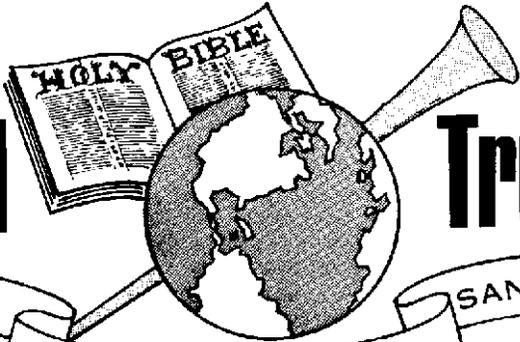


The Gospel  **Trumpeter**

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. 32:33

"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. 40 December 2010 No. 12



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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CONTENTS

The Condition of Your Heart. 3
The School of Salvation. 10
Especially for Young People. 14
Eternity. 16
Winning the Race. 21
Announcements 27
Winter Camp Meeting Announcement. . . 27

Vol. 40 December 2010 No. 12

Guest Editorial

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8

Witnesses for Christ

Jesus came into the world to save men and women from sin's bondage. When He saves men, He saves them for service and to be witnesses for Him and for His cause. Christ does not save souls and then leave them to try to make it on their own. Jesus lived an example for us to follow. Before He died on the Cross, He promised to send us His Holy Spirit to comfort, to guide, and to direct His believers. His indwelling Spirit gives us the power to be the people that He desires us to be. Romans 12:1 tells us, "Brethren, . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." We are to surrender and dedicate our bodies to Him. He gives to us the power to live holy lives and to be faithful witnesses of His goodness.

Being faithful witnesses for Christ today is so necessary. As we can easily see, we live in a world steeped in sin with ungodliness abounding on every side. Our society is saturated with false religions that believe and teach that people must sin a little more or less every day. The majority of people feel it is impossible to live above sin and corruption. However, in 1 John 3:9 we read, "Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Being born again and possessing God's Spirit

gives men and women power to live sinless lives. Living pure lives causes true Christianity to shine brightly. Unbelievers may argue about the doctrine, but it is difficult to refute a life that is lived in holiness and righteousness.

The world needs to see the true light of Christ shining in every place. A beautiful old song says, *"What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him; What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him. He will bring joy and gladness; Take away sin and sadness; What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him!"*

One way the world sees Jesus is through the lives that God's people live before them. A holy life being lived in a world that is full of darkness and sin is like lighting a candle in a room that has no light: it brings illumination. Jesus worded it like this: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Standing firm for the Truth and showing a sweet spirit at all times has a great effect on sinners and unbelievers. Saints who

[continued on page 26]

Mark 7:14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand:

15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

17 And when he was entered into

the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

20 And he said, That which cometh

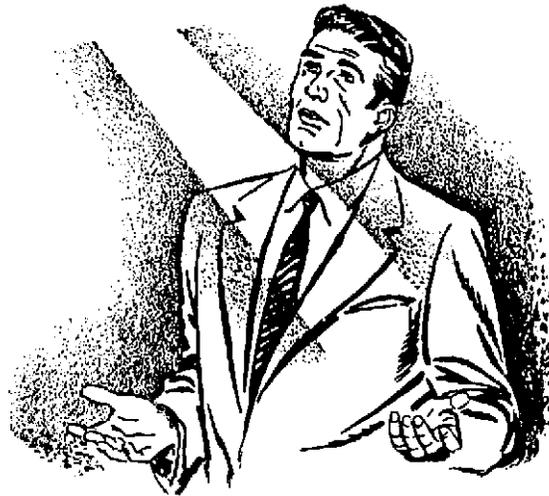
out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The Condition of Your Heart



Brother Roger L. Decker

Elevating Traditions Above God's Commandments

In the first part of the chapter, you will find that a controversy broke out because of the tradition of not eating without first washing one's hands. Jesus set forth a truth in this text, and it was very upsetting to the Orthodox Jews and the elders of that day. Doing away with a tradition of the elders and the Pharisee's religion caused quite a stir in the days of Jesus' ministry.

The Pharisees had so elevated their traditions that they allowed those traditions to replace the commandments of God. Jesus said in Mark 7:9, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." In verses 10-11 Jesus explained the meaning when He said: "For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is

to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free."

The Pharisees were guilty of disobeying the commandment of honoring their fathers and their mothers, and they did that by saying they were under a vow and their money was dedicated to use in the temple. In other words, they could not take care of their fathers and their mothers because they had made a vow to use their money in the work of the temple. They used a

vow that seemed right, but their motive was wrong. They used a tradition to free them from the law of Moses.

In verses 14-15 Jesus said: "Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man." In effect, Jesus was saying that things cannot be unclean in any religious sense, and only persons can really be defiled; but a person's own actions, which are the product of his heart, are what defile him. This was a shattering new doctrine. The Jews had, and still have, a whole system of things that are clean and unclean. It seemed to the Jews that with one sweeping pronouncement, Jesus declared the whole thing irrelevant, and that uncleanness had nothing to do with what a man takes into his body, but everything to do with what comes out of his heart.

Jesus was attacking a system that put rules and regulations before the claim of human need. The commandment of God states that human love should come first. The commandment of the scribes was that the claim of legal rules and regulations should come first. Romans 14:17 states, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." This verse of Scripture lets you know that it is no longer meat and drink, but rather the condition of the heart.

Defilement Comes From Within

The Orthodox Jew was taught the law of clean and unclean. You can read in the Book of Leviticus several laws dealing with the clean and the unclean; therefore, to the Jew this new teaching was very upsetting. Peter was one of the most prejudiced of all the disciples. When he was brought face to face with this truth, he had a difficult time accepting it. In Acts, Chapter

10, you can read about God teaching Peter this lesson. Peter was getting ready for a trip to a Gentile's house.

Verses 9-17 read: "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready [or while they were fixing the meal], he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

"And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice [or three times]: and the vessel was received up again into heaven. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold [here was the answer to the vision], the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate."

As you can see in these verses of Scripture, the disciples were taught in the old law about the clean and the unclean meats and lots of other things that were considered to be clean and unclean. Again, you can read in the Book of Leviticus about many of those things. Peter had a vision, and the sheet was lowered down with beasts and other things that were common or unclean, and he was told to rise, kill, and eat. In essence, his natural reaction was "Not so, Lord; I have never done such a thing!"

Peter felt that for him to do that would defile him. On the contrary, the real defilement that overtakes a man comes from within, or from the

heart, Jesus said. That which defiles a man are his own actions; defilement is a product of his own heart. It springs from within. Do you want to know the reason that you are having a problem with sin? Do you know why you are not getting victory over some things? It is due to the condition of your own heart.

The Soul of Man

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Jesus said in Mark 7:20, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man." When I speak of the heart, I am not talking about your physical heart. I am not talking about the organ in your physical body that pumps the blood; it circulates the blood to keep your body alive. I am talking about the spiritual part of man, where his affections are, where his soul is centered. I am talking about the real you that dwells inside of your earthen vessel made of dust.

Your soul looks out through your eyes, speaks through your mouth, and hears through your ears. God gave you those different functions so that you could exist and communicate while you are here on this earth. Psalm 22:26 says, "The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever."

In Luke, Chapter 16, Jesus talked about the soul of man, death, and what happens after death to man's soul. He taught that after death the soul can see, feel, cry, plead for mercy, remember, and even reason. You are what you are because of the condition of your soul. In 2 Corinthians 5:8 Paul wrote, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Your soul can exist without your physical body. When death comes upon you, the undertaker will prepare your body for burial, but at that point, your soul will already be gone.

Psalm 90:10 says, "The days of

our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Now, you will never see a body fly away; it is the soul that flies away. Luke 23:43 states, "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The thief's body was on a cross, and Jesus' body was on the Cross; yet the man's soul went to paradise. Notice that Jesus did not say Heaven, but rather paradise.

You may ask, "How do you know that Jesus did not mean Heaven?" Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." After three days and three nights, He later told Mary in John 20:17, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." First, there had to be a death, burial, and resurrection.

Jesus went into paradise, but we can read Scriptures telling of when He ascended into Heaven. Acts 1:9-11 tells us: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Here we read of His ascension into Heaven, but on the Cross He went to paradise.

When physical death comes to a person, the soul moves out of the physical body and the spirit goes back to God who gave it. The condition of your soul at death determines where you will spend eternity.

If you are living in sin, as far as God is concerned, you are spiritually dead in your soul; in other

words, your soul is separated from God because of sin being in your heart. In Ephesians 2:1 the Apostle Paul said, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." He was not speaking of being physically dead; he was speaking of being spiritually dead. Paul was writing to people who were very much alive physically.

Evil Thoughts Proceed From the Heart

Genesis 2:16-17 reads: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam and Eve did not die physically; in fact, Adam lived to be more than nine hundred years of age, but they were cut off from God and driven from the garden.

No matter who you are, if you have been partaking of that which God has forbidden, you are dead, spiritually speaking. It makes no difference whether or not you are a church member, God despises sin. God hates sin as much in you as He did in Adam.

Jesus listed some sins that get into the hearts of individuals. He made it very clear when He said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts [from which come evil actions]."

Evil acts begin with evil thoughts. Genesis 6:5 states, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." In other words, they had no thoughts of God; their thoughts were evil continually. Psalm 10:4 reads, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

Are your thoughts taken up with thoughts of God? Before the Flood, the people's thoughts were

evil continually. Some people try to make something dirty of every conversation. You need to be careful around such people. They live in a world of smut. You cannot always stop certain thoughts from entering your mind any more than you can stop a bird from flying over your head. However, you have probably heard it said, "You do not have to let the bird build a nest there."

Evil thoughts are not always sexual thoughts. They can be thoughts where God is left out, thoughts that block God out entirely. Luke 17:26-27 says: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage [it does not say anything other than that they ate, drank, married, and were given in marriage], until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." It does not say they were thinking on sexual thoughts. They were doing things that you and I do every day, but they were so caught up in everyday living that God was not in their thoughts at all.

Luke 12:16-19 reads: "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; [The man was not doing anything wrong. It was something that every one of us would do if we had a bumper crop and no place to store it. What is wrong with building a bigger barn? That was not the problem.] and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease [here was the problem], eat, drink, and be merry."

Everything this man did was only for himself. God was not in his plans. The only place that God was mentioned was in the next verse.

Verses 20-21 read: "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." We do not read of his having any sexual or vile thoughts. We just read of a man who did not have God in his thoughts at all. God knows how many people have made plans that He was not a part of, and they went to the Judgment in that condition.

God Made Man Upright

Jesus also mentioned sexual sins. He spoke of adultery and fornication. Jesus was saying that all sexual vice comes from the heart. Today it is almost unheard of for a bride to be a virgin. God sees the heart. Out of the heart comes adultery, fornication, and all other sexual vices. God has given us a plan, and it takes care of passions and desires, and that plan is called marriage. It works just the way God planned it.

The Greek word for adultery and fornication is **pornicia**, which means "every kind of traffic dealing with sex." You may ask, "What about lesbianism and homosexuality?" God never gave anyone those desires. Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Today many people have come "out of the closet," so to speak, and these sexual sins are wide open. I know they have always been around, but people used to be ashamed and embarrassed about having unnatural affections. They used to be what they called "in the closet." Now they are out of the closet. They are walking the halls of the schools, they are at work, and they are even in the military.

If you are a man, God created you with a desire for a female. If you are a female, God brought the woman to the man. He did not bring a man to the another man; He brought the woman to the man.

Dear one, you need to stay away from homosexuality and lesbianism. Do not fool around and experiment with it. If you do, you will be overtaken by that spirit. Today gays and lesbians are in the streets marching for their rights. The only right they have is according to the Word of God, which is to repent. They have a right to repent.

Wife swapping, prostitution, and pornography are sexual sins. These sins overtake the married as well as the single. Some people like to tempt the opposite sex. They follow the latest fads that the world has to offer. May God help the church to be settled in their standards. Not everything that appears in a fashion magazine is godly apparel.

First Timothy 2:9 says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." God helps the sisters by commanding them to dress modestly. The way you dress indicates the type of person you want to attract. Deuteronomy 22:5 says, "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." The word *abomination* means "a hated thing."

God made a distinction between the sexes in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament. God wants a woman to look like a woman and a man to look like a man; moreover, He wants people to be able to tell the difference. The woman is to have long hair, and she dresses differently. A man is to have short hair. He should not look like a sissy with his hair growing down his neck. The man is to keep his hair trimmed where it needs to be. It should not be down over the collar of his shirt. A godly man wants to look like a man, and a godly woman wants to look like a woman. The Bible speaks of women having "shamefacedness." Today

some women do not even blush or become embarrassed. Sadly, there is little blushing going on today.

There is also spiritual fornication, not just physical fornication. First Corinthians 6:15 says, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid." When you are saved, you are joined to Jesus Christ, and your commitment is to Jesus Christ. He has the number one say in our life.

Darkness Blinds the Eyes

Next, Jesus mentioned murders in our Scripture text. We know that no murderer has eternal life, unless he has been born again. The Jewish nation, as a whole, was guilty of murder. In Matthew 23:34 Jesus said, "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city." He said they killed and crucified the prophets, the wise men, and the scribes.

In verse 37 He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Jesus accused the Jewish nation of murdering the prophets, the wise men, and the elders.

Some people who profess to be Christians have hatred in their hearts. They try to disguise it and cover it up. Sometimes they will even go out of their way to try to make a pretense, but down in their hearts, they harbor hatred. John said in 1 John 2:9-11: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in

darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

In 1 John 3:14a John wrote, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." This is the first thing that happens to you when you get saved. Before you were saved, maybe you could not stand to be around the church. I certainly wanted no part of it before I was saved, but when I got saved, the prejudice was gone, all the wrong attitudes were gone, and I loved everybody. John said you know that you have passed from death to life because you love the brethren.

John went on to say in verses 14b-15: "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

"Let Him That Stole Steal No More"

In verse 22 of our Scripture text Jesus mentioned stealing, or thefts, which is to take that which does not belong to you. In the public schools a lot of stealing goes on. Stealing is sin. John 12:3-6 states: "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

Have you ever gone into a store and purchased clothes for a certain occasion with the thought in mind that you were going to take it back after the occasion? Have you ever thought, "I would love to have that, but it costs so much." So you buy

the garment and keep the price tags and the receipt with the thought in your mind, "I'll just wear it to this event, and then when the event is over, I'll take it back." Would you want that done to you? Certainly not, yet there are people who do that. Now, I have returned defective merchandise. Stores have to raise their prices to offset that which is stolen. There are those who have changed garments in the store and walked out without paying for the new clothes.

Some people steal from the government on their tax forms. Someone may say, "They steal from us." That is true, but you want to protect yourself at the Judgment. You should not put down deductions that you truly do not have coming to you. If you gave one hundred dollars to charity or to the church, you should not add another zero to it.

Some people owe money to individuals and do not acknowledge their debts or pay them, and that is wrong. Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Look at that Scripture. When you get a job, you are able to help others.

Jesus mentioned *covetousness* next. In the Greek this word is **phencia**, which means "a desire to have more." It is the appetite for that which belongs to others, the appetite for gain. This includes not only materialism but also power. It is a spirit that places happiness in things instead of God. Covetousness has taken many a Christian from the fire of the Holy Spirit to the eternal fire of hell.

Guard Against These Destructive Sins

Jesus listed *wickedness*, which is the state of being actively evil. A wicked person might have a desire in his heart to harm someone or long to see evil befall someone. It is

a terrible spirit to want to see someone stumble and fall so that you can say, "I told you so." You have to watch and guard against that kind of spirit. You might desire to be exalted above someone else. You must be careful! That is a way to become stagnate and not to be used at all. Singers should stay in a humble position. You should not sing for the applause of men, but you should sing for the glory of God. If you play a musical instrument, you should use that gift to God's glory. You should not brag about how good you are. You should not flaunt your gift, as if to say, "Watch me do this" or "Listen to me do that." You need to stay in a humble position before God so that He can use you.

Psalms 84:10 says, "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." We know where the wicked will end up. Psalm 9:17 tells us, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

Jesus mentioned *deceit*, which means "to bait, to be crafty, to be deceitful, and to be clever." In 2 Timothy 3:13 Paul wrote, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." False religion is full of deceit. It will take you in as a member without a change of heart.

Next, Jesus spoke of *lasciviousness*, which means "a lack of restraint and decency; excess, a soul who resents discipline or temperance." Some people have no decency or shame. Many sinners hide their sins, but one who is lascivious sins without remorse.

Jesus mentioned having an *evil eye*. This is an eye filled with envy, an eye that looks upon the success of others and wishes he could put a curse upon it. Proverbs 14:30 states, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones." This is one who cannot stand to see others succeed.

Jesus spoke of *blasphemy* next, which means "the act of insulting or

showing contempt or lack of reverence for God." This is evil speaking, railing. It means to insult God. Proverbs 10:18 reads, "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool." He is one who is out to destroy with the tongue. The tongue can destroy so quickly. When you stand for God, people are going to say things about you, but you can overcome it by living right.

The next sin that Jesus mentioned is *pride*, which is showing oneself above others. Pride is a destructive sin. James 4:6 says, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." If you come to God with a proud heart, God will hold you back. If you come to Him in a humble attitude, He will help you and give you grace. The one filled with pride is always wanting to rise above others but is unable to do so because God sees the pride. Proverbs 29:23 tells us, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

We read in Proverbs 13:10, "Only by pride cometh contention [division, or trouble]: but with the well advised is wisdom." The word *contention* means "wrangling and arguing." In 1 Corinthians 1:11 Paul wrote, "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." Proverbs 16:18 states, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Pride is ugly and often will disguise itself through an act of humility.

Jesus mentioned *foolishness*, which describes a man who chooses to play the fool. This is not someone who is brainless, but rather he is like the rich man who built greater barns. He is one who leaves God out of his life. Proverbs 28:26 says, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered."

Jesus laid out quite a catalog of sins. Although I just touched on

each one lightly, these sins are destructive, and they are ugly. The Prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" The answer is that the Lord searches the heart and gives to "every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (verse 10).

How to Obtain a New Heart

Now, there is some good news in this message. It is not all doom and gloom. Although those sins come from within the heart, the good news is that God can give you a new heart, and all those sins can be removed from your heart.

In the Book of Jeremiah, Chapter 31, Jeremiah prophesied of our day. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 he wrote: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Ezekiel 36:25-28 proclaims: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give

you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

As I close the message, I want you to know that you do not have to be involved in any of those sins that Jesus mentioned. You can be made a new person in Christ Jesus. You can have a new heart, a clean heart, and you can live a victorious life for Jesus Christ. The invitation to come to Christ goes out to each one who does not have a clean heart. I invite you to repent to God. Man cannot save you, but he can tell you how to get saved. There is only one Mediator, and that Mediator is Jesus Christ. The pope is not in that position. The pope did not die for you. The pope needs salvation just as you need salvation.

If you have things in your heart that should not be there, those things will keep you out of Heaven. God knows your needs. God wants to see your soul delivered from the quagmire of sin.

You cannot join the Church of God. You have to be born into the church. When you are saved, God puts you in the body of Christ. He does not put you in a sectarian church. The Bible lets us know in Ephesians, Chapter 4, there is one body, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, and one baptism. When the Bible was written, it dealt with oneness. Had there been two ways, people might have chosen the wrong one; but He only dealt with one. If God is speaking to you, then you need to obey what God says. If you obey what God says, things will be right. You can trust God. He is not going to embarrass you or ask you to do something that you cannot do. If He asks you to do something, He will give you the power and the grace to do it. He will give you the grace to repent if you need to repent.

(Compact Disc TR-629E)

"Have You Been Born Again?"

I was reared in a Christian home by born-again parents. They went to be with the Lord some twenty years before I was saved, but my mother had claimed me for the Lord and had died in the firm belief that God is faithful and would one day save me, her only son.

As I grew older, my greatest ambition in life was to become a professional musician. After much study and hard work, I attained my ambition, enjoying some measure of success playing in several symphony orchestras under some of the world's greatest conductors. However, I had gradually drifted into careless living until, before I fully realized it, I had become a slave to drink and a life of sin. I was hopelessly entangled, discouraged, and frightened at my inability to break the awful grip sin had upon me.

One Sunday I had become so despondent that I made arrangements to destroy myself. That afternoon I stopped in a restaurant to have a cup of coffee before returning to my hotel to carry out my morbid purpose. As I sat alone at a table in the restaurant, a young teenager placed her tray of food on my table and sat down to eat. I was scarcely aware of her presence until I was startled to see her bow her head. She appeared to be returning thanks for her food. As I watched her simple act of devotion, my mind was carried back to my early childhood days to things I thought I had forgotten—family devotions, Bible reading, and prayer. I had not been inside a church for more than twenty-five years! When Myrna raised her head from prayer, I asked her where she had learned "that custom."

She seemed surprised and asked, "Well, have you been born again?"

I was astonished at her question, although I understood what she meant. "I once made a profession of faith in Christ when I wasn't much older than you."

Then she looked directly into my eyes and said gently, but plainly, "But, Mister it isn't professing Christ that saves anybody—you must *possess*

Him."

There ensued a long, painful silence as the truth and force of that simple observation stirred in my heart and mind. I had never thought of such a thing before.

Finally, I heard Myrna say, "I think you ought to get under the hearing of God's Word." She recommended her own church and invited me to attend, to hear her pastor preach.

I left the restaurant with my mind in a whirl. All I could seem to think of was, "It isn't professing Christ that saves anybody—you must *possess* Him." I walked the streets all afternoon.

Her pastor's message that night so perfectly fitted my needs that I thought to myself, "That little scamp must have told the preacher all about me," until I realized that she knew nothing about me at all. His Scripture text was, "But as many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of

God. . . ." I realized that "possessing" Christ was the same thing as "receiving" Him.

The pastor remarked that Jesus is a gentleman, that He will not force His way into hearts, but that if we will open our heart's door to Him and invite Him to come in, He will gladly come in—and stay *forever*, because, he said, "Jesus is a forever-saving Savior."

I could hardly wait to get back to my hotel room. Instead of blowing my brains out as I had planned to do, I simply dropped on my knees by my bed and told God that I knew I was a lost sinner, unable to save myself, that I believed the Lord Jesus died on the Cross for my sins, was buried and arose again, and that as best as I knew how—right then and there—I would receive by faith into my heart this "forever-saving" Lord Jesus as mine. How true the verse, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Selected



Galatians 3:22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our

schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

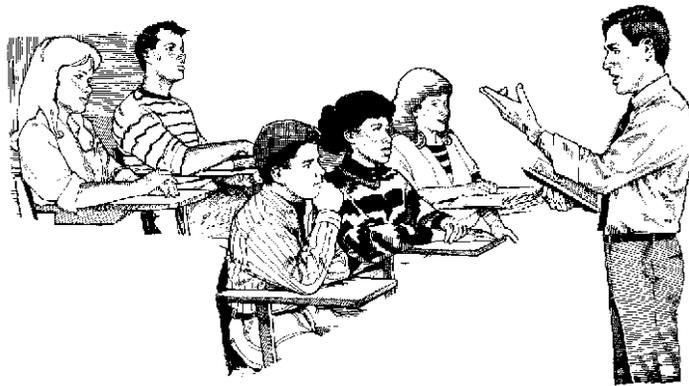
26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abrahams seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The School of Salvation



Brother David Watson

The Great Plan of Salvation

The Apostle Paul went back to the very depths of the marvelous plan of great mystery, a plan that we all are exploring. As we explore, we are still finding golden nuggets, great truths, and great understanding that God keeps revealing. He is leading us to greater things in the Lord.

The Apostle Peter wrote concerning salvation in 1 Peter 1:10-12 that the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come, searched diligently, trying to find what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing to when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but others when they spoke of the things that have been told by those

who have preached the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven.

When Peter wrote about this great salvation, he said that the angels desired to look into it. There are many mysteries about the great plan of salvation. It is hard to get the carnal mind to understand the great plan of salvation. Today it is just as great a need as it was in the days of the Apostle Paul that men and women should be schooled to understand the great plan of salvation. People need to know more about Jesus and His revealing plan. They need to know why He did what He did, how He did it, and how He handed it to you and me. It is still a mystery to find those great riches of the wonderful Savior.

Before the Garden of Eden, God had a plan, and He revealed part of His plan when He told the serpent

that the seed of the woman would bruise his head. Although He was revealing some things about His great plan, He did not make the mystery known to them as we know it today. Yet He revealed some things so that mankind could understand that God is God and that He has an interest in human beings and a love for them. Since the foundation of the world, He planned to bring man into the great plan of salvation so that man could know God and know that God would walk with him and have fellowship with him.

Abel had a relationship with God. Genesis 4:4 reads, "And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Abel found that God is a God to be worshiped, adored, and loved. Abel put forth

great effort to endorse God and to love Him. Abel did not understand the mystery and all the greatness of God, but he understood that God was God and that He was above all gods. You must understand that God is God, that He is a true God, and that He is above all other gods.

A Journey by Faith

God spoke to Abraham and called him out from his kindred and sent him on a journey by faith. This relationship had to be by faith and not by feelings. Abraham had to believe that God was a true God, and that He was able to direct him in the path that he was to travel. Though Abraham might not have understood everything about God, he knew enough about Him to tell his wife that God had called him and that he had to answer God's call to follow Him.

Sarah could have said, "Abraham, where are we going?" No doubt, he would have said, "Come with me, and we will see." That is how faith is. You see, the object is for one to journey with God, and at the end of the journey that person will find the blessings that God has in store for those who are faithful to Him. It is a mystery how we travel by faith in God.

After God talked to Abraham, He made a covenant with him. God told Abraham that He would bless his seed as the sand of the sea and as the stars of the heavens. Abraham got that message deep down in his heart. Hebrews, Chapter 11, says that he journeyed and looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker was God. Abraham might not have understood what God meant when He told him that He would bless his seed as the sand of the sea, but he knew there was a higher blessing in the stars that he mentioned, so Abraham began his journey with God.

Matthew 1:1 says, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

As we study the lineage of Abraham, we find that God was revealing the great plan of salvation to mankind. Christ was going to come to this world to fix something so that mankind could have a relationship with God and God could have that relationship with man.

As God was revealing things and man was making his journey down through the years, God sent an angel to the home of a young woman who was a virgin, to salute her. As he saluted her, she did not understand; it was a mystery to her. However, when the Holy Ghost overshadowed that woman, something got hold of her soul and she laid it in her heart. She knew that a blessing was in store. She was a humble young woman among the women folk, and she had never known a man, but God said she would bring forth a Son. His name would be called Jesus, and He would save His people from their sins. God was on the move, and she pondered these things in her heart. She wanted to find out what this was all about. This was a mystery to her, but God was schooling her and bringing about the plan of salvation to save mankind from sin. I thank God for the plan of salvation.

There was a man who had heard about Jesus, and he was a seed of Abraham. In Luke 19:9-10 Jesus said to him: "This day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Zacchaeus did not understand, but being the seed of Abraham, he traveled by faith. Between the time Zacchaeus left the tree limb on which he was sitting and hit the ground, he had peace in his heart. He met a man called Jesus, and salvation came to his house. I want you to know that Jesus was teaching mankind. He came to earth and went to the Cross of Calvary. On the Cross of Calvary, He fixed it so that, by faith, every man and woman might know Him as a personal Savior and own Him.

Justified by Faith

John said some things that bless our hearts. He said in 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the mystery that I do not understand altogether, but I know that since I met Jesus, this experience is real.

I know that it is His plan. I know that God sent His Son, that He came, and that He died and was resurrected. I have a hope within my soul. I know that salvation is real. Thank the Lord! There are some things that I do not know, but there is one thing that I do know: I know that I am saved from all sin.

In Romans, Chapter 5, Paul wrote to those who were trying to build upon the foundation of Abraham. Paul wanted them to know that was not enough. He let them know that they might have been a descendant of Abraham's seed, but the real seed is through faith and not through the flesh. The real seed has to come by the blood of Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:1-2 Paul said: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Since Jesus came, we no longer need the blood of bulls and goats or priests and an old tabernacle. We have a new tabernacle, and we have a new priest. We have to come to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by faith. Paul said that being justified by that faith, you will have peace in your heart with God. When you get saved, you will not need anyone to tell you that you are saved, you will know that you are saved.

Romans 6:1-2 states: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in

sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" In Christ we are dead to the world and the world is dead to us. When we got saved, God did some things for us.

Galatians 1:13-16 reads: "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

Why did Paul say that? He knew that he was saved by faith. He knew there was a mystery and that it had happened to him. What was it that had happened to Paul? He was on the road to Damascus and had a warrant to arrest the saints of God, to waste the Church of God, or to persecute it. Then God shined a light from Heaven upon him, and it took him to the ground. Paul said, "Lord, who art thou?"

The voice said "Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest." I do not know of another man whom God brought in the way He brought in Paul. He brought him in and gave him access by grace. Paul went out testifying and witnessing that Jesus was God's Son. God revealed Christ to Paul, and he knew Him through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul knew Him as a personal Savior because of the revelation that God revealed to him, showing him that Jesus is God's Son.

The Love of God Is Shed Abroad in Hearts

God put Paul through school. It is the Holy Ghost that reveals and teaches you and me that God is real.

Child of God, you do not go to school to learn to be a Christian. You did not go to school to learn that you got saved. When God saved you, the Holy Ghost revealed the Son and knocked on your heart's door. As Isaiah said, He shortens your bed and makes your covers too narrow. In other words, He puts judgment on you and causes the water to overflow your hiding place. The Holy Ghost will bring old-time heartfelt salvation to your soul. The Bible teaches us that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. When He sheds the love of God abroad in your heart, you will love the things that you once hated. You will love the church, you will love the preaching, you will love the singing, and you will love those times of shouting and praising God because the Holy Ghost of God has shed the love of God in your soul. When God does something for you, nothing else in the world can do that for you; it is greater than anything.

In Romans 3:21 Paul taught the Romans that they needed to do some learning. He said, "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." God used the Prophets to school the people. They prophesied as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Many times they wrote and studied what they wrote, and it may be that they did not fully understand some things. Even Peter said that some things that Paul wrote were hard to understand. Nevertheless, there was a message from God, and it was to be read and studied, and it was to bring understanding that God has a plan of salvation, and that plan of salvation is by faith through the blood. Friend, Jesus Christ can give you a relationship with God that is personal. You may believe there is a God, but that is not enough. You must believe in Him by faith. When it is by faith, it becomes personal to you, and He has a personal relationship with you.

Paul taught that they were schooled by the prophets of old. He continued in verses 22-23: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It was something new for the Jews to understand that everyone needs a Savior and needs to repent.

Redemption Through Jesus Christ

Repentance must come from the heart, and one must have godly sorrow. You repented when the Holy Ghost helped you to recognize that sin is deadly and that you were dead and needed a resurrection. You needed hope, and the only way to find it was by faith in the Son of God. The same Holy Ghost that shortened your bed, made the covers too narrow, and overflowed your hiding place is the same One who raised me by faith to believe in Him. He let me know that God sent His Son to bleed and die for me and that I was lost and needed a hope, because I was in despair. Jesus spoke to my soul through the Holy Ghost of God. I repented through the old sweatbox of repentance and took Him by faith. He removed all my condemnation and put peace down inside my soul. He gave me something that I never had before. When I was going this way and that way, suddenly He led me to the strait and narrow way. For the first time I knew who I was and where I was going. I know what He saved me from, I know what I am saved to, and I know where I am heading. I thank God for Jesus Christ!

Paul went on to say in Romans 3:24-25: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

What was Paul saying? God sent His Son to take our place at Calvary. Friend, He took your place at Calvary. You were a debtor, you were in sin's prison, and you needed a Savior. Paul let us know that the whole world was lost and needed a Savior.

One dear brother told that when he was in the military, he was a guard for the President of the United States, and a choir sang "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" He said it made him tremble. He said deep down in his heart, he wondered why they would sing such a song, because he was not there. When God raised him out of despair and gave him a hope in his soul and let him look at the Cross, he said, "Yes, I was there. I was on His mind. He took my place on the Cross of Calvary. My sins put Jesus on the Cross of Calvary." Jesus took it as a sheep led before the shearer. He opened not His mouth. He even looked at the crowd that crucified Him and said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Dear one, Jesus paid your debt on the Cross of Calvary.

God's Remedy for Sin

When I met Jesus, I met Him through the Holy Ghost. He revealed to me that Jesus is the Son of God. He is God's remedy for sin. He is God's plan for salvation. He came here to seek and to save that which is lost. He came here to give you and me peace.

Sinner friend, what happens when Jesus saves you? Romans 8:1 tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." When does this take place? It does not take place somewhere in the future. You can be delivered from sin today, right now. Today is the day of salvation, and if you will hear His voice and harden not your heart, as the Israelites did in the wilderness in the day of provocation, He will save you. Now is the accepted time. You can be a

brand-new person in Jesus Christ today.

Again, Romans 8:1 reads, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Jesus can give you a new walk and a new talk. I did not have a thing in the world to sing about before God saved me. I was as David of old described in Psalm 40. I was in the miry clay, but God lifted my feet from the miry clay and set me on the solid Rock. Then He established my goings and put a new song in my heart. He gave me something to sing about, something that lifts my soul. It is new and refreshing every day. It is manna from Heaven. It will bless your soul and renew you. It is just like the dew that David spoke of, that comes down over the head, runs down to the breast, to the shirt. When God anoints, He pours out His love all over you. He makes a brand-new creature out of you, from the top of your head to the soles of your feet. God brings something new to you and me.

Romans 8:2 reads, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Jesus let me know when He saved me that the law was changed. The law of sin abounded in me and condemned me. The law of sin put me in sin's prison. The law of sin brought death to me. The death penalty was on my soul, and I was doomed to die. I was looking at the burning flames of hell. I had no hope, no God, and no peace.

Before I was saved, I was living in fear and frightened wherever I went. I was afraid there would never be another day. I was afraid that I might never get right, but when Jesus came in, He changed the law, He took death out. Thank God, He gave me a new song! He put the spirit of love in my heart. He lives in my house of flesh. He lives within me, and where I live, He lives. The church is His tabernacle. He bought her, He paid for her, and she belongs to Him. He gave

the church His Father's name. I thank God for the plan of salvation!

Romans 8:3 reads, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." What a work Jesus has done! What a salvation that Jesus has brought! What a way Jesus has made for you and me! Oh, what He puts in our souls when He saves us!

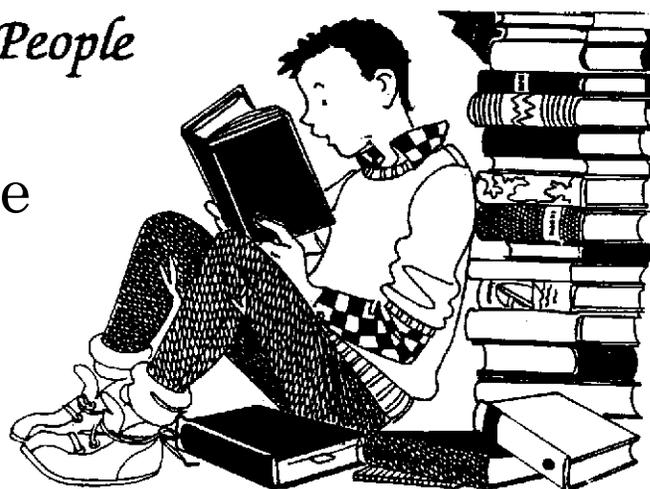
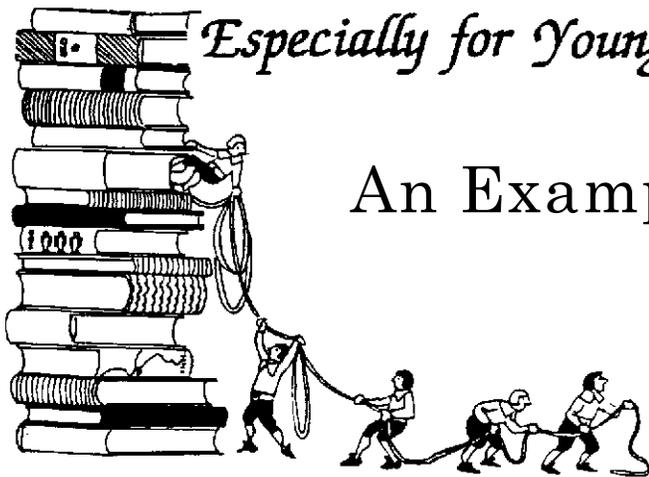
Paul said in Romans 8:4, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Even the Ten Commandments are fulfilled in those of us who are saved. Salvation has been revealed to us, and God has given us the law to fulfill the Ten Commandments. The commandment says, "Thou shalt not steal," and in Christ I do not have to. The commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and in Christ I do not have to, praise God! The commandment says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and that is easier since Jesus came in. I found out who my neighbor is. Before Jesus came in, I did not know who my neighbor was, but thank God, I know now because salvation is real. Friend, you can have salvation right now if you will come to Him. He wants to save you, and He will save you if you will accept His offer of salvation.

The school of salvation is deeper, richer, and longer than I have time to preach to you. I have merely scratched the surface to let you know that back before the Garden of Eden, God fixed a plan for you and me, to save us, to redeem us, so that we would not have to die and go to a devil's hell. You can be saved from all sin. You do not have to sin. You do not need to sin when you have God in your soul and the Holy Ghost. He will help you to live this Christian life.

(Compact Disc TR-499E)

Especially for Young People

An Example



Stealing away from the ones at home, who would be sad when they found out about it, stealing away from honor, purity, cleanliness, goodness, and manliness, the minister's boy and the boy next door were preparing to smoke their first cigarettes. They had skulked across the back pasture and were nearing the stone wall that separated Mr. Meadow's cornfield from the road. Here, screened by the wall on one side and by corn on the other side, they intended to roll the little "coffin nails" and smoke them unseen.

The minister's boy, whose name was Johnny Brighton, and who was an innocent, unsuspecting child, agreed that it would be a fine, manly thing to smoke. So the lads waited and planned, and now their opportunity had come. The boy next door, whose name was Albert Beecher, saw old Jerry Grimes, the worst character in Roseland, drop a small bag of tobacco and some cigarette papers. The lad, being unobserved, transferred the stuff from the sidewalk to his pocket, and then hid it in the wood shed.

At last, their plan seemed about to be carried out. Albert's mother was nursing a sick friend, and the minister, secure in his study, was preparing a sermon. Johnny's mother was dead. His aunt Priscilla was his father's housekeeper, and she was so busy that she had little time for little boys. Today, as she began her sewing, Johnny slipped quietly from the house and joined

his chum.

The boys reached the stone wall and sat down, with the tobacco between them, to partake of what they considered to be a manly deed. After considerable talk and a few blunders, each succeeded in rolling a cigarette and was about to pass it to his lips, when a strange voice, almost directly above their heads, said, pleasantly, "Trying to kill yourselves, boys?"

With a guilty start, Johnny and Albert turned instantly, and beheld the strangest specimen of humanity that either had ever seen. An unmistakable tramp, with a pale, sickly face, covered partly with grime and partly with stubby black beard, stood leaning with his arms on top of the wall, looking down at them. Although it was summer, he wore a greasy winter cap, and his coat, too, spoke of many rough journeys through dirt and bad weather. His lips were screwed into something resembling a smile, but as he spoke, his haunted sunken eyes roved restlessly from one upturned face to the other.

As the only answer the boys gave him was an astonished, frightened stare, the man continued: "I would not do it, boys. It is an awful thing—awful! I was trying to get a little sleep over here," he continued, "when I heard your voices and thought I would see what was going on. Did not anyone ever tell you about cigarettes? Why, each one contains enough poison to kill a cat,

if it was fixed right, I mean." He passed a thin shaking hand over his face and went on: "Do you want to fool with such things? Not if you are wise. You see, the cigarette habit will kill you sometime, by inches, if not right away, or else drive you crazy; and no sane person wants to kill himself or spoil his health. That is what I am doing though," he admitted with a bitter smile and a sad shake of his head. "But I cannot stop it now. I have gone too far, and I cannot help myself. I am a wreck, a blot on the face of the earth."

Both lads had thrown their cigarette to the ground and scrambled to their feet. Johnny, sober-faced and round-eyed, was gazing intently up at the man; but Albert feigned indifference, stood digging his toe into the earth. He was listening, however.

"It is this way with me," the stranger went on, seeing he had audience, "I have gone from bad to worse until I cannot stop, no matter how hard I try. Why, was once a clean little chap like you, but I got to reading trash, and then I began to smoke, and pretty soon I had drifted so far into evil ways that I had no control over myself."

Here Johnny and Albert exchanged a painful glance.

"The worst thing about cigarettes," the man continued, "is that they usually lead to something worse. I am a drunkard and a thief, because of evil associations. Tramps

never have any ready money; so when I have to have cigarettes, which is all the time, I either steal them or steal the money to buy them with. Besides," with another sad shake of the head, "I am what is known as a drug fiend, and—yes, I guess I am everything bad. If your folks knew who was talking to you, their blood would run cold.

"And it is all principally due to cigarettes!" he broke forth, savagely, emphasizing his words with his fist and speaking more excitedly. "Just look at me and behold a splendid example of the cigarette curse! Why, I was naturally bright. I might have been a man to honor, but a bad habit, uncontrolled, soon ruins one. My nerves are gone. I am only a fit companion for jailbirds and criminals. I cannot even look an honest man in the face, yet I am not naturally bad at heart. The best way is never to begin; then you will never have to suffer. Cigarettes will surely hurt you someday, though you may not be able to see the effects at first."

The speaker's manner had changed greatly during the past few moments. At first, he had spoken calmly, but he was now more than agitated. His eyes rolled and flashed in their dark caverns, and he spoke vehemently, with excited gestures. Johnny and Albert stood close together, regarding him with frightened eyes.

"I wish I could reform," he exclaimed, "but I cannot! The poison is in my veins. A thousand devils seem to be dragging me down. I wish I could make every boy stop smoking those things. I wish I could warn them of the horrible end."

With a sudden shriek, the man threw up his hands, fell backward, and disappeared. After a second's hesitation, both lads ran to the wall, climbed up, and looked over. In an unmistakable fit, the man was writhing on the ground. Johnny and Albert ran quickly across lots and into Paul Brighton's study. After learning that the boy's had found a man in a fit, Johnny's father hailed two passing neighbors, and a little party of rescuers followed the lads to the scene of the strange experience.

It was a sorry spectacle that greeted them. The poor fellow's paroxysm had passed, and he lay still and apparently lifeless, covered with dust and grime. The minister bent over him, and ascertaining that he was alive and conscious, lifted him up; then with the help of the two men, took the outcast to the parsonage.

That evening, before the minister had asked his boy three questions, Johnny broke into convulsive sobs and made a clean confession of the matter from the beginning. Blaming himself for not having won the child's heart securely long before this, the minister did not censure him severely. He knew that after such an example, the sensitive lad would never go wrong as far as cigarettes were concerned.

Aunt Priscilla took her nephew in her arms and, kissing the lad, said, "If I have neglected you, Johnny, I am sorry, and after this I am going to spend considerable time being good to my precious laddie."

Johnny slipped an arm around Aunt Priscilla's neck. "That is just

what I want," he said happily.

"I hope this will teach you a lesson, Albert," said Mrs. Beecher to her son, when he, with the help and advice of the minister, had made a full confession of his share of the matter. "After such an example, I should think you would never want to see another cigarette."

"I do not," said Albert soberly, "and if I can help it, I am not going to; I will fight them. Cigarettes certainly did not make a man of that fellow. They *unmade* him."

For several days, during which the minister thought of what could be done for him, the outcast stayed at the parsonage. He was invited to try the Gospel cure. "If you will put yourself unreservedly in the hands of God, and remain steadfast," said Mr. Brighton, "there is hope for you. Besides, I know of some medical missionaries who can help doctor the poison out of your system, if you will let them."

At last, the poor fellow yielded. After a hard bitter struggle, during which the Higher Power helped him, he won the victory.

He joined a band of religious people whose work is to help rebuild wrecked lives. Although weak at first and never robust, he was still able to point the right way to many an erring mortal. He did much good. Johnny and Albert never forgot the practical example that he gave them of what the cigarette can accomplish for its slaves.

Selected

Both faith and fear sail into the harbor of your mind, but only faith should be allowed to anchor.

Psalm 90:1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up.

6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

12 So teach us to number our days,

that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

ETERNITY



Brother E. David Stegmeier

Our Greatest Need in Life

I want to speak to you about a very serious subject. Eternity is the most sobering thought that will ever appear in our minds. I believe most people do not think about it; but if they do, they put the thought aside quickly. I do not play church. Worshiping and serving God is very serious to me. If you are not serious about this, you need to be serious about the subject of this

message.

I ask you, "Where will you be a million years from now?" A million years from now, eternity will only be beginning. I realize this is difficult to comprehend, because we have finite minds; nevertheless, it is true. The most sobering thought that will ever enter your mind is, "Where will I spend eternity?"

Serving God is the most important business of my life. I do a lot of traveling. During one particu-

lar flight, a flight attendant saw me reading a religious book and asked if I would share some of it with her. As I began to share it with her, she began to cry and said: "I'll tell you what. I've been a flight attendant for many years. On September 11, 2001, I pleaded with my supervisor that I needed more hours. I wanted to be on that plane. Little did I know when it left Boston that it would be the second plane to hit the second tower of the World Trade Center.

"I continued to plead with my supervisor. I wanted to be on that plane. My supervisor said: 'No, you have enough hours. I told you once, and I'm telling you again, you will not be on that plane.'" That morning when the second plane hit, she emailed her supervisor and said, "Thank you for saving my life!"

Then the flight attendant said to me, "Pastor, my friend was not so fortunate." She was just crying and crying. She said that morning another flight attendant was going to have a birthday, so she pleaded with her friend to take the flight in her place so that she could celebrate with her family. The friend really did not want to take it that day because she had her own plans. As she continued to plead and express how important it was to her, the friend said, "Okay, I'll take the flight for you." She got on board the plane that flew into the second tower, never to be seen again. She said, "Isn't it something how things go in life?" I said: "You're right. We need God. You need God in your life."

"High Time to Awake Out of Sleep"

I have a real problem with people being silly, lighthearted, and indifferent toward the things of God, because we are eternity-bound souls. We are here for such a short, brief, period of time. We often hear it said that this life is just a dressing room for eternity. People primp and work to take care of the outward man with very little thought of their eternal souls. They spend very little time working on their eternal souls.

You will give an account for the thoughts that permeate your mind. Though a wrong thought is not a sin, it will become a sin if your will connects with your thought and you conceive a plan to carry out that thought. That is when you have sinned. In traveling I meet with many people, and I have to work at keeping my mind clear and pure. Some people continually allow filth

to come into their minds. They feed on trash.

We read in Romans 13:11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." We are down to the very end of time. We are saved to tell others what God has done for us. Paul said that it is high time to awake out of sleep. We are living in a time of lethargy, lukewarmness, and indifference. If you are not saved, you need to wake up, spiritually speaking. Many people are asleep spiritually. Most ministers the world over are asleep spiritually. If they were not, they would be sounding an alarm. God said in Joel 2:1 to "sound an alarm in my holy mountain." That alarm is being sounded to awaken people. Dear one, it is high time to do something about your soul and to help the souls of those around you.

Are you truly awake spiritually? If you are unsaved, there is a good chance that you will be lost eternally. As I was studying for this message, I thought about how people think upon trivial things that do not matter. You need to realize that many trivial things have decided the destiny of many people in the Bible. Eve merely ate of the forbidden fruit. Esau sold his birthright for a mere bowl of soup. Those things were trivial things. Zechariah 4:10 asks the question, "For who hath despised the day of small things?"

If you have unforgiveness, hatred, disgust, or dislike toward someone, it will keep you out of Heaven. There is not a person anywhere that I do not love. When you say that you love God, you do not love Him any more than you love the brother or the sister that you see.

The Need to Prepare for Eternity

Our Scripture text is often read at funeral services. Ecclesiastes 7:2 reads, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the

house of feasting." It is better to attend a funeral than a birthday party. It is better to go to a memorial service than an anniversary celebration. Why is it better? People have more serious thoughts when they see the dead and realize that someday death will be knocking at their own door, and then they realize their need to prepare.

Sometimes I read the obituaries in the newspaper. Now many people do not even want a memorial service. They do not want to think seriously. It is too uncomfortable for them. One time I asked a high school superintendent, "Do you ever think of eternity?"

He replied, "Yes."

Then I asked him, "What are you going to do about it?"

He said: "It is too uncomfortable for me to deal with it now, but someday I will." That is a very dangerous attitude! I always say that the majority of the time, "someday" never comes.

I was brought up that if you have something to do, you ought to do it right then, and I am still that way. If I have said something that sounded a little cross to my wife, I take care of it immediately. Why? I want to be clear with God, because my heart might stop beating. You are not clear with God unless you are clear with the person you are sitting next to, the man at the grocery store, or whomever it might be. You must be clear with all men in order to be clear with God.

Moses said in verses 1-2 of our Scripture text: "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." God is eternal. When I was a child, I remember going to the Church of God, and it was always very serious to me. I can remember going home and thinking about the message. I thought, "There had to be a beginning for God." I had a difficult time comprehending that God has al-

ways existed. Have you ever wrestled with that thought? We have such finite, or limited, thinking, but God is eternal. Before anything was created, God was, and He has always been.

"Be Sure Your Sin Will Find You Out"

We read in verses 3-4 of our Scripture lesson: "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." I believe that God can remember what happened ten thousand years ago. Oh, yes! You may think that was too long ago and that no one could remember, but God remembers.

If you have something amiss in your life, perhaps a restitution to make, you need to do it. It may take all the grace that you can possibly muster, but God has the grace you need. You may say, "That would be so hard!" Well, that is God's plan. The easy way is the wrong way. The Bible says in Ezekiel 33:15, "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die."

The Bible tells us not to build on the sand. We must dig down to a solid foundation. If you have done wrong, you need to make it right. It would be better to be incarcerated here for life than to be free here and end up in a devil's hell for eternity.

Psalm 90:4-5 states: "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up." Grass does not last long. At best, our lives are very brief. When I think about where I am today and look back to when I was young, it seems like yesterday. I am so glad that God still has a people who are serious about serving Him.

If you have sin in your life, God knows all about it. Verse 8 of our Scripture text says, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Numbers 32:23 says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." I have seen that verse fulfilled repeatedly. Often people want to hide things, but sooner or later (sooner for some and later for others), it will be revealed. God's Word is true! It will be just that way.

Moses admonished in verses 9-10 of our Scripture text: "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." To where do we fly? Either we will go to Heaven or hell – one or the other. There is no such thing as purgatory or a second chance once death overtakes you.

The Shortness of Life

Parent, you need to be faithful to God. Your child may end up in hell because of your unfaithfulness. You do not realize the consequences of your foolish acts. You may stray for only a while and then come back and ask for forgiveness, but your son or daughter may go out into the world and never return. No matter how much you cry and weep, God's ear may be deaf. The consequences of sin are tremendous! One of the saddest pictures in the Bible is when David heard that his son Absalom had been slain. When he heard that, he turned around "and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33). I can hear him as he climbed the stairs: "O Absalom! my son, my son!"

I love my children and my

grandchildren. I do not want them to be lost. As a parent, you need to walk the straight and narrow way. This is not silliness. Eternity is serious business!

Verse 11 of our Scripture text says, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." God allowed what happened on September 11, 2001. During World War II, six million Jews, Gypsies, and homosexuals were murdered. Why? It was due to the consequences of sin. The Jewish people had been warned by Jesus. I take warnings seriously, and the warnings we receive in the house of worship are the most serious warnings that we will ever receive. Please heed the message and be serious.

Verse 12 of our Scripture text ought to be the prayer of every one of us: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." You need to be careful of your priorities. We never took our children to any special vacation resort for children. We always took them to the camp meetings at God's Acres. Do I regret it? No! I want my children to serve the Lord. My concern is not so much what they do in life, whether they are going to be doctors or lawyers or bakers. My concern is that my children are serving God.

Only God knows the end, and as we look out at the signs of the times, He is very near to sending Christ and bringing this to a consummation. I want to be ready, and I want to help other people to be ready. I love people, and I want them to be ready too. We cannot make people do right, but certainly we can reason with them and try to convince them through the Scriptures.

In Psalm 39:4-5 David said: "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is alto-

gether vanity." What is a *handbreadth*? It is about the distance of your four fingers; that is not a very big distance when comparing a lifespan to eternity.

You see, all of us are on the stage of life. We are the actors and the actresses, and we are either acting out what the devil is telling us to do or acting out the will of God. I want to act out the will of God, don't you? I have no higher aspiration in life than to be all that God would have me to be. I do not measure myself by others. I have a wonderful wife. I have had wonderful godly examples, but I must measure myself by Jesus Christ. Every one of us should be aware of the shortness of life and its uncertainties. Death will be the final chapter in your life of mortality.

Apply Your Heart to Wisdom

People have all kinds of plans. Many people live thinking about their plans to go on vacation at some exotic destination. They plan their vacations a year in advance, and throughout the year they are in an euphoria. They live on that. James said in James 4:13-14: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

God has the final word. I look forward to attending the camp meetings at God's Acres. I enjoy the saints so much, but every day of the year, I need to live consistently because I may never get to the next camp meeting. You need to be very careful about making plans without God's approval. I repeat, God will have the final word. The Bible lets us know that we should number our days and recognize how few they are. God can help us to spend them as we should. Life is full of all kinds of choices. You are making the right choice when you choose to

go to the house of worship.

We need to spend our days carefully. The Scripture says, "Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." You really ought to consider your time right down to the moments. You might not have another day. This could be your last day. You may not see the rising of the sun tomorrow.

Many times I have been in the intensive care unit of a hospital. You have to be quiet there because someone might have had heart surgery. Ministers of God are performing operations on people's spiritual hearts. When they do it, they are very serious about it. Someone may be making an eternal decision. You have a wonderful opportunity to serve the Lord and get established in the Truth. Everything is set. You should not turn it away. Eternity is long.

Charles Spurgeon, a great man of God, went to the bedside of a dying believer. He took an individual with him, and this individual said to this dying believer, "Farewell, friend, I shall never see you again in the land of the living." The dying Christian replied, "I shall see you again in the land of the living where I am going. This is the land of the dying." We are born to die. The most solemn thought that could ever appear in your mind is that you have an endless existence somewhere.

Think Seriously About Your Eternal Welfare

It has been said of Judas that it would have been better had he never been born. I believe it can be said of every individual that has ever lived that it would be better never to have been born than to have not been born again. You have an immortal soul that is going to spend forever in Heaven or in hell.

One time when I was teaching as a substitute in an English class, the teacher requested that I write five questions on the board and

have the students respond to them in their journals. Because of so many suicides and troubled homes, the teacher wanted to keep close contact with these students. These were three of the five questions: Do you believe there is a hell? Do you believe there is a devil? If you believe there is a devil, what is he like?

The students scratched their heads, trying to think of something to write, so I said, "Would you like to know what Mr. Stegmeier thinks about these questions?"

They said, "Yes, help us out!"

I said: "There is an afterlife. It is certain, and it is in the Bible. There is a Heaven, and there is a hell. Heaven is a prepared place for those who prepare. Hell is for those who are unprepared. Is there a devil? Yes, there surely is a devil." In a general way, I used Saddam Hussein as an example. I believe that he was possessed of the devil. Also, I believe that Adolph Hitler was possessed of the devil.

There is a Heaven, a hell, and an afterlife, just as sure as you are living. It is settled. The devil works in *very* sly ways. He has many tricks because he has been at it for thousands of years. Do not try to argue with him. He is much more in-depth at deception than you are at understanding. Your only defense is God. You should not try to outsmart the devil, because he has been at this much longer than you have.

Eternity is an infinite time, eternal existence, and having infinite duration. It is an infinite future without end. God has no beginning and no end. The Bible says in Deuteronomy 33:27, "The eternal God is thy refuge." It has been said that the most distant star ever seen through the most powerful telescope has been estimated to be the vastness of 2.5 quadrillion miles from the earth. This distance is utterly incomprehensible to us, but so great that light, which is said to travel 100,000 miles while I take one ordinary step, can reach us only after the long period of three hundred years.

That distant star is not the limit of space, even though it is 2.5 quadrillion miles from the earth. Space goes on unendingly, and so does eternity. Eternity is like the circumference of a circle: it is without an end.

Are you thinking seriously about your eternal welfare? All of life should be very serious. We all like to have fun and enjoy living. I have some very fun times. However, when it comes to the Gospel and the work of the church, I do not play around. If you are playing church, may God pity your soul! You would be far better off playing with electricity.

"Hear the Solemn Footsteps of Eternity"

Someone once said, "If a bird could fly with the smallest grain of sand to the most distant star and return for another grain of sand, and then another, until it had taken the earth completely away, and through these incomprehensible stretches of time, that bird had transported this earth to that distant place, eternity would have just begun." The reason I love the worship services is that there is always an aura of fear upon my heart. Dear one, are you pleasing to God, in your words and your actions? Will they cause you to miss your eternal home with Him? You had better be careful to bring your mind into subjection to God. You must watch what you say and guard your heart.

A poem entitled "Eternity" reads:

*No mortal knows the depth
To which its meaning goes.
If only one each thousand years
Of all the atoms of this sphere
Should go on to nothingness,
For aye when thus this world
Should pass away unmeasured,
Even then would be the ages of
eternity.*

The Church of God has the finest hymns in the world, and that

is a divine work of God. They are awesome! One particular song was the inspiration of a sixth-seal Church of God songwriter, D. O. Teasley. He wrote some of the most serious songs that we sing in the Church of God. This song, which is also entitled "Eternity," was inspired as he was walking with a group of mourners to a cemetery in New York City. As he was going under the portal of that cemetery, God began to inspire his heart, and he penned the following words.

*I stood at the time-beaten portals,
Where many a pilgrim had passed
Out into the infinite future,
To be with the pure and the blest;
And, musing in silent devotion,
Eternity seemed to draw near;
And strains from the choir of the faithful
I seemed in my fancy to hear.*

*Oh, eternity! Long eternity!
Hear the solemn footsteps of eternity.*

*I lingered, and silently listened
To the dull, heavy tread of the years,
And thought of the fate of the guilty,
When Christ in His glory appears;
A shutter came over my spirit,
As I thought what a moment might
cost,
For eternity's stillness was broken
By the groans and the sighs of the lost.*

*I saw then the Judge in His splendor,
As he stepped to his great judgment
seat,
And thought of the crashing of ages,
When time and eternity meet;
For Time, who has laid many millions,
To slumber in death's silent shade;
Shall reel at eternity's presence,
And sleep in the tomb he has made.*

*Let us work while 'tis day, brother,
sister,
For soon shall the Master return,
To garner the wheat that we harvest,
The chaff in his fury to burn;
Then in haste let us rush to the rescue,
But few can we save at the most;
Soon millions shall be at the judgment,
Forever, eternally lost.*

*Oh, eternity! Long eternity!
Hear the solemn footsteps of eternity.*

You need to think about eternity. If you have a need, won't you pray? Many times when I think along these lines, I think of a scene that I saw one time. I was teaching a history class, and they showed brief excerpts from the Vietnam War that a journalist had taken. When South Vietnam fell to the communists, they brought helicopters in to take people out who wanted to flee Saigon. When the last helicopter flew in and landed on the American Embassy building, the desperate people crowded the helicopter, and people were clinging to whatever they could on that helicopter, trying to get out. As the helicopter went up, you could see those who were hanging here and there, but eventually they lost out. That is a picture of how it is going to be in the end of time.

Many people will want to get into Heaven, but it will be too late. Now is when you need to make a decision to live for God. Do you seriously realize that you are going to live continually forever? It is high time that you become serious about your soul.

(Cassette C-5428E)

SIX LITTLE WAYS TO MEAN MORE TO YOUR CHURCH

1. Be an On-Timer.
2. Be a Friendly Greeter.
3. Be a Cheerful Giver.
4. Be a Willing Helper.
5. Be a Hymn Singer.
6. Be an Earnest Prayerer.

*Philippians 3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Winning the Race



Brother Irwin Seshier

The Importance of Running This Race

Our Scripture text says in verse 13 to forget those things which are behind. If more people would forget the things that are behind, they would be further up the road in their walk with Jesus Christ. Friend, you need to sever the ties of this old world if you are going to win this Christian race. You must not allow those things to weigh you down if you expect to win anyone else to Jesus Christ.

A race is a contest to determine the relative speed of persons in

competition, to contend against in a race, to move at great or top speed. This Christian race is a race above all other races. As children of God, we are in a race as well as in a battle. As we run, we are fighting against the evil forces of this old world. We are fighting against spiritual wickedness in high places. We do not have time to look around and waste time. We need to set our faces as a flint and run for Christ. This race is far different from any other race. Should someone beat you in a literal race, you would gather your wind and say, "Let's go again. I want to try to beat you

again." You only get one chance in this Christian race, and that is the reason the stakes are so high. The prize in this race is something that the mortal mind cannot really comprehend. We are running for an eternal prize.

Many individuals think, "I can do whatever I want to do to run this race." Friend, you have to give up all to run this race. You will not get a second chance to run the race again. You will have only one time, and you want to win this race. You do not want to lose. This is a heavenly race against the forces of evil, a race of right versus wrong. I want to

emphasize that you need to win this race. You cannot just go through the motions and expect to win.

You must run the race because you love God and the things of God. As a child of God, you must see the importance of winning this race. This race must mean more to you than your friends or your job. You may think: "I can move over there and make more money. I think I will move there." Is there a true Church of God congregation there? If not, you need to stay right where you are so that you can get your soul fed. Life is too short and eternity is too long to take a chance on losing your soul.

This race is more important than your husband or your wife, your boyfriend or your girlfriend, or any earthly treasure. I am concerned that too many people do not see the ultimate price of this race. This race is more important than all your investments in the stock market. Today we have gone through some tough economic times. Sometimes we see the sad faces of people who have lost some of their investments. Friend, if you have Jesus Christ, you have the most valuable investment. One of these days all the money will burn with a fervent heat. Only what you have down deep in your soul is going to last eternally.

Are You in Condition to Run This Race?

Dear one, how is your spiritual conditioning program in running this spiritual race? What do you need to do to get yourself in top spiritual running condition? Literal runners do not just sit around. They must not allow themselves to become lazy. They are constantly in training, running and exercising. They watch what they eat and keep track of their caloric intake and other nutritional information. They know the importance of eating the right foods.

Sometimes when it comes to people's spiritual food, they do

not seem to care what they take in. They feed on Babylon's buffets, thinking they can be well fed there. Friend, when you are in a true Church of God congregation and you are getting your soul fed, you have no desire to go anywhere else. I have no desire to go down to Babylon to try to get my soul fed. Why would I eat scraps down there when I can feast at Father's house? I know I can get my soul fed there and be in good condition to run this race successfully.

A runner is not going to sit around and eat candy bars, potato chips, and other confectionaries and expect to run a race effectively. That would not work well. They monitor what they eat and keep track of how much time they spend exercising, how many miles they run, and how many calories they burn. It is important to them because they want to be their best for the race. An athlete has to train diligently. Why? In a literal race, there is only one winner, and that is the first person across the finish line. He does not want someone to overtake him and pass him in the next lane. Remember, an athlete is running the race

to win. I have never heard of anyone who said he wanted to be in a race to lose. That would not make sense.

First Corinthians 9:24-25 tells us: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible."

In Greek and Roman times, foot races were the most ancient and the most highly esteemed of all games. They were witnessed by kings, noblemen, and statesmen. In some races that is the same way it is today. Those who are running the Christian race are watched. If you are saved, people will watch your every move, and they will listen to every word that comes from your

mouth; therefore, you need to be careful when you run this race. Many people may not pick up a Bible and read the Word of God, but if they know you claim to be a child of God, they will watch you. They will know without a doubt whether you are committed to this race or just going through the motions.

Changing Your Position for an Easier Way

The winners of those ancient foot races were held in very high esteem. They were considered to be heroes in their land, and they were treated like royalty. I try to picture in my mind those runners getting closer and closer to the finish line, trying to get themselves in position to make that last long spurt to cross the finish line. No doubt, as they got closer to the finish line, the crowd was shouting and urging them on. Perhaps some runners tried to change lanes to position themselves to get a better angle at the finish line.

Sometimes people want to change lanes. They do not like the lane they are in, so they think, "If I go into this lane, I can do better." Friend, you need to stay where God expects you to stay. You need to stay in the position where God wants you to be. Many times when people get out of the order of God, they start affecting other dedicated runners who want to run this race to win. Sometimes lane changers find fault and start pointing fingers at others, accusing others of having an unfair advantage.

Dear one, you need to buy the Truth and sell it not. I do not want to give up Truth. I want the Truth to go forward. God has been so good! You need to hold the Truth higher than you ever have before. I love the standard of God's Word! I love it just the way it is. Too many people want to find an easier way. If you are going to make Heaven your home, you must work hard and put forth much effort. Today people

have transferred their wants and needs from the material world and try to bring it over to the spiritual side. Friend, that is not going to work.

Jesus said in John 10:1-2: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep."

I want you to notice that Jesus said that the one who tries to get into the kingdom some other way is a thief and a robber. When a person thinks it is all right to change lanes, he becomes confused and out of focus. He loses the sense of why he is in that lane and for what purpose he is there. He begins to think in terms of what will benefit himself, not thinking about the needs of others. As Christians, we should be more concerned about others. Friend, you need to quit thinking of yourself so much.

During the Olympic games, when runners move into the wrong lane, they are automatically disqualified. Friend, when running this race, the last thing that you want to happen to you is to change lanes and become separated from God. I have never seen a time when people want to change lanes so quickly. They are changing their thinking about the Truth. They say they do not see things as they used to. Friend, if you become spiritually blind, you will not see anything clearly anymore. Your eyes become blinded because your heart is not right.

Today people feel they can change lanes anytime they desire to do so. They say, "Wait a minute, preacher. You are preaching it too straight. I think I'll go over to another church where I can do things the way I want to and still be called Church of God." That is sad, isn't it? Such people need prayer. How did they get in that condition? They changed lanes. They moved from their previous position. There is a

danger in thinking, "I will go where I can wear whatever I want and still be labeled Church of God." I am simply appalled that people who once stood for the Truth, shouted praises to God for the Truth, and walked the aisles and rejoiced because of the Truth turned away from the same Truth. Where are they today? They think they have found a better way, but in reality, they have gone the wrong way and have fallen into deception.

The Need to Stay Focused

Deception does not happen overnight. The devil is too wise for that. It is a gradual occurrence. He will get you to look at others, question others, and think that others who have changed are getting by. No one gets by when they let down on God's Word. That is a trick of the old devil. God is taking account of everything. I am simply appalled at how quickly people change, and when you look at them, you cannot tell where the world ends and the church begins. They have become so blended with the world, yet they say everything is all right. No, it is not! At one time they declared that certain things were wrong, but now they see no wrong in those same things. If those things were wrong back then, they are still wrong today.

The Truth does not change; it just gets stronger in these last days in which we are living. The messages concerning how the saints should dress, how we should act, how we should talk, and how we ought to conduct ourselves around the opposite sex are in the Bible for your protection. We need to realize that it is not important what people think; it is what God's Word says that will judge us. He is the One whom we will face in the end, not this individual or that individual or a preacher. We will stand before the Almighty God and be judged by His Word.

Have you faced persecution? Have you faced discouragement?

Have you faced false accusations? If you are still in the race, you need to thank the Lord for protecting your soul. You need to thank God that your desire to serve Him is still strong and that you have no desire to change lanes. Church of God, the lane that God put you in was right then, and it is still right.

When you run this Christian race, there are usually bystanders who yell at the runners. Either they are going to cheer for you or work against you. Friend, you should not allow anyone to talk you out of this most important race. Do not lend an ear to ones who want to spread division. You must not lend your ear to anyone who wants to run down the man of God. You need to stay focused. Do not look around or look up into the stands. When you start looking at others, you will get your eyes off Christ.

You need to keep your eyes focused on Jesus. If you do not keep your eyes on Him, you will get off the mark, and that is exactly what the devil wants you to do. If you get your eyes off Jesus, your mind will begin to wander. You will begin to think about other things rather than spiritual things. If you start letting down and leaning on the flesh, the devil will go into overdrive to try to get you to mess up. He will say, "Well, he claims to be a child of God, but he does not live as strictly as he ought to live."

You should not let circumstances knock you out of this most important race. Sad to say, some people are getting knocked out of the race for little reasons. It is time for the church to be strong in these latter days. People in the world are looking at those who are still standing for the Truth consistently. You may not know all about every church doctrine, but you can still live the life before those whom you are around. People on the job know that a true child of God is going to be in the house of God each Wednesday evening and each Sunday morning and Sunday evening. You can be strong in the Lord.

Examine Your Heart

Psalm 24:7-8 tells us: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." I thank God that we have One who will go into the battle with us. We do not have to go in this battle alone; the Lord will be there to lead the way for us.

Getting back to the thought of a race, before an athlete runs in a race, he should have a physical checkup. Why? The race will be very strenuous. It will take a toll on the heart and every part of the body. Many people would not consider participating in sports without having a physical checkup, but what about the most important race that the Christian is in? You need to have a spiritual checkup. Child of God, this is the most important race that you will ever run.

When a person gets a physical checkup, first the doctor asks a few questions. Before you go into the examination room, someone will give you a questionnaire to fill out. Why does the doctor do this? It is so that he can gain knowledge. You would not want a doctor to start giving you something without knowing anything about you. If he were to do that, you might end up in worse shape than you were before you went to his office. In order to find out your medical history and to diagnose any problems, a doctor needs a patient to answer a questionnaire.

Many people would not think twice about giving their physical information to a doctor, but if a pastor says that he missed a person being in the services, some individuals take the attitude, "What business is that of his?" Friend, a godly pastor is concerned when you are not in the services. What would you think if he was not there, yet he offered no explanation? You need to be in the services regularly. Why? You are in this race to win. The

services are where you get a checkup, not for the outward man, but for the inward man.

You need to be in the services, if at all possible. If you cannot be there, you should let the person know ahead of time the reason that you cannot be there. That is called courtesy. He is your pastor; therefore, you should show him much courtesy. He is the watchman on the wall, and he wants you to make Heaven your home. The pastor is not there to nitpick; he is there to follow the will of God. It should not be a struggle to get to the house of the Lord. That is where you gain the strength and the encouragement to run this spiritual race. You need the Word of God to feed you exactly what you need to be fed.

Another reason that you need to be in the services is that you will be around others who are running the same race that you are running. It is vitally important to your spiritual welfare in the race for you to be in the services and for you to be in Sunday school. You are not too old to be in Sunday school. Hebrews 10:25 reads, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Is Your Experience Up to Date?

Before a literal race, a doctor will check your heart. Some people try to run this Christian race with a faulty heart, a weak heart. Sad to say, their hearts are not right with God. Friend, whether you are a member of a congregation or think you are Church of God, if your heart is not right, it is all for naught. Jesus said you must be born again. You must have an up-to-date experience of salvation. It is not what you did thirty or forty years ago that is important right now. The question is, are you still saved today?

How can you run a spiritual race successfully with a defective

heart, spiritually speaking? You cannot do it, friend. First, your heart must be right. That old stony heart needs to be removed, and you must have a heart of flesh that the Lord can work with. When you have a heart of flesh, you will not have a desire to change lanes. Too many people have spiritual heart failure, because their spiritual hearts are faulty. Their heart valves are not working properly and their arteries are clogged with envy, malice, jealousy, evil thinking, and covetousness. Friend, you must have a clean heart to run this spiritual race successfully. All the vessels that lead to the heart must be cleaned up. Malice has to go, jealousy has to go, and the spirits of this old world have to go. Your heart must be fixed on Jesus.

We read in Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

You need to think about that, friend. Jesus ran the race before us. He went through persecution before we were ever thought of on this earth. You can run this race effectively. Jesus did, and He is our example. He faced much opposition. Too many people want to get out of this race because of an adverse circumstance, because of what someone said or did to them, or because a preacher did not shake hands with them. Those are ridiculous reasons. Those reasons will not stand on the Day of Judgment. Do you think that you will get by with saying, "I gave up serving You, Jesus, because someone did not look at me right." How did people look at Jesus? How did they treat Jesus? Do you think you cannot take a little persecution? Shame on you!

Is Your Heart Right With God?

If your heart is not right, if you are harboring those things that I previously mentioned, you are setting your heart up for a spiritual heart attack. Those things become spiritually fatal. If you allow those things to overtake you, you might not have a chance to get back to God. Those things do not happen overnight; it is a gradual process.

Today many people do not see the Truth as they once did. The critical spirits are on the rampage. When finger pointing sets in, an old spirit of division wants to work, and their attitude toward their brothers and sisters change. All those things come from the heart. They need to have their hearts changed.

Matthew 15:18-19 says: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." You have no business trying to run this spiritual race when your heart is defiled. You will not be of any benefit to others if your heart is not right. Some people are trying to do things when their hearts are not right, yet they are being accepted by nominal religion.

False religion says: "You can come over here and still do the things you want to do in sin. We will make you a Sunday school teacher or maybe we will put you in charge of the youth program." Dear one, until you have a definite change of heart, although you might have a profession, Christ does not possess you.

Is your heart right with God? If your heart is right, it ought to be in tune with your brother's and your sister's heart. If it is, you will be an encouragement to them, and they will be an encouragement to you. Now, you may disagree about this or that, but you should not let these little things stand in the way. If your spirit is right, you will accept

your brother and sister in Christ. If your spirit is right, your heart will be right.

How is your heart today? Is it in tune with your brother and sister? It ought to be in tune with your Sunday school teacher. Do you say, "The reason I don't go to Sunday school is that it is too long" or "I just cannot stand that individual"? If you do, your heart is not right. If I were seated at a dinner table and someone served me spinach, just because I do not like spinach does not mean that I would get up from the table and not eat anything. I would not show a wrong attitude just because a bowl of spinach was placed on the table. Sunday school is an important part of the services.

How is your attitude toward the choir director, the song leader, and the pastor? If your heart is right with God, you will not sit back and criticize, but instead you will ask the Lord to point out those things in your life that might hinder you or others in this race. You need to ask God, "Is anything in my life preventing me from running this race effectively?" If your heart is right, you will love others. You must seek God's face in all that you do, not just in some things. If your heart is right, you will not run down a man of God.

Is Everything in Order in Your Life?

Do you have a problem with gossiping about others or listening to gossip? Do you know how you can stop gossip? You simply refuse to listen to it; that stops it right then. The gossipper has to have a listener. That person may begin this way: "I am going to tell you something, and I know you will pray about it. I don't want you to tell anyone else," even though they have already told fifteen or twenty other people. Would you want things that you have said or done blasted all over the congregation? No! If someone has a problem, you ought to pray for that person.

The gossipper may come to you and, in the course of conversation, say: "Oh, guess what I heard about Sister Cucumber. I couldn't wait to tell you." There is a good possibility that what that person heard is false. Then what should that person do? He or she ought to back up and make it right. Too many people do not have a reverse gear, so to speak. The gossipper would not have to use reverse gear if he or she would walk right in the first place. These things come from the heart. You need to be careful of what you say and what you listen to.

If more people's hearts were right, less homes would break up. More people's marriages would stay together. Divorce is out of the question when two people are in love and walking with God. If more people's hearts were right, church attendance would be up and not down. Pastors should not have to pull and tug to get people to the house of God.

When you have the Truth, you do not need gimmicks, side shows, puppet shows, or soup suppers to get people to the house of God. You need to stay away from soup suppers down in Babylon. Revelation 18:2 says it is "a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." You need to stay away from those unclean birds. The birds in those cages carry diseases and parasites, and you will catch what they have. Why go down to Babylon when you can have the best? You might have friends down there, but God will take care of them just as He has called others out of Babylon. You need to pray that the Lord will show them in His Word that what they are in is false and that God will bring them out. You should not go down to Babylon to try to win them, because you might get stuck down there.

The Church of God has given me everything. It was there that I found hope, joy, and peace. It is an everlasting peace, a deep-seated peace. Salvation gives you power to say no to the devil. When the devil

points his finger to accuse you, you can rebuke him. You can say, "Devil, get behind me! You have nothing to offer me. Jesus Christ has done everything for me!" The most important thing is, you need to get your heart right, not according to what this group says or does, but according to how the Holy Spirit directs.

Have you allowed the Lord to look at your heart today and do a thorough examination? You should not try to close some chambers of your heart, because He can see your

whole heart. You should not try to withhold anything from God. Is everything in your life in order?

I thank God that I am free from the bondage of sin. One day the Lord spoke to my heart. I was tired of going my way, and I thought it was time to go God's way. I am thankful that I did, because this way is glorious! This way is full of joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Jeremiah 24:7 tells us, "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their

God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." Friend, the world will tell you that you do not have to live this life so straight, but it would be terrible to run this race and then come up short at the end if you did not. Does it not make sense to run the race the right way? As I said at the beginning of the message, you will not get another chance once death overtakes you. Are you in condition to win this race that is set before you?

(Compact Disc TR-453M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

faithfully endure severe opposition as it is hurled against them prove that the Bible is really true. It shows the onlookers the grace of God in powerful demonstration. It illustrates God's ability to keep a trusting child secure through the tests and the trials that befall him. Honest hearts are watching to see if Christianity really works when the pressure is applied. A Christian's faithful witness has often been the convincing element that has won many a precious soul to the Lord. In a home where a saved spouse lives with an unsaved companion, the one who is saved has often been able to win the unsaved to the Lord by living a godly life. Faithful witnesses are a good influence on those who are living contrary lives.

Living the Christian life and being faithful in the Lord will never go unnoticed or unrewarded. You may not see the fruit of your witness as you would like, but the Lord is keeping the record. He is accom-

plishing in you that which He desires. Do not be discouraged at what you see with your physical eye. You must continue to press forward in your efforts for the Lord. Do you remember faithful Stephen? He was just an ordinary man whom the Lord chose to work through. The Lord uses the humble to do great things for Him. Stephen witnessed for Jesus in the midst of a crowd of unbelieving Jews. Those same men were responsible for crucifying Christ. Stephen boldly proclaimed the Word of God and pointed his finger at these religious professors. In Acts 7:51 he said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Stephen's faithful witness made an impression on a young man standing in that crowd. That man was Saul of Tarsus, who was later saved and became the Apostle Paul. We know that Paul was used of God in a mighty way. Oftentimes one man's faithful witness and great

service for the Lord will lead another man to salvation.

Have you ever thought, "What if Stephen had not been faithful by allowing the Lord to use him as a witness?" Maybe Paul never would have been won to God. Consequently, he never would have become a mighty instrument in God's hand. No doubt, we would have missed seeing and reading the letters that Paul wrote in the New Testament.

What if you fail to be faithful to God and neglect being the witness that He wants you to be? Your failure could result in some lost soul never finding his or her way to the Lord and salvation. This is a sobering thought, is it not? God is counting on each of His children to be the faithful witness we need to be. A lost and dying world is waiting for you and what you have!

Selected

We increase our ability, stability, and responsibility when we
increase our
sense of accountability to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Summersville, WV
December 3-5

REVIVAL: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Rd., Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Brother Daniel Webster, Medina, Ohio
Service times: Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders at telephone: 304-872-4047
Visit our website @ www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com

NEWARK, OH
December 28-31

CAMP MEETING: The Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055
Three services daily: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. The first service begins Sunday morning. The afternoon service will be a teaching service.
For lodging reservation, please call Bro. & Sis. Dave Bush at 740-345-1213
For further information contact: Pastor Roger Decker, 87 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055
Telephone: 740-344-2543



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Time: 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.
Ages: 5 - 12

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(See page 27 inside for more information.)