can see that Nicodemus' mind could not take in spiritual things. He thought there was no way to be born again except to start over in his mother's womb and be reshaped. Then Jesus let him know what He was talking about when He said in verse 5, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

What was Jesus talking about when He spoke of being "born of water and of the Spirit"? Was He referring to literal water or baptismal water? No, He was talking about the Word of God; it will clean you up. Again, Jesus said in verse 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God."

The Old Testament Prophet Ezekiel wrote in Ezekiel 36:25-27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: [The water used in water baptism may not be clean. Sometimes people are baptized in a river, and there are unclean things in a river. Ezekiel was talking about clean water.] from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

Jesus said in John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." He was speaking of the Word of God. Believing the Word of God will cleanse a man or a woman from sin. Psalm 119:9 reads, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."

Verse 11 states, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." The Word of God will clean you up, friend. You are not in the right condition for water baptism until you have been cleansed by the Word of God. Jesus is our example. He was the Son of God before He went in the river to be baptized. You ought to be a child of God *before* you are baptized. Water baptism cannot put you in the church. You enter the church through spiritual birth. You are born into the Church of God. Peter said in 1 Peter 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Jesus said in verse 6 of our Scripture text, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh [speaking of physical birth]; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit [speaking of spiritual birth]." Friend, your nature needs to be changed. The new birth takes in more than what people can

even fathom or think. I thank God for the new birth. When you are born again, there will be a change in your life. Throughout the New Testament, those who accepted Jesus Christ and were born again were changed.

### **The Life of Sin Comes to an End**

Again, Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 36:25-27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: [Water baptism will not cleanse you from idols. Idols get into the heart. The Word of God is quick, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It gets right down into the spirit and the soul of man.] and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

When you get a new heart and a new spirit and receive God's Spirit, it will cause you to walk straight, to keep God's commandments, and to do them. A definite change takes place in the heart and life of a man or a woman who has been born again. The life of sin comes to an end. Sin stops because the stony heart has been taken out and a heart of flesh has been put in. The disobedient spirit has been taken out and a right spirit has been put in. However, God does not stop there. He knows you cannot live holy on your own, so He puts His Spirit within you and dwells within you. You may say, "I can't live free from sin." On your own you cannot do it, but with God all things are possible.

You should not believe the doctrine of "sin you will, sin you must, and sin you can't help it." That never came from the lips of our Savior; that doctrine came from hell. With people's experience under the old Law, such as Nicodemus had, they brought sacrifices once a year.

They did the best they could, but they could not help but sin. Then this Man, Jesus Christ, was the sacrifice for sin, and He gives those who are born again power over sin. I repeat, a definite change takes place when one is born again: sin stops.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, said in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" If you claim to be a Christian, dead to sin, how can you live in sin any longer? If your life has not been changed, you are not saved.

### **All Who Touch Christ by Faith Are Changed**

Nicodemus was as high on the ladder of success as any Jew of that day could be, but he needed to be changed. If sin is still working in your life, you are under a spirit of bondage. Was Nicodemus changed? We read in John 7:50-51: "Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" Nicodemus defended Jesus publicly by quoting the requirements of the Law.

John 19:38-40 reads: "And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews [he was another member of the Sanhedrin], besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night [the writer wanted you to know who he was talking about], and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

Suddenly two secret disciples appeared: Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. Both of them were

members of the Sanhedrin, and they openly declared that they were disciples of Jesus Christ. Joseph of Arimathaea asked for the body of Jesus, and Nicodemus also, and brought a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, the best spices one could bring. They took the body of Jesus, and Joseph supplied the tomb. Nicodemus brought enough spices for the burial of a king (and Jesus was and still is the King of kings), and he supplied the burial clothes.

Salvation changes a person. If you are saved, you are not the same person you once were. What is the sense of being wrapped up in religion all your life and then being lost in the end? If you are going to serve God, why not do it right? Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, one on one, searching for the right way. Jesus, who knows the thoughts of all men, knew what Nicodemus wanted. He wanted to know if what he was doing was good enough. Jesus let him know that he needed to be born again. Second Peter 1:4 says that we are partakers of His divine nature. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that we become new creatures. All who touch Christ by faith are changed.

### **Believing the Gospel**

You may ask, "How can I be saved?" Isaiah 53:1 asks the question, "Who hath believed our report?" It is revealed to those who believe the report. What is the report? It is the preaching of the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10:6-17: "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt

believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Again, Paul said in verses 9-10: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." What did Paul mean when he said to "confess with thy mouth?" You must own Him as Lord: "Lord, You are right, and I am wrong. You are the Potter; I am the clay."

You must believe in your heart that God raised Christ from the dead; then you can be saved. You must see Christ as the Supreme Sacrifice and a victor. He lived, and He also lives yet today. God raised Him up, and He is sitting at the right hand of the Father. He died for you and me, and He lives for you and me.

Paul went on to say that with the heart man believes unto righteousness. In other words, Christ becomes the center of your affection.

Paul said that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

### **Walking in Complete Obedience**

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 2:6-11: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

To confess that Jesus is Lord means that He is your owner, or your master. Christ is divine. When you confess Him as Lord, it means you are prepared to give Him unquestioning obedience. To be born again means to turn from the world of sin, to turn from following the flesh, and to turn to Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. You must confess your sins to God and forsake them. Thank God, you do not have to get down beside your bed every night and confess. If you do, you do not have salvation.

You must confess your sins and forsake them, and then you must bring your will into submission to the will of God. Some people claim to be saved, but they are not submissive to the will of God. Jesus said in John 3:7, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." There is no other way to enter the Kingdom of God.

Friend, if you have not been born again, you are not going to make it. If you have not been changed, then you have not been born again. Oh, I know that some rock stars, nightclub entertainers, and social elites of the world misuse the phrase. It is a byword in Christianity today. Being born again involves more than what people think it does. When people are born again, they will not fuss and rise against the pastor all the time, but those who merely have a profession will. The phrase "born again" has been tossed around loosely today.

Worldly people claim to be born again and yet go back into the nightclubs. Friend, if you have truly been born again, God has delivered you from such places. You will not even want to be around those kinds of places. You may say, "I can go in those places to be a witness." If you do, it will not be long until you will be back down into the old slop from which God delivered you. You cannot effectively witness to people when you are disobeying the Word of God.

Likewise, you cannot hang around false religion and stay saved when you have greater light and understanding. Some people claim that they hang around false religion to help others, but that is contrary to the Word of God. Revelation 18:4 says, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." Do you think you can help others by staying there when you are disobeying the Word of God? No, brother. No, sister.

People who are saved get rid of their old sinful habits. They do not want anything to do with tobacco. They do not want to chew it, dip it, snuff it, smoke it, or grow it. They will not take a drink of any kind of alcohol. Being born again changes you. You are no longer the same person you were before. You are, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "a new creature." Old things have passed away and all things have become new.

### **The Only Way That Leads to Eternal Life**

Going back to our Scripture text, earth's best (Nicodemus) came face to face with Heaven's best (Jesus Christ). God's love toward man was looking eyeball to eyeball at Nicodemus and said to him, in essence: "Nicodemus, you know much about Me, and you flatter Me with your words, but I have something to tell you: You *must* be born again. There must be a change in your life, Nicodemus."

Friend, you need a change in your life. If you are acting the same way you have always acted, you do not have salvation. When you have it, you will know you have it, and people around you will know. Your home will be different. You will be like the woman at the well, who left her waterpot and went into the city to tell others, "Come and see! I have found the Messiah! Come, and I will show you a man who told me everything about me!"

Have you been born again or are you merely a church member? The Bible tells us that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to

eternal life. Jesus, while preaching here and walking the shores of Galilee with the multitudes following Him, laid out the requirements of being His disciple, and the crowds scattered. They do yet today when a man of God lays out the Bible doctrines. Many people say they want Jesus, yet they want to live their own way. Friend, you cannot have both. Oh, many people say they want Christ, but they also want to do their own thing. They want just enough religion to get by. Well, such does not exist. You must either have it all or you have nothing at all. If you do your own thing, you have no part of Jesus.

Have you been born again? God is looking down right now, and He sees your heart. Perhaps you have religion but you have not been born again. If you have not, you are lost. How can you be saved? You must obey the Word of God: confess, forsake, and turn from all sin. You must bring your will into submission to God's will. He can take out that old disobedient spirit. You see, sin carries a disobedient spirit with it. Sin and disobedience go hand in hand. That is the reason people do

sinful things, and it is not easy to break loose. A spirit is behind it. God said He would take out the disobedient spirit and give you a right spirit; then He said He would give you His Spirit so that you can keep His statutes and walk in His commandments.

I am not preaching to get you to join a church. You cannot join the Church of God. The Lord adds daily to the church such as should be saved. You are born into the Church of God. If you are in a church that you can join, you are in the wrong one. Have you been born again? If you have not, then you cannot see the Kingdom of God, and you are not in the kingdom. I trust that you will obey the Word of God. If you will come to Jesus, He will not turn you away. Nicodemus went to Jesus by night, but at least he went. Jesus did not turn him away, and He will not turn you away either. Won't you turn your heart over to Him completely? Jesus Christ wants to save you and deliver you. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

*(Cassette C-1374M)*

## **2007 Camp Meeting Dates**

**June 17-24**

**August 5-12**

**December 26-30**

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**We hope you will plan your vacation time so that you can join us in these old-fashioned camp meetings. Also, we hope to see you in our Winter meeting, December 27-31, 2006.**

1 Kings 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;

2 Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his

heart.

4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.

6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.

7 Then did Solomon build an high

place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.

8 And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.

9 And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice,

10 And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded.



# The Danger of Turning Your Heart Against God

*Brother Irwin Seshier*

## **Rejecting God's Word Is Dangerous**

When I read this passage of Scripture, I felt very concerned for people who are turning their hearts away from God today. None of us is immune to going the way that King Solomon went. The things that we read about in the Old Testament are very up to date today. Many people are going after fleshly things. Verse 1 of our Scripture reading states, "But king Solomon loved many

strange women." Today people love the things of this old world rather than the things of God. This is very evident. Friend, you will not prosper spiritually if your mind is constantly feeding on the things of this old world. Those things might look good on the surface and sound good, but a day is coming when those things will not matter in your life.

Young person, the enemy will let you think you have plenty of time to get things straightened out

with God, but you do not know how much time you have in this life. You do not know how long you are going to live, but you can be certain of this: one of these days you are going to die. When you begin to indulge in sin, it may look good to you, but at some point in time it will not look good to you anymore. You will come to a point in your life when you will say, "Why did I even get involved in those things?" The enemy of your soul will not let you know that. Instead, he will try to

convince you that those things are right for your life, and he will let you go just a little at a time.

In verse 4 of our Scripture text we read, "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father." Friend, turning your heart away from God is a serious danger. You should not put God off in your life.

If you once knew God and you have turned away from Him, you are in even greater danger. Second Peter 2:21 says, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." To never have known God would have been better for you than to have known Him and then to turn away from Him. There is a great danger in turning your heart away from God.

### **Characteristics of Those Who Turn Away From God**

What are some characteristics of one who turns his heart away from God? First, his confidence level changes. He has confidence in himself rather than in God. A person who turns his heart away from God becomes more sure of himself. Things do not bother him as they once did. He develops a selfish character, and friends and family cannot get through to him. Loved ones may warn him about going back into sin, but he does not want to listen. He has his own agenda planned.

Another characteristic of one who turns his back on God is, the truth of the Gospel becomes heedless words. He once praised God for the message of Truth, but now he does not want to hear the message of God anymore, and the services have become boring to him. A true child of God wants to be in the house of God whenever the doors are open.

Another characteristic of one who has turned his back on God is,

that person disregards the Bible standard. The things he once stood against, he does not see a problem with now. He will say, "That was just the pastor's idea" or "That is just his opinion." When he was walking in God's will, he had no problem lining up with the Bible standard, but now he has a problem with it.

Another characteristic of one who has turned away from God is, his clothing changes. The clothing becomes worldly instead of godly. Also, the hairstyle changes, and that person becomes more critical in his talk, in his thinking, and toward others who hold the standard. He does not uphold it, so he does not want others to either. He tries to influence others to go his way to make himself feel good.

When a person gets in that condition, he tries to seek those who are weak spiritually to get them to agree with him. Often one who turns away from God mocks the things of God and God's man. However, God is not mocked.

Another characteristic of one who turns his heart away from God is that his heart becomes hardened. At one time, he bowed his head in prayer to pray for others and to ask God to examine him. You need to say, "Lord, am I where I need to be? Is there anything in my life that I need to get rid of?" Sometimes people look at others and say, "I am glad they heard this message." My mother used to say, "You need to clean your own doorstep before you think about cleaning someone else's."

One who has turned his heart away from God will move further and further away from anything associated with spiritual things. At one time he was afraid to be out where the saints might see him, but now he openly smokes and dresses immodestly. That is how sin works. Sin does not care what it does to you. It wants to expose you to everything else. Dear one, you need to be careful of sin and stay as far away from it as you can. Sin wants to entangle you, take you down, and

destroy you. It will cause you to move further and further away from anything associated with spiritual things.

### **Loving Evil More Than Good**

Friend, if you turn away from spiritual things, you will move toward things that are worldly and ungodly. You will have a worldly spirit about you. The spirit of this old world wants you to have nothing to do with God. What association does light have with darkness? None!

Verse 6 of our Scripture text states, "And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father." If you turn away from God, you will do evil, and your thoughts will continually feed on evil things. Your mind will be constantly taken up with evil. Friend, if you turn your back on the goodness of God, you will do things that you thought you would never do, and those things can never satisfy. Nothing can satisfy like Jesus.

Psalm 52:1-5 says: "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah."

Friend, that is exactly what will happen if you remove yourself from the richness and the glories of God. If you let down on the things that you ought to stand for, you will be plucked up by the roots. You need to get settled and established and say, "I am going all the way with Jesus Christ." The world has its own agenda. What is wrong with the children of God following God's agenda?

When you have salvation, you are alive spiritually. You have something to live for and something to shout about. You can say to those in the world, "I have been there and done that, and I have no desire to go back to it." There is nothing out in this old world that you can use as a substitute for Jesus Christ.

When you have genuine salvation, you are alive unto Christ. You live in the realms of a living salvation. I like something that is alive, don't you? I like something that will keep me in the time of the storm. The Truth of the Gospel is glorious! Living this life as a child of God is not hard. The enemy will tell you that you cannot do this. You cannot do it on your own, but you can through Christ. When you are living your life free from sin, you do not want to sin. God takes the sinful desires away.

### **Captivated by Evil**

Once you have given up your salvation, obtaining it again is not always easy. Why is that? One reason is that you will go deeper into the things of this old world than you did before. Friend, once you go deeper, it will be very difficult to return to God. I am not saying that you cannot, but why take that chance? When you go deeper into the things of this old world, your mind is more deeply captivated by evil thoughts. You will go more into deeper sins than you ever thought you would. The enemy of your soul will try to convince you that you have gone too far to get back to God. However, there are living examples of those who have gone that far, and God was merciful. God talked to them again, and they humbled themselves at an altar of prayer, and He gloriously saved them. It can be done, but not everyone gets that opportunity. God is Almighty. There is nothing that God cannot do, but you should not tempt Him.

Turning your back on God is a dreadful thing. He would never turn His back on you, yet if you have

turned your back on Him and have forsaken His mercies, your only escape from a devil's hell is to turn back to Him. You may say, "God is merciful. He will not send me to hell." No, God will not send you to hell, but you can send yourself there by the life you live and the things you do.

If you go against God, the abominations you do against Him will be terrible. You should not tell God that you love your old sins more than you love His plan of salvation. If you do, the Lord will become very angry with you. He was angry with Solomon. Why? He turned his heart away from God. If your heart is turned away from God, you really cannot enjoy God's mercy and goodness. That is very sad and dangerous.

Young person, you need to get your heart right at an early age so that your heart does not get turned away from God. You need God in today's world. Do not let the bulletin boards of life influence your stand with God. It is time to get rooted and grounded in the things of God. Young person, the Lord wants to protect you from the many evils out in the world. There is much evil out there today. Parents have to be careful when they let their children play outside. They cannot do anything without having their children right there all the time because of all the evil and sin in the world.

I read an article in the newspaper about a man in Florida who was found guilty of abducting and killing a twelve-year-old girl. That man looked just like any other man. He was clean cut, he had a good job, and he was a family man. Nevertheless, that is how sin can disguise itself. Sin down in the heart drives people to do things they do not want to do. Young person, you ought to stay away from sin. Its tentacles can reach out and strangle you.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set

in them to do evil." Friend, the enemy wants to set up shop in your heart. Once he enters your heart, he will work and take up more space.

Dear one, turning away from God is not worth it. Nothing in this old world is worth going to hell for. When I got saved, I decided that I was not going to turn back. With God's help I am going to stay saved. I remember what a pitiful condition I was in. I am not going back. God has been so good to me.

### **Avoid Evil and Do That Which Is Good**

When you get saved, you need to go to work for God. You cannot coast into Heaven. When you were living in sin, you worked at it. As a child of God, you must work in the Kingdom of God. God has a work for you to do. There is more to salvation than going to the house of God. You need to seek the Lord about what He would have you to do. Do not let the enemy cause you to think there is nothing for you to do. The enemy does not want you to do spiritual things, but you ought to do them anyway.

If God wants you to do certain things, then you need to do them. Do not ask someone else what they think you should do. If God impresses you to call a certain individual, do not get on the telephone and call someone else. You should call the one whom God told you to call. Too many people want to have a committee meeting to see what they should do. You should do what God tells you to do.

Friend, it is not worth it to go back to the things of this old world. Do not invite the enemy in for entertainment, and do not try to reason with the enemy. If you try to reason with the enemy, you will lose every time. Do not try to bring the enemy to the bargaining table. You need to avoid any activities that have evil stamped on them. The enemy wants you to believe that they look innocent; however, he is trying to get you more involved with those types

of activities. Worldly parties, even office parties, are no place for a child of God. If the Lord delivered you from alcohol, you should stay away from it. With the alcohol comes off-colored jokes. If you are having a struggle with the tobacco habit, you should stay away from people who smoke.

The enemy of souls wants you to think, "If I don't get involved, I will be viewed as an oddball." Well, I would rather be looked upon as an oddball and still have my salvation than to join in evil activities and lose out with God. Sometimes you just need to tell some people no. Let them know that you are a child of God, and tell them how the Lord delivered you and that you have no desire to do it; then watch them hush.

There are so many different types of spirits out in the world today, and those spirits want to enter your heart and cause you to veer off God's spiritual highway. Friend, it is dangerous to know what God wants you to do and yet not go His way. Seeing those who once claimed to be saved and have turned away from God is so sad. They said they were going all the way with God, but they have given up.

Getting your eyes on people is dangerous. Friend, if you are ever going to be spiritually successful, you cannot get your eyes on people. Too many people have their eyes on other people and listen to things to which they should not listen. Saint of God, you should not give up. You need to stand for what is right.

Some people may say, "Well, I want to give up because So-and-So didn't speak to me." Did you put forth the effort to talk to that person? Communication is a two-way street. Some people need to grow up spiritually.

### **Where Will You Spend Eternity?**

Child of God, when you got saved, you entered a race. You knew that you were going to face trials, but you were tired of sin and tired

of going the devil's way. You need to stand for God. Too many people have "yo-yo" religion: they are always up and down in their experience. They need to get rooted and grounded. Certainly we all are going to face opposition and persecution. We all have battles. Your battles may be more severe than someone else's battles at this time, but God will fight your battles.

Many have gone back to this old world and its ways. Friend, it is time to go all the way with Jesus. What some people are saying and how they are living are two different things. Can you turn away from God as King Solomon did? Yes, you can. The Lord can warn you to stay away from certain things. Circumstances can come your way to remind you to go God's way, but you can become just as King Solomon was. Verse 10 of our text of Scripture states, "And had commanded him [Solomon] concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded." Friend, you will not have success in your spiritual life if you overstep what God tells you not to do. If God said it, you should believe it. You should not say, "Well, maybe God changed His mind." If God said it, He means it. You need to listen to what God says.

Dear one, has the Lord pointed out something in your life that you should not go after? Are you any different from King Solomon? No. Can the enemy work on you just as he worked on King Solomon? Yes! If you start letting down, the enemy will come in. A little letting down here and there will cause you to be lost in the end. Has the Lord made it plain to you concerning what you should do? In many people's lives, the Lord has made plain what they should do, yet they go their own way. Friend, you are not going to prosper spiritually if you do that. There is a terrible danger in turning your heart away from God. If God has told you to get rid of something, you should not put it off.

Death is sure, friend, and if Jesus Christ carries His coming, it is something each of us must face. The question is, Are you ready to meet God? Many people make sure that material things are taken care of, such as their houses, their cars, their finances, their education, and so on, but they do not care about the condition of their souls. They do not take the time to do anything about that.

Dear one, what is the condition of your soul right now? Will you make Heaven your home? There is no such thing as purgatory. There is no such thing as dying and that is the end of you. People are not like the animals. Your soul is going to take its flight and go back to God who created it, and the body will go back to the dust. You have something within you that is going to live forever. You cannot put a time limit on eternity, because there is no end to eternity.

Brother Emerson Wilson used to illustrate eternity this way: If a bird were to pick up one grain of sand from the earth and take it to the moon, deposit it there, and fly back to the earth and get another grain of sand, and do the same thing with each grain of the world, one grain at a time, until they were all placed on the moon, eternity would just be beginning. Our minds cannot fathom that, but with God there are no time limits. We have calendars and planners to record dates, but God does not have to do that. He is in charge of everything, and when He says it is enough, there is nothing anyone can do to change it.

When the question is asked, "Are you ready to meet God?" many people say, "Well, I hope so" or "I guess so." Friend, you should not just hope so or guess so, you need to *know* so. This is a know-so salvation. It is more than signing a pledge card or being baptized as a baby. You need to check with God to see if your soul is clear with Him right now. Many people do not know where they truly stand with God. Friend, if you are a true child of God, you should know where you

stand with Him. There should be no doubt about it. If you are in doubt, then you need to seek God earnestly and remove all the doubts.

Dear one, do not do as King Solomon did and turn your heart away from God and do things

against what God wants you to do. There is such a danger in turning your heart away from God. Going out and playing with high voltage power lines would be better for you than to trample God's mercy under your feet. Where will you spend

eternity? There is no more convenient time than right now to get right with God. I pray that God will show you where you truly stand.

(Cassette C-5517M)

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[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]  
influence simple ones by telling them, "The way of righteousness is too fanatical. Being so strict and strait is not necessary to be a real Christian."

Then there are people whose hearts are likened to the stony ground that has no depth. This ground is very shallow, and the seed lacks the sufficient nutrients and moisture needed to produce. These hearts receive the Word with joy but soon find that they cannot endure or come to a mature state. The heart is only affected superficially. They hear the Word gladly and quickly embrace it, but they fail to realize all that is required of them. Their emotions are easily stirred when listening to an inspiring message preached or moved when hearing a Gospel song. They respond quickly, but unfortunately they do not follow through with their decision. When temptation, trials, persecution, or hardships come, "they are offended" (Mark 4:17).

The soil of this type represents the heart of an individual who has very little depth. Beneath this shallow layer of earth there often lurks secret sins. Among these sins you might find things such as impure motives, covetousness, immoral attitudes, unjust business dealings, envy, or malice. When evils such as these lie buried beneath the topsoil, you will find men and women who are unable to be all they need to be for God. The blessed Gospel seed cannot grow in this hardened condition. All the stones and debris must be removed completely.

Next, we want to look at the heart represented by seed planted in thorny places. The thorny heart hears and receives the seed (or the Truth). This soil is good and has good depth. The seed germinates and begins to grow into a beautiful plant. However, the

growth is soon hindered due to surrounding circumstances. Certain unsightly weeds are present, thus preventing any room for growth. Mark 4:19 tells us it is due to "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." This heart is anxious over material things. Materialism possesses too great a hold in their lives. Often these hearts are too busy trying to keep up with the Jones', so to speak. They neglect the really important things of life, such as a deep spiritual relationship with the Lord, in exchange for the weak, beggarly elements of this world.

The deceitfulness of riches has ruined many souls. It has robbed men and women of becoming fruitful vines for Christ and His kingdom. All their time is spent on acquiring more worldly possessions. They are never content with what they have, but are always seeking ways to increase their possessions. The home they live in is just not large enough or the vehicles they drive do not satisfy them. They desire bigger and better. They believe that their lives could be better if they had just a little more. Jesus informed us in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesses." Wanting God to bless you with riches is not wrong. However, if you set your heart on financial gain above spiritual prosperity, you will become a prey for Satan. First Timothy 6:9 reads, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

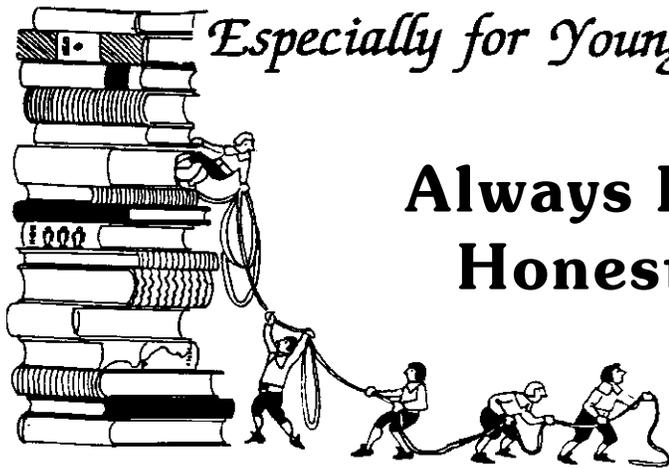
Finally, Jesus spoke of the seed that is planted in the good ground. This ground has been plowed and

tilled, with all stones, thistles, and thorns removed to make the soil ready for the good seed. It represents those who hear the Word and graciously receive it into their lives. This heart is completely honest and open before God with nothing hidden that would prevent spiritual development or choke out growth. A heart such as this is determined to live righteously and is persistent in bringing forth the good fruits of the Spirit. It will strive to live according to the pattern that God has designed. The good heart finds delight in living for and serving the Lord, and the secret time spent with Him in prayer and meditation is always a highlight of the day. Another mark of the good heart is that it is touched with the feelings of other's infirmities, heartaches, and misfortunes.

My friend, what kind of heart do you have? In which category do you find yourself? Is your heart hard and crusted over where the Word cannot penetrate? Are you unwilling to repent and acknowledge your true condition before God? Could it be that there are stones of deceit buried under a false pretense of Christianity, things such as impurity, envy, or malice? Possibly you have various weeds growing in your life that are constantly choking out godliness and keeping you from blossoming as God would have you to do. Do weeds of wanting material possessions or wanting more riches or seeking after worldly pleasures control your life? Is your heart a good heart? Your heart is what you desire it to be. You have the right of choice. You can choose to hear, understand, and obey or you have the right to reject the pure Truth of God's Word. The choice is solely in your hands.

Selected

*Especially for Young People*



## Always Be Honest



Boys are very apt to get wrong ideas about courage and cowardice; they often confound the two, calling that courage which is cowardice, and that cowardice which is courage. Two or three illustrations will make this plain to all our boy readers.

George came into the house one day, all dripping wet. His mother, as she saw him, exclaimed: "Why, George, my son, how came you so wet?"

"Why, Mother, one of the boys said, 'I dare not jump into the creek,' and I tell you, I am not to be dared."

Now, was it courage that led George to do that? Some boys would say it was; and that he was a brave and courageous boy. But no, George was a coward; and that was a very cowardly act. He well knew that it was wrong for him to jump into the creek with his clothes on, but he was afraid the other boys would laugh at him, if he should stand and be dared.

Edward came strutting along up to James, and putting his fist in his face, said: "Strike that if you dare!" just to see if he couldn't get him into a quarrel. Now, which would show the most real courage, for James to give him a hit and have a brutal fight, and both get wounded, or to say, as he did: "Edward, if you want a quarrel, you have come to the wrong boy. I never fight, because it is wrong. You may call me a coward if you will, but I will show you that I have courage enough not to be tempted by your ridicule, to do what I know is *wrong!*" That was brave and courageous.

Well, a great man, Mr. A., a member of Congress, said something that offended Mr. B., another great man. Mr. B. sent him a note and dared him to fight; that is, he challenged him to fight a duel. Mr. A. accepted the challenge, and they met with deadly weapons and sought to take each other's life. Now, some said Mr. A. was a man of courage, because, like the foolish boy who jumped into the creek, he wouldn't be *dared*. But Mr. A. accepted that challenge, probably, through cowardice. He knew it was break-

ing a positive command of God to attempt to kill the man who dared him, but he had not courage enough to bear the tauntings of those who would say he was afraid to fight. He was a coward!

A good definition of courage is, "*not to be afraid to do what is right, and to be afraid to do what is wrong.*" The stories of Daniel and his three friends and of Joseph give us fine examples of those who possessed true courage, who were not afraid to do what was right, and who were afraid to do what was wrong.

*Dare to be honest, good, and sincere,  
Dare to be upright, and you never need fear,  
Dare to be brave in the cause of the right,  
Dare with the enemy ever to fight.  
Dare to be loving and patient each day,  
Dare speak the truth, whatever you say.  
Dare to be gentle and orderly too,  
Dare shun the evil, whatever you do.  
Dare to be cheerful, forgiving, and mild,  
Dare to speak kindly, and ever be true,  
Dare to do right, and you'll find your way through.*

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**To know God's will  
is life's greatest treasure.  
To do God's will is  
life's greatest pleasure.**

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Ezekiel 9:1 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

4 And the LORD said unto him, Go

through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

8 And it came to pass, while they

were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

# Where Are the Burdened Saints?



*Brother C. H. Dickerson*

## **The Moral Decline Today**

I want you to consider verse 4 of our text of Scripture, which states, "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the

midst thereof."

Friend, as you consider this text of Scripture, I want you to realize that we are living in a day of ungodliness on every side. The people who are making the laws of our land are ungodly as well as those who are supposed to enforce the laws. I have never seen such a time when even senators and other high elected offi-

cial are being removed from office because of their ungodliness and wrongdoing. Some police officers, who are supposed to be enforcing the laws, are involved in crimes facing our nation.

We are living in a time when moral standards have hit the rock bottom. The very sins for which God destroyed the Old Testament cities

of Sodom and Gomorrah are rampant in our world today. Moral standards have been dropped, and officials in high positions are putting their approval upon those sins. Today many young people think marriage is outdated. More and more people are living together without a marriage license. Abortion, or the murder of unborn babies, was approved by the highest court in our land. Illegal drug use is rampant. Child abuse, incest, and child molestations are taking place. Also, people are killing their own children. Religious movements and false preachers are lying to people for nothing more than filthy lucre.

One popular evangelist stands before people and says, "I am a sinner, and so are all the rest of you." At the end of the sermon, when they ask people to come forward, he says, "You do not have to say a word or do a thing. I will say a little prayer for you, and that is your commitment to God." Friend, I want you to know that is false, and people are getting duped by that falseness. Modern-day religion has let down, and because of this, all these evils are transpiring, and people are seeing their sons and daughters and grandchildren addicted to drugs and alcohol and other sinful vices.

Sad to say, we are living in a time when people seem to have little concern about all of this. Where are the burdened saints today? Truth is the only thing that will set people free; nothing else can. You may join all the churches, shake all the preachers' hands, and learn all the catechisms you want to learn; but you will be in as much bondage as you were before. The only way you can ever get free is when you obey God's eternal Truth. In many places they have watered down Truth with soothing words and soothing spirits.

In the very beginning God set a standard for His children, and He still has a standard for His saints. If you are going to be a saint of God, you must meet His standard. If you do not, you are not a saint of God.

God has set a Bible standard for

every purpose. He has set a dress standard, and He told us exactly how we ought to dress. God did not set a dress standard that we could not meet. No matter how hot or cold the weather is, God has a dress standard that is modest and appropriate for all people in all climates. Today many people have the idea that because the weather is hot, it is all right to wear shorts. However, that is far from God's standard. If you wear them, you ought to seek God's face to see what His standard is.

God also has a standard for the hair. There was a time when you could not tell some men from the women because people of both sexes had long hair. Now the style has shifted and you cannot tell some women from the men because they cut their hair as short as the men do. This is far from God's standard, and it is far from what God puts His approval upon. My friend, if you are going to please God, you must obey His standard.

God has set a standard for our conduct and for the company that we keep. He has set a standard for us to live by. You cannot please God short of complete holiness. You may think that meeting God's standard is difficult, but if you obey it, it will bring freedom. If you do not meet it, it will bring bondage. You are either obedient or disobedient. If you are going to make Heaven your home, you must be obedient, my friend.

### Turning to Idols

Sinner friend, God wants to save you. You are to glorify Him so that the world can see Christ through your life. If you do not put Him on display in your life, then you are not glorifying Him.

Our Scripture text tells about a nation that was called out to glorify God, but they had turned their backs on Him. The Prophet Ezekiel wrote in Ezekiel 8:16, "And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the

altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD [in other words, instead of facing God, or serving God, they had turned to idols], and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east."

My friend, an idol is not always a statue. Anything to which you give excessive admiration is an idol. Excessive admiration of anything will rob you of your time until you do not have time to read the Bible, to pray, or to go to the house of God. My friend, many little things can become idols to you. When television first came out, many homes were separated because too much time was spent watching it. It could have been beneficial in the work of God, but the devil took it over.

Another modern invention has come into our homes since then called the computer. It can be a good thing, and it is a way of life today. There is nothing wrong with it, but if you allow it to take too much of your time, then you have given excessive admiration to it. It can ruin your home and your experience with God. If you are not careful, you will have no time to pray, no time to go to the house of God, and no time to read the Word of God. The wife will have no time to fix the husband's meals and no time for her husband, and the husband will have no time to show his wife that he loves her and no time to take her anywhere. I would rather have God than a computer, a television, an automobile, a house, or anything else. You should want God in your life more than anything in this world. The people in our Scripture lesson were giving God lip service, but their hearts were far from Him.

In John, Chapter 2, you can read that Jesus found the money changers and those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves in the temple. He made a whip and overthrew their tables and drove them all out of the temple. Jesus said in verse 16, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

The reason He was so stirred was that their zeal was not for the house of God. Verse 17 tells us, "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." My friend, you ought to have so much zeal for the house of God that nothing but dire necessity keeps you from assembling yourself with the saints at the house of God. People are allowing too many things to keep them out of the house of God, and it shows that their zeal for God is not what it ought to be.

God did not overlook the sins of those people in our Scripture text. The day arrived when He separated the true from the false. Today God is long-suffering, and He is doing everything He can to awaken people. He wants to get people back to serving Him with all their hearts. Friend, He wants you to put everything you have into the work of God. If people do not turn to God, His judgment grinds slow, but it is certain.

### **When God's Glory Departs**

There is not a sadder picture in the Word of God, as far as I know, than the one that is presented in our text of Scripture. Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 9:3a, "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house." What was the Prophet saying? The threshold of the door is the entrance. They were to go in there to worship God and enjoy the glory of God, but the glory of God was departing because of their disobedience. It was right at the threshold on its way out, to leave their house desolate. Ezekiel cried out because the glory was departing. When the glory of God has gone out of a place, the fire is gone, the promise is gone, and the blessings are gone.

You may ask, "What is the use of getting so excited about the glory of God?" I repeat, God saved you to glorify Him. That is the only way the world can see Christ. They can-

not see Him in the Word of God or in the world, because He is a Spirit. However, they can see the Word of God lived through you and me. God wants us to glorify Him.

If you are not careful, you will settle down and feel content, but you will not praise God or rejoice as the Truth is going forth. Could it be that the fire has gone out in your soul? Could it be that the glory of God has departed from your life? God may be trying to tell you something, friend. When there is fire in your soul, it will cause you to praise God. My friend, God does not overlook these things. When your life is truly glorifying God, He will turn up the power. I repeat, when the glory of God is gone, the fire is gone, the promises are gone, and the blessings are gone, you will take on nothing more than a profession, and you will not have the possession of the Spirit of God.

Revelation 3:14-22 teaches us that we are living in a lukewarm age. It seems as if many people accept that as being the way it is, but we do not have to accept lukewarmness. Many people feel that it is a light thing to be lukewarm. That is how they felt in Ezekiel's day. Ezekiel 8:17b asks the question, "Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here?" They thought it was a light thing too, but God's judgments stuck. If you take this as a light thing because we are living in a lukewarm age, you are right on the verge of God's judgment being poured out to awaken you.

### **Lukewarmness**

In Revelation 2:1-5 you will find that God complimented the church at Ephesus for nine things, but Jesus said in verse 4, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This was the only complaint He had against them, but those nine compliments lost their value in the sight of

God because He had one thing against them.

You may pat yourself on the back because you give your money and do this and that, but one wrong thing in your life can turn God's wrath upon you. He can give you the grace to measure to everything the Word of God says to do.

Grace is the divine influence working within man to make him pure and morally strong. Today many people are not living pure lives as they once did. We are not seeing nations that are morally strong. Why is that? They do not have the grace of God. God will give you all the grace you need to be morally strong because He wants you to be pure. He does not want anything less than purity. He cannot use you unless you are pure and morally strong. You do not have to be a partaker of sinful things.

Christ had somewhat against them because they had left their first love. Their love for God was not as it once had been. Jesus said in Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Today we are faced with the lukewarm spirit of the age in which we are living. If there was ever a time when we needed to get hold of God in a greater way, it is in the day in which we are living. He said, "Unless you repent, I will come quickly and remove that candlestick from you."

Someone may say, "He was not talking about when the church at Ephesus left their first love, but about Laodicea's lukewarmness." What is the difference between leaving one's first love and being in a lukewarm condition? God has not changed His mind. When the church at Ephesus left their first love, He said He would remove the candlestick from them unless they repented. If you become lukewarm, God will take away His Spirit, and then you will have nothing more

than a profession. This is what is happening today. That is the reason some people are going back to Babylon. They have lost the power of God and the grace of God in their lives. They are going back to Babylon where they can hide, where there is not enough of the Spirit of God to make them see their true condition. People lose the fire because they leave their first love.

God wants fire in the house. He will not put up with having a few little glowing embers. He does not want people to be lukewarm. He wants the church to be on fire so it will draw attention to Christ. If you should see a few hot coals out in someone's backyard in the grill, you would drive on down the road and not pay any attention to it. On the other hand, if you should see a house on fire, you would see the streets would line up with traffic because people would want to see what is going on. This is what God wants. He wants fire in the house of God so that people will come in to see what is going on. If you do not keep the fire burning in your soul, God will spew you out.

### **Having Merely a Form of Godliness**

When the glory has departed from a congregation, the people may still put on programs and have services, but it will be useless. First Samuel 4:19-22 tells of a woman who was ready to be delivered of her child. The Philistines had defeated Israel in battle and had captured the ark, and when that woman's baby was born, she called him Ichabod, meaning that the glory of God had departed from Israel. Why? The ark and the Spirit of God were gone.

My friend, when the glory of God departs from the midst, people may claim to have salvation and they may testify, but it will not produce results. When people have fire in their testimonies, it is uplifting. I repeat, God wants fire in the house. When God's glory has departed, you

may go through a form of serving God, have revivals, hold the doctrine, and have a form of godliness, but without the glory of God the victorious power will be gone.

I thank God for the Truth. It is the only thing that will make you free. If you get to the place where you do not accept God's eternal Truth just as it is, you are not going to have God's grace or freedom anymore. When the Truth goes forth, the victorious power will be there. However, when it is gone, the victorious power will not be there either.

You can read in the Book of Judges, Chapters 13 through 16, about Samson, the strongest man who has ever lived. He was strong, but he got to the place where he started playing around with the world and fooling around with someone whom he did not know well. That is the reason the Word of God teaches that you need to know the company you are keeping. If you are not careful, you may become too talkative for your own good. This is what Samson did.

God gave Samson all the power he needed, but he flirted with the Philistine women. A woman named Delilah eventually got hold of his heart, and she began to cry and vex him to get him to reveal the secret of his power. Finally, he told her all his heart. He told her that no razor had come upon his head, because he had been a Nazarite to God from his mother's womb. He told her that if his head was shaved, he would become as weak as any other man. Then Delilah called the Philistines and told them all that she had heard. She got Samson to fall asleep on her lap, and then she called for a man to come in and shave his head.

### **"He Wist Not That the Lord Was Departed"**

Judges 16:20 tells us, "And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake my-

self. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him." Samson did not even realize that the Lord had departed from him. He had broken his covenant with God. My friend, all you have to do is break your covenant with God, and your power and strength will be gone; then the devil can do whatever he wants to do with you. This is what is going on today.

Too many people have broken their covenant with God. If you ever get saved, it will be the day you seek Him with all your heart, and that is the same way you can keep Him. If you allow other people or things to take first place in your heart and life, you will break your covenant with God.

Samson's power was gone. The Philistines took him, and the first thing they did was to put out his eyes. This is the first thing the devil does yet today. When people back away from the Truth they once had, the devil will put out their eyes. Some people go out and fool around with the world and fool around with Babylon, and then they say there is nothing wrong with doing those things anymore. People are wearing worldly adornment that they once would not wear. Little by little, they have let down to the degree that now they see nothing wrong with things they used to be against. Why is that? The devil has put out their spiritual eyes. That is the reason Babylon looks so good to them.

Protestantism came into being because people took a stand against Roman Catholicism and protested, but today their eyes have been put out. They have gone back into harmony with Roman Catholicism. They preach in Catholic churches and let Catholic priests stand in their pulpits. Today some places that call themselves the Church of God are allowing Babylon to come in and fill their pulpits.

When people break their covenants with God, the devil will put out their spiritual eyes, they will not see any harm in many things they used to have light on and be

against. After the Philistines put out Samson's eyes, they bound him. This actually happened to Samson, but God is showing us this example for our spiritual admonition. When people back away from God's Truth, often they cannot discern Truth from error, and then they become bound and taken down to the prison house of sin. It will be a miracle if they ever get out.

When an individual breaks his covenant with God, God's Spirit will depart. Paul told why people break their covenants with God. He wrote in 2 Timothy 4:2-3: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine [we are seeing that time now]; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." They do not care what the doctrine is as long as their ears get tickled, or as long as someone tells them what they want to hear. Friend, no true man of God will tell people what the flesh wants to hear. When people get to the place where they do not want to hear the Truth, Paul described what happens in verse 4, which reads, "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth [this is the first step, and the second step follows], and shall be turned unto fables."

### **Possessing Christ's Attributes**

In our text of Scripture Ezekiel's attention was drawn to the man with the inkhorn, who set a mark on the foreheads of those who were sighing for the abominations of Israel. Ezekiel wrote in verse 4 of our text of Scripture, "And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Those with the mark represent those who possessed Christ's attributes in their lives. First, they had love—love for

God, love for Truth, love for God's people, and love for the lost. (The Spirit of God will cause one to help others.) Those were spared when the executioner passed by.

Today God is looking for people who have a burden for the lost. A burden for the lost cannot be counterfeited. It will cause you to pray and fast. A genuine burden will cause you to do many things that the world does not do. You will groan in the spirit, so that souls might be saved.

The old spirit of trying to turn a person against someone else is of the devil, no matter who does it. If you have the Spirit of God, you want to see people saved. Whenever a brother is preaching God's eternal Truth, if you have the Spirit of God in you, you will not try to turn others against him. He may say the very words needed to lead a soul to God that no one else has been able to say. He might have the message and the personality to win that soul to God.

Many things have been counterfeited, but under close examination, one can tell that they are fakes. My friend, genuine love from God for the lost and having a burden for the lost cannot be counterfeited. Too many people have only a casual concern. You may ask, "How can one tell the difference?" Well, if you are so burdened one day that you cannot eat and the next day you do not even think about it, that is a casual concern. When you have a burden for the lost, you will carry that burden consistently. You will want to see that soul won for God so much that you will continually carry that burden to the throne of grace. God's people are marked due to carrying such a burden and travailing for souls. Certainly this is what God expects of His people. To travail for souls is to plead before God, "God, save my son, my daughter, my spouse, and my neighbors."

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given

the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." There is a Heaven to go to, and a payday is coming. There is no union in God's army. We get paid according to what we do.

Throughout God's Word, He said He would reward every man according to his works, not according to what he wanted to do or intended to do. Whatever a person does, that is what he or she will get paid for, not for any less or any more. Until that payday, He gives us an earnest. He said He would give us the Spirit of God in our hearts. In other words, He gives us a down payment on what is to come.

God also gives us the Spirit of God to lead us, to set us on fire, and to give us power so that we can live for Him and be pure. Then when He declares time to be no more, He will say, "Come and enter Heaven, your eternal home," so we are sealed.

### **Are You Burdened Over Ungodly Conditions?**

John wrote in Revelation 14:1, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." These were those who were delivered from man-made organizations, and God said His name was written in their foreheads.

In our text of Scripture the man with the inkhorn passed through the congregation. He found only a few people who had a burden. Therefore, it did not take long to go through the congregation and mark each one who had a burden.

My friend, God knows each of us, and we cannot work this thing up. I wonder, if God were to pass through right now how many would receive a mark? How many are *really* burdened over the conditions that we see today? Today innocent children go to schools infested with drugs and weapons. In many places walking down the street is not safe anymore. Carrying money on you is not safe. Are you really concerned about these conditions? If you are a

parent and have school-aged children, are you burdened over the conditions that prevail in our society today?

The newspapers state that most children between eight and eleven years of age have already encountered their first brush with illegal drugs, and many of them have already encountered their first sexual experience. Think of that! This ought to stir you and cause you to get down on your knees! These conditions can affect your children and your grandchildren.

Again, the man with the inkhorn marked those who had a burden. God's Spirit is fair. He tries to burden people over the ungodly conditions that we are seeing. If you are not careful, pleasure will become a big priority. I am not against having luxury items such as vehicles, boats, and so on. Do not take me wrong. However, I am saying that we are living in a nation that is more concerned about pleasure than about the things of God.

Today many churches do not even have services Sunday nights, so the people either sit at home and watch television shows or go boating or fishing. If you are going to please God, and if you want to see God move, such conditions must be reversed. People need to become more concerned about the things of God and burdened to the place where we can see the schools and our government cleaned up. If we are going to get America back on the right track, we must get leaders in place who are against the wrong and who will take a stand for that which is right.

I want you to realize there used to be a time when people wanted godly counsel. At one time pastors were kept busy counseling, but today people merely want to be consoled. They do not care to take a pastor's counsel anymore. Instead they look around the congregation and find someone who will sympathize with them. They look for someone who will put their arms

around them, pat them on the back, and console them. They do not know the people's problems, and too often they console them instead of telling them what they really need to hear. It used to be that more people wanted to be counseled because they wanted to know whether they were right or wrong, but today they do not want to change. They want to be consoled and made to feel that they are doing right.

### **Are You Setting the Right Example?**

Let us look again at our Scripture text. God was ready to pour out judgment, and the first to be executed were the ancient men. Ezekiel 9:6 says, "Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house." Someone may ask, "Why did they start with the ancient men?" They were the ones who should have set the example.

In Titus 2:1-3 the Apostle Paul penned: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate [having self-control], sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things."

In our text of Scripture the Lord told Ezekiel to start with the old men because they were to set the example for the middle-aged, and the middle-aged were to set the example for the young men, and the young men were to set the example for the next generation. My friend, you need to set an example, and if you do not practice self-control and keep the victory in your life, you are not setting the right example.

The people in our Scripture lesson had become complacent. In other words, they were self-satisfied

and undisturbed. They had lost the sighing and had stopped crying over the sin and the shame all around them. In verse 8 you can read that Ezekiel tried to intercede for those people one more time. He said he was the only one left with a burden. I wonder, are you concerned today about the letdown or are you just going along with it? Have you determined in your heart that you are going to stand for God's eternal Truth regardless of who falls? There is a letdown, but how many are concerned about it today? How many would receive the mark today?

Today we live in an age of lukewarmness. Christ said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." My friend, the latch is on the inside, and God cannot come in unless you open the door and let Him in. If He gets on the inside, He controls the latch. He said He would walk out unless people get more concerned about conditions.

If you stay aglow, then you must sigh and cry about conditions. Isaiah said in Isaiah 66:8, "As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." When Zion gets down to business and travails, children are going to be born into the family of God. I thank God for the people who are being born again, but seeing more born into the family of God would be wonderful.

### **Have You Lost Your Burden for Souls?**

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

These verses of Scripture let you

know that if you just keep sleeping, trouble will come as someone who is traveling. It makes no difference whether you drive twenty miles an hour or sixty-five miles an hour, if you keep traveling, you will eventually get to where you are going. If you are lazy in the things of God, your want will come just as sure as a man who is traveling will reach his destination.

Proverbs 24:30-34 states: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

The writer let you know that if you become slothful, or lazy, and allow the spirit of lukewarmness to come upon you, the day will come when you will be in want. The Proverb writer said to consider the ant. In other words, you should not have to be pushed all the time to follow the Word of God. We are living in a day when the ministry has to continually preach the standard. If they let something go for a month or two, they will see it start to creep into their congregations.

God has never changed. What He did for the church in the past, He will do for us, but too many people have lost their burden for souls. I like what happened on the Day of Pentecost, although I realize there will never be another Pentecost. Nevertheless, I like the way the disciples were in one place in one accord and began to pray to God. The Jews were ready to kill them, but the disciples prayed, and when Peter stood before the people, God moved on him and gave him the power to look those people in their eyes and say, "You people crucified Christ." When Peter got done, they cried out, "What shall we do?" That day three thousand souls were saved.

I want to emphasize to you that God has never changed. What is the problem today? Too many people lack having a soul burden. Too often whenever some individuals have problems, they want special prayer services called, but as soon as their burdens are lifted, you do not even see them. That is not the way it ought to be. The people of God ought to think about their loved ones and their neighbors who are lost. We each ought to have so much concern that it drives us to our knees, and then we will see great things come to pass.

People are dying at the rate of approximately ninety souls a

minute, which equates to fifty-four hundred an hour, or 130,000 a day, and most of them are lost. Why are those who claim to be God's people so involved with their own pleasures when so many souls are dying lost? We need to give prayer priority, with sobbing hearts and pleading, standing in the gap between the living and the dead. Friend, what about your family and your friends? No doubt, you have family members who are unsaved. No doubt, you have friends and neighbors who are lost and on their way to a devil's hell. Are you really concerned about them? Perhaps your son, your daughter, or your spouse is lost. Are you really burdened? Are you pleading for them before God? Friend, your hands are not tied.

I want you to consider the Syrophenician woman who needed help for her daughter. She went to Jesus and asked for mercy. He said in Mark 7:26, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs" (verse 28). Then He granted her request. My friend, if you will bombard Heaven, you will see souls saved, problems worked out, and people helped. I ask you, friend, are you *really* concerned?

(Cassette C-2783M)

Resisting temptation is  
more than just putting it off  
until no one is looking.

*Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

*2 For the law of the Spirit of life in*

*Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of*

*sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

*4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*



# Them Which Are in Christ

*Brother Allen Polston*

## **Give Diligence to Make Your Calling and Election Sure**

There are many ways each of us could be described, and each way would be unique and would shed more light on the persons being described. In the Bible we find that God, in His love for mankind, went to great lengths to describe what it really means to be a Christian. God has given illustrations to which we can relate. Sometimes we find them in the form of parables or symbols so that God might bring greater understanding concerning what it really means to be a child of God. I do not know how others feel, but I am not interested in something that

is counterfeit. The counterfeits are never as valuable when the truth comes out. I want the pure religion that Paul talked about when he wrote to Timothy in the Bible. I want that which is true, that which is sure, that which will definitely enable me to one day go to be with God forever.

My mind goes to the words of Peter in 2 Peter 1:10 where he wrote, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." One way to make your calling and election sure, or positive, is to get on the right track and "give diligence." In other words, you have to put some

effort into it. You must apply yourself to serve God.

In verse 1 of our Scripture lesson God revealed four different ways to understand true salvation. God gave four different descriptions that apply to what it really means to be a Christian. You could go out in the world and find thousands of different interpretations of what people say it means to be a Christian. In most people's minds it is simply a matter of finding a church and attending the services from time to time or getting their name on a membership book. If you want to know what the Bible says, friend, you must study God's Word and rightly divide what the Bible says

concerning real salvation.

Let us consider the four different descriptions of true salvation in verse 1. The Apostle Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in* Christ Jesus [not just saying, 'I believe in Him']; being in Christ Jesus is a way that the Bible can come right down to you and let you know what it really means to be a child of God], who walk not after the flesh [this also describes what it means to be a Christian: God's people do not walk after the flesh], but after the Spirit."

### **Rightly Divide the Word of God**

I realize all these descriptive points fit together, but to break them down and study them is important, because we are living in a time when everyone has his own idea and opinion about serving God. Having their own opinions about things that God does not really get too involved in is fine. For example, I may choose to wear a blue suit because I like the color blue, but you may not like that color, and that is all right. If you want brick on the front of your house, you are entitled to have it your way on your house. Someone else may choose to have all vinyl siding. We each are allowed to have our own opinions about such things. However, when it comes to serving God, friend, there is only one true way.

Mark 12:29 says, "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord." He is one Lord. He is not whatever you want Him to be or fix Him up to be, as many people try to do today. God has given us the liberty to choose many things in this life, but when it comes to the Bible and serving Him, there is just one Lord. Friend, your responsibility is to give diligence to make sure you know that one Lord.

Ephesians 4:4 reads, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Most people will agree there is only one Heaven. Nearly everyone

talks about going to Heaven, and in most places everyone who passes from this life is said to go to Heaven. Just about every obituary mentions that the deceased had a church affiliation or membership, which implies that the individual was Heaven bound.

Many people will agree there is one hope of our calling, but where they run into the problem is in verses 5-6 where Paul wrote: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." They want to make God out to be one who closes His eyes or turns His head on all the wrongdoing and lets it go as if it is no big deal. Friend, just as there is one Heaven or one hope of our calling, so the rest of that passage is true. There is only one Lord, one faith, one Spirit of God, and one baptism.

There is only one way, and that is the way you need to get acquainted with. You need to study God's Word and not just accept what someone says without opening your Bible and studying God's Word. Second Timothy 2:15 tells us, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." God wants us to rightly divide it. Just the mention of that lets me know we can wrongly divide it if we are not careful.

### **Condemnation**

In our Scripture lesson the four different descriptions are given to help us understand the true way. Friend, I want to know the true way, and you should too, because that is the way that will enable us to be with God forever. The Apostle Paul spoke of there being "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Condemnation is not a welcome guest. It is not a pleasant feeling. It settles down upon you and does not seem to want to leave. Condemnation is the blame that is put upon you for the wrong that you have done. It could be described

as an expression of utter disapproval.

People generally do not coexist well with condemnation, so they try to rid themselves of that feeling and excuse themselves to try to escape the feeling that they are wrong. They try to do this and that and say this and that. Why? They do it because condemnation is not a pleasant feeling. It is a heavy feeling of wrong upon you, knowing that you are not getting away with the things you have been doing. You might have things covered for a while, but you are not going to get by with them.

Condemnation is not a good thing to have. In most cases, people take steps to try to appease their consciences and try to rid themselves of their condemnation. For instance, they may join a church because it seems to be the right thing to do. Other people, in trying to rid themselves of condemnation, join a religious institution. They turn to this action to suppress the feelings of guilt that they possess.

The world will tell individuals, "Choose the church of your choice. Choose something that you like and give yourself to it." However, I want you to know that joining an earthly organization or subscribing to their creed can never completely remove condemnation. Joining a church will never be sufficient.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, another way that people deal with condemnation is to try to dismiss it through the involvement of drugs and alcohol. One may say, "I am going to drown my troubles. I am going to get loose and feel good for a while and escape reality for a little bit." Why? They do it because reality is painful to them. In many people's lives, the reality that they have to face when they realize the wrong, the ungodliness, and the things for which they must be responsible is painful. Therefore, many seek relief through drugs and alcohol.

One person told me that when he tries to quit the usage of drugs, the pain and the remorse for all

the many bad things he has done resurfaces. I told him, "You sound like a classic case of one who needs Jesus Christ." Friend, you may drown those sorrows and temporarily forget the wrongs that you have done, but sooner or later, the party will end, and the condemnation will return.

### **How to Rid Yourself of Condemnation**

My mind goes back to the time when my life was a mess. I can remember the many lonely nights, traveling down the road to get back home or wherever I was going to rest. When the party was over, the condemnation began to resurface. Friend, condemnation is not something with which you want to live. It will rob you of joy and happiness. Dealing with the blame and the guilt that condemnation has pronounced against you will steal any real and lasting happiness from you.

As I stated previously, and you can verify this by asking other people and by studying the Bible, simply joining a church cannot take away condemnation, and running to get out from under it can never do the job. Again, our Scripture text tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation. . . ." While the efforts many people are putting forth to try to get rid of condemnation are failing, I am glad to report a means by which a man or a woman can be set free. Friend, you can receive permanent relief from condemnation. Thank God, there is a way!

Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way." He is the way whereby you can get out from under every wrong, ungodly act that you have ever done. You can be free from condemnation. Carrying around condemnation is awfully wearisome and tiresome. It can cause distress upon anyone. That is the reason Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Friend, condemnation is like carrying a heavy backpack. When you roll out of bed every morning, sooner or later, you will pick it up before you go any further. As time goes on, it will become heavier and you will become wearier, but you have to pack it around. I am glad that God made a way so that we all can be free from condemnation. After you have been saved by the grace of God, you can get the victory over that old devil and send him where he belongs, because the Bible says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

### **Light Brings Condemnation**

Someone may say, "Well, I'm not a drunkard or a drug user, and I am not a church member." Friend, moral goodness, though many have used it to justify themselves and thus deny condemnation, will fall short of doing a perfect work. Many people are morally good. They work steady jobs, help others, and love their country, but moral goodness alone is not sufficient. Having these qualities is good, but moral goodness cannot remove condemnation. Friend, this is something that only God can do by His grace and the sacrifice that He made for you and me. The things that make up moral goodness are commendable, but they cannot remove sin and condemnation.

The devil has many methods that he employs to get people to turn to other things to appease their consciences. Someone may ask, "From where does condemnation originate?" John 3:16-19 states: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only

begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Condemnation is the result of light coming to you. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. He brought Truth and understanding, and then He went away to be with the Father. He told His disciples in Matthew 5:14, "Ye are the light of the world." In other words, you are to show others what is right. Jesus was a divine example, and God's people carry out the teachings and the practices and the doctrines of Jesus Christ, to reveal to the world the difference between right and wrong.

Saint of God, you have a very responsible position. You may think that you are not very accountable, but in all truthfulness, you are very responsible. You have a responsibility to be a witness in your neighborhood and place of employment. Sometimes you might have to change jobs or move. I look at those situations and think, God is working because other people need to see the Light. God may be saying, "You need to witness to these people."

I believe that God has His hand in things that sometimes trouble us so much. Sometimes there are things that you cannot figure out and do not understand why they are happening as they are. You may end up in the hospital, but God knows where honest hearts are and He knows where there are people who need to gain understanding of right and wrong. God wants to save doctors, nurses, and technicians. He wants to save whosoever will, and He needs some people who will show forth the light.

I thank God that I know that God can save even the most wicked individual, but He needs people who will show others the difference between right and wrong. Maybe those individuals are not even thinking about eternity or God, but when light comes and they begin to understand that they are involved in things that they should not be, that

brings condemnation.

In many cases the children of the saints go way out in sin. They know that certain things are not right. They have heard it declared and the Spirit of God has witnessed to them, yet they go against it. They keep going and try to get rid of condemnation. Condemnation is the result of knowing better but going ahead and doing things that one ought not do. John 3:20 says, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

### **The Free Gift Is Available to All**

In the Book of Romans the Apostle Paul took us all the way back to the first man and those of that era. We read in Romans 5:17-18: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." This Scripture needs to be rightly divided. We know that not everyone turns his heart to God. Unfortunately, some people reject the pleading of the Spirit of God and walk away one time too many. Not all men become justified, but it is available to all.

If you are not where God would have you to be, you have condemnation in your life. Friend, you do not have to live with that. You can have liberty from all wrong and all sin. You can be set free from every wrong that you have ever done. You cannot go back and change what you have done, but it will certainly give you peace in your soul.

You need to understand that this gift comes to all who are willing to obey the Lord. It comes to all who will bid the world goodbye, never look back, and walk with Jesus Christ. This justification of life is available to all. Paul said that

"judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Those who insist on going against what they know is right will be condemned. When God, in His love and mercy, deals with them and they choose to continue doing those things, condemnation will be present.

What are *you* going to do with condemnation? How are you going to handle carrying that heavy load of condemnation day after day? Are you going to do as some and join an organization that will give you money and time to continue in your deeds? Are you going to dabble in sin and get involved in the night life and end up with your body in a terrible condition or are you going to do what God bids you to do and let Jesus Christ remove your sins?

Condemnation will be present if you continue to do wrong. I can remember sitting on the back row of a little church during the services. Another boy and I would get out our wallets and look at each other's pictures repeatedly to try to get our minds off what was going on in the service. One of us had a watch that had a game on it, and we often played with it to get our minds off the things that were being said. Why? We knew it was Truth.

Friend, God's Word is forever settled in Heaven. He is not going to change it for you or me. If you know things are not what they ought to be in your life, you need to do something about it, otherwise condemnation will be present. What are you going to do with the guilt? What are you going to do with the heavy load that you carry? Friend, you do not have to carry it any longer. Do not be as the many foolish people in this world who are destroying themselves and their hope of Heaven for the temporal pleasures of this life. You can get rid of condemnation.

### **Becoming a New Creature in Christ Jesus**

The Apostle Paul said in verse 1 of our Scripture text, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them

which are in Christ Jesus," not in this life or in Heaven. You do not have to have any condemnation. You can become a new creature in Christ. You can turn your life over to God completely and He will wash away every sin, every act of wrong that you have ever committed, with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We read in Isaiah 1:18 that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." You can be clean and pure.

Why would anyone who has been given an opportunity to turn to Christ walk away with a load of sin when he has to lie down with condemnation every night? Perhaps that person awakes in the night and remembers those things that he has done, and then picks up the same heavy burden the next day and starts over. Friend, there is release from condemnation.

The Apostle Paul described in our Scripture lesson what it means to be a true Christian. Being a true child of God is much different from what many ministers are telling people. They say, "You have to learn to deal with condemnation the best way you can." Friend, there is something better than that! We sing a song called, "Victory," which says, "Hallelujah, I am free. Jesus gives me victory." You can enjoy freedom from condemnation if you become a true child of God.

Our Scripture lesson talks about being *in* Christ Jesus. This is more than just knowing His name and saying, "Yes, I believe in the Son of God." The devils believe in the Son of God that much. I am speaking of being *in* Christ Jesus, not just being around people who are in Christ Jesus. You can be in Him.

How can you be *in* Christ Jesus? The Bible talks about the body of Christ. Colossians 1:17-18 states: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." The body of Christ is God's church,

and you can be *in* Christ when you get in that body, or in that church.

### **Seek the Way Everlasting**

How can you get in the church? You can become a member of God's church when you get right with God. You get *in* the body of Christ when you turn to Jesus in old-time repentance and yield your heart to Him. He puts you in the body, and sends condemnation down the road. It is a wonderful blessing to have the wrong that you were going to face at the judgment bar of God be sent on before and stamped "Forgiven." Thank God, you can be in Christ Jesus.

The reason many people do not get delivered is that merely joining a church or an organization cannot do it; that is not sufficient. A divine change must take place in your heart and life. God must move in and the devil must move out. If you are not ready to meet God or if you have allowed something to begin to work that you ought not, God wants you to take care of that need right now.

Not long ago, I was talking to a young man in a county jail who could have had a great future before him had he only yielded himself to God wholeheartedly. Friend, do not wait until you get in such a position to begin to think about seeking God. You should not wait till you are behind bars or lying in a hospital bed taking what might be your last few breaths. Do not wait as the rich man who delayed turning to God far too long. You can read about him in Luke, Chapter 16. Verse 23 reads, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being

in torments. . . ."

Friend, do not let the enemy of your soul convince you that you should wait to seek God. The enemy will often say, "Wait until tomorrow" or "Wait until you have gotten past this or that." Do not allow the enemy to deceive you as he has so many others.

The Bible says in 1 Samuel 16:7 that "the LORD looketh on the heart." God is looking on you, friend. If you have something in your heart that should not be, God knows it and you know it. You need to do something about it while you still have time. You need to move closer to God than you ever have before. David said in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." What is the way everlasting? It is the way of the pure and the free. The way of the clean is everlasting. This way is already wonderful, and it will only get better.

### **"Walk Not After the Flesh"**

Our last two descriptions of what it means to be a true Christian are found in the latter part of verse 1 of our Scripture lesson, which reads, ". . . who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Are you walking after the flesh or after the Spirit? God is saying, "Follow Me." Dear one, you need to get rid of the things that are plaguing you. The devil works on you through your flesh, and the flesh will say, "Do it some other time." The devil tries to get

you to put off doing what you really should attend to now. Won't you obey the Spirit of God? Won't you obey the tugging, the pleading, and the tender calling of the voice of God's Holy Spirit?

If you do not know the Lord and you are living with condemnation day after day, wondering why your life seems void of happiness, you need to let God have His way. You can have a rich, full, enjoyable life living for God. I have been on both sides, and thank God, serving God is the best way to live. There is no better way to live than living in Christ Jesus with no condemnation, walking after the Spirit.

So many people today are walking after the flesh. When something happens, the flesh says, "Fly off the handle, get angry, and stomp around." They walk after the flesh, and then they regret it. They regret the cruel, hurtful words they blurted out, yet they continue to walk after the flesh. Often people say they are going to do better and straighten up, but the next thing they know, they are doing those things that are damaging to them and bringing destruction.

The way of the true Christian is not to let the flesh dictate and rule his life, but to have God's sweet Spirit presence with him every moment of every day. Won't you obey God's Spirit as He bids you to come to Him? Why not yield to Him? I am so glad that one night I yielded to His call and did not listen to the flesh.

*(Cassette C-4982E)*

**OVERLOOK  
THE FAULTS OF OTHERS  
BUT LOOK OVER  
YOUR OWN CAREFULLY.**

# Spring 2006 Camp Meeting Tape List

TAPE NO.	DATE	MESSAGE TITLE	MINISTER
C-5597M C-5598E	6-18-06	Being a Spiritual Man The Need of Confidence	Bro. E. David Stegmeier Bro. Roger L. Decker
C-5599M C-5600E	6-19-06	The Nation of Israel How Shall We Escape?	Bro. Roger L. Decker Bro. E. David Stegmeier
C-5601M C-5602E	6-20-06	The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom as a Rose Are You Judging Yourself Unworthy of Everlasting Life?	Bro. Roger L. Decker Bro. Esau Brooks
C-5603M C-5604E	6-21-06	The Great Tribulation Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain	Bro. Roger L. Decker Bro. Esau Brooks
C-5605M C-5606E	6-22-06	Becoming an Adult I Saw the Lord	Bro. Calvin Foster Bro. Esau Brooks
C-5607M C-5608E	6-23-06	Are You Filled? The Need to Open the Windows of Heaven	Bro. Allen Polston Bro. Esau Brooks
C-5609M	6-24-06	Holiness Cometh Forever	Bro. Charles Ferguson
C-5610M C-5611E	6-25-06	The Home—Our Immediate Mission Field The Danger of Pushing God Too Far	Bro. E. David Stegmeier Bro. Esau Brooks
MD-287 MD-288 MD-289 MD-290 MD-291 MD-292	2006	Spring Camp Meeting Songs #1 Spring Camp Meeting Songs #2 Spring Camp Meeting Songs #3 Spring Camp Meeting Songs #4 Spring Camp Meeting Songs #5 Spring Camp Meeting Songs #6	

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