

The Gospel Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

"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 July 2008 No. 7



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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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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Annual Financial Report and a Word of Thanks

Once again, our mind is turned to thoughts of appreciation to all our readers for their continued support of this work. We want you to know that we are grateful for your prayers and your thoughtful giving. The letters that come in prove to be an encouragement to us. Through this means, we want to thank everyone, and we want you to know that your offerings are deeply appreciated.

We are reminded through your letters that God's Word is still reaching out to precious souls. The anointed Word is yet locating the unsaved and the backslidden. It is ever a reminder to them of the love and the concern that God has for them personally. It constantly admonishes them to turn to the One who died for them. Also, it brings strength and courage to the saint of God who has been at the battle's front. It offers inspiration to the weary heart to press the battle on. We are yet finding those who have been battered around in false religion. To them, the Word of God is like an oasis in a dry desert. When the pure Word goes forth under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, it prepares a table for the hearts of all mankind that is able to supply every need.

It always brings joy to us when we hear that The Gospel Trumpeter has been a help and a blessing to some soul, whether a saint or a sinner. Not a person connected with this monthly publication could rightfully take any credit for success; all honor and glory belong to the Lord. We are only workers together and helpers with Him. When He receives His proper glory and exaltation from His creatures, then He, in turn, blesses us through His Spirit and makes our labors

fruitful.

We realize that no good can be accomplished without Him being the Captain of the operation. It is still through His presence and divine guidance that the victory is won and souls are reached with the Gospel. Jesus reminds us that without Him we can do nothing. On the other hand, we can do all things through His strength.

Our sufficiency rests in Him, and we want God to know that we need Him on the scene. When we think of our inability to do the task set before us, we are reminded of Gideon and the children of Israel as they came against the Midianites. At first, the mighty man of valor started out with several thousand soldiers. God saw that when Israel defeated the enemy, that they would be tempted to glory in their own strength, so the Lord began to reduce the number of troops until Gideon ended up with only three hundred men. Looking through natural eyes, this proposed great odds, but that is when God gains all the glory.

Can you imagine how small and incapable Gideon and the men must have felt as they considered going up against such a great company of warriors? In their own strength there was no way possible that they could do the job. Humanly, the odds were too great. Many times God leads His people to places such as that. First, He does so to remind us of how weak and frail we are, and then He wants to show us just how strong He is when we put our trust fully in Him.

God told Gideon that He was going to give them deliverance, but there was something that Gideon had to do before God

[continued on page 22]

1 Kings 18:17 And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?

18 And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

19 Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

21 And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under:

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

25 And Elijah said unto the

prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under.

26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

27 And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

28 And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

29 And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down.

31 And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

32 And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as

great as would contain two measures of seed.

33 And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

34 And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

35 And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

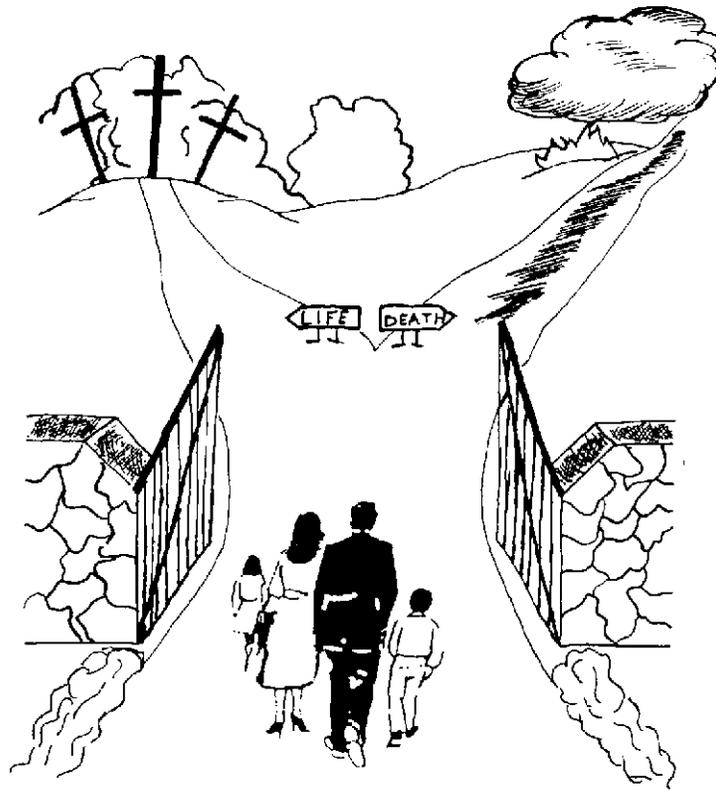
37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

How Long Halt Ye Between Two Opinions?



Brother Roger L. Decker

Elijah's Role With Israel

The Prophet Elijah's role constantly placed him in opposition to the majority of the people of his nation. Elijah had prophetic confirmations with King Ahab and later with his son, Ahaziah. Their toleration of more than one god was the ongoing reason for Elijah's prophetic judgments. When we first read of the Prophet Elijah, he was making a declaration of judgment. He came into the Scriptures as John the Baptist did, preaching judgment in the wilderness.

Elijah's first confirmation with King Ahab in 1 Kings, Chapter 17, was when he gave him the message that there would not be any rain until he said so. Elijah turned off the rain at God's command, and then in Chapter 18, at God's command again, he prayed that it would rain,

and it did. In 2 Kings 1:2 when Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, fell and injured himself, he sent messengers to ask Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, about his faith. Elijah intercepted them and sent word back to Ahaziah that he would soon die. Ahaziah sent three different detachments of fifty soldiers, to arrest Elijah because he did not like the declaration that Elijah gave concerning him.

The first two detachments of fifty soldiers that were sent out by King Ahaziah died. Those two units were destroyed by fire from Heaven. The captain of the third detachment got a little wiser and pleaded for their lives and were spared; then they safely escorted Elijah to King Ahaziah, and Elijah delivered the prophecy of King Ahaziah's impending death to him personally.

In the Hebrew language the question "How long halt ye between two opinions?" in verse 21 of our Scripture lesson means "How long hop ye upon two boughs?" It was a metaphor taken from the birds hopping from bough to bough; not knowing which bough to settle upon, they would halt. Israel was halted, and they could not walk uprightly, so they were at a place where they were of no value to anyone but the devil. Israel dreaded God; therefore, they could not totally abandon Him. However, they also feared King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and thought they must embrace the religion of the state. Their conscience forbade them to do the former, yet their fear of man persuaded them to do the latter. They were not heartily engaged in either. At this point in time, their minds seemed evenly balanced, and

they were waiting for a favorable opportunity to make their decision. Such an opportunity presented itself to them through the mercy of God.

Elijah's Challenge to Israel

Elijah issued quite a challenge to the people of Israel. Again, verse 21 of our Scripture lesson says, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Elijah went on to state that he was the only true prophet left, and Baal's prophets numbered four hundred fifty.

Elijah felt that the only way to move the children of Israel from their position was to challenge the prophets of Baal. Therefore, in verses 23-24 of our Scripture lesson Elijah said: "Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken."

I want you to notice that Elijah was very fair in this challenge. He gave the prophets of Baal every advantage when he granted that the god who answered by fire should be acknowledged as the true God. The Baal that they worshiped was called Apollo, or the sun god, and was the god of fire; therefore he had only to work within his own element. Also, Elijah gave the prophets of Baal first choice of the bullocks for sacrifice. The children of Israel said it was well spoken.

In the Scripture reading you can read the outcome of the challenge. The great God of Heaven sent down fire and consumed the sacrifice, licked up the water, the wood, the stones, and the dust. Then Elijah

ordered that the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal be destroyed. After the sacrifice was accepted and the prophets of Baal were destroyed, Elijah went to pray, and then he sent someone to notify Ahab that there was a sound of an abundance of rain, not just a sprinkle but an abundance.

Unsettled Hearts

Now I want to take that message and bring it up to date. I like to take the principles of the Scriptures and apply them to us today. Some people are doing the same thing that Israel of old did. They have not made a clear-cut break from the world, and they need to. They are limping along trying to serve God, while parts of their hearts are going out to the wrong places. They have a slight fear of God and do not want to abandon Him completely. They do not want to quit attending the church services, yet they are halted, as a bird leaping from limb to limb, not truly settled about which limb to settle upon. God does not have all their hearts as He wants.

In Proverbs 23:26 the writer stated this: "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways." Friend, you cannot serve God halfheartedly. That is a miserable state for a person to get into. Israel was in a halted condition. They feared God too much to abandon Him completely, yet they feared King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and wanted to follow the religion of the state. In that halted condition they were no good to God. The only thing they were good for was for Satan to use them.

Too many people have things that are crowding out the Spirit of God. They are walking with a limp, spiritually speaking. They are tossed when it comes to the Bible standard of the church. They know that in order to be accepted of God and to please Him, they must dress as Christians should. On the other hand, they also want to be accepted by the world. Therefore, they back

away from the Bible standard a little, and they are halted.

The sisters in that condition begin to wear their skirts shorter, and they are halted in their Christian experience. They become concerned that someone might think they are overdoing it, so they try to be accepted by both the church and the world. They do not want to be left out in the cold entirely with the church. They try to be accepted by the church and the worldly crowd. They are halted, just as Israel of old was. Those who are in a halted condition are going to be brought to a showdown: if God is God, they must serve Him; and if the world is their god, they will serve it. They are not going to be able to answer a word.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." What was He saying? He was saying there is no use for you to try to do that, because you cannot get it done.

Only when the idolatry stopped in the lives of Israel of old did the rain begin to fall again, and the rain came in abundance. God wants to bless His people; He wants to turn on the blessings from Heaven, but He does not want you to be halted between two opinions. How long has it been since the dew of Heaven has fallen upon your soul?

Have You Robbed God?

Some have not received any blessings from God since they quit tithing. Although prices of things have gone up, God's percentage still remains the same. Malachi, the last of the Old Testament Prophets, wrote in Malachi 3:8-12: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now

herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the LORD of hosts."

If you stop tithing, God will not rebuke the devourer as He once did. It is amazing that when people get saved, they want to know how much they should give. Covetousness is a terrible sin. Some people always have enough for themselves, but they struggle with that which is God's. God said He would rebuke the devourer, or those things that take all your paycheck.

When God does not have all your heart, you will look for ways to rob Him. Sometimes people have two or three jobs, yet they still do not have enough money to make ends meet. The husband works, the wife works, and the children work, yet they have a shortage of funds. Why is that? In many cases, they are robbing God. They have withheld their tithes and offerings, and God sees that. You see, the tithe is not yours; it is God's. If you withhold the tithe, God says, "You are robbing Me." Could it be that you have failed God in tithing? Could it be that God is not in first place in your life? Oh, you say that He is, but is He first when the offering plate is passed to you? God has made you a steward over that which He has given you. He is not against people saving money or obtaining wealth. Some prophets in the Old Testament were wealthy, and so were some people in the New Testament. As long as the riches did not have them, God blessed them.

Standing Against Temptation

God gives you the strength to get out of bed and go to work, but

the same God of Heaven who gives you that strength could work the other way. Some have not severed relationships with their worldly friends, and it causes them to halt in their Christian experience. Dear one, when you truly get salvation, you will not have to worry about worldly friends. On the other hand, when you are halted between two opinions, the world knows that. They know when your heart is not truly into serving God. I am not saying that a person could not have friends in the world, but you should not allow them to influence you to do wrong.

On the job you do not have to worry about being pestered by the world if you live right. Also, when you are living right, you will do a full day's work; that will separate you from the majority of the people. I have been on both sides of that. I knew what it was to do very little at a factory, and I knew what it was to do a full day's work. The change came when I got saved. True Christians are the best workers any factory could ever have. The Christian is not a troublemaker; he is a peacemaker. He goes in to do his job, and he wants to please the company. Why? The company pays his wages.

Proverbs 1:10-16 reads: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not [in other words, do not give in to their desires and passions]. If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause: Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit: We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil: Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse: My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood."

Ephesians 5:11 says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." As a Christian, you may be tempted to run with the

world, to dress as the world does, and to indulge in the same entertainment that they do, but you need to stand against these temptations. If you start going to the places where your worldly friends go, the next thing you know, you are going to be limping along in your experience and halting between two opinions. Then you will fear God, but you will also fear that your worldly friends will think that you have become too religious. I do not know of anyone who is overdoing it.

Dear one, God wants your whole heart. Serving God is not boring, not when you truly turn everything over to Him. Serving God is exciting! It is not a drudgery. When you see a soul delivered from sin because of your prayers or your helping hand, it is payday.

A Divided Heart

Again, Elijah said, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). Dear one, do not be tossed and halted. You should not limp from one opinion to the other. You need to be honest and admit it if that is what you are doing. If that is your plight, you are miserable.

Today there are many gods, just as there were in the days of old Israel. Oh, most people are not bowing down to them at a shrine, but the gods today have just as strong a hold on people as those gods did on the people in yesteryear. Today there is the god of television, the god of dirty movies, and the god of pornography, just to mention a few. These gods have a drawing to them. If you are not careful, they will drain every ounce of spirituality from you.

When you get married, you should no longer have divided affection. The flirting ought to come to an end. You should only have eyes for your husband or your wife. You should not be making secret telephone calls. You should not have the boys' night out or the girls' night

out. That ought to be out of your system when you get married. You should not be thinking about someone else. When you got married, you said marriage vows before other witnesses and before God. You said, "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer." Husband, even in tough economic times, she is still your wife, until death do you part. It is a beautiful thing in the Church of God to grow up together, to wed, to have a good marriage, to grow old together, and to leave this world with no regrets. That is wonderful! You should not do things that cause your husband or your wife to have a lack of trust in you. The vows that you said are still binding even as you get older, until death do you part.

Are you tossed about and unsettled, all because you have a divided heart? How can you get

victory over it? You must destroy all the things in your life that you have been giving allegiance to instead of God. At the Red Sea, all those who followed and were in pursuit of the children of Israel were lost in the sea. All the things that are causing you to limp must come to an end. If you keep limping, you are going to fall. God wants you to destroy all the things that cause you to have a divided heart.

Are you being tossed about as Israel of old was? Could the Prophet say to you, "How long halt you between two opinions? If god be God, follow Him; but if Baal is your god, then follow him." What would you say? Israel of old did not answer a word. If you are being tossed about, you need to tell God all about it. You can tell Him that you want complete victory. When God hears

that, it pleases Him. You are not going to have a hard time getting along with God when you are honest and want to do right.

If you want to do right, God will help you. The only thing God asks is that you be honest. There is no sense in telling God that you do not have any trouble when you do have; He knows the truth. If things are drawing you away and causing you to limp when it comes to serving God, you need to deal with it now. You should not put it off until tomorrow. Why? Only the Lord knows whether or not you will see another day. You need to deal with it while it is fresh in your mind and when God deals with you. You will be so glad that you did.

(Compact Disc TR-233E)

Meeting Announcements

NEWTON, KS

July 14-20

REVIVAL: The Church of God, 400 N. Meridian, Newton, KS 67114

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, OH. Preaching on the Book of Revelation.

Service times: Monday-Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday 10:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.; Sunday 10:45 a.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Sandy Killfoil @ 316-842-5127

MECHANICSBURG, IN

July 17-20

REVIVAL & FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Mechanicsburg Church of God

Evangelist: Brother Aurelius Raines, Chicago, IL

Service times: Thursday-Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday 10:00 a.m. with meal afterward;

Saturday afternoon baptismal service; Sunday 9:45 a.m. @ Mechanicsburg &

Sunday 6:00 p.m. @ Brown Road. Special singing, anointed preaching, & spiritual fellowship.

For further information contact: Pastor Allen Polston @ 765-524-1776 or visit our website at www.churchofgodindiana.com

Happy is the man who has learned
to hold the things of this world
with a loose hand.

Ephesians 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their

heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him,

and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

The Curse of the Life Away From God



Brother Esau Brooks

Words of Caution

As we look over these words of admonition, first of all, I want you to consider that originally they were directed to saved people. Second, I want you to consider the fact that they were spoken to serve as words of caution, not only to those people of the past but also to us in the world today. The great Apostle Paul made a very moving declaration,

which was making known a truth to the people back then, and now I am striving to make it known to you today. He was speaking of a truth that very few people realize: a curse comes with a life away from God. The Apostle Paul wanted people to understand that sinning and rebelling against God affect man in more than one way. It makes an individual a sinner, and it affects the entire man.

I ask you to focus your attention on verse 18 of our Scripture reading, which states, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." He mentioned three definite effects that sin has on an individual. First, a sinner's understanding is enveloped in darkness along spiritual lines. Second, sin has the potential of

alienating, or cutting off, one completely from the life of God. May you be quick to realize the difference between physical life and the life of God. Third, this condition also blinds the heart, because of the ignorance that sin allows one to go on in.

The fact that Paul's admonition was directed to saved people should come to us as being very significant. In essence, the Apostle Paul began by stating, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord [not in his own understanding, not in his own way of seeing things, but in the Lord] that you, brethren, from now on, will not condescend to walk as other Gentiles walk." Those Ephesians were Gentiles. No doubt, it was easy for them to fall in line with other Gentiles in their practice of living, which was exactly what the Apostle Paul admonished them against doing.

No doubt, some would say that we do not need this today, but we do. While I am not dealing with this from the standpoint of Gentiles with Gentiles, I am dealing with it from the standpoint of church people and religion. More and more every day, it is becoming so easy for people to pattern themselves after others. In too many cases that is the reason there seems to be little difference between that which is the Church of God and that which is comprising denominationalism. It is my own personal conviction that the line of demarcation has become a little too low.

I would say that Paul was dealing with this matter because the congregation at Ephesus was beginning to feel the effects of the first apostasy—the first compromise, which was the very thing that the Apostle Paul had endeavored to warn them against.

It Is High Time to Become Fully Awakened

In Acts, Chapter 20, we find that Paul was bound in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. In verse 17 we read that from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and

called the elders of the church together. He felt the approach of death. He was aware that he was not going to be with them much longer. He had perceived by divine inspiration that their spiritual existence was being threatened; therefore, he decided to counsel with the elders one last time.

Verses 18-20 state: "And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

The Apostle Paul could not afford to keep back anything that was profitable to them, because some disagreed with him. There are always going to be those who feel that they know more than the Holy Ghost. They feel that they reserve the right to dictate to God what they think He should give them. God is our Creator, and we owe all to Him. Therefore, He has the right to dictate to us the things that He would have us to know. However, Paul said that he did not hold back that which was profitable to them.

Paul labored with a concern and a burden, but he also labored with an objective. He made it plain to them that he was not just beating the air; he knew who his enemy was. He was not running as one who was uncertain; he knew what he was after. It is high time for us as God's people to become fully awakened to what is going on all around us in the spiritual realm. Some are like the five foolish virgins. They are falling asleep on the job, and they are totally unconscious to what is going on in the spiritual realm. As a result, they are falling victim to all kinds of spirits. It would really shock many of us to know of all the spirits that have invaded the ranks of the believing world.

Paul was so concerned about the brethren at Ephesus that he held a revival for three years, with services every day and every evening. He went around knocking on doors. Perhaps people would hear a knock on the door, and the mother would tell the child to see who was at the door. As the child looked out the door, he might have said, "Mama, it's that preacher again." She said, "Oh, no! Not again!" How many times have you been in that position, where someone was carrying a burden and trying to awaken you to the dangers around you, yet you were so unaware of what was going on that you said, "Oh, no! Not again!" Paul said that he preached to them publicly and from house to house.

Take Heed

Verses 21-27 read: "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." We are in need of all of the counsel of God, and God has His way of bringing it to our attention. We have the option of accepting or rejecting it.

The ministry must be able to say, like Paul, "I am free from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." Sometimes that is not

pleasant. It is like the little boy who, when his mother asked him what he would like to be when he grew up, said, "Well, Momma, I would like to be a lawyer or a doctor."

She said, "No, child, I want you to be a minister, a preacher of the Gospel."

He said, "Oh, no, Momma, I don't want to be a minister, because the preacher says things that people don't like."

That is the truth. It is not often that a preacher can preach what everyone wants to hear, and if he ever does, he will find himself in trouble with God. After all, preachers are under obligation to God; that is the way Paul saw it. Therefore, he said that he was free and pure from the blood of all men, because he did not shun to declare to them all the counsel of God.

Paul said in verse 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Paul said to feed the Church of God, not on just one particular kind of meal. For example, you might like french fries and coke, but just think what would happen to you if that was all you were to eat for your diet. We must have diets to make us sound physically. Also, it is going to take a healthy, balanced diet of the Word of God to make us sound spiritually. In the Word of God there is such a thing as having meat for the season.

Today we are living in very perilous times. Whether you are a saint of God or a sinner, you cannot afford the luxury of being casual along spiritual lines. These are days when you must be watchful and be on your guard. In 1 Peter 5:8 Peter said to "be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." We have not made it through yet. We are still in the battle. We are going to have to fight every inch of the way until the very end.

It does not matter to Satan how he gets you, just as long as he gets you. There are people whom the devil cannot ensnare through gambling, drinking whiskey, or going to the honky-tonks because they have never partaken of these things, so he has to come up with other tricks. That is the reason you cannot afford to take things for granted and be casual. You must be sober and vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, is as a roaring lion, walking about and seeking whom he may devour.

In Acts 20:28 Paul told the elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves," because in most cases, as the ministry goes, so goes the people. Much of the mess in religion today is the result of a false ministry. Therefore, we need to be aware of what Satan is doing. In so many words, Paul said, "Brethren, watch yourselves and keep yourselves straight, and then the flock will be straight." You cannot have a straight flock under a crooked ministry. Men pleasers are not God's servants. You have to get to the place where the approval of God and the favor of God mean more than the favor of individuals and the approval of the crowd.

Again, Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God. . . ." The church needs to be fed a balanced diet so that she can be healthy spiritually.

Friend, God wants you to make it to Heaven, and He is doing all He can to get you there. Some people wait until nearly their last breath to cry out to God for mercy, thinking that they will walk into Heaven, but it is not going to be that easy. In Luke 13:24 Jesus said to "strive to enter in at the strait gate." It matters what gate you enter. Matthew 7:13-14 says: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate,

and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

We have to look this thing over again in these times. We are living in an age where people are throwing off all restraints. People are coming out in the open and following the line of thought, "Let it all hang out." Many people are falling for that gag. This is the reason that people are in all kinds of messes. I marvel at the way our civilization is degenerating today. Man is going down.

When I was a child, no one would dare to call one of us boys a sissy or we would have fought that person. Now many young men have changed. They are fighting others to call them sissies. They are looking for laws to be legislated so they can flaunt their lifestyle as they go around. That is how far down our civilization and our generation is going. I believe that it is only God's mercy that many as yet have not been overthrown.

"Earnestly Contend for the Faith"

Matthew 24:24 tells us, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Something is going to have to give soon or the very elect will not be able to stand. Everywhere we turn we are faced with indifference, carelessness, lethargy, and apathy when it comes to the things of God. People get to a certain place, a certain position in the things of God, and then they relax. More people are joining churches today than ever, even though they are getting nothing in return. They just have it as a pacifier.

Again, Paul said in Acts 20:28 to "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Verses 29-30 continue: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men

arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." This was Paul's parting admonition to the church of Ephesus. Is that not the trend anymore? Many are out to build up a following for themselves, but very few are concerned about building up a following for God. The bad part of it is that the majority are not taking things seriously enough. They are taking things for granted, or falling in line with those who are advocating an easier way.

Matthew 7:13 says, ". . . wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction." Why is the way wide and broad? So that it can accommodate anything you want to take along with you. The gate is strait and narrow that leads to life. It is not *straight*, but *strait*, denoting that it is very confined. The narrow way denotes that it is very confined. It is so narrow that you cannot get by with a cigarette between your fingers. One songwriter wrote, "*In the strait, narrow way I'm determined to stay Till I leave this old dark world behind.*"

Jude wrote in Jude 1:3-4: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness. . . ." That is still going on today in the name of religion. No wonder people are so apathetic toward it and so disinterested in it. In spite of all the corruption and the hypocrisy, I am glad there is a pure, undefiled religion. God has a church and He has a people, regardless of how much corruption there is in these last days.

The Dangers in These Last Days

Again, in Acts 20:30-31 Paul said: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch [in other

words, do not go to sleep on the job; wake up and watch], and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." What a concern and a burden Paul had for those people!

We find that he expressed the same concern in the Roman letter. Romans 9:1-6a states: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect."

We have studied the background from which Paul wrote our Scripture text. In our Scripture text Paul told the Ephesians not to walk as other Gentiles walk. How did they walk? They walked in the vanity of their minds.

In spite of that three-year revival and the letter that Paul sent directly to them, admonishing them along these dangerous lines, we find in the Book of Revelation that the very first letter that John was called upon to record was directed to the church at Ephesus. In this letter Christ announced that they had some commendable qualities. However, Revelation 2:4 says, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This church failed despite all the effort that the Apostle Paul put forth to help them. This should awaken you to the dangers that we are facing in these last days.

That was only the beginning of the morning-time apostasy. They were confronted with the dragon power; the beastly power had not yet risen. However, we have the

dragon power, the beastly power, and the false prophet today. They have but one aim, and that is to deceive souls and to make them unfit to hear these words on the Judgment Day: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Dear friend, salvation requires more than belonging to a church. I say this respectfully and charitably. We need very serious reflection along the line that the Apostle Paul was warning those people. Saint, you must not walk as other Gentiles walk, because it will affect you beyond recovery. Paul let them know that their walk was of such because their understanding was enveloped in darkness.

The Hope of His Calling

Paul stated in Ephesians 1:15-18: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: [There is a difference between the knowledge of Him and the knowledge in Him: you need the knowledge of Him to get saved, but you need the knowledge in Him to keep saved.] The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

In Chapter 4 Paul talked about the understanding being darkened, which lets us know that they started off with an enlightened understanding, but the course that they took reversed that condition. Instead of their understanding being enlightened, their understanding was darkened.

All kinds of spirits are out there, and those spirits are after our souls. Therefore, we must keep in touch with God and be filled with the blessed Holy Spirit in order to escape the snares of the enemy. Paul

told the people in his day that they were not ignorant of the devices of Satan, but to a very great degree, that cannot be said of very many people today. Many people are falling by the wayside and following the suggestions of the evil one. I thank God for those who are not ignorant of the devices of Satan. It is necessary for us all to have our understanding enlightened.

What do we need to be enlightened about? Paul said, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." The hope of our calling is Heaven. We are called from sin to live for God, to shine for God, and to make Heaven our home. What is the hope of his calling? God has a hope of His own in calling us. Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Paul let them know that they had been blessed with whatever they needed to fulfill the purpose of God. These blessings are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The Purpose of Christ's Coming

Paul continued in Ephesians 1:4-5: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love [that is the purpose of His choice]: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." We must have our relationship established between us and God for this to be realized. People cannot be holy without God.

If your church tells you that people have to sin, in essence, they are telling you that you are not in Christ and that you are not saved. If that is the way your church preaches, it is false. That doctrine will not help you to make Heaven your home, but rather it will deceive your soul and cause you to be un-

prepared to meet God. The purpose of Christ coming into this world was made expressively clear to us by the Word of God. Matthew 1:21 reads, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." That is what salvation is all about.

Someone may say, "I don't see how anyone can live a sinless life in a sinful world." Well, a fish can be kept saltless in a sea full of salt. Have you ever caught a salty fish? We have had to add salt to every fish that we have caught, even after the fish had been living in the briny ocean all its life. Why is that? The fish was in the sea, but the sea was not in the fish. By the same reasoning, if you are in this sinful world, but this sinful world is not in you, then you can live free from sin.

Jesus illustrated it this way: the stronger man enters into the weaker man's house and binds the weaker man and then spoils his goods, and it works. Sinner friend, if you will open your heart to God and cry out to Him, I can assure you that He will save you. In 1 John 1:9 John wrote, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Isaiah 55:7 states, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Glory be to God! The only thing that is separating you from this experience is your own will. Jesus said that if you will hear His voice and open the door, He will come in. It is as easy as that.

The Riches of His Grace

You do not have to let false teachers and false prophets deceive your heart. God has given you a choice, but the choice is based on the fact that you will go on to live holy and blameless before Him in love. To bring this about, Ephesians 1:5 tells us that He "predestinated us

unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." The adoption comes by Jesus Christ in God. It does not come by shaking a preacher's hand, as many people have been duped into believing. The act of shaking a preacher's hand could never make you a Christian; you must be born again, not from the standpoint of reincarnation, but from the standpoint of the miracle working power of the grace of God.

Another point worth mentioning, found in verse 5, is that this privilege, or this predestination, is not according to anything that you might do, but it is "according to the good pleasure of his will." It is through the Lord's mercy that we are saved. Paul was also projecting the fact that this work of divine grace that God is offering to lost humanity has an end in view. What is that end? Verse 6 tells us, "To the praise of the glory of his grace."

How is God going to effect this work of making us children of God? He redeems us: He takes us out from under the powers of sin, out from under the powers of Satan, so that we can live right. We can stand right here on the devil's own ground. When the devil tells us that we have to sin, it is a great thrill to say, "Praise God, I don't have to sin." It may seem that everyone else is doing it, but you do not have to. Others may be pushing drugs in school, but with Christ you do not have to. Others may be carrying a whiskey bottle around with them, but with Christ you do not have to. Salvation is that real, and it is that simple!

Verse 7 says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." God has this all fixed for us. He did not have to wait until the last days when they have opened up all these "preacher factories" across the country in order to give the revelation and the knowledge of salvation. The revelation of these things came through Jesus Christ. That is what the Apostle Paul was telling the Ephesians.

I beg you to quit patterning yourself after the religious world. You should not walk as other Gentiles walk. If you do, it will have an adverse effect upon you.

The Mystery of His Will

Ephesians 1:9-10 reads: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." It is a mystery; the finite mind will never fully comprehend it. It defies definition by words, by reasoning, by human judgment, by human logic, and by human rationalization. It defies definition because it is the mystery of His will.

Saints, we will be living in Heaven when this life is over; there-

fore, we must learn how to live heavenly lives down here. Through the mighty works of God, we have to learn how to get out of step with our generation. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached to those people in Acts 2:40, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." We cannot keep step with the world and hear "Well done" at the end of the way. Someone may say, "Well, you do not realize that we are all human, preacher." Man is the unique combination of the dust of the ground and the breath of God. He is comprised of both body and soul. The soul is the part of man that is accountable to God.

Before we leave this world, we have to be like the angels in Heaven in our walk, in our talk, and in our living. That is impossible as far as the flesh is concerned, but with God all things are possible. Why don't you talk this matter over with God? You must remember that you must

have a revelation in the knowledge of Him.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians would get a revelation of the knowledge in Him. The only One that can give you that revelation is God. He can clear up all your misunderstandings and misconceptions. How do you approach God? In Acts 3:19 Peter said to the people of his day, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." In Acts 17:30 Paul said, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Repentance is your first step toward establishing a relationship with God. Confession is the next step in filling your relationship with Him. The forsaking of your sins will be the direct result of having established your experience with God. God bless you.

(Cassette C-2070E)

Youth Corner

Telling Mother

A group of young girls stood about the door of the school one afternoon, whispering together, when a little girl joined them, and asked what they were doing.

"I am telling the girls a secret, Kate, and we will let you know, if you will promise not to tell anyone as long as you live," was the reply.

"I won't tell anyone but my mother," replied Kate. "I tell her everything, for she is my best friend."

"No, not even your mother, no one in the world."

"Well, then I can't hear it. What I can't tell mother is not fit for me to know."

After speaking these words, Kate walked away slowly, and perhaps sadly, yet with a quiet conscience, while her companions went on with their secret conversation.

I am sure that if Kate continued to act on that principle, she became a virtuous, useful woman. No child of a Christian mother should take a sinful course, if Kate's reply is taken for a rule of conduct.

As soon as a boy listens to conversations at school or on the playground, which he would fear or blush to repeat to his mother, he is in the way of temptation, and no one can tell where he will stop. Many a man dying in disgrace, in prison, or on the scaffold, has looked back with bitter remorse to the time when he first listened to a sinful companion who came between him and a pious mother.

Girls, if you would be respected and honored in this life and form characters for Heaven, make Kate's reply your rule: "*What I cannot tell my mother is unfit for me to know.*"

No other person can have as great an interest in your welfare and prosperity as a true, Christian mother.

Every boy and girl should always remember that a Christian mother is his or her best earthly friend, from whom no secret should be kept.

*Highest aim and true endeavor;
Earnest work, with patient might;
Hoping, trusting, singing ever;
Battling bravely for the right;
Loving God, all men forgiving;
Helping weaker feet to stand, —
These will make a life worth living,
Make it noble, make it grand.*

Matthew 16:21 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and

be killed, and be raised again the third day.

22 Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.

23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

Mistakes and Correction



Brother Paul Prinkey

Characteristics of Peter

Peter was very outspoken. People did not have to worry much about what Peter thought because he told them. If you study the life of Peter, you will find that he was not afraid to speak up. Whenever the rest of the disciples stood silently, they could count on Peter to say something. His mind was always working. I do not condemn him for that. I like a man who is assertive and who has the backbone to stand for what he believes.

Many good men like Peter have lived in sin and then have gotten saved, turned their lives around, and used their lives for good. Some men were ready to fight if they thought someone was even hinting at an insult toward them. They had

their fists up, and they were ready to fight and say, "Did you say something about me?" When they got saved, God changed them and used them for good. Now they stand up and tell people about God. If you think you can sin and get away with it, God has your number, and He is writing it all down. You cannot get by God.

Although Peter was very outspoken, Jesus used that characteristic for good. However, his outspokenness also got him into trouble. His experiences left behind some lessons for us to learn. We find in our Scripture text that Peter began to rebuke Jesus. Peter took hold of Him and said, in essence, "I am not going to allow that to happen!" If you will read a few verses back, you will find that Peter was the

number one man.

Matthew 16:13-14 reads: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Then Jesus said in verse 15, "But whom say ye that I am?" Jesus knows how to get personal. They presented the opinions of others, but He wanted to know what His disciples thought. All the other disciples were quiet, but Peter was not.

In verse 16 Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"

(verse 17). No doubt, Peter was as proud as a peacock because he got the right answer. Well, he went from hero to zero quickly, because not long after that Peter got puffed up and exalted in his heart.

In so many words, Jesus said, "Listen, fellows, I am going up to Jerusalem after a while, and I am going to be persecuted and taken by the hands of the chief priests. Those fellows are going to harm Me, and then they are going to kill Me." Can you imagine Peter's reaction? He took hold of Jesus and said, in essence, "That is not going to happen! I have something to say about this!" Then Jesus reproved him. Peter made a mistake.

Works of the Flesh

It is easy to make a mistake whenever you get puffed up in the flesh. You can get all puffed up in yourself and say, "Did you hear what the pastor said about me? He gave me a word of praise! I am the 'go to man.' No one is better than I am today." You can get puffed up if you are not careful, and the next move you make might send you down lower than the bottom. This is one reason you should not receive praise to yourself. The Bible is clear on this. To God be the glory! The Apostle Paul, with all the great things that he accomplished, said in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." Do you think he did not have something to be proud of? Had he wanted to be, he could have been really puffed up. He raised up many congregations and appointed elders over those congregations. He wrote many great letters to the congregations. After all he had done, he let people know that it was only because of God that he was able to do what he did. The same is true of us today.

Has anyone ever come up to you and said, "You are a good man"? Do you know what I tell people when they say that to me? I say, "I am just a man who knows the Man." Christ

Jesus made the difference in my life. He is my Savior. All the praise belongs to Him. I am nothing. Jesus made this principle clear in John 15:5 when He said, "Without me ye can do nothing." You may ask, "Do you mean that you are totally helpless?" No, a person can do lots of things in the flesh, but without Christ one cannot do anything to glorify God.

Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 5:20, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." What was He talking about? The scribes and the Pharisees did a lot of good works. Jesus even told them in Matthew 7:22-23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Their works were works of the flesh. Isaiah said in Isaiah 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

Pushed to the Limit

Peter was often a spokesman for the disciples. They recognized that he was a natural born leader, and they followed him. God found in him something special. You may say, "Well, he made a lot of mistakes." Yes, he did, but God did not put him down over those mistakes. God still used him. In Luke 22:32 Jesus said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," and that is exactly what he did.

Whenever Peter said something, the other disciples were right with him. When Peter stood up on the Day of Pentecost, the other eleven stood up with him. It was not because they were incapable of leading or following God on their own, but God had given Peter a special gift. Although God had a special

hand on Peter, Peter made mistakes.

We read in Matthew 26:50-54: "And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" We find here that as Jesus was being taken prisoner in the garden, someone stuck up for Him. Who was that person? It was Peter.

John tells us in John 18:10-11: "Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" I am still preaching about mistakes and correction. Here was Peter, one more time, in a place where he felt helpless to help Jesus in any other way than in a physical way.

Have you ever been in a place where you felt helpless? Sometimes the old devil will push you to the very limit. Sometimes you will think that you have had as much as you can take. You may think to yourself, "I don't know if I can take anymore of this." Have you ever been there? What is the temptation? It is to react in the flesh. You may think, "I have been praying, looking to God, and trusting Him to help me in my situation, but it seems that nothing is helping. I just keep getting pushed further and further. I have my back against the wall, and I cannot go any further. I am going to do something about this." Have you ever felt that way? I have, and sometimes I have told my wife what I was going to do.

I thank God for a good wife. She said, "Now, honey, maybe you ought to be careful and give it a little more time."

Have you ever thrown up your hands and said, "I'm sick of it! I've had it"? It happens; feeling that way is a part of life. Sometimes you will get pushed to the brink and feel that you have had all that you can take. What are you going to do? The devil will be right there. He knows that you are weak. He knows the situation is pressing hard on you, and he is waiting for his opportunity, a prime time when he can step in and, in the heat of the moment, cause you to respond in the flesh. Then when it is all over, you will look back at what you did and say, "Why did I do that? Now I have to go back and straighten it up." Have you ever had to go back and straighten up something with someone? Have you ever had to go back to your enemy and humble yourself and ask for forgiveness? That is very humiliating. You have to be a humble person to do that.

I thought I had done it all until I did not obey God with my enemy, and I had to go to my enemy and humble myself and say, "Listen, I was wrong in how I acted, and I ask for your forgiveness. Please forgive me." We still do that in the Church of God. It takes more than an apology at times; it takes more than saying, "I'm sorry." Sometimes God brings it down to the point where, whenever you have done something wrong or made a mistake, that you have to say, "I was wrong," not just to God, but you must admit it to the one you wronged and say: "I was wrong. Will you please forgive me? I'm sorry."

You may say, "Oh, I don't know if I can stoop that low." If you are going to go forward in your experience with God, you will have to humble yourself. You may say, "I don't think I need to do that, preacher." You will not go any further in your Christian experience until you make your wrongs right in the right way. You have to go all the

way with the Lord if you are going to be right with Him.

Preparing, But in the Wrong Way

Peter got himself into trouble. What did he do? Somewhere along the way, he picked up a sword. I do not think he went around armed all the time, but for some reason he thought he might need it, perhaps because of the things Jesus was saying. Everything that Jesus was telling the disciples was enough to let them know that they were heading for troubled waters, so Peter picked up a sword and hid it.

Peter was preparing himself, but not in the right way. He could not watch and pray with Jesus even for an hour or so, but he was able to find a sword and hide it. He fell asleep while Jesus was praying, but he still had enough presence of mind that he could hide something. He made preparations that got him into trouble. The time came when the mob moved in to take Jesus away, as designed by God. Peter drew his sword and said, in so many words, "You are not taking my Lord and Savior!" Next, he smote the high priest's servant and took his ear off. That was not a near miss; that was what he was aiming for.

Since Peter was close enough to hit him with a sword, that individual presented a big enough target that Peter could have done more than take off his ear. I think he just did it to prove that he was able to fight, but do you know what became of it? He received reproof from Christ again. In essence, Jesus said, "Peter, put up your sword. Don't you know that I could call twelve legions of angels to come down and deliver Me?" Peter failed to remember all the other times when they tried to take Jesus and sought to kill Him. One time they crowded Jesus to the edge of a hill to cast Him over, and He walked through their midst, and no man could lay a hand on Him. Why? It was not His time yet.

Peter got in the flesh. Do you

ever get in the flesh? At times, in the heat of the moment and in a moment of weakness, one can give in to the flesh. I thank God for His faithfulness and for being there to reprove. When He reproves you, He will tell you not only what you have done wrong but also what you have to do to fix it. He will let you know the steps and the measures you must take to make it right.

God will not leave you in the dark. Anytime an accusation comes against you and you seek God in prayer to find out what it is so that you can correct it, but you never get an answer, that is the devil. God will not leave you in the dark about something that you have done wrong. He will reveal it to you and tell you what you need to do to make it right.

Judging a Matter Too Hastily

Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world. He said if it were, His servants would fight. It was not Christ's will for Peter to fight for Him physically. That was the reason He told Peter, in so many words, "Don't you know that I could call twelve legions of angels to come down and deliver Me? Don't you realize that the hour has come? I have been trying to prepare you for this." Peter did not want to accept that; therefore, Christ had to correct him. I believe that it is important to understand that we, as Christians, can make mistakes.

The word *mistake* means "to misunderstand or to perceive wrongly; to misjudge or to err." Sometimes we, as Christians, can make mistakes but that is not the norm. I am not preaching something to give people the leeway to run over someone or to do something wrong and get by with it. However, sometimes we can err, make a bad judgment, or perceive something wrongly. Have you ever perceived something wrongly? Have you ever gotten heated up and thought, "That really aggravates me," and then found that the situation was not the

way it seemed? Perhaps you heard something wrong. Then you have to say: "I got myself all excited over nothing. I heard it wrong. That is not what they said, and that is not what happened."

This is the reason Solomon made it clear that we need to be slow to make judgments. We should not be hasty to judge a matter. We should wait until we hear the whole matter. That will save a lot of trouble. There have been times when I have been ready to make a hasty judgment, and God has helped me to hold off taking action for a while and to be patient. God worked it out so that I did not have to lift a finger to do anything. God laid His hand on the situation and took care of it. Getting in the flesh is easy to do. I believe one reason that Peter got himself into so much trouble was that he was such a man of action. He was quick to get up and do something. He was not a lazy man. He was a man who was ready to get things done, but sometimes he moved too quickly.

Putting Too Much Confidence in Self

John 13:36-38 reads: "Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake. Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice."

Once again, we find Peter anxious in his desire to be with his Lord, to please Him and to do whatever he felt might have been necessary. Jesus told him that where He was going, he could not come with Him at that time. Peter did not understand that, because he was willing to go with Him right then, even to death. In essence, Jesus said, "Is that so? Well, the cock will not

crow until you have denied Me three times." Peter overestimated himself. He got confident in the flesh and got in trouble again.

God will not support a self-confident, independent spirit. You will fall flat on your face every time. We have to depend on God. It is only by the grace of God that we stand. I cannot stand on my own. I do not have enough strength. Any confidence I have in myself is vain. I have to trust in God. We can see that David realized this in Psalm 121:1-2: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD." David recognized where his help came from.

Peter spoke before he really thought. Sometimes he was quicker to talk than he was to listen. Do you know anyone like that? Children are apt to do that. Sometimes they have a hard time listening, but they do not have trouble talking. We have to be careful that we do not do the same thing.

You may be quick to make promises and pledges and say, "Well, this is what I will do," but whenever the trial or the battle comes, you may find yourself coming up short. Why is that? You put too much confidence in yourself.

Peter got himself into trouble because he trusted in the flesh. In his mind he thought he could stand, but read what Luke recorded concerning Peter in this situation in Luke 22:54-62: "Then took they him [Christ], and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off [Peter made a pledge to Christ and said he would go with Him to death; the time for Peter to prove himself was upon him]. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him.

"And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after

a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Again, Peter was tripped up. Peter is one of my favorite Bible characters. He was a man who could get things done, but there were some areas in his experience where he was weak. He was a proud man, and he had a lot of self-confidence. It got him into trouble again because he said he was ready to go with Christ even to death; however, when the moment was upon him and he could have been standing by Christ while He was in the hall being judged and abused, he was following afar off. He was not there with Christ. Christ prophesied to the disciples and told them that all of them were going to forsake Him. They did not like that, and they did not want to believe it. Why? They had traveled with Him for three and a half years.

Will You Also Go Away?

Jesus appointed seventy disciples and gave them power to go out and preach. Thirty-five sets of disciples went out into the cities to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." They went out and baptized in the name of the Lord, raised the dead, healed the sick, and cast out devils. However, the time came when Jesus spoke something that was a hard message. He said they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood, and some disciples talked among themselves and in John 6:60 said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" The message got a little

too strong for them. In essence, Jesus said: "You do not understand. You are receiving this as something fleshly." It is not of the flesh; that would profit you nothing. It is only in the Spirit that you find life.

What happened? About fifty-eight disciples left Jesus all at one time. He lost the majority of His preachers with one message. In John 6:67 you can read that Christ turned around to the twelve that He had left and said, "Will ye also go away?" He wanted to be sure that those who remained were going to stick with Him. Who was the spokesman? Peter was. He said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

The twelve disciples stuck with Christ through the thick and the thin, so to speak, but Jesus told them that the time was coming when they all were going to forsake Him. They stuck with Christ for three and a half years. They did not want to believe that they would ever forsake Him, especially Peter. Therefore, he opened his mouth and claimed that he would stick with the Lord even to death. Jesus told Peter that by the time the cock crowed, he would deny Him three times. The moment was upon him. There he was, following afar off. He tried in the flesh to stay with Jesus, but he just could not do it. When others tried to identify him as one of the disciples, he denied Him. Then someone said to Peter, "You *have* to be one of them; you are a Galilean." Again, Peter denied Him.

Immediately the cock crowed, and Jesus turned around and looked at Peter and made eye contact with him. When Christ did that Peter remembered what the Lord had said. Luke 22:61-62 says: "And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." I want you to recognize something. In all the accounts that you have read of Peter and the mistakes that he made, Peter never

once turned away from God. He erred in judgment. He followed Christ afar off and got himself into trouble when he spoke too quickly, and he denied the Lord; but he never once allowed those things to keep him down.

God's Way to Recovery

The Bible lets us know that a righteous man might fall six or seven times, yet the Lord will raise him up. Do you know what the devil does with people when they make mistakes? He makes them feel that they can never get over it. He tells individuals: "You will never recover. You will never be of any use to God after this. Your life is a waste. You can be a Christian, but God cannot use you because you messed up." Contrary to this line of thought, Peter's best days were yet to come. He had not been used yet to the capacity that God was going to use him even though he stumbled around.

The devil is a liar. Do not let him lie to you. If there is one that I hate, it is the devil. Why? He is lying to many people and keeping them down. Some people have thrown their hands up and quit and have backslidden on God because they listened to the devil's talk: "You will never recover yourself from the mistake that you have made." Friend, that is a lie. If you will trust God, believe in God, and humble yourself before the Lord, He will recover you. The Lord will lift you up. Do not let the devil lie to you.

Peter realized as soon as Jesus' eyes rested upon him that he had messed up again. What did it cause Peter to do? It caused him to go out and weep bitterly and repent. You see, there was a difference between Peter and Judas. They both realized they had done wrong. Judas went back to the chief priests and elders and said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). He cast down the thirty pieces of silver and went out and hanged himself.

Those chief priests and elders did not care anything about that. Judas realized he had done wrong, but he did not take the steps that Peter took. When Judas went out, he should have fallen on his knees and humbled himself before God. God could have helped even Judas to recover, but that was not in Judas' heart. Peter realized that he was wrong and went out and wept bitterly and got right with God. Judas realized he had done wrong and went out and hanged himself. Judas went the devil's way; Peter went God's way.

God's way is still the right way, whether you have made a mistake or you have fallen into sin. God's way is for you to humble yourself and repent, and He will recover you. God is in the business of recovering people who have erred or sinned. The Lord told old Israel when they continued to backslide in Jeremiah 3:14, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." It was not His will to see Israel cast away. It was by their continual rejection of God that they ended up being left desolate. Had they acknowledged God and humbled themselves, recovery could have been theirs.

Succumbing to Life's Pressures

We have to remember this: each of us is still in a fleshly body. James 5:17-18 says of Elijah: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." What took place after that? Elijah was afraid of a woman, so he ran off into the wilderness and sat down under a juniper tree and requested that he might die. In essence, he said: "God, take me on to be with my fathers. It is all over.

Nobody loves You like I do. I am the only one left," and he laid down and went to sleep and waited to die.

Well, God was not ready to let him die, so He sent an angel with food to feed him, but Elijah was not satisfied with that. He laid down and went to sleep again. The angel came back a second time and fed him some more food. He probably thought he was going to starve to death, but God would not allow that to happen to him. He went without food for forty days and forty nights, and he was still living. God got him to a place where he would listen. He said, "Why don't you go up into the mountain? It is time for us to have a talk. I am not finished with you yet."

In the weakness of the flesh, we can succumb to life's pressures and hardships that come upon us, but God is still in the business of lifting us up. How do I know? I have experienced it. Sometimes you can get down so low that you feel that you are clear down on the bottom. You may feel that you are so short that you can walk underneath doors, and out of the bottom you cry out to God, saying, "Lord, I have messed up. I have been wrong, and I need to know what to do to make it right. I want to be right."

God will satisfy the desires of your heart. If you want to get right, you must humble yourself before God, and He will uplift you and guide you. The light will begin to shine on your path, and you will see the direction you need to go. You will see the moves you need to make and the things you need to take care of. You might have to do some backtracking.

Do You Need a Second Chance?

Peter was a proud man, and it was hard for him to back up. He was a leader, and he was used to people following him and doing what he said. He was not used to being told what to do. The disciples got discouraged after Christ was crucified and buried in the tomb, so what happened? They were sitting

around moping: "Boy, isn't life terrible? It is rough. We don't have Jesus anymore." Then Peter said, "Hey, fellows, I don't know what you are going to do, but I'm going fishing."

The others said, "We're going with you." They all climbed into Peter's boat and went out on the water and started fishing. They had had it.

Jesus had them give up their occupations to follow Him. He said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." So you know what the disciples did? They went back to their former occupations, and who was walking on the shore but Christ! Just about the time you think you are getting by, here comes God. You are busted. No one recognized Him but John. John looked over and said, "That looks like Jesus!"

Peter said, "Jesus? Do you mean that He is over on the shore?"

"Yes, it sure looks like Him, Peter." It was not long until they brought the boat in. They followed Peter. He was a natural born leader. They did whatever he did. Peter got to the shore, and there was Jesus. Jesus called Peter over to Him. In so many words, He said, "Peter, I've got to talk to you. You let those other boys have the fish and bread."

"What is it, Lord?"

Jesus said, "Do you love Me?"

"Yes, Lord, I love You."

Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." Jesus did not reject Peter. He knew that Peter had denied Him three times. Jesus knew it was going to happen before it ever happened. This is something we need to remember.

You may say, "Oh, my, have I ever messed up! How did I ever get in such a mess?" God knew the way you were heading before you ever got there. You may ask, "Well, why didn't He do something to stop me?" You were too hardheaded to listen. You had it all figured out on your own. God is faithful to minister to you by the Holy Spirit.

Peter said, "I love You."

Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." Then Jesus asked Peter again, "Do

you love Me?"

He said, "Yes, Lord, I love You."

The third time Jesus asked Peter, he got aggravated that the Lord asked him so many times. Well, how do you think the Lord felt when Peter denied Him the third time? Jesus said, "Peter, do you love Me?"

He said, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

Jesus said, "Feed My sheep." Do you know what I see in that? Christ gave Peter a second chance. Do you know what the devil will tell you? "It is all over; that was your last chance, and you cannot do anything else about it. You might as well hang it up and quit. You will never get right now." What a lie! Some people have listened to Satan's lies, and they are lost. Is there hope for the lost? There most certainly is! God does not owe you anything, but He will give you a second chance. Christ gave Peter a second chance.

When the Day of Pentecost came, many people had forsaken Jesus Christ who had once believed on Him, but there were one hundred twenty in the Upper Room who were tarrying as Jesus had commanded them. He said in Luke 24:49, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, "But ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." What happened? Peter was faithful. He was not out on a fishing boat. He left the boat out there on the shore, and he was tarrying in prayer, waiting for the coming of the Holy Ghost. He was found faithful, and whenever he was found faithful, God was faithful to him and poured out the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit came upon Peter, he was not satisfied to keep it in the Upper Room anymore. He was a leader, remember?

Down the stairs Peter went, and everyone followed him. Peter stood before the people, and the eleven disciples stood up with him, and he preached as he had never preached before. Jesus said in John 16:12-13: "I

have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

Have You Stumbled or Erred in Your Experience?

Peter did not understand everything when Jesus was walking on the earth, but after the Holy Spirit came upon him, Peter spoke of the Prophet Joel and of King David. In essence, he said, "Do you remember what the patriarchs said?" Peter began to quote Scriptures to the people and preach to them, and the Holy Spirit of God sanctioned the message. What a wonderful work was done! Why? Because Peter had been given a second chance by Jesus Christ, and he proved faithful. I thank God for that!

Had God cast me away the first time I made a mistake or stumbled in my experience, I would not be where I am today. I thank God for a second chance. I wanted to prove to God that I loved Him and that I would be faithful. I said: "Lord, I will not fail You this time. I will be faithful. If You tell me what You want me to do, I will do it, no matter what it is." Is that the kind of commitment you have?

In too many cases, some Christians are falling short of that commitment. They cannot honestly say, "Lord, whatever You tell me to do, I will do it." If you are falling short in your commitment to Christ, you need to take another step in your experience or that will be a stumblingblock to you. Peter proved himself true in the second chance that he was given.

You may not be guilty of sin, but if you are, Christ can cover that too. First John 2:1-2 reads: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin [notice that this does not say *when* he sins, but *if* he should sin], we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous [do not listen to the devil, but listen to

God; this is what the Word of God says]: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

This message is for the whole world, but it also comes to the believer, if one should sin. I am not preaching a watered-down Gospel to you. This verse of Scripture does not give you a license to sin and say, "Well, I have done wrong, God. Please forgive me." No, that would be presumptuous sinning, and this Scripture does not cover that. To sin presumptuously is to have the attitude, "I know that if I do something wrong, I can just ask God to forgive me." You might as well go out and join those in false religion and get down on your knees every night and say, "God, forgive me for the sins that I have committed today. We all sin in word, thought, or deed." That "sin you will, sin you must, and sin you can't help it" doctrine is false. I am preaching so that you might be aware of the ways that the devil works.

If you should stumble or err in your experience, the devil will be quick to jump on you and try to make you believe that you can never recover, but you can! Many of us could testify that we have stumbled somewhere in our experiences, but God was faithful, and we humbled ourselves before the Lord and He forgave us. He gave us a second chance. He renewed us and gave us the strength to get up and go on for Him. In Proverbs 28:13 Solomon wrote, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." This promise is still true. It has been said that the only complete mistake is the mistake from which we learn nothing.

Peter's Dissimulation

In Galatians, Chapter 2, we find that Peter got himself into trouble again. In verses 11-21 Paul stated: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For

before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

"But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Why did I want you to read all of that? Because that is what Paul said to Peter concerning that matter. Paul had so much to say to Peter because Peter, a Jew, was sitting down at mealtime and eating with the Gentiles, but when some other Jews came to visit, as soon as Peter saw them coming, he got up from the table and ate no more with the Gentiles.

You need to remember this: if God is using you in the capacity that people are affected by your life, by

either the good that you are doing or the wrong that you are doing, you cannot stop your influence. Some people take the attitude: "This is my life, and I will live it the way I want to. I don't care what other people do." That is a wrong attitude, because your life is influencing others. You may say, "Oh, I am not telling others to go out and do wrong." You do not have to. Your life's influence is speaking louder than words.

Because Peter was such a leader, when he got up from that table and walked away, other Jews, as well as Barnabas, were carried away with the dissimulation. Therefore, Paul said Peter was to be blamed. After Paul finished talking to Peter, we know that Peter accepted it, because later, in 2 Peter 3:15-16 Peter wrote: ". . . even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written many things hard to be understood."

The Need of Correction

Peter accepted correction, and this was important. It is important how you receive correction. Do you receive it or do you reject it? Are you indifferent toward it? This is important because in every one of our lives, we are going to come to a place where we need to be corrected.

The Hebrew writer stated in Hebrews 12:5-11: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth [or corrects], and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. [We each are going to be corrected at some point in life. How do you know that?] If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected

us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

I have four children, and I have chastised each of them, and they are not infants. Why do I chastise them? I do it because I love them. At the time it does not seem joyous, but "afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness." A man told me once that he had a girl and a boy and that he had never spanked his children. I said, "Well, I don't know a child living that did not need to be spanked some time in his or her life. You just did not give it to them." I still believe in corporal punishment—putting the board of education to the seat of knowledge. It is amazing how effective it is in correcting wrong behavior. It still works. My parents practiced it on me, and it helped. Children need correction.

Bringing this right over to the spiritual realm, as a child of God, sometimes you must be corrected, whether you knowingly transgress or you make a mistake or you fall into something. You may not mean to get yourself in a situation, but in the heat of the moment, you could end up there. We all need correction from time to time, but do not faint when you are chastised, or corrected. Why? It is God showing His love to you. If He did not care about you, He would not visit you about the thing you have need of. It is because God loves you that He has paid you a visit and pointed out your need.

Stand Strong and Heed God's Word

Jesus loved Peter, and when it was all said and done, Peter proved

his love to Christ even to death. He had a backbone like a saw log, so to speak. He would not bend or bow, but God had an effect on him. He was a man who was strong enough spiritually to stand up to the council and ask who they thought he ought to listen to, them or God. Those men could have ordered his death at the snap of their fingers. When Peter and John left there and went back to the believers, Peter told them that they had been threatened because they were preaching about Jesus. What do you think they did about it? They began to pray.

Do you think they prayed, "God, help us to be meek Christians, to obey the laws of our land and our religious leaders"? No, they did not pray that way. They asked God to give them boldness to speak His Word and to confirm the Word with the signs following. Do you know what the Bible says? Acts 4:31 tells us, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." Great grace was upon them. They were filled with the Spirit afresh, and they went out and preached through the streets just as they had done before, but with more fervency. Why? Because they had a man who was willing to stand up for God and lead them.

Today we need more good spiritual leaders who will stand up and lead God's people, and we also need more people who will heed God's Word and accept correction when it comes. You may say: "That preacher is really skinning me today. He must not like me." No, that is not true. He is preaching that way because he loves you. He is being faithful to God who gave him the message, and he is preaching it so that it will help you.

When I was a younger man and just beginning to raise our family, I desired to hear some preaching on the family, so I told my father-in-law, and he sent me one message on the husband's place in the home and

one on the wife's place in the home. I listened to the one about the husband's place in the home first. I thought I was doing all right until I heard that message. That preacher skinned me up one side and down the other. I did not like it, but I needed it, and it helped me.

There are times when we each need help. Whenever God brings help to you, how do you receive His correction? Oh, sometimes the flesh does not like it and it hurts. We all need it, and we need to receive it. Have you erred or sinned? Maybe you let the devil talk to you, and

you just threw in the towel and backslid on God. God will give you a second chance, if you will give God a chance. You must be honest and open before God. Do not try to hide anything from Him. God knows it all anyway.

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 4:13, "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." His eyes see it all, so let us be open with Him. Is there a place in your life where you need to get down to business with God and pray to get something settled? Has something in the past

been nagging at you? Has something been hindering you spiritually? Perhaps you cannot sing as you used to or you cannot rejoice and praise God as you used to. Maybe you cannot pray as you used to, and your experience with God is hindered. Is there something in the past that you need to straighten up, something in the past that you need to bring before God and be honest about? You can have victory. Won't you let God have a chance to help you?

(Compact Disc TR-063E)

[Annual Finan. Report—contin. from p. 2]
would bring the miracle. Gideon was commanded to throw down his father's altar, which was a false god, and to go out and kill his father's prize bull. It might have seemed a hard thing to do, but Gideon obeyed the Lord's command. Perfect obedience to God's command is still the thing that will bring the victory. May God ever help us to do just as He commands.

What was the outcome of that beautifully portrayed happening from God's Word? When that small band of faithful men sounded the trumpets as they were instructed and broke the vessels and allowed the light to shine out, God caused fear and havoc to come upon the enemy. The Scripture informs us that the Midianites began to kill one another. There is a lot of good meditation material in that story about Gideon and those few faithful soldiers.

We trust that our readers are interested in the financial side of this publication. The purpose of inserting this report each year is so that you can stay informed of the costs involved in operating this missionary effort. Also, you can see what has been sent in through the means of contributions from our readers and the balance that must be absorbed by the local congregation. Our desire is that you might

realize in a greater way the need for your assistance.

The local congregation is endeavoring to consume these cost differences out of the general fund of the church, along with maintaining support to the mission fields. Our prayer is that as you are presented with these figures, you will allow them to make a deep impression upon your heart and mind, and then move according to God's leading.

Missionary undertakings require larger and larger amounts of revenue in order to keep them going and prospering for the Kingdom of God and the souls of men. The saints in this congregation feel the responsibility to reach out to men and women who are lost in sin and to seek those sheep who are still

located in false religion. By a continual sounding forth of God's eternal Truth, we believe and know that God will call to each needy one and offer them deliverance. We want to be faithful to the vision that God has given us and stir up a vision in the hearts of others so that they will help support the cause of the Gospel with their finance as well as their prayers.

We ask you to take a greater burden on your heart for this work. We request your support in prayer, that God will help us and guide us in keeping this periodical spiritual. Once again, we want to thank each and every one for the loyal support in the past, and we trust that God will richly bless you and your faithfulness.

Statement of Condition for 12 months ending January 31, 2008

	Income	Expenses
Supplies.		\$ 24,529.20
Wages.		31,886.16
Donations/Offerings	\$11,499.05	
Equipment Purchased.		19,097.07
Postage.		52,799.80
Maintenance & Repairs.		8,889.37
Miscellaneous Expenses.		802.33
<i>Subtotals</i>	<i>11,499.05</i>	<i>\$138,003.93</i>

Balance paid out of the general fund of the Church of God congregation at Newark, OH *\$126,504.88*

Job 26:2 How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength?

3 How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast

thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?

4 To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?

5 Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.

6 Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.



Hell is

Brother Allen Polston

The Seriousness of Eternity

Despite the many efforts that are made to distract you in life and cause you to feel that hell does not exist, hell *is* a reality. This subject matter is not necessarily pleasant to think upon. People would rather push it out of their minds, and the devil will support every measure for you to totally avoid the thought. Nevertheless, dear one, it is very important for you to consider this subject from time to time because hell is real. It does exist, and it awaits every individual who lives a sinful life and leaves this world in that condition.

Job said in verse 3 of our Scripture text, "How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?" When thinking about hell, some

thoughts that come to mind are burning fire, pain, and torments. These things alone would be enough, but hell is more than that. This topic ought to stir the mind of every person to think about the horribleness of hell.

Peter said he wanted to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Peter 3:1). We are living in a time when people have very little fear of God and very little reverence for Him. They take the things of God very lightly and even use His name in vain. The beginning of wisdom is to fear God and to respect and reverence Him. Even if you are not a Christian, you ought to at least respect God and thank Him for His blessings. You should show reverence toward Him for allowing you to live up to this very hour.

Considering the awfulness of hell ought to cause the fear of God to be reaffirmed and your burden for the lost to increase as you think of the awful plight of those who die without God. It is very easy to go about the cares of life and allow our burden for the lost to diminish. The seriousness of eternity presented afresh helps to increase one's burden for the lost. The value of earthly success is diminished when compared to the loss of one never-dying soul.

Sometimes people can over-emphasize success in obtaining goals and earthly pursuits to the extent that the work of God is neglected. Dear one, you must proceed with caution when the eternal consequences for living wrong are presented. As a Christian, you must

live cautiously. The devil has many seducing ways to lead you astray. You must use caution as you proceed along life's way. A message about hell should bring to the mind of every sinner that which is awaiting if he or she fails to get right with God. When you are aware of the potential danger and the pitfalls that sinful behavior can bring upon you, it should cause you to carefully consider the course of action that you take in life.

Hell Is a Reality

It is difficult to get people to seriously consider the reality concerning matters of the soul. People think that because things are going well for them, they do not need to concern themselves about the future. Many people scoff and say, "Jesus is not coming back." That is an indication that the time of His Second Coming is drawing closer. The end of your time in this life could be getting very near for you as an individual. Therefore, God wants you to know that hell is a reality. Despite the claims made by atheists and other unbelievers, hell is real.

Often those in the entertainment world have turned this subject into something very light, but there will not be any joking down in hell. No one will be glad to be there. No matter how many times the thought may come to your mind that there is no such place, that does not change the fact that hell is real. Paul said in Acts 20:27, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." The Truth that was written from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation is something that we need to hear and be reminded of.

Someone may say, "I don't think a loving God would send someone to hell." God does not send anyone to hell. Friend, anyone who goes to hell chooses to go there. God gives everyone the ability to make moral decisions and choices in life. The enemy of souls causes people to think there will be many opportunities to get saved as they travel down

life's road, but that is not a sound thought. Doubtless millions ignore the opportunities that God gives them. They reject His offers; they procrastinate and put off salvation repeatedly, but one day it will be too late.

The Prophet Isaiah had something to say about hell. He wrote in Isaiah 5:13-14: "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure."

I am convinced that part of the reason hell had to enlarge herself is that God did not intend for people to go to hell. God did not create you to die in a lost condition. God intends for you to be saved and to serve Him, which is a beautiful way to live. It is a rewarding life, and it is a peaceful way. God brings all the comforting things that the world cannot provide to those who serve Him. God wants you to be saved.

There is a false doctrine that teaches certain people are doomed to hell from their birth. Contrariwise, John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hell had to be enlarged because so many people have chosen to reject God. For this reason, the writer said in Proverbs 27:20, "Hell and destruction are never full." When you think about all that God is, all that He does, and all that He provides, if all of that were to be taken away, it makes this topic even more serious.

The Attribute of Love

James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning." I have never been very good at giving good and perfect gifts, but I want to tell you about One who is a good

and perfect gift giver. God is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. He is the One who has provided all the many things that we enjoy.

For just a moment or two, I would like for you to imagine what it would be like if all those good things were taken away. He is the giver of every good gift and every perfect gift, but none of those good things will be in hell because God's goodness and mercy will not be present there.

The Bible lets us know that God, through His Holy Spirit, is the giver of the fruit of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." None of these attributes will be present in hell.

Let us consider the attribute of love. Love is a beautiful thing. God's love for us is absolutely wonderful, and so is the love between God's people. Even if you are not a Christian, think about someone you love and someone who loves you. What a good feeling that is! What a blessing it is to have someone who is concerned about you, who cares about your day-to-day life, who is there in the hard times, who will support you and stand by you! How wonderful it is to experience love! I am convinced that there is a lot of love in America even though there are things that we could point out that are wrong here and there.

Can you imagine a place with no love and no concern whatsoever? Have you ever been through a hard place and experienced the comfort of someone holding you by the hand and encouraging you or someone patting you on the back and giving you a word of admonition? That is a wonderful blessing.

Perhaps there have been times when someone said something to you that was just what you needed to encourage you to press on. Maybe you had a setback or some kind of confrontation, and someone let you know, "I'm here for you." Love is

wonderful. The love that the saints have for one another is beautiful, as well as the love that God gives a husband and a wife. What a wonderful blessing it is to have a companion who will stand by you and be there for you. On the other hand, hell is a place that is void of love; all love is absent there. If that were the only thing absent in hell, that would make it miserable enough. The Psalmist said in Psalm 9:17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." When a nation begins to forget God, love begins to diminish.

The Anguish of Hell

Another attribute of the fruit of the Spirit is joy. It is wonderful to have joy and to have joyful times. What if there was no joy whatsoever? What if you were in a place where there was never a smile? Sometimes just a smile can help you. Sometimes a smile will bring a little joy. Can you imagine an atmosphere with absolutely no joy? If joy was the only characteristic devoid in hell, that would make it a miserable place.

What about peace? It is good to have peace. Sometimes after you have worked hard, it is so peaceful to sit down, put your feet up, relax, and just spend some time in peace. What if you never had any peace, inwardly or outwardly? That would be tormenting if there was always chaos. Have you ever been in a chaotic situation when it seemed as if things were just falling apart? What if you were surrounded by chaos with no peace, no rest, and no relaxation? That is what hell is like.

What about the attribute of long-suffering? Are you not glad people are still long-suffering in the land? Some people may not be very patient, but are you not glad that everyone does not just jump on your case, so to speak, as soon as you do something the wrong way? Are you not glad that some people are long-suffering if you make a mistake? Thank God, they are not ready to

destroy you if you make an error. I am glad there is still long-suffering among God's people and even in the world, but there is none in hell. Can you imagine being in a place where there is no long-suffering? Hell is a place with no mercy or long-suffering.

Second Samuel 22:6 says that hell is a place of sorrow. It is also a place of confusion. The inhabitants in hell will have no recourse but to endure their punishment with no hope for reprieve. They will suffer everlasting anguish due to the innumerable acts of sin committed here on earth.

What does God give us here in this time world? He gives us many, many things. Acts 17:25 says that "he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." How good it is to take a big breath of fresh air; that comes from God. He freely gives that to you. In hell there will be no fresh, invigorating air to breathe. Can you imagine living in an environment where it seems as though you are smothering? Can you imagine feeling that way for all eternity?

Acts 17:28 says, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." God is the One who gives us the ability to move about. The longer you have been confined to a seat in a vehicle or a plane, the more you anticipate getting out and moving around a little. You look forward to getting out and stretching and walking around, but in hell you can never look forward to getting out of the misery and the torments. Dear one, hell holds terrible torments for the lost.

A Place of Torments

The Bible tells about a rich man who went to hell. That does not mean you will go to hell just because you have money. However, this rich man failed to get right with God. Luke 16:23 says that in hell he "lift up his eyes, being in torments." I wonder how confined and restricted his movement is? Hell is definitely a place of pain and suffer-

ing. It is not a place of rest. There will never be a time of relief in hell. In your place of employment, no doubt, you look forward to lunch-time or break time so that you can rest from your labor. It is refreshing to rest a little while. Friend, no one in hell will get a break or a time of rest.

One time I did some construction work inside a glass factory, and at one end of the factory, the glass was heated to a liquid form and ran down into molds. That end of the building was so hot that if I walked through that area, I could hardly bear the heat. The men who worked there wore heavy clothing with long sleeves and long, heavy gloves. They had big swabs that looked like oversized Q-tips, which they used to oil the machines in that area. Each time the presses came down, they moved in and oiled them and then backed away. They could only work about twenty or thirty minutes in that intense heat, and then they had to go out and take a break. They had a continual change of workers because it was so hot and miserable and it raises the body's temperature. If a worker were to stay in that area too long, he would die. They were able to get a break from that heat, but in hell no one will get a break from the intense heat.

Thank God, after a long day, you can lay your head on a pillow and drift off to sleep and get some rest. If people in hell had the ability to sleep, they would be very jubilant. However, hell is a place of no sleep, no rest, and no breaks.

Dear one, I want you to see afresh that there is something to escape, and there is something to gain by the way you live. Hell is a place of irritation, isolation, aggravation, turmoil, pandemonium, misery, torments, immense suffering, and everlasting punishment. Hell is a place of disorder, destruction, unrestrained torture, and extreme pain. Hell is a place filled with demons, screams, moanings, and groanings. It is a place of unpleasant noises and smells. If you had to live

with just one of these attributes surrounding you consistently, it would be hell.

You have probably faced some of these things at least once. In life you will face some kind of irritation or aggravation, but thank God, it passes. If you had to live with these things constantly, that would be enough to cause you to say, "I don't ever want to go to hell." Imagine having to endure all those things for eternity.

Hell Is Avoidable

The grace of God is what enables you to be an overcomer. The grace of God and the hope that He has given the human race is unattainable in hell. It is a place without grace. Hell is a place of darkness, and there will be no pleasant communication there. People foolishly talk about having a party down in hell. An ungodly songwriter wrote a song that says, "I'm on the highway to hell, And, oh, what a joy it is going to be!" What a sad misconception! I used to listen to that song when I was living in sin, and it troubled me greatly. There will be no celebration in hell.

You and your best friend may go to hell, but that person will not be your best friend any more. You and your wife may love each other deeply, and the two of you may be inseparable, but you will not be in love in hell. Hell is a place of damnation. If you reject God, you are choosing to go to hell. God put you on the earth, and He has given you many wonderful blessings, life, strength, mobility, good fragrances,

and pleasant things to look at, enjoy, love, and share.

God has given you all these things, and all He says is, "If you will give Me your heart and live for Me, I will be your Father, and I will take care of you. Won't you turn from the wrong things and be My child?" God is giving you an invitation to be in His royal family. If you make a decision and say, "No, God, I don't want to be Your child; I don't want to be a part of Your family," in essence, you are saying, "I would rather be in the awful environment of hell than to dwell with You in paradise."

Dear one, hell is real. It would behoove you not to forget that. Hell is a place for those who decide that it is not important to pray. Hell is a place for those who replace Bible study with worldly entertainment. Hell is a place for those who do not think it is necessary to attend worship services to get their souls fed and to help the body of Christ. Hell is a place for the backslider. Hell is a place of fire and brimstone and constant fear. May God have mercy on those who harden their hearts and stiffen their necks.

Hell is a place for children who were raised in the church but became stubborn and bitter and said, "I'm not going to live that way." Many of them go further and further away and never come back. If you want to be bitter, the devil will give you a reason. You can be raised in the best home, have three meals a day, have your clothes provided, and enjoy good times. Your parents can treat you very well, but if you want to be bitter, the devil will give

you a reason to be bitter. If Satan thinks he can cause you to be lost by your becoming bitter, he will. He will amplify something in your mind to cause you to become bitter. Hell is a place for those who allow the devil to get them to become bitter and will not turn it loose.

Dear one, hell is an awful place. You do not want to go there. God does not want you to go there, and there is no reason that you should go there. Jesus made it possible for you to avoid hell. You can be saved by repenting and giving your heart to God. You can let Him come into your heart and life.

The devil will fill your mind with many reasons to try to get you to delay getting saved. He will point out this and that. He did the same to me for a while, but thank God, I got saved. If I had to do it over again, I would have gotten saved much sooner. If you really get saved, you will not regret it. Salvation will not cause you to sing the blues. You will sing praises to God.

Hell is real, but it is avoidable. Dear one, you should not live your life unsaved. Hell is awaiting those who live in sin, but there are so many rich blessings to enjoy in living for God. I am not trying to scare you into being saved, but if I could scare you into being saved and making Heaven your home, it would be worth it. It is a joy to live for God. If you are not right with God, I trust that you can see there is a reason to seek the Lord. Hell is real, but thank God, it is avoidable.

(Cassette C-5681M)

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