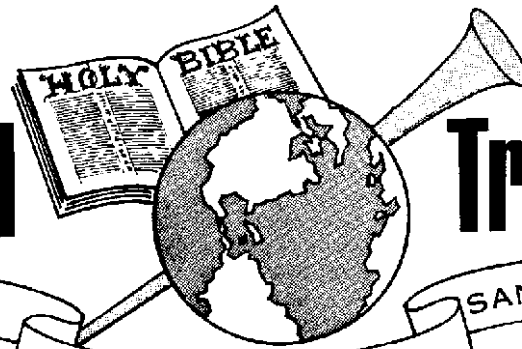


The Gospel



Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

"So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." Eze. 34:12
Jer. 32:39

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished." Rev. 10:7
Mal. 2:13

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 38 April 2008 No. 4



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

*"I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the Lord."*

Psalm 122:1

"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
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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items.

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Be Stubborn. 3
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Vol. 38 April 2008 No. 4

Guest Editorial

*"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of
unbelief, in departing from the living God."*

Hebrews 3:12

Take Heed

This sobering exhortation ought to cause each and every one of us to beware and to take heed, lest we enter into a state of unbelief as many others have. Let me remind you that no one in this world has it made! There is always the possibility of losing out with God. One may be saved today and be in good spiritual condition, but that can change if that person fails to watch and to stay alert. Others have lost out, and it could happen to you also. There is an enemy who is ever seeking an opportunity to turn the child of God away from righteous living.

You must take heed to yourself, be serious, be sober, and be diligent about the things of God and your soul. Why? So that you do not become faint in your mind and begin to think that serving God is too difficult. You need to beware of becoming weary in the battle for Truth and right, thus entertaining the thought of laying down the armor. Consider the pitfalls so many others have fallen into and then lost out with God. You must realize that one day this life will come to an end. The race is going to be over someday, and only those who have been faithful to God and who have stood firmly in the faith will obtain the final reward.

In the Old Testament we find many examples of the children of Israel failing and going back on the Lord. Oftentimes they provoked Him to anger through their unbelief. They did not believe that He would carry them

through and supply all their needs. When in the wilderness, the Israelites complained and murmured against God and His man Moses. They complained of having no food to eat, so God sent manna from Heaven, but that soon became distasteful to them. They murmured and complained because they had no water to drink, so God sent forth water from the Rock. When the Israelites came to the place of entering Canaan as God had promised, they did not believe He would destroy the giants who dwelled there. Because of their unbelief, they sent spies to seek out the land. God's wrath was stirred to the degree that He said in Hebrews 3:11, "They shall not enter into my rest."

Unbelief working in the heart greatly displeases God. There is no sound reason for anyone not to trust and believe God. The Lord performed many mighty miracles before their eyes back then, and He is still doing great things today. Yet there are ones who grow careless in their souls. Because things do not go the way they think those things should go or because God does not answer as quickly as they feel He should, they are ready to give up on God. A desire to turn back to the old life of sin seems to overtake them. Entertaining the thought of turning back to the old sinful life and the habits one was once delivered from arouses God's displeasure. Unless those thoughts are cast aside quickly, one may find himself or herself in serious

[continued on page 22]

Isaiah 1:16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil [through the Prophet Isaiah, God was telling the people to quit sinning and to put away the evil of their doings from before His eyes; God sees the

heart];

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as

snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

To Refuse, to Rebel, and to Be Stubborn



Brother Roger L. Decker

Hearken Diligently to the Voice of God

We have before us in these verses two promises that God said would come: one, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land"; the other, "if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword." One promise is for the obedient, and the other is for the rebellious. As you can see from the Scripture text, the blessings of God rest upon the one who is obedient. Just as a mother and a father love obedience in their children, God loves obedience.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 reads: "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hear-

ken unto the voice of the LORD thy God." That is a wonderful promise that God bestows upon the one who is obedient.

What is *rebellion*? It is "an act or a show of defiance toward authority or established convention; the condition or practice of not obeying." Rebellion is a terrible sin, and it is a very difficult sin for someone to be delivered from. This is one of the main reasons that God insists that parents discipline their children. Some parents are not doing it, even though it is a Bible command. God commands that parents discipline their children. They must do so to halt rebellion. A child follows the flesh; a child is not spiritual. Certainly, a child does not have any sin until he comes to an age of accountability; therefore, he follows the pattern of the flesh. As a parent, you interact in the place of God until the child gets to the place where he can know God.

Proverbs 22:6 instructs, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and

when he is old, he will not depart from it." Which way do you want your child to go? The Proverb writer said if you train up a child in the way he should go, he will not depart from the training that he had as he was growing up. This does not mean that he will not depart from God, but it means that he will have some righteous principles instilled in his life, and he will remember the training that he had as a youngster.

To train up a child in the way he should go is to initiate the child at the mouth of his path, before he has the right to choose the direction he will go. This is a responsibility that parents cannot get around. Sometimes grandparents pamper the grandchildren and do not want to see the parents correct the children.

Having to correct children is not pleasant, but it is necessary. If disobedience is left unattended, then rebellion will begin to set itself in that child's life. The next thing you know, the only way you are going to

overcome it so that you will not be embarrassed in public is to give that child his own way. You are going to have to do something, because you failed to raise the child the Bible way. Now, I am not talking about abusing a child and knocking the child against a wall. I am talking about good, old-fashioned discipline; it is necessary.

What Does the Bible Say About Rebellion?

If a child should become rebellious against his parents and authority, what chance does the child have when it comes to submitting to God? Parent, that is the reason God wants you to discipline the child. If a child will not pay any attention to you, why should he pay attention to God?

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 states: "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

Today we certainly do not carry out this Old Testament practice, but they dealt with rebellion in the Old Testament the way God told them to. Under the old Law, they sanctified the flesh. In other words, it was a life through the flesh, and they had to curb the flesh by extreme means.

What does God think about rebellion? God, speaking through the Prophet Samuel, said it is as the sin of witchcraft. That is quite a charge. First Samuel 15:23 states, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also re-

jected thee from being king." Here we find that Samuel was speaking to King Saul, but this reveals to us what God thinks of rebellion and stubbornness. Also, this tells us what God thinks about idolatry and witchcraft. He puts them all in the same category.

Why is rebellion like witchcraft? Well, witchcraft deals with spirits. Just as the one involved in witchcraft is under a wrong spirit, likewise the one who is in rebellion is under a wrong spirit; that is the reason God despises it. You can talk until you are blue in the face, so to speak, and warn and warn, but when one is rebellious, he does not seem to hear you. You can talk to that person, and he may even nod his head to indicate that he is listening, but the warning goes right on by him because he is under a wrong spirit.

Stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Idolatry is the worship of other gods. When one is stubborn, he holds out for his own way, and he worships himself more than he worships God. God let us know that it is just like idolatry. These things are caused by rejecting the Word of God, by refusing to obey it and by seeking another way.

The Cost of Rebellion

In the Word of God you can read of severe judgments that came upon those who rebelled. Today some people will not take the Word of God. They are stubborn, and they are determined to hold out for their own way, even if it costs them their souls in the end; and that is exactly what it is going to cost them!

Let us look in the Word of God to see how God dealt with people who were rebellious. In Deuteronomy, Chapter 1, we have a great lesson. When Israel was camped at Kadeshbarnea, before going into Canaan, some of the people rebelled, and that rebellion was very costly. Deuteronomy 1:19-26 reads: "And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by

the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadeshbarnea. And I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us. Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

"And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe: And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.

"And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us [now, remember, God had already told them that it was a good land, so they found that what God told them was true]. Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God."

In these verses we find that at Kadeshbarnea Israel was in rebellion. Twelve men (one leader from each of the twelve tribes) were sent to search out the land. Moses said the saying pleased him well. They were going to go up to search out the land and then return to tell Moses what they saw and the best way to enter the land.

The twelve spies found that the land was a good land, and they brought back some of the fruit of the land. They returned with grapes, pomegranates, and figs, and the fruit was plentiful in the land, as God said it was. Truly it was a land flowing with milk and honey. They searched the land for forty days and found it to be as God said: it was a land of abundance.

Ten of the twelve spies brought back an evil report. (There are still people today who see the enemy bigger than God is.) Those ten men testified that it was surely a good land, but Deuteronomy 1:26 says they "rebelled against the commandment of the LORD." They got their eyes off the commandment of the Lord and fixed their eyes on the enemy that dwelled there. They could not get out of their minds what the enemy looked like. They brought back some good news, but it was not long until they began to amplify the enemy. Yes, it was a land flowing with milk and honey, a land plentiful in fruit, just as God said, but an enemy was there too. Once they began to report on the enemy, they did not speak of the fruit anymore; they just kept amplifying the enemy.

When all people see is the enemy, the devil will amplify the enemy's strength beyond the promises of God. The commandment of God in Deuteronomy 1:21 was this: "Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged." Why did God say that? He knew they were going to see the enemy, but He instructed them not to let the enemy discourage them and not to fear the enemy. The people rebelled, and it was costly. It was so unnecessary, and from the rebellion came complaining and murmuring and the desire to return to Egypt, which was a type of bondage in sin. The enemy has not changed; he just uses different avenues. He will tell you that the way of Truth is too difficult. He will say that no one can live holy and that the way is unattainable. He will attack the pastor by saying, "Don't preach it so close."

Stirring the Anger of God

What happened at Kadesh-barnea? Unbelief and rebellion got hold of the people of God. Because of that, everyone from twenty years old and up died in the wilderness, except

Joshua and Caleb. They spent forty years, one year for each day that the spies searched out the land, wandering in the wilderness. They had stirred up the anger of God. He was so angry that He pronounced judgment, and that judgment did not change. It happened exactly as God said it would.

What did the Psalmist say would be the life of one who rebels? Psalm 107:9-13 reads: "For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses."

God can help those who rebel. In the midst of your trouble, you need to cry to the Lord. Dear one, if you have rebellion in your heart, you need to have God deal with you in a special way. It is a terrible spirit. It will affect you in the house of God, at work, with your family, and in all avenues of your life.

What did the Psalmist mean when he said the people "contemned the counsel of the most High"? To *contemn* is "to abhor, to despise, to detest, to dislike, to hate, to loathe, and to scorn." Because they rejected the counsel that God sent, He brought down their hearts with labor. He brought down their self-sufficiency, their self-complacency, and their pride. They thought that they could do all right without God. They relied on their own resources, and they were self-satisfied; however, God humbled them. How did God humble them? The Psalmist said He did it with labor, trouble, affliction, disappointment, reverses, and sorrow.

Deuteronomy 26:6-8 reads: "And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the

LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders."

Rebellion brings affliction, suffering, labor, distress, and oppression. These were all things brought on by sin. Labor is a difficult or a tedious undertaking, and oppression is a feeling of being heavily weighed down in mind or body.

Ferocious Taskmasters

Look at Israel's plight in Egypt. Exodus 1:11-14 states: "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And They built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour."

Serving with *rigor* means "with cruelty, or great oppression." The Egyptians were ferocious taskmasters. They made the lives of the children of Israel bitter. They became weary of life through the severity of their servitude with hard bondage. Dear one, you should not mess around with sin. Do not let it get into your mind or into your heart. Sin will devour the whole man, and once you give in to sin, it will bring hard bondage and bitterness. The devil does not show any mercy. He could not care less how afflicted, oppressed, downhearted, and discouraged you are. He will just keep pushing and shoving you down. If you receive any mercy, you can only find it with God; He is plentiful in mercy.

This characterized their life in

Egypt. It was a life of the most painful servitude, which was oppressive enough in itself, but it was made much more so by the cruel manner of their treatment while performing their tasks. The children of Israel were in hard bondage. They cried out to God for deliverance, and God sent a deliverer in Moses.

The historian Josephus wrote this: "The Egyptians contrived a variety of ways to afflict the Israelites. They enjoined them to cut a great number of channels for the river and to build walls for their cities and ramparts that they might restrain the river and hinder its waters from stagnating upon its overrunning its own banks. They set them also to build pyramids and wore them out; forced them to learn all sorts of mechanic arts and to accustom themselves to hard labor." That is what was set before them every single day. That is what sin does to you.

Many people do not believe that sin is as bad as it really is. They feel that way because nothing happens to them right away. They commit sin, and they are still able to get up and move about and go to bed. If this is your attitude toward sin, do not be deceived by that. It is only the mercy of God that He has not sent judgment.

I repeat, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. God classifies witches as being sinful. God does not want His people to fool around with witches or witchcraft. Church, you ought to be wise enough not to mess around with Ouija boards or palm readers. They have evil spirits.

When individuals get under a rebellious spirit, they will not listen to reason. As I said earlier, it starts in the homes and progresses to the schools and carries over into marriage. When people are under that spirit, they despise authority. They cannot stand people in leadership. They always have something negative to say about the pastor, the choir director, and the special singers. They always have a snide comment to make. They are never completely satisfied with anything.

Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

God Visits Rebellion

Let us look in the Word of God at the outcomes of some individuals who rebelled. After King Saul received the commission to destroy the Amalekites, he spared the best of the animals and King Agag. Let us see what happened to them. Did God let the disobedience slide by? In 1 Samuel 15:1-5 we find the commission: "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. [Amalek ambushed the children of Israel from behind as they were coming out of Egypt, attacking the weak, the sick, and the elderly. Moses had to stop and have Joshua get some men together to fight them.]

"Now go and smite Amalek [God put in their remembrance that He was going to take care of what Amalek did and said He was going to visit them and wipe them out; this was Saul's commission], and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley."

Now let us read what happened in verses 13-15: "And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD [Saul started out with a big lie,

and God had a way of revealing it]. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, [The commandment was not given to the people; it was given to Saul. It was not their choice; it was Saul's.] to sacrifice [Saul brought God into it to try to melt Samuel's heart a little, so he said he did it to sacrifice] unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

Saul tried to justify his actions and indicated that he had slaughtered all the vile ones, the lame, and the old. In essence, he said, "We spared the rest of them to sacrifice to the Lord." God did not let that disobedience go. Rebellion was in the heart of Saul. The Bible lets us know he was once little in his own sight; in other words, at first he did not think he was able to carry out the commission that God gave him when He chose him as king. He thought he was the least of the brethren, but after he had a few victories, he began to overstep his place and did not obey what Samuel commissioned him to do.

Verses 24-26 tell us: "And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel." Saul rejected God, and God turned around and rejected him. Do you know how he ended up? He committed suicide in battle, and he lost his kingship.

Israel's Idolatrous State

The children of Israel rebelled against Moses and went into idolatry

when they made the molten calf. Exodus 32:1 reads, "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, [The people were talking about Aaron's brother Moses. They defied Moses' brother. Aaron did not have enough intestinal fortitude to stand against them.] the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." What did Aaron do? He did not rebuke them or try to still them; he went along with them.

Verses 2-6 say: "And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

"And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." God saw all of this going on, so God told Moses to get down out of there and go back to the camp. Verse 7 reads, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." As Moses went down to the camp, God wanted to consume them. Moses interceded for the people. Then when Moses got near the camp, his anger exploded. He could not believe what he saw.

Verses 19-24 tell us: "And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his

hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

"And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf."

Verses 25-29 state: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

"And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men [that is how stirred God gets against idolatry, rebellion, and stubbornness]. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." God put severe punishment on idolatry, rebellion, and stubbornness.

In those verses you can see how God visits idolatry. God is jealous. He does not want you to set up an idol in your heart. Oh, I know most people are not worshiping a molten calf, but some people have allowed

sports to become an idol to them; that is their god. From one season to the next, they are caught up in sports. Worldly fashions could become an idol to you. Some people are so stingy with money that they have almost gotten to the place where they are misers. What did Jesus say? He warned people to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. What was it? It was covetousness.

Unbelief Brought Progress to an Abrupt Halt

In Deuteronomy 9:23-24 let us look at the commission and the deed: "Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadeshbarnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice. Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you." This was a terrible charge that Moses brought against the people.

Let us look at the punishment. They did not go in at Kadeshbarnea because of unbelief. Numbers 13:26-32 states: "And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

"Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men

that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature."

Verse 33 reads, "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." That shows you that their faith was in themselves, and that condition spread. In Chapter 14 you can read that the congregation lifted up their voices to murmur and complain. Next, the whole congregation turned against Moses, complaining in their tents all night to the place that God was stirred again. God had taken about all that He was going to take. The people kept complaining, yet Joshua and Caleb kept standing up for God saying, in so many words: "We are well able. Let us go up at once!" They were shouted down by the voices of all the others in the camp. That is how murmuring and complaining can spread among people. It was a terrible condition.

Punishment for Rebellion

We read in Numbers 14:26-33: "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me [you need to watch that you do not murmur and complain], Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which

I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

"But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness." What a terrible judgment came upon the people that rebelled. The Hebrew writer says that because of unbelief, they did not enter in.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled. They thought they should have as much say in matters as Moses did. In Numbers 16:1-4 we read: "Now Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men: And they rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown: [Where does the devil work? Often he works through a person in a congregation who holds a position, who has a voice in the congregation, who carries a Bible, and who is faithful. Who did he get? Two hundred fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown.]

"And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD? And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face." Naturally the only thing for Moses to do was to talk to God about it. Men of renown rose up against leadership.

Let us see what the punishment was. Verses 28-35 tell us: "And Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the LORD hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of mine own mind. If these men die the

common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the LORD hath not sent me.

"But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods.

"They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation. And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also. And there came out a fire from the LORD, and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense."

When stubbornness, rebellion, and idolatry began to rise up, God dealt with it; that stirred God. If you are rebellious against leadership, you are going to be rebellious against the Lord. If you are stubborn against leadership, you will be stubborn against Him.

Driving Out the Enemy

Numbers, Chapter 33, speaks of dividing the inheritance in the land of Canaan. Verses 50-56 state: "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places: [God did not want anything left to remind them of the enemy. He wanted them

to bring down their images, to bring down their groves, and to bring down all their places of worship and destroy them.]

"And ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it. And ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance among your families: and to the more ye shall give the more inheritance, and to the fewer ye shall give the less inheritance: every man's inheritance shall be in the place where his lot falleth; according to the tribes of your fathers ye shall inherit. But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."

Here a command was given and a warning was put before the children of Israel. God told them to go over and divide up the land by inheritance, by tribes and by families. However, He warned them not to make any treaties or allegiances with the Canaanites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, or the Hittites. He commanded them to drive them out and not to let any of them remain. In essence, He said, "When you drive them out, destroy everything they have: their molten images, their groves, and their high places of worship; destroy it all." That was a command to exterminate the Canaanites and divide the land among the families of Israel. They were to exterminate all the inhabitants of the land, destroy all the memorials of their idolatry, take possession of the land, and dwell therein. God had given it to them to possess.

If you do not drive out sin, sin will drive you out. After Joshua died, Israel failed to keep that commandment. God got really stirred against Israel because they failed to wholly follow Him. If you read about the different tribes, you will find that some tribes did drive out the enemy,

but other tribes did not destroy them as God told them to do. They were in servitude to Israel, but in time the Israelites started mingling with them and marrying among them. God got stirred to the place that He sent an angel to remind them of the commandment.

You can read in Judges that many allowed the enemy to live among them. They made a treaty with them. They would defeat them, and the enemy would end up being their slaves or working for them, but God did not say to do that. God commanded them to drive them out completely. He said to drive out all their images, all their pictures, and all their places of worship. They were not to let a trace of the enemy remain in the camp. When they failed to do that, Israel wound up in idolatry.

Enjoying Life to the Fullest

God wants His people to enjoy life to the fullest. It is wonderful to live for God. Living for God is not a hard life, as the enemy would like to make you think. The devil wants you to think that living for God is a bondage because you have to keep certain commandments and do this and that or God will strike you down. No, you have to remember that when you get saved, God changes you, and you *want* to keep His commandments. The old man that you used to be passes away, and you become a new creature. Then you have a new heart, a new spirit, and new desires. You have God's Spirit and a desire to live for God. It is not a hard life where you cannot do this and that. All God ever asked of anyone is that a person keep Him first. You can have a good life. It is enjoyable to be a Christian. There are many fun times.

We have grievous times and bitter things that come upon us, just as the sinner does. We suffer illnesses and afflictions, but never forget that we have One to go to. This is where Christianity supersedes anything in sin. We have Someone to talk to all hours of the day and night. When you are afflicted and you go to the

doctor, you have to wait to get your doctor's appointment. We can call upon God at any hour. God does not slumber or sleep. He does not get tired. You can talk to Him in the middle of the night. There are tremendous benefits in serving God. However, He asks that you not rebel against Him or become stubborn or turn to idolatry. You can enjoy life as a child of God.

I have been on both sides of the spectrum. If you are saved, you have too. Living in sin is a life of bondage and heartache. All people can think of when they think of Christianity is having to dress right and having to attend church services. When God makes you a new creature, you love to do these things. It is not difficult for the child of God to go to the house of God and to work for God. I love to do it. As long as I keep rebellion, stubbornness, and idolatry out of my heart, I will continue to love to do those things.

If you stiffen against God and fail to walk in the light, you are just kidding yourself. You are the one who makes Christianity miserable, but it is not a miserable life. Serving God is a good life. It is the best way to raise your children. The house of God is a good place to bring your family.

As you can see, there are plenty of examples in the Bible where people were rebellious and stubborn, and God dealt with them. He knows how to deal with things. I do not question God. He is Almighty God and the great I AM.

Is anything in your heart causing you to rebel or to be stubborn? Is there anything in your heart that puts self on the throne in idolatry instead of God? If there is, you ought to deal with it now. Do not let that thing knock you out of serving God. It will make serving God miserable; then you will despise going to the house of God to attend Sunday school, the regular services, and revivals. God wants you to enjoy serving Him to the fullest. Living for God is a good life.

Jeremiah 5:21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not:

22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone.

24 Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

25 Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

26 For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men.

27 As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

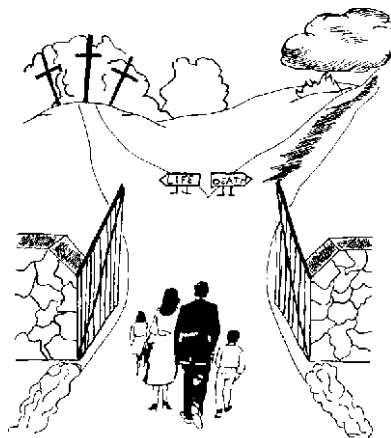
28 They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

29 Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

30 A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;

31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

WHAT WILL BE YOUR END?



Brother E. David Stegmeier

A Lack of the Fear of God

In our Scripture text God was speaking to a generation of people who had lost their spiritual eyesight and their love for the Lord, much like our generation today. We read that God said to them in verse 21 of our Scripture text, "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not." We need to have good eyesight, spiritually speaking. John the Revelator said to "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve" (Revelation 3:18). As Christians, we need to have good spiritual perception. We are living in a time of much deception. This is

a very serious and critical time.

In verse 22 of our Scripture lesson, we read that God asked those people "Fear ye not me?" I believe that at the very bottom of all sin is a lack of the fear of God. A fear of God in the hearts of men and women will cause them to be very careful of their actions. There is not enough of the fear of God. God said, in essence: "Will you not tremble at My presence? It is I who placed the sand to contain the sea by a perpetual decree, so that the sea cannot pass through it. The waves toss and cannot prevail; they roar, yet they cannot pass over the boundary."

An end is coming for all things.

I think of the maiden voyage of the huge, luxurious ocean liner called the *Titanic*. Not many years ago, they found the sunken *Titanic* off the shores of Newfoundland, and they have taken people down to see it. Some people have debated as to whether they should bring it up or just leave it on the bottom of the ocean. I have read, and perhaps you have also, accounts about the *Titanic*. It left on its maiden voyage from the British Isles to journey to the Northern Hemisphere. The engineering designers of that huge, luxurious ocean liner said that it was built so well that it could never sink. One of them made the foolish

statement, "Not even God can sink her."

As the passengers began to board the ship, some people felt a real strangeness about setting a foot on that large ocean liner, and even though they were booked and ready to go, they stood back and decided not to go. One fateful night on the *Titanic's* maiden voyage, as it was getting close to midnight, the band was playing some very happy, frivolous music, and people were dancing and having a big time. All of a sudden, that huge ocean liner lurched, and the people became fearful. They inquired, "What was that?" They were told that it was nothing to worry about, but soon they all knew that the ocean liner was sinking. History tells us that before it went down, the band began to play, "Nearer My God to Thee." Even as the water was coming up on their legs, they continued to play that song.

Dear one, what will be your end? The end is coming. To me, that is a very sobering thought. Nevertheless, there is an end coming to all people and to all things. Our Scripture text says in verse 23, "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart." Hundreds of people on the *Titanic* went down into the icy, cold water, screaming and hollering. Some men changed into women's clothes because the Captain said, "Women and children first." Many lives were lost, and children were separated from their parents. It was a very horrible situation.

You see, people may mock God, but a time is coming when they will regret it. We dare not mock God or the man of God. God does not take that very well. In 2 Kings 2:23-24 you can read about the forty-two children who mocked the Prophet Elisha. They said, "Go up, thou bald head; go up thou bald head." The Bible says two she bears came out of the woods and tore them apart. Dear one, you dare not mock God. He will have the final word. God allowed that ship to sink. God knows how to handle every situation.

A Day of Retribution Is Coming

Again, verses 23-24 of our Scripture lesson read: "But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God [we need to reverence and respect God, respect the man of God, and respect the house of worship], that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest." There is coming a time when the harvest will end.

We read in Jeremiah 8:20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." If you have a need in your heart, do not delay in asking God to forgive your sins and in letting Him save your precious soul. Now is the best time to get saved.

God has promised good things to His people, but sin, rebellion, and iniquity keep good things from people. If you will serve God and give Him your best, He will return His best to you. Sometimes people want to see how close they can get to the world and still be accepted of God. They should be asking, "What more can I do to obey God?" God will reward each one according to his or her obedience.

Verses 25-28 of our Scripture text read: "Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men [not everyone who attends a church and claims to be a Christian is truly saved, so you need to be careful]. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge."

In verse 29 of our Scripture text,

we find some very sobering thoughts. God asked, "Shall I not visit for these things?" Friend, a day of retribution is coming. There is coming a day when God will mete out justice. It may not be meted out in this present world, but an end is coming. King David questioned the state of the ungodly. You can read in Psalm 73 that David was looking at people around him and thought, "These people around me are not serving God, yet they seem to be getting along fairly well." He thought that they even seemed to die well. He pondered this and, in essence, said, "I was about to give up until I went to the house of God, and then I understood their end."

God's Law of Sowing and Reaping

There is coming an end, so it is a sobering thought that God asked, "Shall I not visit for these things?" Yes, there is a universal law of sowing and reaping. It was so in the Old Testament, and it was so in the New Testament. Adam and Eve found it to be so. How about Haman? In the Book of Esther you can read of Haman and Mordecai. Solomon said, "Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray . . . he shall fall himself into his own pit" (Proverbs 28:10). Haman built a gallows fifty feet high, and he planned to hang Mordecai on it. However, in the end the king ordered Haman to hang on it. You will reap what you sow.

There is a story in the Old Testament about a king who had taken seventy other kings captive and had their big toes and their thumbs cut off. In time he was taken captive, and his captors cut off his thumbs and big toes. Judges 1:7a tells us, "And Adonibezek said, Threescore and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me." There are many examples of sowing and reaping in the Bible. No one can get by God's law

of sowing and reaping. God said in verse 29 of our Scripture lesson, "Shall I not visit for these things?" You can read in 1 and 2 Kings about Jezebel's wicked life and the reaping of what she had sown. All the way through the Word of God, we find the divine law of sowing and reaping. It is a universal law.

Again, verse 29 of the Scripture text reads, "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" We are concerned about our country. The best thing we can do for our country is what the late President John F. Kennedy said: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country."

The best thing you can do for your country is to live a holy life, to be an example wherever you are, and to stand for what is right. You can make a difference where you are, whether it is at work, at school, at home, or in the neighborhood. You can stand so that people know who you are and know what you stand for. God is going to deal with this nation, and I am very concerned. I do not know how it is all going to happen, but it concerns me.

Sin Blinds the Mind

Our Scripture text states in verses 30-31: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely. . . ." There is so much lying in the pulpits across our nation today. False teachings are running rampant in the religious world.

We have a young man in our congregation who came from a large denominational church, whose members had a big fight. It was such a terrible brawl that they had to call the police to the church building to settle it. He was so disgusted that he quit going to church altogether. One day one of my sons-in-law invited him to church, and he said: "You know, it is just wonderful to come where you can understand the Truth. I believed all my life that

there was going to be a millennium, but when the Truth was explained to me from the Word of God, I could clearly see that was false. It is wonderful that the Church of God has the Truth." He also said, "I was taught that the devil fell from Heaven, and I learned from the Word that this is not so." He was thrilled, and he is growing spiritually so beautifully. How blessed we are that the Church of God has these wonderful truths!

Sin blinds the minds of men and women. The Church of God teaches sinless living, and when the blinders are removed, the Truth can be seen clearly. Jeremiah 5:1 reads, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth." Child of God, you can make a difference. You can be that one man.

Verse 31 of the Scripture text states, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means. . . ." They do not depend on the Word and the Spirit to lead them. In the Church of God, the Word and the Spirit are standing and witnessing and directing the people of God. The saints want them to testify, but in false religion they are laying dead and inoperative because man does the controlling. Different religious sects take a portion of Truth, but they mix false doctrine with a small portion of Truth. The Church of God teaches all the Truth.

We need to be very alert and listen very keenly for the Spirit, because we want our worship services to be spiritually led and dictated. God knows how the services should be. Many times I get ready to preach, but the service goes a different way. It is beautiful when we let God have His way, but "the priests bear rule by their means." They control people by committees and rules of their own making. God's people want the Word and the Spirit to lead, and they want every-

thing done according to the will of God.

Again, verse 31 of our Scripture text reads, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

No One Can Get by With Sin

I want to ask you a couple of questions, and you need to think seriously about them: Shall God not visit you for these things? What will you do in the end?

Ex-President William Clinton wrote a 957-page autobiography. In that book he spoke openly of the demons that haunted him all his life. No one is getting by with sin. Numbers 32:23 says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." It is amazing how God will bring sin to the surface. Mr. Clinton said his sexual encounters almost cost him his presidency and his marriage, and they certainly damaged his image in the minds of the American people.

Mr. Clinton said that as a child, he learned too well how to live with secrets. His mother always told him as a boy, "If you are hiding something, it is wrong." Have you ever heard that? If you are hiding something, it is not right. Mr. Clinton said his family creed was, "Don't ask, don't tell." In 1998 he led two incongruent lives. (That is not how God's people live. I thank God for the Truth! I have absolutely nothing to hide.) He said there came a time when he could no longer live with himself. His sexual indulgences risked not only his marriage but also the love and respect of his only child.

I want my children to respect me. Do you want your children to respect you? I believe I have to live a clean life so that my family will naturally respect me. You must live so that the world will respect you and will believe your word.

Mr. Clinton went on to say in his book that he spent several days immediately following his con-

fession begging for forgiveness and plotting a retaliatory strike against Bin Laden. It all came crashing down on him because he was hiding sin. He wrote that his father's death at the age of twenty-eight made him conscious of his own mortality. He closed his book with a short meditation on the lessons he has learned about accepting personal responsibility.

We each are responsible for the actions and deeds done in this life. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." At the Judgment I will not be able to call upon my wife or my children. It is going to be me and God alone. People may flirt around with sin, and married couples may flirt with others, but what is their end going to be? If you play with fire, you will get burned. Proverbs 6:27 asks, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?"

The Danger of Neglecting Salvation

We are living in a day when we see so much of the "eat, drink, and be merry" spirit. Most people are living for the present, not realizing that they must answer to God for their actions. Sometimes people want to get together in groups and do things, but we need to be able to stand alone, if need be. Knowing that your conscience is clear is important. We are living in a day when people are going after the physical and the material things but neglecting the spiritual. The older I get, the more I realize how little these material things are worth. They mean less and less to me. The things of the Spirit are being crowded out of many people's lives. Where are you spiritually?

David wrote these words in Psalm 37:37, "Mark the perfect man [in other words, watch him and take note of him], and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." I want peace in my life, don't

you? As I was studying, I thought, if the dead could come back and testify, they would warn everyone that an end is coming, and they would urge you that now is the time to prepare for it.

Luke, Chapter 16, records the fate of one who was physically dead. Verses 19-21 read: "There was a certain rich man, [I believe there actually was a certain rich man. I do not believe this is a parable, but even if it were a parable, you ought to consider what Jesus was teaching.] which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores."

The Scripture goes on to say that both Lazarus and the rich man died. Lazarus was carried away to Abraham's bosom, but the rich man was in hell. Verse 24 reads, "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

You will be either tormented or comforted after you leave this world, one or the other. What will be your end? It can be a wonderful and glorious end. To the Christian, death is gain; it is an entrance to a better world. The Christian leaves the turmoil, the strife, and the sadness behind. On the other hand, death is an eternal loss to the sinner.

The story was told of a sinful man with whom the late Brother R. L. Mullen had pleaded many times to get saved, but he continued to neglect his salvation. As he lay screaming, crying, and agonizing on his deathbed, those who were with him said: "Brother Mullen, what shall we do? How can we help him?" Brother Mullen said: "He has passed up his day of opportunity. Just make him as comfortable as you can. It's too late." This man said: "*My feet are burning! I'm going into a*

devil's hell. I'm burning! I'm burning!"

What a sobering thought! We have children, loved ones, neighbors, and friends whom we want to see saved, but some day there will be no more opportunities. We need to live very responsibly. There is coming an end. We should walk circumspectly and very cautiously. As a parent, if you really love your children, you will be extremely careful of how you live, because they will be affected by the actions of your life. I do not believe that I was always a perfect father, but I did not sin before my children. I might not have always used the best judgment in disciplining them, but I have always realized how serious my behavior was regarding the eternal welfare of my children, and I tried to set a good example before them.

"Be Ready When He Comes"

Again, in verse 29 of our Scripture text God said, "Shall I not visit you for these things?" God will visit everyone for the deeds of his or her life. What are you going to do in the end? If you will turn to God with your whole heart and mean business, God will deal with you in mercy. However, it must be done before the end comes. At the end, there will be no more mercy.

How is it with your life? What will your end be? As I grew up in the Church of God, every church service was very serious to me. At the close of almost every service during my childhood and youthful years, I went to the altar. Why? I wanted to be sure that I was right with God. The thought came to me that maybe I had spoken a little sharply to my mother or hurt someone else. I do not want anything between God and me. Do you?

Philippians 2:12 says to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Are you saved? You should strive to have such an experience that, if the whole world should turn against Christ, you would still be standing. You should not allow your experience to be

contingent upon this friend or that friend and what others are going to do. You should have a settled experience. You know it is right to serve God. I know that the Church of God is on the right track. You have the privilege and the responsibility of studying the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 1:12 Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed." Do you have that kind of experience? Do you have it settled, so that no matter what anyone else does, you are going to stand tall for God?

When I entered the military service, I remember leaving and flying up over the huge Rocky Mountains. The song came to me, "He is the God of the universe, and He is my God." I prayed: "God, keep me faithful. Don't let me waver. Though there may not be another saint that I know in the military

service, I want to come out stronger for You than when I went in."

I remember the late Brother Emerson Wilson telling about a young man who was getting ready to go into the military service, and Brother Wilson told him: "Go in on the offensive. Go in to win someone for the Lord. Go in with a determination to stand for God, and He will help you." Do you have the kind of experience that if everyone in your family turns against you, you are going to stand for the Truth? There is an end coming, and God is going to visit people for every wrongdoing.

We once had an older sister in our congregation, and she often said, "God is exacting to the weight of a feather," and she was right. The morning she passed away, she told the sisters in the home that she was going to be with the Lord that day. She believed that was her day, and

it was. When I visited her home, she always said: "Parson, are your bags packed? You and I are going to take a trip."

Soon afterward, she died, and I accompanied her body to California for a memorial service. She knew what she was talking about.

There is coming an end, and you need to be ready when He comes. Be ready! When He comes, you cannot run and find someone you have wronged to ask for his or her forgiveness. You must be ready at a moment's notice. How is it with your soul today? If you have something between you and a brother or a sister, do not leave it undone. You need to take care of it. Are you clear with God? I like that old song that says, "Be ready when He comes." Are you ready?

(Cassette C-5265E)

Announcements

SUMMERSVILLE, WV

March 31-April 6

REVIVAL: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd., Summersville, WV 26651

Evangelist: Brother Allen Polston, Mechanicsburg, Indiana

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

For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders at telephone: 304-872-4047

MEDINA, OH

April 14-20

REVIVAL: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, OH

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

For further information contact: Pastor Daniel Webster, 92 W. Main St. Seville, OH 44273

Telephone: (Home) 330-435-6490 or (Church) 330-725-5993

MT. PLEASANT, PA

April 19

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA

Service time: 10:30 a.m. A meal served by the local congregation.

MOTELS: *Holiday Inn Express*, 724-547-2095 (This is on the same road as the church. Please mention that you are there for the church meeting.); *Super 8 Motel in New Stanton*, 724-925-8915 on I-70W, 10 miles north of the church); *Melody Motor Lodge*, 724-628-9600 on 119N in Connellsville).

For further information contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey at telephone: 724-547-2151

KENSETT, AR

May 23

May 24-25

WEEKEND FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 409 Southeast 2nd St., Kensett, AR 72082

Guest Speaker: Brother Ula C. Bland, Chicago, Illinois. Service time: 7:00 p.m.

Evangelist: Brother Ron Hawkins, Port Republic, Maryland. Dinner served Saturday at 4:00 p.m.

Saturday service time: 7:00 p.m. Sunday service times: Sunday school 10:00 a.m. and Sunday worship: 11:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. Lunch served after the Sunday morning service.

For further information contact: Pastor Calvin L. Foster at telephone: 501-742-3006

1 Kings 21:1 And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

2 And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

3 And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

4 And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

5 But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

6 And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

10 And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

11 And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

12 They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

13 And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

14 Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

The Great Value of a Godly Inheritance



Brother Allen Polston

There Is Victory in Jesus Christ

As Christians, we need to realize that what God has given to us through salvation is great and wonderful to possess. It is not something that we ought to take lightly. It is something that we ought to treasure and that we really

ought to value and consider to be very important.

We find in the Scripture lesson an Old Testament battle ensued over the inheritance of one individual who had come under great attack. As God's people, we know that we have an enemy that is out to take away what God has given us. He is

out to destroy.

The Bible teaches that you ought not to give place to the devil. When you see that something is leading you astray or interfering with your relationship with God, the Bible teaches that you should cut that off. In fact, in Matthew 5:29-30 Jesus said: "And if thy right eye offend

thee, pluck it out. . . . And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." Now, God does not want anyone to dismember the physical body, but He was saying that if something is causing you to be put at distance with God, you need to put some distance in between you and that thing. You need to quit allowing it to influence you. Many times that only comes when you do away with it altogether.

We have to be aware of these things. We have an enemy that is after us, but I am glad to report to you that in Jesus Christ there is victory. Though there is a mean, sly, seducing devil working through all kinds of spirits, there is victory in Jesus Christ if you are willing to walk with Him. There is victory in the things of God!

As we look at the Scripture lesson, we find a man who was right where God wanted him to be. He was in his place, and he was doing what God wanted him to do with the inheritance that had come down through his fathers. Naboth was tending to his vineyard and taking care of it. He was going about his business as he was supposed to do. However, the enemy began to work against him, as he does with every Christian. Whether you are a new Christian or one who has just begun to understand the Truth or one who has been in the Truth for many years, the devil is out to get you one way or another. He is working to come up with some way to hinder you.

Guard Your Inheritance

As a young convert, I remember that a good friend of mine was very disturbed because God had made such a change in me, so he talked to a denominational preacher who told him, "No one can live free from sin." The next time I was with my friend, he told me, "You may be going to church, but nobody can live free from sin."

I said, "Well, I don't know about that, but I know that God has

changed my life." At the time I was not really sure about the doctrines or about the teachings, though I had been around the church for many years. I did not know Scriptures such as 1 John 3:9, which says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." However, one thing I knew was that God had changed me. God had made a difference in my life.

The enemy was beginning to work against what God had done in my life, trying to get me off course. That was just a few days after God had saved me. The devil hates it when someone turns to God. Why do you think the devil makes it so hard? Why is it so difficult when God speaks? It is due to an enemy who does not want you to do anything about the condition of your soul. There is a devil that does not want you to measure to Truth. He does not want you to get rid of bad habits. He does not want you to change the way you look. He wants to keep you in the same old worldly way that you have been living and somehow work against you until he can get you to a place where you are lost forever.

Young person, the thinking in your mind that, "There will be another day" or "There will be better day to get saved" or "It just doesn't seem right now" is always going to be there. Stepping out for God is always going to seem that way. Growing close to God is always going to meet some resistance, because you have an enemy that is working to hold you back.

In the Scripture text we see that Naboth was approached by King Ahab. The enemy was working through Ahab to try to acquire what belonged to Naboth. What God had given to Naboth was the inheritance that his fathers had passed down to him, but the enemy was out to acquire that. That is still the same thing that is going on today. Christian friend, the enemy is out to get your inheritance. We

have a wonderful, rich inheritance. I am so thankful that God has brought me in to enjoy this inheritance! I did not deserve it. At one time I worked against God, but I thank God that He loved me through all of that. While I was yet in my sins, He loved me and brought me around to enjoy this wonderful inheritance that I am enjoying today.

Beware of Seducing Spirits

When the devil begins to work, he works to try to deceive you. He does not come to you and announce who he is and declare what he is trying to do to you. Friend, you need to be wise to that. If the devil informed you that he was the enemy of your soul and that he was trying to bring eternal death to you and cause you to be cast into the eternal lake of fire, you would be wise to that. I do not believe you would say, "All right, I will go along with you." You would know better, so he does not come that way. He works in deceptive manners, and he works through seducing spirits.

In the Scripture text we find that is what he chose to do. First, he used good reasoning for wanting to acquire the inheritance of Naboth. The enemy, through Ahab, said in verse 2 of our Scripture text, "Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house." King Ahab presented good reasoning along with his desire to take what belonged to Naboth.

The devil is not stupid. When he tempts you and places a thought in your mind that is designed to lead you astray, he brings good reasoning with it. When he tempted Eve, he did not tell her, "Disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit, and then you will die and go to hell." He made it appear attractive and said, in essence: "It will make you wise. You will be like God. You will be able to profit from this thing." He presented good reasoning with the temptation.

Friend, not every thought that comes into your mind is good, whether it seems good or not. Many thoughts may seem as though they will help you. They may seem to be attractive and to be of benefit to you, but you have to measure those thoughts by what God has to say. You have to consider these thoughts in the light of God's Word. One brother once said he prays that God will help him to be quick to discern the difference between good thoughts and bad thoughts. That is a good prayer. You need to be quick to discern the difference between a good thought and a bad thought.

The battle of Armageddon is taking place in the mind as you sort out thoughts. You need to be careful that you do not give too much of yourself to a thing until you know for sure that it is of God. Sometimes things that come your way may seem to be really good initially, but you have to watch human reasoning. It is not always God's reasoning. Isaiah said that His way is much higher than ours. Isaiah 55:9 states, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." That is the reason you have to consider things in the light of God's Word.

Many thoughts that enter into your mind over the course of a day need to be rejected, just as you would throw junk mail into a trash can. I get things in the mail all the time that I do not even bother to open. I just throw away certain mail because I know that it is not something that I am interested in. You should not even give some thoughts time to set in and take hold; you need to dismiss them immediately.

Sometimes certain companies send envelopes that look like they have a check inside. You may think: "Boy, this is my lucky day! Somebody sent me a big check!" When you open the envelope, a letter inside may say, "If you will do this and this. . . . This is not a negotiable check. If you apply, you might be

eligible for a loan up to fifty thousand dollars." Well, you should just toss it away.

You may not be sure of some thoughts that you get at first. Perhaps you do not know their origin, but as you investigate them and compare them with God's Word, you may find that you have to dismiss them. There is an ongoing process of considering. I repeat, even if something seems good, it may not be good. Even if something seems to have good reasons for going that direction, it does not mean that it is really of God. You have to thoroughly investigate it.

Weigh Your Decisions by God's Word

King Ahab seemed to have a good reason for wanting to acquire Naboth's vineyard. It was close to his house. In 1 Kings 21:2 Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house. . . ." That is the way the devil works, but oh, if people could only see the other side of the billboard, so to speak. When you see the billboards advertising alcohol or cigarettes as you are driving along the Interstate highways, the advertisers portray people as though they are having the time of their lives in partaking of those things, but if you could only see them a few years down the road, you would not really want what they are selling. The other side of the billboard would have to show the people with their health broken, hacking and coughing, unable to get their breath, suffering from emphysema or cancer and other things that they have to deal with continually. You should weigh things by God's Word.

One thing that God has helped me to learn is to take time to make decisions and to be careful. It is not good to get in too big a hurry. Sometimes things come, and you may feel pressured and think, "Oh, I have to do this quickly," and it is rush, rush, rush! The devil is trying

to get you to go out on a limb while he is on the other end with a saw, cutting it off so that it will take you down. If you do not know for sure what to do about something, you should just hold steady until you know what God has to say about it. Had Eve waited and thought about the consequences rather than seeing that fruit as attractive and something to be desired to make her wise, she might not have given in to the temptation.

In our Scripture lesson, King Ahab made an offer to Naboth. In verse 2 Ahab said, ". . . I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money."

When I read this, I thought of young people who have been brought up in the church and know the Truth. When they come to the age of making their own decisions and getting out on their own, the devil tries to put in their mind: "Why don't you take an easier way? You can still be morally good and religious. I will give you a better vineyard." He tries to get you to trade in your godly inheritance for something different.

If he cannot do that, he says: "Just sell that vineyard altogether and take the money and run. Go out in sin and enjoy the pleasures of life. You should get a taste of the high life and really live it up. Why not sow your wild oats and really have yourself a time with all those things that Mom and Dad have forbidden you to do? You can even listen to the songs that those homosexuals and lesbians sing on the radio. Why don't you go out and enjoy the things that Mom and Dad have kept you from enjoying all these years?" That is how the enemy works, friend. He offers you a replacement vineyard, or he says: "Just get out of this vineyard business altogether and go out and live it up. You should leave the church and get away from all the restraints, the holy living, and all that Bible stuff. Go out and do what you have been wanting to do for a long time."

Never Negotiate With Satan

Friend, the devil works on young people as well as those who have been around for many years. Sometimes when you go through deep valleys and trials, the devil will whisper softly: "Just leave it all behind. It isn't worth fighting anymore. Just go on your way and forsake it all." I have had that thought come into my mind. That is one of those thoughts that you have to treat like junk mail: as soon as such a thought comes into your mind, reject it as quickly as you realize what the devil is trying to work.

There are all kinds of replacement "vineyards" that you could get rather than the one that God has given you. You can go down and get the vineyard of sin. You could become a high-ranking member of some organization and make just a little room for darkness. You could go down and trade in this inherited vineyard for some denominational vineyard, a Babylonian vineyard. The devil will make sure you have one, if you want it. You have to be careful and weigh things according to what God thinks about it.

Someone may ask the question, "What would cause an individual to turn down a good business deal such as the one that King Ahab offered to Naboth?" Read what Naboth stated in verse 3. In essence, Naboth told King Ahab, "The Lord forbids me to do what you are asking me to do." Friend, that is the way you have to deal with the enemy when he tries to persuade you to sell your vineyard. You should never try to negotiate a deal with the devil. You need to respond to him as Naboth did. He simply said, "The Lord forbid it me."

As you consider certain ventures that you could become involved in, you need to ask yourself these questions: "Would it hurt me spiritually to do this? Would this be wrong for me?" You may think, "Well, we could probably keep ourselves in control if we let down a little here."

Friend, you should not think that way. You have to seek God and think as He has shown in the examples in His Word. If God forbids it, then you should not do it.

Your attitude should be: "I am not giving myself to it. God forbids it, so I am not going that way." You have to be strong in this area. When you know that God is against something, you should not even lend an ear to it. Do not give it any time to work, because it is dangerous to do so. When you know God is against something, you should not pray and ask Him if it is all right for you to do it. If you do, you can become deceived.

Keeping the Flesh Under

The Bible teaches us that when Jesus was here during His earthly ministry, He was tempted in all points as we are. Also, the Scripture says there is no temptation but what is common to man, and it will not overtake you if you will stand with God. In Matthew, Chapter 4, we find that Jesus was tempted many times. Matthew 4:2-4 says: "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

First, the devil tried to make Him doubt who He was when he said, "If thou be the Son of God. . . ." The devil is always trying to make us doubt by saying, "If you were really a Christian . . ." or "If you were saved, that bad thought would not have come into your mind." The devil will tempt you through thoughts, but just having a bad thought enter your mind is not sin. However, it is important what you do with that thought. The devil will always try to cause you to doubt the Lord. Also, he will always try to belittle you in your stand for God.

Satan tempted Jesus by saying, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." I want you to notice that he did not say, "You are not really hungry." He did not try to interfere with that desire that Jesus had. Jesus was hungry. He had a flesh just as you and I do, and He had fasted for forty days and nights. That would be long enough to make anyone hungry. His hunger was a natural, fleshly desire that He was feeling. The devil did not try to say, "You are not really hungry." The devil tried to get Jesus to take that natural desire and resolve it in an unnatural way.

God has given you a way for your desires to be satisfied. You have to keep the flesh under, as Paul said, and you have to die daily so that the flesh does not get out of hand. There are ways that God has given you, as He did for Jesus, to get something to eat and fulfill that desire.

Young person, God has made a way for you to meet a fine companion. You need to wait on God until He shows you the right person. When you are dating, do not get out of control, do not get too touchy, do not get too flirty, and do not get ahead of yourself. You must wait on God, and if the Lord has shown you that that person is right for you, you can go through the ceremony of marriage; then God will bless your life. He can give you a home and a family. Sometimes He works in different ways, but He can bring you satisfaction.

The devil will always try to get you to take your natural desires and satisfy them in an unnatural way. You have to be careful. It is not of God to get too close or too affectionate before marriage. It is not of God to be parked alone in places and spend time in the dark before marriage. God has a way for you to find satisfaction, and that is if you wait on the Lord and let Him work in your life as He wants to do; then you will be happy beyond what other quicker ways will produce.

Jesus responded to the devil when the devil tempted Him. He could have commanded those stones to be made into bread; He had the power to do that. We do not have that power, but Jesus could have done that if He wanted to. However, when fleshly desires come, you have power to do whatever you want to do. You can fulfill your desires in a worldly way, or in a sinful way, but you do not have to do that.

"Wait Upon the Lord"

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 40:31, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles." Do you know what an eagle does? It flies higher than any other bird. The eagle does not hang around in the top of the trees or with the sparrows and the little birds. The eagle soars way up into the very heavens. If you will wait on the Lord rather than getting in a hurry and trying to fulfill your desires some other way, He will take you higher than those other ways can take you. Although you can get the quick gratification that the flesh wants, it will never take you as high as you will go if you wait on God to put the things you desire in place in your life. It will never provide for you what God will provide if you wait on Him.

You have to resist the devil. You have the power. Naboth had the power. Had he wanted to, he could have sold his vineyard, but he knew it was against God's commandment. He knew that it was not the right thing to do, without giving it any consideration; therefore, he refused King Ahab's offer. That is how you should respond. You have to be careful. Christian friend, your inheritance, that which God has given you, is precious, valuable, and very, very rich. It is something that not many people have, but you can enjoy it. If you are unsaved and you are not enjoying it, God can give you this godly inheritance. He can make you a partaker of this inheri-

tance with the saints in light.

This inheritance is among those who are sanctified, who are set apart from the world and set apart from doing things as the world does. What a wonderful treasure! Some people leave an earthly inheritance to their children, such as great amounts of money and other worldly possessions. Proverbs 13:22 says, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children." That is what this is. This inheritance of Truth is worth beholding and partaking of even more than a great sum of money or some other valuables that people might have inherited.

Many young people think: "When I become eighteen years of age, I am going to quit going to church and quit minding Mom and Dad. I am going to trade in this 'vineyard' and trade in this way that they have made me live, this way that they have raised me." So they do, either for another vineyard or for the money, and they go out and live in sin.

Living for God Is the Very Best Way to Live

This way is the greatest. God's way of living will produce the most joy, the most happiness, and the most blessings in your life. Friend, if you will turn your life over to God and forsake sin and serve God with all your heart, you can be a partaker of this wonderful inheritance and be on fire for the Lord. Won't you get on fire for God and let Him give you a place to labor and a job to do in the church? You need to put everything else behind you so that you may enter in.

You can have good thoughts and good intentions while you are reading this message and yet go back into the same old ruts. If you do, you will end up in a worse condition than you have ever been. The Bible lets you know that for those who have known the way of righteousness and then turned back, it is terrible. They end up in a worse condi-

tion than they were before, like a sow that goes returns to her wallowing in the mire after she has been washed and cleaned up.

The Bible also compares that to a dog that turns to its own vomit. What a sickening, terrible condition, but that is what God's Word says! If you are introduced to righteousness and begin to walk in this way and then go right back into the same old sinful ways, you will end up in a worse condition, friend. Do you want your life to end up in a worse condition? If not, you must not walk away from God when you know what you ought to do.

Naboth stood firm, and he would not trade his vineyard. He took a stand and said, in essence, "God forbids it, so I cannot do it."

King Ahab probably pleaded: "Oh, but it's near my home, Naboth."

"I am sorry, but I can't do it. God forbids it."

"But I have a better vineyard that I will give to you or I can pay you money for it."

"God forbids it."

Child of God, you need to be as determined to do what is right as Naboth was. You must live your life the way God would have you to live. Perhaps you have heard it said, "The just shall live by faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin." That means everything you are doing, from the way you are living at home, on the job, and wherever you go, you must live by faith and make sure that what you are doing is pleasing in the sight of God.

The moment you begin to feel, "Oh, this isn't pleasing in the sight of God," then you will start doing something about it. You will not override that. If you are going to be justified, then you must live by faith and live in such a way that you are pleasing to God in everything you get involved in.

God will prick your conscience when something is not right. He will show you, "This is not the right way." As soon as you realize that, you need to do something about it

so that you can be justified and live without any wrong in your life. The just live by faith in everything they do. Every place they go, they believe God would have His approval upon them.

"Resist the Devil"

You have to obey God, and you have to be careful to live in such a way that when you lie down at night, you can feel God's approval upon your life, which includes the events that took place, the things that you said, and the things that you did. There is a great fear upon my heart that I do not offend God. God has been so wonderfully good to me. I do not want to cause God to feel sorrow over something that I am doing or talking about. I do not want to cause God to disapprove of my life in any way, so I must be careful.

Naboth refused to do what the enemy wanted him to do, and in verse 3 of our Scripture lesson he said, "The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee." Resisting the devil will cause him to flee from you. James stated in James 4:7b, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." That is what you have to do over and over again.

Someone may say, "Well, it just keeps coming into my mind about having a cigarette again" or "It just keeps coming into my mind about doing this." You must resist the devil. That is what the Bible says to do. You must resist the thought and push it out of your mind. One way to do that is to think about something else. You can sit down and read some Scriptures, talk about the good things of God with someone, or sing a hymn. Doing those things will get the temptation out of your mind.

Someone else may say, "Well, I just keep thinking about the way I used to live and going back and doing some of that." I repeat, you need to get those thoughts out of your mind by thinking on some-

thing else. If you will do that, they will be gone, if you want them to be.

God does not wash away your sins for only a week or two. He does not begin a good work in you just to turn you back to the byways of sin. God saved you for time and eternity. What He has begun in you, He is able to complete, but only if you are willing. You must be determined: "I am going through with God. I am finished with sin and the world. I am on my way to Heaven, and I am not going to turn back anymore." If that is your determination, you will do what God would have you to do.

Keep on the Firing Line

Naboth said, "The LORD forbid it me." The enemy ran for a while, but the devil started working in another way. King Ahab was distraught by Naboth's strong stand. Naboth's rejection of Ahab's offer sent Ahab running back home where he laid on his bed and cried and carried on. Next, along came the devil. The enemy began to work to seek another way in which he could accomplish taking over Naboth's inheritance. The devil is always looking to work through someone. Ahab and Jezebel were in exalted positions.

You have to watch getting lifted up. You must not allow that to happen. Friend, you need to always remember that God is all in all. If there is any good, it is because of God. If there is any ability, it is because of God, not because of your little old hunk of clay. You need to remember that.

As a child of God, your inheritance is very valuable, and you must guard it. Though you may be victorious today, you must not relax your efforts. You should not be as the men who went up and fought against Jericho. They had such a great victory that they thought they could easily take down a little place called Ai. However, the men of Ai gave them a whipping, and Israel lost thirty-six men.

You have to stay right in there and press the battle on, day after day, year after year. God can make you victorious! He can give you the power to be an overcomer, but you have to keep on the firing line. You must not become careless and quit reading your Bible and praying and going to church. Every day you have to keep rejecting the devil and keep embracing the things of God, if you are going to make Heaven your home and enjoy communion with the Lord.

The enemy began to come against Naboth in a deceitful way (that is how the devil works). Jezebel was the vessel that the devil was going to work through. She began to consider the whole situation, and so, in essence, she said, "I will take care of this!" The Scripture text lets us know that she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sent them down to the city where Naboth was dwelling. She wrote to the elders and the nobles in the city and said, "Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people." How convenient! She wanted to make it look as though they were doing something for God.

The devil was not giving up. He wanted that inheritance very badly, and he wants yours too, friend. He wants to pull down the banner of Truth that you are upholding in your life. John 8:32 says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The Truth sets you free to live as God wants you to live. The Truth sets you free from pride, worldly fashions, and the follies of this old world. People may laugh and mock us as the people of God, but we are free to live as God wants us to live. Let them giggle and snicker if they want to, but we are living as God ordained mankind to live. Let them point their fingers and make their little jokes. This is the very best way to live. We have a wonderful inheritance!

We do not have to be in the bondage of sin. We do not have to have bitterness or an ugly spirit. We do not have to be worldly and

ungodly, but we can truly be what God would have us to be. What an inheritance has come down through the years! We are living in a wicked world. It is not just that way in America; it is that way wherever you go. We have an inheritance that we can enjoy, not just after we are gone, but right now. Friend, you do not have to wait until you get to Heaven to get joy and peace.

When I was first saved, I visited many denominational churches. All they sang about was the joy they would have when they got to Heaven. I often thought: "Well, I have joy now. I don't have to wait until I get to Heaven to be happy." Why? God set me free from sin. I am not a drunk anymore, I am not a drug addict anymore, I am not a liar anymore, and I am not a fornicator anymore. God set me free! I do not have to wait until Heaven to have joy. They sang about getting over to those golden streets, walking those streets of gold, and what a wonderful day it will be.

Friend, we are walking on streets of gold now. If you are saved and living for God, your feet are walking on streets of gold today. It is wonderful! What a blessing! You do not have to wait until you go to Heaven. We do not know what all we are going to enjoy in Heaven, but it will be a happy time! It is a joyful time right now. We can experience full joy because of our godly inheritance.

How Is Your Witness?

Going back to our Scripture lesson, we find that in verse 10, Jezebel continued: "And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die." Naboth was just doing what God had called him to do, enjoying the inheritance of his father. Jezebel ordered that two men of Belial be brought in as witnesses against him so that they could make it look as though what they were

doing was in order with God. Sure enough, they found him guilty, and they stoned him to death.

Why did the other people not speak up in Naboth's behalf and say: "Hey, wait a minute! These are men of Belial. They are not worthy witnesses. We are not going to accept what they have to say." When I think of witnesses, I think of the Holy Spirit and the Word. When I think of the qualifications of witnesses, I think of the qualifications that I see in the Word and in the Holy Spirit. Do you know what one qualification is? It is faithfulness. God's Holy Spirit is a faithful witness, day in and day out, through the years. He is not there one day and gone the next; He is a faithful witness.

What a faithful witness the Word of God has been down through the years of time! Many books have been written, but the Bible is still the number one best seller, and it is still available to you and me. We can obtain as many copies as we want. When I think of good witnesses, I think of people who have been faithful to God and to the cause of God for many years.

Why did some of those people not stand up and say: "Wait a minute! I know Naboth, and that is not true!" Rather than standing and proclaiming his innocence, they yielded their time and their ears to the whole matter. Those men of Belial lied and said Naboth had blasphemed God and the king, and then they took him out of the city and stoned him with stones until he died.

The Bible teaches that it is a terrible thing when a little darkness is in the life of one who professes to be a Christian. Matthew 6:23 says: "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Once you have known the Truth, if you allow a little darkness to begin to work, how great is that darkness, because you knew better. You have to be careful.

Sometimes a person may use the expression, "Let me tell you about So-and-So. Now, I'm going to tell you this so that you can pray for that person with me," when that is not really the intention at all. What that person really wants to do is spread gossip. He or she is not telling you so that you will carry a burden and pray. Instead, that person tells others because something is gnawing at him or her. That person wants to destroy someone else. He or she is not getting enough fleshly gratification, so to try to lift up self, that individual puts someone else down. Therefore, he or she says, "Now, I'm telling you this so that we can pray together. I want you to take it home and make it a burden," and then the whispering begins. How great is that darkness!

Do You Have This Godly Inheritance?

Jezebel created a big scheme to bring Naboth down. She wanted to rob Naboth of this inheritance so that Ahab could do with it as he wanted. They were not concerned about the inheritance of God or the real use of the inheritance. Ahab wanted it so that he could make his life easier.

The enemy began to work to seek another way in which he could accomplish taking over Naboth's inheritance. You have to watch the thinking, "It would be so much easier if we did not hold the standard on our children, because other children laugh at them at school, and it's hard sometimes to keep their dresses long enough. It's so hard to find dresses that are modest." Then why not get a sewing machine and make them modest clothing? I am sure that someone would be glad to help you if you need help learning how to sew.

The devil will tell you that it would be so much easier just to do away with some things and to let down the standard a little. Also, he will say: "It is just so hard to go to church three times a week. You

ought to do away with the Sunday night service. You get home after the Sunday morning service, prepare a meal and eat and get it cleaned up and go back to church again; then you have to get up and go to work Monday morning. It would be much easier just to have church once on Sunday." You have to watch those thoughts that the devil puts in your mind.

The men took Naboth out and stoned him until he died. In the Old Testament the way the sinner was punished was by being stoned. However, when Jesus went to Calvary, thank God, He did away with stoning. Jesus hung on the Cross of Calvary and made the sacrifice for you and me. Thank God, we do not kill the sinner anymore. We kill the sin, and the sinner can live and rejoice in the inheritance and in the good things of God. The sinner can

be set free from sin, and then he is not a sinner anymore. He is not a sinner saved by grace. He is a saint who is saved by grace. Thank God, his sins have been washed away, and he is holy.

Sad to say, some people try to take the Bible and twist things to their own using, to try to destroy a good man of God, just as those men in our Scripture lesson took stones and killed Naboth. That is what the devil will try to do to get the inheritance.

Jezebel had Naboth taken out and killed because she and Ahab sought his inheritance. I am glad that we have One who can help us. We can hold on to what God has given us. This inheritance is precious and very valuable. Oh, friend, do not lose sight of how valuable it is to have a godly inheritance.

If you do not have this inheri-

tance, you can have it. If something has been working in your life to try to get you to trade the Truth for something else, you ought to stay away from it. If temptations look attractive to you, you need to flee from those temptations. You may say, "Well, if I move, I could make a lot more money." You will not have any church to attend where Truth is preached, and you will not be able to be around the saints anymore. You had better watch it. The devil will try to get you to trade in your vineyard.

I thank God for this vineyard, but the devil is out to take it away. How is it with your soul? Do you need help from God? Are you really enjoying this inheritance? Won't you lay hold of it? God bless you.

(Cassette C-4783M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2]

trouble with the Lord. Jesus stated in Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Every person will be tested to prove what is truly in the heart. This time of testing is a good opportunity for each one to see what is really motivating his or her life. Do you truly love God and His way or are you just following along for the blessings you might receive? In Deuteronomy 8:2 we read, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no."

There is danger when temptation presents the possibility of becoming disgruntled by causing one to think that the old life was a better way to live. The devil will cause you to think of a time when you thought you had more pleasure and things seemed to have gone better. The children of Israel thought this as

they faced the hardships that came along the way. They began to accuse God of mistreating them and making the way hard for them. They accused Moses of bringing them into the wilderness so that God could destroy them. These accusations no doubt hurt God and stirred His wrath. The Scripture verifies the fact that Israel's unbelief and disobedience and failing to follow God by faith prevented them from gaining the rest that He promised. This same condition can fall on men and women today. Some people grumble over the way God chooses to lead them. They dislike the way God requires them to live and conduct themselves, and then they reject His standard and His man. This is dangerous! What happened to the Israelites can happen to people yet today. God wants a willing and obedient people to serve Him. If you do things God's way, you will prosper and be blessed in your soul. In Isaiah 1:19-20 we read, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with

the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Friend, if you allow an evil heart of unbelief to take hold of you and remain, you will depart from the Lord, even as old Israel did. It would be well for you to take heed to the Word of God, to believe it and obey it. That which has been sent to be a blessing and a guide through life can soon become a curse that destroys. You must overcome all doubts and unbelief through faith and reject any thought of ever turning back to your old sinful life. You must not allow Satan to cause you to entertain the thought that you had it better when you were living in sin. The Christian life is the best life to live here and the only one that will assure entrance into Heaven! Regardless of the trials, persecutions, upsets, misfortunes, afflictions, and frustrations that may come your way, having a Christ filled life is by far the best and only way for man to live. There is really nothing to go back to!

Selected

Proverbs 10:29 The way of the LORD is strength to the upright: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity.

Malachi 3:14 Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?

15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

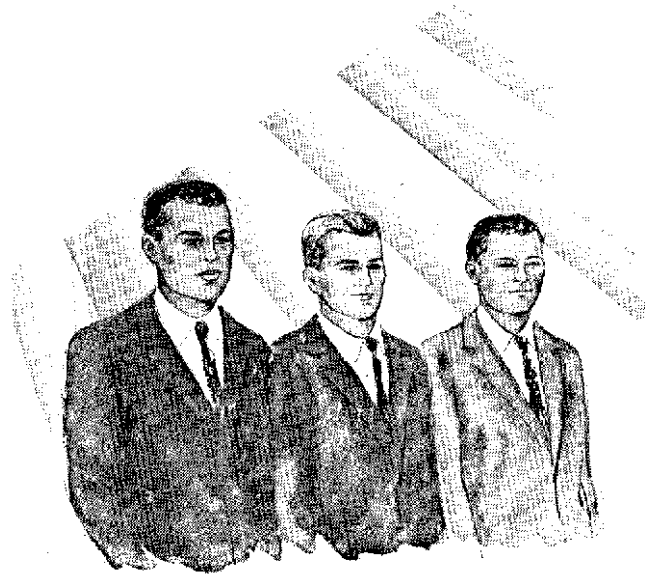
Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

The Strength to Be the Church of God



Brother Wayne Hafley

Be Strong in the Lord

We are living in a time when there is trouble on every side. God is our refuge and strength, and He is a very present help in the time of need. God is mindful of all our problems. He is mindful of what is going on. He knows everything, and He knows how to deal with every situation. You do not have to fall by the wayside. Isaiah 40:31 reads, "But

they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength." God has enough power to help you to be a part of the Church of the Living God.

There is strength in living for God. Zechariah 12:8 says, "In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel

of the LORD before them." The Prophet Zechariah let us know that in this day in which we are living, he that is feeble will be as David. Do you understand what he was talking about? When David had to go out and slay the giant Goliath, in essence, he said to Goliath, "You come to me with a sword, but I come to you in the name of the Lord." The name of the Lord is a high tower to those who trust in Him. You might

have a lot of "giants" before you, but thank God, there is not one that can get you down if you will trust in the Lord. David said that God delivered him from the bear and the lion, and He would deliver him from the giant. I want you to know that God is just the same in the evening time as He was in the morning time. When the Apostles went out, nothing could stop them. Though men threatened them and threw them in prison, they found the strength and the grace to go on.

I want you to know that as God was in the morning time, so shall He be in the evening time. In the morning time God had a victorious church, and it was made up of powerful men and women for God. They leaned upon God, and nothing was able to stop them. There is strength to be the church today. I am glad that we can reign with Christ. God is still on the throne, and we are not left alone. He knows our risings and our downsittings. He knows the path that we are traveling, and every child of God has access to His grace, whereby we can stand and rejoice.

Christian friend, in Christ you can reign. He has made you a king and a priest, and you can reign in this life. You can live the righteousness that God requires and be accepted of Him. At times you may be tired, and trials and tests will come, but if your heart is set on living for God, He will never leave you or forsake you. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always." What a mighty God we serve! God is faithful to His people. He will never fail us. He is an all-powerful God. None of us has to be weak and feeble. Thank God, we can be strong in the Lord!

Characteristics That Identify What Is Not the Church of God

Division weakens people and brings confusion, and God is against it. God is not the author of confusion. Dear one, you do not have to be in confusion. If you are honest

with God, He will show you what is right and what is wrong.

Isaiah 5:20 speaks of people who were so confused that they called good evil and evil good. They lost their discernment of what was right and what was wrong. Friend, you do not have to be deceived, if you will be honest with God. To get the strength to be the Church of the Living God, you must be willing to accept the Truth, regardless of where it is and what it is. You have to be ready to stand against that which is wrong.

There are a few characteristics that identify that which is not the church. The Bible says that the church is a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. If you are a Church of God minister, you must have a strong ministry and lay line upon line, precept upon precept, and rightly divide the Word of God.

Isaiah 13:10 says, "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." If the ministry fails to proclaim the glorious Truth, people will not find the strength to live for God. The ministry, through the preaching of the Word, strengthens the church.

If you read Ezekiel, Chapter 34, you will find that the people spoken of there had false shepherds ruling them. Through the Prophet Ezekiel, God told those false shepherds that they had destroyed and scattered His flock. God had something against those shepherds because they fed themselves and did not bind up the wounds. Division is sin. Woe to the man who causes division! Romans 16:17 says to "mark them which cause divisions." Such a person does not serve God, but he serves his own belly. One who causes division is not saved.

You cannot live on inspirational singing. You must have the Word of God. If you build again the things you once destroyed, you make yourself a transgressor. Do you know how you can win this battle? You

have to hold up the man of God's hands, back him up, and support him 100 percent. If you are attending a true Church of God congregation, are you backing your pastor?

Being a Peculiar Treasure

The strength of the church is in unity and brotherly love. The Bible lets you know that he who says he is in the light and hateth his brother is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. You are not one of God's children if you hate your brother or your sister. Jesus said in Mark 13:13, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." He said in Matthew 5:11-12: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Paul had a people who once loved him and then turned against him. He said in Galatians 4:15-16: "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"

Today people are about like they were in Israel of old. When you drop the plumbline, they say, "Get it out of there. Prophecy smooth things to us." If you are going to make Heaven your home, you should not want a minister that speaks smooth things. You need one who will blow the trumpet and sound the alarm. God will not accept just anything. Just having the name "Church of God" does not mean that God has accepted it. It is not the name that makes the church; it is the people who possess that name. A building does not make the church; it is God's people who are in it. As a man of God, you cannot be a respecter of persons. When God measured the

city in Revelation, He measured it just as far one way as He did the other way. We need to be strong people for the Lord so that other people can say, "They really live it; they are truly God's people."

Do you know what has hindered people whose hearts are full of doubt? It is the way they have acted, their attitudes, and their spirits. You may say, "My attitude does not have anything to do with it." Yes, it does. Your attitudes reveal your character. Oh, friend, certainly it is a serious matter.

The Bible talks about God's people being a peculiar treasure. The Kingdom of God is a peculiar treasure. We are valuable to the Lord. We are sanctified and meet for the Master's use. You should want to be someone who is valuable to the Lord for His work and His cause, not someone who works against it. God's people are those who are following the Lamb, and He has written the covenant upon their hearts. God said He would make a new covenant with the house of Israel (Jeremiah 31:31).

"Perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God"

In Jeremiah 24:7 God, speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, said, "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." God identifies His people.

To be the Church of God, you have to be a separate people. John wrote in 1 John 2:15: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." In 2 Corinthians 6:17 the Apostle Paul said, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." Then he said in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthi-

ness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." You may not always see everything exactly as I do, but you must have the right spirit.

You have to be washed and made clean and set apart for Him. God does a work within the heart with old-time salvation, and thank God, when you get that salvation, you will have His Spirit. His Spirit will work in bringing you to perfection through sanctification and will set you apart completely. The Holy Spirit has to work with you in leading and guiding you into all Truth. To be the Church of God, there is only one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. You have to be able to work with that one Spirit. The Spirit has to have something to work with.

I thank God for a people who have the right spirit. There is no way that you can go to Heaven with a wrong spirit. Some people do not have the right spirit. You can have strength to endure things in the right spirit. You cannot have real unity with a spirit of division; the spirit of unity is not there. I cannot be against a brother and him be against me and both of us have the right spirit.

I am glad for the Spirit of God that will enable us to have the right spirit. David said in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." That meant that he had the wrong spirit. Unforgiveness and bitterness are bad spirits. Also, faultfinding is a bad spirit; it is a pharisaical spirit. You do not have to run around with an old picky spirit. You should want to see the good in individuals.

God wants you to come out of confusion. That is the reason He said to come out of Babylon. To be the church, you must walk in the light as God reveals it to you. Do you know why some people do not have the strength to be Church of God? They are not willing to walk in the light as they see it. Why? They love darkness more than they do light. Many people will not accept the Bible standard, because they love

darkness rather than light.

Division is a work of the devil. You need to stop arguing about *who* is right and take *what* is right and admit your own fault. Some people have so much pride and stubbornness, and they are afraid to confess their wrong attitudes, their unforgiveness, and their own faults. God is sick of it. If you want to be Church of God, you must repent of sin. If you have a faultfinding spirit, you must repent of it. You must get right with God and make an open confession of Christ.

Do you have an old sulky spirit? Some people do not have a bit of love in their hearts. They are not even willing to help a brother. If someone were to make a mistake, they are ready to push him right on down. Galatians 6:1 reads, "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Some people are trying to be the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the One who condemns men and women.

Winning the Battle for the Lord

Getting back to our subject, you can have the strength to go on for the Lord. When David fought Goliath, he found strength in the Lord. Gideon, even though he did not have a great number of men, still had the strength of God to defeat the enemy. Joshua 23:10 reads, "One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you." In Philippians 4:13 Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

When the Prophet Elijah hid in a cave after Jezebel had threatened his life, he thought he was the only one left who had not bowed to Baal. In 1 Kings 19:18 God told Elijah, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." God let Elijah know that "I have seven thousand men that you do not know anything about." Thank God, we have an army over in Heaven and

an army here, and real soldiers help one another and care for one another.

To win this war, you need the strength of God. You must not be ignorant of the devil's devices. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

In Joshua, Chapter 5, we read that Joshua and the children of Israel were camped in Gilgal. Verse 13 says that Joshua saw a man with his sword drawn and said to him, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" In verse 14 the man that he saw replied, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." If you are in the army of the Lord, you must listen to the Captain. He is the One who gives the orders. He is the One who calls the ranks and does the inspection. Thank God, we have a good Captain who leads us from victory to victory. We are in a battle, but we can win by the power of God.

In 1 Samuel, Chapter 17, you can read that David was preparing to battle the Philistine giant Goliath. In verse 47 David said, "The battle is the LORD'S." Some people would win the battle if they would keep their mouths shut. You have to rest some things in the Lord.

In the Old Testament the Syrian army surrounded the city of Dothan where Elisha was. In 2 Kings 6:15 his servant said, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Then in verses 16-17 Elisha said to his servant: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." They won the battle for the Lord.

In 2 Chronicles 15:2 we read, "And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and

all Judah and Benjamin; the LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

Shedding Unnecessary Weights

As you serve the Lord, sometimes there are things that you must lay aside, things that weigh you down in running the race. You must shut off the works of darkness and get rid of anything that hinders you in running the race. You have to stay strong to keep running.

In Psalm 37:25 David said, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." You ought to give God the best of your life. Sell out to Him completely, and be strong enough to give up things.

Some people are so weak. Friend, to be strong, there are things you have to give up. You need to give up any weights that are weighing you down. David of old said in Psalm 101:3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes." David did not want anything to hinder him in the way. He said he would set no wicked thing before his eyes. The television used to be a thing preached against strongly, and it still is. However, people have gotten so wicked that they have gone back and gotten a television.

If the devil can get you to let down on one thing, you will let down on another and another and another. He is a slick and slimy devil. Do you go out and rent dirty movies? What do you look at on the Internet? Internet pornography is of the devil, and you had better stay away from it. It will destroy your virtue and your spirit. It is a trick of the devil. Older men contact teen-aged girls in Internet chat rooms to try to meet them someplace, and then sometimes they end up killing them. Ungodly lust is running wild. You need to be as strong on vacation or wherever you are as you are on Sunday.

James wrote in James 1:14-16: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren."

When Adam and Eve were thrown out of the garden, the Lord placed an angel there that did not let anything in. We have a strong angel that does not let anything in that will defile the city of God. Friend, we each have many battles. Do you know what it will take to win each battle? We must fully obey God. When the children of Israel went around the walls of Jericho, they obeyed God. Soon they became self-confident and, in essence, said, "We can easily take Ai." Do you know what happened? Sin got in the camp. We must have strong protection to have a strong church. You need to live a sanctified life, set apart for God.

God's People Are a Holy People

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 6:15-16: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." He that is joined to the harlot has another spirit. Those spirits clash. Do you know what it means to stay joined to the Lord? You are going to stay with the true Church of God. You will not run down and join Babylon. This has an effect on your stand and your solidness and how strong you are. A prominent stand has to be taken. All who are on the Lord's side, come over here.

Your spirituality has to do with the atmosphere you are around. If you fool around with Babylon's unclean spirits, you will get that same spirit. The harlot spirit is a spirit

that is unfaithful to the husband. In fact, the Bible calls it spiritual fornication. Once you know the Truth and you go back on the Truth, you are a fornicator, and no fornicator has an inheritance in the Kingdom of God. The Corinthian church wanted to keep a man among them who had committed fornication, but Paul said in so many words, "Take this man out of here."

You can have the strength to go through tribulation and trials. When the church went into the wilderness, they came out of those trials and washed their robes and made them white. When the trials come, you will have a cleansing if you will hold steady.

Abraham sent his servant to get a bride for Isaac. When he met Rebecca, she was to meet certain qualifications. When Abraham's servant spoke to her of Isaac, she said, "I will go." She had never seen him. Perhaps you have never seen the church, but if you will take a stand by faith, you will be glad that you did when you see her. The Spirit, as a servant, is seeking a bride for God. Abraham had much wealth. Malachi 3:17 reads, "And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

John, in Revelation 21:9, got carried away with mystery Babylon until God got hold of him and said, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." In other words, He was saying, "I want you to get your eyes off that harlot and keep your eyes on the bride." Friend, God wants you to keep your eyes on the church, the Lamb's wife. The Lord showed John the bride, that holy city of Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven, and He let him know that she is holy. To be God's child, you must be holy. First Peter 1:16 states, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

You have to come out of the unclean thing to be holy. Why? When you come out of Babylon, you

need to cleanse yourself from all of Babylon's tricks. This coming out will bring rejoicing. If you are going to be a part of the city of God, you have to live a victorious life. That is where the rejoicing is. The Prophet Habakkuk said in Habakkuk 3:17-18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Speaking of the New Testament church, Galatians 4:26 says, "But Jerusalem, which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Walking Uprightly

Proverbs 29:25 tells us, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." Some people fear man more than they fear God. Some men even fear their wives: "If you go to that Church of God, I'll leave you." On the other hand, some men have the wife held in a cage where she cannot really do what the Lord tells her to do. Friend, you do not need to be in bondage, or in captivity. First John 4:18 reads, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." I am glad for the freedom in Christ and for fellowship with the saints.

The church is wearing the wedding garments, and she is enjoying the marriage supper of the Lamb right now. In Matthew, Chapter 22, Jesus told a parable likening the Kingdom of God to a certain king who sent forth his servants to call people to the wedding of his son. When the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man who did not have on the wedding garment. In essence, he said, "Friend, why are you here without a wedding

garment?" The man was speechless, so the king told his servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Are you wearing the beautiful wedding garment? That man had as much chance as anyone else to have on the wedding garment.

Isaiah 4:2 reads, "In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." Who can stand the everlasting burning and the spirit of judgment? In this city of God the spirit of judgment puts fire on Babylon, and the city of Babylon burns. Do you know what we are to do in this evening time? We are to give Babylon a double cup.

Your works will be tried by fire. God's people are a separate people, dead to sin, crying out against sin, and living for God. Psalm 15:1 asks, "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" God lets us know who is in there: he who walks uprightly. Are you willing to give up things to be a part of the church? God will give you strength to give up whatever you need to, but your mind and flesh will say no. Is there anything you need to give up? Are you coming short of the light, coming short of really being what you ought to be for God?

Someone may say, "Oh, I used to be more spiritual, but I have drifted a little and have gotten into the fashions of the world." It breaks my heart to see those who were once on fire for God but today they are decked out like the world. At one time they had fiery testimonies and shouted praises to God when the Truth was preached, but now they never even come around the Church of God. If you are not where you know you ought to be spiritually, won't you seek the Lord while you still have the opportunity?

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