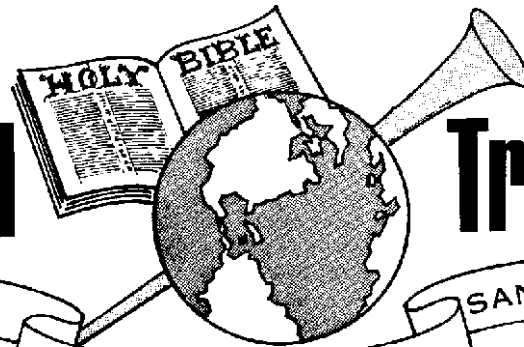


The Gospel



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. 32:38

"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 July 2010 No. 7



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

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

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

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Vol. 40 July 2010 No. 7

Guest Editorial

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them."

2 Timothy 3:13-14

Beware of Seducing Spirits

Christians everywhere agree that today we are living in perilous times. Wickedness and rebellion ruling in men's hearts is causing this perilous condition. As society continues to worsen, the saint's only hope of making it through with victory is to diligently draw closer to God.

Regardless of what scoffers say, we are living in the last of the last days of time. Satan has been turned loose, and as never before, he is seeking every means possible to destroy the souls of men and women. It makes no difference what means he uses, he has but one purpose and that is to destroy precious souls. There are many ways that a seducing spirit can make its inroad into the heart and life of an individual.

First Peter 5:8 says that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." When a lion roars in the jungle, it petrifies its prey. In other words, the victim freezes with fear, unable to move. With resistance diminished the attacker can soon move in on the prey and overcome it. Unless something interrupts this petrifying condition, the intended victim stands no chance of survival.

This is much like the adversary of men's souls. Satan's sly and deceitful tactics often overcome people. His continual roaring brings on undue fear, turmoil and confusion. He deceives ones by causing them to feel that they

will not be able to live victoriously over sin. He torments others with the fear of dying and not being right with God. This is only a trick of the enemy, but many times it robs the Christian of the peace and the joy that God wants them to possess. Saints do not have to fall captive to Satan's false fears and lies. Remember, Satan is a defeated devil because Jesus overcame him; because Christ overcame, we can overcome also.

The children of God face many perils today. If saints are not careful and prayerful, Satan will worry them over things that may never come to pass. Fear is a terrible thing, and it causes men and women to get their eyes off the Savior. When individuals take their eyes off Him, they get switched over to looking at the surrounding circumstances, which hinders their faith and allows the enemy to gloat with victory.

Satan uses many seducing spirits to deceive and to lead souls away from the truth of the Gospel. These devilish spirits operate in very deceitful ways. Often they come in the bodily form of ungodly men. Disgruntled balk and find fault with God's Word, His way, and His man. Jude, verse 4, reads, "For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God."

[continued on page 20]



The Great Tribulation

Brother Roger L. Decker

Daniel's Vision

We want to look at a false doctrine that is being taught for truth. Many false doctrines are running rampant in our nation. People seem to believe almost anything that comes across the airwaves or that is hailed across pulpits, such as millenniums, eternal security, prayers for the dead, and the thousand-year reign, just to name a few. These seem to get the attention of the masses in false religion. Some so-called ministers are lining their pockets with healing campaigns. Certainly divine healing is a Bible doctrine, but it is not to be used for mammon (money) or personal gain.

We want to look at one of the teachings that seems to fit in with all the rest of the falsity. We want to study the great tribulation. We will not be able to exhaust the subject, but we will start in Daniel, Chapter 9. Daniel had been praying, confess-

ing the sin of Israel and his own sin. Daniel had read in Jeremiah about how Israel was going to be in captivity, and He was wondering how long this captivity was going to last. While he was praying, God gave him a vision.

Verses 21-22 read: "Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me. . . ." In other words, He gave him the vision and revealed to him how long Israel was going to be a nation and when the time of the consummation was going to end. Gabriel revealed to Daniel all the things that Daniel had been praying about.

Verse 27 reads: "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the

overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Many people accept anything that is said by some preachers, and they take that for their security. I thank God that we can buy Bibles and read them. You can turn to chapter and verse and read these things. Do not set your mind against these truths. You need to study this with an unction from the Holy One as you look into His Word.

Millennialists say that the anti-christ is going to confirm the covenant with the literal Jew in Palestine during Daniel's seventieth week and that it is still out in the future. On the contrary, the seventieth week follows right behind the sixty-ninth week. If the seventieth week had not come, there would not be a Cross, there would not be an atonement, and there would not be salvation.

Where Did Antichrist Come From?

In the midst of the seventieth week, Jesus was hung on the Cross. He died and rose from the dead. It is in the Book of Daniel that millennialists say the antichrist comes in, but the word *antichrist* is not even found in the Old Testament. Daniel 9:26 states, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

Daniel spoke of a prince, and the prince was Titus, not an antichrist. There are only two places in the Bible where the word *antichrist* is mentioned, and it was by the same writer, in First and Second John. Let us read what John had to say about antichrist. First John 2:18 reads, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now [A.D. 97] are there many [plural] antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." Where did antichrist come from? Verse 19 states, "They went out from us [the word *us* is speaking of the morning-time church, which included John], but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest [or made known] that they were not all of us."

Those verses of Scripture are about as simple to understand as they can be. John was letting us know that they went out from us, and they went out from us to make it known that they were not of us. If they were of us, they would have stayed with us. Here we see the words *antichrist* and *antichrists* mentioned. Antichrist started with the church, among the saints, right among the Apostle John and the morning-time church. In verse 22 we see the word *antichrist* again: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that

Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."

We read in 1 John 4:3, "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." One more verse where the word *antichrist* was used is found in 2 John 1:7, which states, "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist." Those are the only times the word *antichrist* or *antichrists* are mentioned in the Word of God. It is not mentioned in Daniel or in any other Books of the Bible except 1 and 2 John.

Antichrist is nothing more than false religious spirits that rise against the Truth. According to millennial teaching, this is where the antichrist starts to fit in. Millennialists fit it into the Book of Daniel, yet antichrist is not mentioned in the Old Testament. The "he" in Daniel 9:27 is not an antichrist, but rather the Messiah. The same "he" that is mentioned in the rest of the verses, the only One who can confirm the covenant, is the One who brought the covenant. It was not an antichrist who was going to confirm the covenant. To confirm the covenant, we need to prove it by God's Word.

You may ask, "How do you know it was Christ instead of the antichrist who is to confirm the covenant?" Mark 16:19-20 reads: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." Paul, writing to the Romans in Romans 15:8 stated, "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." What does the word *confirm* mean? It means to authorize it and to back

it up. When the Gospel is preached, Christ is there to confirm it, because He is the author of the new covenant.

What About the Great Tribulation?

The great tribulation was one of the most gruesome events that you could ever read about. If you have the stomach to read it, it is a book called *Josephus*, under "The Wars of the Jews."

The word *tribulation* means "suffering, misfortune, pain, and distress." The word *great* means "huge, enormous, large, grand, and big." In other words, the great tribulation means huge suffering and enormous distress.

We want to look at the subject of tribulation and ask the question, "Is there going to be a great tribulation in the future?" We need to know the answer to that question as it is taught in Truth. Never mind what radio preachers and those in false religion say. Let us get the answer from the Word of God.

Jesus warned there would be tribulation. He said that we are going to live in tribulation in this world. In John 16:33 He stated, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This is a tribulation wherein you can be of good cheer, and you can overcome this tribulation. Why? Because Jesus overcame the world, and this tribulation is from the world. The church of the morning time lived in tribulation. It was as common as eating breakfast. When they arose in the morning and stepped outside their dwellings to go to their trades or occupations, they knew that they were going to be in tribulation. They knew that some might possibly be cast into prison.

The Bible lets us know in the Book of Acts that James was run through with a sword. They lived in that kind of environment. However,

this was not the tribulation that Jesus was talking about when He spoke of the abomination of desolation. Acts 14:22 says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Do you remember how the devil fought you before you got saved? I remember how Satan fought against me. The devil will work overtime to keep you from obeying the Gospel.

Again, the writer of Acts said that through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God." The morning-time church suffered much tribulation. First Thessalonians 3:4 states, "For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know." Tribulation, suffering, and persecution was a way of life for the early church; but I want to talk about the great tribulation.

Matthew wrote about genealogies in Matthew, Chapter 1. He covered fourteen generations to David, fourteen generations to Babylon, and fourteen generations to Jesus Christ. You can tell that Matthew was writing to the Jews because he put the genealogies into his writings.

Matthew 24:14-22 reads: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation [do not get all caught up with those words, because Luke explains to you exactly what Matthew was talking about], spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) [the holy place was Jerusalem itself] Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

"And woe unto them that are

with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be [in other words, nothing had ever happened like it before, and nothing will ever happen like it afterwards]. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." It is called "the abomination of desolation."

The Days of Vengeance

In Luke's Gospel Luke made this event plainer when writing to the Gentile. Luke told what the abomination is. In Luke 21:20 he recorded the words of Jesus: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." An abomination is a hated thing. What was the hated thing? It was the Roman armies. There was a great division there. The Romans hated the Jews, and the Jews hated the Romans.

Luke lets you know exactly what was going on. He said that "ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies." He was talking about the Roman armies. In essence, Jesus was saying, "When you see those armies out on the horizon, when you see Jerusalem surrounded, then you will know that the desolation is near."

Jesus said in verses 21-24: "Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance [not Rome's vengeance, but God's vengeance], that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them [Matthew recorded the same thing] that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away

captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

I trust that you can see the different ways the writers of the Gospel explain the same event. One was writing to the Gentile; the other was writing to the Orthodox Jew. Matthew was writing expressly to the understanding of the Jew, and Luke was writing to the understanding of the Gentile.

Matthew 24:15 called the same event "the abomination of desolation." It says the same thing about the armies surrounding Jerusalem. Matthew used the word "abomination," and Luke called it "armies"; both of them were right. The armies were the Roman armies, which were an abomination, or hated by Israel of old. The word *abomination* is used in Proverbs 6:16, when the wise man said, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him." Both New Testament writers used terminology that the readers could easily understand.

Romans 12:19 reads, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." In Luke 21:22 Jesus said, "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." What is *vengeance*? It means "to avenge, to bring to justice, anger and wrath." Another translation says, "It is the days of punishment." Another says, "It is the days of avenging." Another states, "It is a day of judgment."

"Your House Is Left Unto You Desolate"

Daniel 9:26 reads, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." Notice that this verse says "the people of the prince." Who was the prince? It was Prince Titus.

The latter part of the verse tells us that "the end thereof shall be with a flood." What does that mean? It is speaking of an overwhelming force of an army. Isaiah 59:19b says, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." That is exactly what happens when the Spirit of the Lord is present.

Matthew 23:38 says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Who was speaking these words? Jesus Christ made this statement. At one time, it was called "God's house." If you are a child of God, "your house" is the dwelling place of God, but if God moves out, your house will be desolate. What was He talking about when He said "your house?" Jesus tells us in Luke 19:46, "It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves." Here He called it "My house." He said in Matthew 21:13, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." Twice you have read that God called His house a house of prayer, but in Matthew 23:38 He called it "your house." When He said "your house," He said it "is left unto you desolate." It is Jesus' house when He lives there; but if there is sin, disobedience, and rebellion; it then becomes your house.

What was Jesus saying to the Jews of that day? Jesus had a clear message for them. To take it in the simplest terms, we move out of the words "abomination of desolation" and we go to Luke's term. In essence, he said: "When you see the Roman army surround Jerusalem, flee. Do not go back to your houses to get your clothes, your jewelry, or your gold coins. Flee to the mountains; and do not tarry. Do not try to take anything out of your house, but run for your lives. You have only so much time, so use all your time to flee." Today people need to get out of sin. Sinner friend, you need to get out now! You must quit lingering in sin. When Jesus says to get out, you need to get out!

Jesus said woe to those who were with child or who had babies. What did He mean? They would have had a more difficult time fleeing. Also, a mother would not have wanted to leave her children, because she loved them. Often the Jews had large families in Jerusalem, so a mother would have had to gather her children. He said woe to them because it would take them more time to get out.

Jesus said to pray that the flight would not be in the wintertime or on the Sabbath day, a time when they were not supposed to be out of the house. They would have a struggle during those times. Jesus said in Matthew 24:21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Another translation says, "This will be the worst time of suffering since the beginning of the world, and nothing this terrible will ever happen again." This verse was saying that there never has been and never will be a tribulation like the one that Matthew and Luke mentioned.

Prince Titus' Strategic Plan

It is here that we need to turn to the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus. He wrote "The Antiquities of the Jews," which is simply the history of the Jews and "The Wars of the Jews."

Again, Daniel 9:26 says, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." The Messiah being cut off refers to the Cross. It was there that Jesus died for you and me.

This Scripture begins, "And after threescore and two weeks." If you add that to the seven weeks in verse 25, you get sixty-nine weeks, and after that would come the seventieth week, when the Messiah would be

cut off. I am not preaching on the seventy weeks of Daniel, but verse 27 says that "in the midst of the week [not in the midst of the sixty-ninth week, but in the midst of the seventieth week, Jesus was cut off]."

Josephus was quite a writer. He was there and saw some of the happenings. He was a great Jewish historian. He wrote, "And the people of the prince of the Roman soldiers under Prince Titus came and they did destroy the city and the sanctuary." Josephus said that the providence of God was with Titus. You can read about the sufferings that went on inside, but there were some things that led up to it.

When Titus entered the enemy's territory, he came up through the desert area between Syria and Egypt on his way to Jerusalem, or Israel's land, Judah. As he went, the first thing he thought he would do was go out and view the city, looking for the best place to attack. He knew that he could not attack in the valley, because that would have made the wall too high for them. Titus was a great leader; he was quite a strategic planner and a great warrior. He thought that instead of entering right into war that he would view the city first. At what was he looking? Jerusalem had three walls, and Jerusalem was on two hills. He would have three walls to go over to get inside the city, and inside the city were ten thousand Jewish warriors.

Titus was hoping that Israel would surrender. Josephus said that Titus chose six hundred select horsemen and went to view the city. He wanted to see the strength of the city and to see how courageous the Jews were. Before Titus went into a direct battle, he was hoping the Jews would be frightened and would surrender. He had been informed that the people were falling under the power of seditious men and robbers and were greatly desirous of peace. Being too weak to rise against the rest, he hoped they would lie still. Friend, if you fail to serve God, He will bless your enemy.

Titus' Unintentional Skirmish With the Jews

As Titus was coming up a straight road that led right to the wall of the city, he did not see any one, and no one appeared out of the gates. He veered off the road and went toward a tower and was leading his band of horsemen. All of a sudden, a great number of Jews jumped out and intercepted Titus, his horse, and a few others.

Titus could not go forward, because ahead of him was a series of trenches around the walls and gardens laid out before the city. Also, there were hedges growing up around, so he was between a strait. The enemy was behind him, and he could not go forward; he was separated from his men. In fact, his army did not even know that he was in trouble.

To return to his men was impossible because the enemy was between Titus and his men. Titus' men actually thought that he was still among them. Titus knew that if he was to survive, it would be because of his own courage, so he turned his horse around and charged straight toward the enemy. Now, keep in mind that he was not wearing a helmet or a breastplate. As he ran straight toward the enemy, or the Jews, they were throwing darts, which were nothing more than lightweight spears. They threw everything they could at him, yet they never touched him. He rode right through their midst unharmed. Josephus said that he could hear the darts whistling by him, as if all of them missed him on purpose. Those who were in the same danger kept close to him.

There was a lot of shouting and hollering going on, so his men saw him coming, and they turned to follow him. Again, he did not intend to go to battle; he wanted to survey the city. Notice how the providence of God was with him. Why? He was an instrument in God's hands against the Jews.

A couple of Titus' men were

wounded, one was killed on a horse, and another was killed falling off a horse. Although a couple of his men were lost, he made it through. Titus escaped with the rest and arrived safely at his own camp. After he got back to his camp, he realized that the Jews were going to put up a fight. They were not going to succumb to Titus' army. He saw that they were fighters.

The Jews fought hard, and that encouraged them that they had put Titus and his army to flight. The war ceased for a little while, and there we see the mercy of God. Titus laid out a war strategy that would eventually conquer the Jews. This was something that had never happened before, and it has never happened since. I am talking to you about the great tribulation.

Titus' friend was hit with a dart in the shoulder, and it provoked Titus into action. He went from being a merciful captain to being a murderer; he changed, and he could not wait to get inside the city and wipe out the Jews.

What Kind of Tribulation Did Jerusalem Suffer?

Titus eventually took two walls of the city. After he got over the two walls, he relaxed his effort for a while. No doubt, he thought, "Surely, the Jews will surrender." The Jews' days were numbered, yet they would not surrender. Titus knew one thing beyond a doubt: he knew that he could starve them to death. Nothing could enter the city because Titus had it surrounded. They did not have enough supplies to operate indefinitely. He knew they would lack food and other essential supplies; therefore, he made sure that all supplies were cut off.

Such great tribulation was never known upon this earth. Starvation began to set in on the inside, and suddenly the people turned against one another. You might have been hungry, but you have never been so hungry that you would reach into somebody's mouth and take the

food out and eat it. People took children and turned them upside down and shook them to see if they were hiding any food in their clothes. Mothers actually baked their children. It is gross to think about it. It is something that we pray to God never happens again.

Titus waited the Jews out. Next, some of the people started breaking over the walls, so Titus sent patrols around. He no longer had any mercy. They even took a woman who was pregnant and ran a sword through her, and people ate the child. That is how horribly gross it got. When Titus sent patrols around, the soldiers grabbed mothers and their children and took them back inside the city and crucified them and ran a sword through them. Some people swallowed gold coins, and soldiers cut them open to retrieve the money. Old men were beaten, because old men were wise and kept food stored away. People would go in and beat them practically to a pulp and ransack their homes. The Jews turned against themselves. The people acted like wild animals in search of food. People were searched, beaten, tortured, and held right to the place of death to get them to tell where they had hidden their food.

Since the Jews turned against one another, all Titus did was make sure nothing entered that city to help them. He set up ambushes for those who tried to escape over the wall. The slaughter was immense, and the dead were innumerable. As I was reading this from *Josephus*, a Scripture came to my mind in the Book of Numbers, where God was speaking through Moses. Chapter 33 speaks of the children of Israel getting the inheritance of the land by lot, by family, and by family size. God, speaking through Moses, told them that they had to drive some things out of the land. He would give them the power, but they had to do it. Israel did not obey. We read in verses 55-56: "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come

to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them [their enemy]."

Dear one, you never want God to become your enemy. Literal Jerusalem had an enemy, and it was more than the Roman army; it was God Himself. He left their house desolate. When people who have been warned will not heed the warnings of Jesus, then God will turn and help their enemy. When God helps the enemy, there is no way that you are going to overcome. God is smarter than you are. He was smarter than the Jews and Prince Titus. God used Prince Titus for vengeance. What did Jesus say? "These are the days of vengeance" (Luke 21:22).

Which Way Will You Choose?

Now, there is another side to this. Those who obeyed and fled to the mountains were not lost. Those who obeyed the words of Jesus fled when they saw the armies

encompassing Jerusalem were saved. They did not linger or go back to their houses. *Josephus* says that every one made it to safety. Those who through covetousness and greed and self-righteousness lingered behind perished in the onslaught of this great tribulation.

John 16:33 reads, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." What is the difference between tribulation and the great tribulation? The difference lies with how people stood with God. In general, the Jewish people had rejected God's Son. God will be with you in tribulation if you serve Him.

Those people's houses were left desolate in our Scripture lesson. God was no longer with them, so the enemy had a field day. After reading *Josephus*, I still believe that the providence of God was with Prince Titus so that not one spear touched him. It was amazing that he could ride through the Jewish soldiers when the soldiers were throwing spears all around him. Remember, he was not wearing any armor to protect him, but not one of the

spears touched him.

As long as you obey the Truth that you know and walk in the light, God will help you, and you will overcome. On the other hand, if you disobey and disregard His Word, God will turn against you and help your enemy. When the Lord told Israel their house was left to them desolate in Matthew 23:38, He meant that God had moved out. When God moves out, then the enemy moves in, and there is no protection without repentance.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:29, "For our God is a consuming fire." Dear one, you do not want God to become your enemy. You always want Him to be your friend. When God is your friend, you can rest assured that He will stick closer than a brother.

The great tribulation was certainly a sad time in Jewish history. Thank God, there will never be another one like that. In the world we will have tribulation, but we can be of good cheer, because Christ overcame the world, and He will help you and me to overcome it too.

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Hebrews 12:1 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.

Besetting Weights



Brother C. H. Dickerson

Running This Race to Win

In Hebrews, Chapter 11, you will find that the writer was talking about people who were tortured for the cause of Christ. They were stoned, sawn assunder, and persecuted in many other ways because they wanted to serve God. They served God to the best of their ability, but they had not yet received the promise that we have received.

The Scripture makes it quite clear that we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. Paul said we are in a race, and in this race some people are for you and others are against you. Some people are trying to knock you out of the race and others are trying to encourage you. Therefore, we must lay aside every weight.

Paul, through the eye of his imagination, must have looked down through the corridors of time to these last days. He saw that we, too, would be in a race. We are in

this Christian race, and as in all races, some lose and some win. Whether you are a loser or a winner is entirely up to you. If you are going to be a winner, you must "lay aside every weight," or everything that holds you back. You must lay aside everything that would attract your attention and slow you down if you are going to be the winner that God wants you to be. If you are not willing to do that, then you will be a loser.

Some races are short and some are long. Some automobile races are only a few laps around a track and some are five hundred miles. Likewise, for some Christians the race is short and for others the race is long. The race that we are in is over treacherous terrain, and you might have to endure sickness, sadness, and even death. Some people are rich and others are poor, but whether you are rich or poor, there is joy in serving the Lord. Friend, if you are going to be a winner in

this race, it does not allow for any excessive weights whatsoever.

The Scriptures let us know that every believer will be confronted with weights. Weights will defeat you. All races that are successful demand that a person runs with as few hindrances as possible. When an individual is going to be in the Olympics, he does not put on an overcoat and expect to win the race. The person who is running in a foot race does not put weights on his ankles and expect to win. He lays everything else aside.

When we were young, we spent a lot of time at the racetrack. When we went out there, we saw cars that were stripped down; they had no windshields, no headlights, and no mirrors. Why? They wanted to get rid of all unnecessary weights and anything that would cause air resistance to hold the racer back. They took off everything that was possible to remove so they could win the race. I say this because I want you to

realize that every believer is running to receive a prize. There is a prize, friend, and it is the best way, but it is not an easy way. If someone is running in this race and says it is an easy way, I question whether he or she has true salvation. When we are running this race, there are hindrances. Some people will find fault with you, criticize you, laugh at you, and do all kinds of things to try to hinder you. Those things will break down your pride.

Be Temperate in All Things

When you enter this race, you have to make a big decision: are you going to look beyond the race to the prize or are you going to allow yourself to become beset with weights? The enemy of souls will do his best to try to talk you out of your experience and defeat you. He wants to get you so busy or disturb you to the degree that you do not want to run this race. Friend, you need to get it settled in your mind that you are going to run this race with one thing in mind, and that is to obtain the prize.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:25, "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." Now, those who strive for an earthly prize have to defend their title the next year; therefore, they have to discipline themselves to stay in excellent condition. How, then, should we act when we are striving for a heavenly prize?

One brother was once a professional boxer, and when he got saved, he did not box any more, yet he still maintained the training he had. No matter what time he went to bed, he made sure that he got eight hours sleep. I talked with him one night until 3:00 a.m., yet I got up about 7 a.m., just as I normally did. However, since he always maintained a regular routine of getting eight hours of rest, he got up at 11:00 a.m. If he went to bed at 9:00 p.m., he still got eight hours

sleep. That was a part of his training. When he was a boxer, it was his goal to obtain a knock out fight. Why? It was for a crown that would diminish the very minute he lost.

Paul was telling us that we are not striving for that kind of crown. Those who strive for a corruptible crown are particular about how much sleep they get as well as what they eat. They are temperate, and they control themselves in every way only to obtain a corruptible crown that they might have to defend the next year. If they work so diligently to defend that crown, how should we act when we are going after something incorruptible, a crown of life that lasts forever? How much more should we be concerned about obtaining the prize?

Again, Paul said, "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate." In other words, he practices self-control in all things: his appetite, his rest, and every aspect of his life. If we are not careful, we will let some of these things get away from us.

Paul made it quite clear that we need to control ourselves, because we only get one life to live. I used the example of a boxer because if he loses one bout, he has an opportunity to win another one. If he controls himself and wins the next one, then he is back on track. However, you do not have another time. If you lose your race, it is over. Therefore, you must use self-control to keep under your body, or your fleshly desires. You see, you are tempted through your flesh; it wants to be satisfied.

Dear one, you cannot satisfy the flesh and satisfy God at the same time. Everyone who strives for the mastery must take control of the flesh and keep it under. In other words, you must do what God wants you to do, not what the flesh wants to do, because the flesh loves earthly things. No matter who you are or how long you have been saved, you still love earthly things.

When you strive for the mastery of an incorruptible crown, some-

thing that will never pass away, you must be temperate in all things. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Do You Lack One Thing?

Paul placed before you two destinies. You must choose and live according to whether you set your goals on eternal life or the second death. Eternal life is a strait way. Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:14, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Jesus told people just like it is. He said if you live for Him, it is a strait, narrow way, and it becomes more narrow all the time.

This narrow way does not branch out. We are living in a day when people start for God and live in the narrow way for a while, and it is not long until they start to branch out, making the way wider and wider. Jesus said this way is strait and narrow. It is a difficult and a tight way, but He let us know that is what will lead to eternal life.

The Word gives many examples of people's failures. Many people started out for Him, but because of excessive weights, they lost out with God. You can read about the rich, young ruler in Mark 10:22. He turned away from eternal life because he had many possessions. Some say that he was never on the right way, but I disagree with that.

Mark 10:17-20 states: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit

adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth." Does this sound like he was a good fellow? I will guarantee you that he would have far surpassed a lot of people that call themselves Christians today, but Jesus loved him enough to tell him the truth.

A gauge to see how much you love your children is this: are you teaching them what is right and what is wrong. Sometimes you need to let them know who is the boss. You need to teach them and correct them to show that you really love them. If you just let them go, you do not love them at all; then when they grow up, they will not go the Christian way. They will go far away from God.

Jesus looked at him and loved him. He knew that he had a soul and He knew that he was looking for something. We read in verse 21, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." This is an allegory to teach spiritual things. This is where too many people get in trouble when they read the Word of God. They want to take everything with a literal meaning.

The Word of God is written in such a way that it lets us know what we ought to do. Jesus told the rich, young ruler to sell all that he had. Why did He tell him to do that? It was because he had great possessions, and they were taking first place in his life. He is telling you today: "If you want to serve Me, you do not have to go out and sell your farm or sell your house; you do not have to divorce your spouse to put Me first; but you must put Me ahead of everything else." Today people are trading God for a husband or a wife because they are afraid they are going to be an old maid or an old

bachelor, but Jesus said if you want Him, you must sell out to Him completely. You may be a good person, and you might have kept all the commandments, but do you still lack one thing? Lacking one thing will bar you out of the Kingdom of God.

The rich, young ruler went away sorrowfully because he had great possessions, and he put these things ahead of serving God. Are you putting something ahead of serving God? Money can be a great possession to you, or it can be your job, yourself, your children, your companion, pride, land, and so on. You might have done many other things, but is one thing keeping you from really serving the Lord? If you are really going to serve God, you need to lay aside everything you have and put God first.

Giving in to the Flesh

Another reason that some fail the test is that they do not give God His rightful place. We read in Luke 9:61-62: "And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

That person wanted to serve God, but he wanted to do something else first. One of the biggest weights that you have is self. The flesh is barring more people from entering the Kingdom of Heaven and from making Heaven their home than anything else. We each want to please self, and that is what this man wanted to do.

In Luke, Chapter 12, you can read about a man who wanted to tear down his barns and build bigger ones. He said that he would say to his soul, "Take thine ease," but God said he was a fool. In our Scripture lesson Jesus was telling us that anyone who comes to Him for an experience of salvation that wants to do something else first before serving Him is not even fit

for the Kingdom of God.

Judas was one of the twelve disciples, but he betrayed Christ for only thirty pieces of silver, so he was unable to make Heaven his home. When Judas went to the chief priests, he asked how much they would give him, and they decided that they would pay him thirty pieces of silver. From that time forward, the Scriptures tell us that he sought to betray Christ.

Matthew 27:3-5 states: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."

I want you to see that a weight, whether it is self or whatever it might be, will defeat you and cause you to miss Heaven. The Word of God brings this out very forcefully, otherwise we might overlook it. Today many people are so wrapped up in money that they will not do what God wants them to do.

Some people might say that Judas did not have a chance. Yes, he did, but he made a covenant with the chief priests. Matthew, Chapter 26, says that for thirty pieces of silver he betrayed Christ. He sought for an opportunity, and when the time came, he said, "Hail, Master," and kissed His cheek. Afterward, they led Christ away and crucified Him. When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and returned the thirty pieces of silver and went out and hanged himself. Judas could have chosen not to do what he did.

In John, Chapter 13, you can read that Jesus washed the disciples' feet. In verse 21 He told the disciples that one of them was going to betray Him. Peter asked Him, "Who is it?" Verse 26 tells us that Jesus replied, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop,

when I have dipped it." Then Jesus told Judas to do what he had to do quickly. What did Judas do? Did he repent? No, he put the silver in his pocket and kept it there. The Scriptures say that it was night. He went out from them into the darkness, despite all the light that God had given him as he walked with Christ. He chose to walk away from Christ, and then the time came when he could not turn back, and he went out and hanged himself.

Are You Selling Your Birthright?

Paul let us know that we are in the race of life. I have lived a long time, and I have never in my life seen a time when people are as busy as they are today. People do not even have time to visit one another. Very few people take the time to call on the sick or even to send a card or to make a telephone call to encourage people. Why is this? It is due to the busy age in which we are living. People are so busy that they do not read the Word of God as they should. Some people do not attend the church services as they should. Many people do not pray as they ought to.

My mind goes back to the Old Testament to the account of Esau, when he stayed out in the field too long. That is exactly the type of day in which we are living today. People are so busy trying to make a living, trying to accomplish this and that, trying to get things paid for, and trying to do more and more material things. As a result, they neglect the Word of God. That is what happened with Esau. He stayed in the field too long, and when he went in and smelled the pottage cooking, his physical desire for food was too strong for him to get victory over his hunger. Hebrews 12:16 tells us, "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Genesis 25:29-34 states: "And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I

pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

This was a type of the devil talking when Jacob urged Esau to sell his birthright to him. Do you remember reading about Job's wife telling Job to curse God and die? That was the same temptation that Esau went through, but Esau failed the test. I wanted you to read these Scriptures so that you could understand how these weights can hinder you. No matter what kind of weights they are, they will keep you from making Heaven your home unless you sell out to God completely.

Paul let you know quite clearly what you ought to do with weights: you must get rid of them. You must lay aside everything that hinders you in any way. Only you know what they are. What might hinder you may not hinder someone else, and what may hinder someone else may not hinder you. The Bible lets you know that if you are going to make Heaven your home, you must lay aside every weight, everything that holds you back. Now, he was not talking about your companion, because you are to work together.

Looking Back, One More Time

Many people are held back because of worldly allurements. This is what hindered Lot's wife. I do not believe that Sodom and Gomorrah were as bad as the world is today. Their sin went up before God; therefore, he was going to burn those two cities because their sin was so great. Genesis 19:15 reads, "And when the morning arose, then

the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city."

I want you to get the picture. In Genesis, Chapter 13, you can read that because of the strife between the herdmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle, Abraham said they needed to separate. Abraham let Lot choose first, so Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. Eventually Lot moved into Sodom. He chose what looked good to the flesh, Abraham chose the opposite direction. When Lot moved down to Sodom, two of his daughters married there. When Lot tried to tell them what was going to happen, they looked at him and said that he seemed as one who mocked, because of the way he had lived.

The next morning God sent angels down to get Lot, his wife, and his two daughters out of there because Sodom was going to be destroyed by fire. Did that phase Lot? No! What happened? They lingered. Verse 16 tells us, "And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."

Lot lingered even though God sent angels down there and told him what was going to happen; but that did not phase him when it came down to happening. What is that a type of? God told us this old world is going to be destroyed, but what are people doing about it? Most people are not doing anything. Day after day, they are going along, living the way they want to live.

Some people say that they plan to get right with God sometime, but now is not the time. God is sending His angels, or the seventh-seal ministry, to declare it in a way that has never happened before. He is trying to get the people out of the city of sin, but what are they doing? They are staying right where they are because they do not believe it.

Genesis 19:17 reads, "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Did they do it? No. Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. This is an allegory that reveals this: if you fail to listen to God and do what God says, you will not be preserved. Many people are giving up and going back today, and the Gospel does not phase them. They cannot see anything wrong with what they are doing. Their eyes are closed. Only by the mercies of God will they open their eyes again and see their lost condition.

Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. She never got to the place of safety that God meant for her to get to. I want you to realize that we are living in the day when many people want just one more fling with the world. That is what Lot's wife wanted, just one look back. Why did she look back? Was it because they had some property there? Was it because she had some friends there? Was it just one more chance for her to see it? She should have been sick of Sodom and Gomorrah with the things that were going on, but she wanted to look back one more time.

This is exactly what is going on today. People come and want to get saved, yet they want one more fling with the world, one more cigarette, one more drink of alcohol, or one more shot of drugs. They say they want to do business with God, but they wait until it is too late. I want you to see that these worldly allurements are ensnaring more people today. The dress standard that we are seeing today is becoming more ungodly. What is the purpose of it? Nothing more than to attract attention and to draw people away. They say that the *next* time they will do business with God, but those worldly allurements cause them to look back one more time.

Many years ago I knew of a man who got saved. He was really bound

by the cigarette habit. God saved that man, and one time as he was walking down the street, he said the devil talked to him and said, "Why don't you smoke just one more cigarette?" This happened after he had been saved for many years. Just to show the devil that he had victory over them, he stopped and got one cigarette and smoked it. Unfortunately, he never got rid of that habit again, and he died in that condition.

This is how the devil works. He convinces a person to drink liquor one more time, to smoke a cigarette just one more time, to get high on drugs just one more time, to look at this old world and have just one more fling, and then he tells them that after that they can settle down. Sad to say, he gets individuals to turn back one more time, and then they never get away from it again. Alas, they end up lost because they want to look back, one more time.

Lay Aside Every Weight

Paul said in Ephesians 4:25, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." Paul said to put away lying. This deals with the compromising ministry we have today. When ministers get up in the pulpit and tell people, "You can't live above sin," they are lying. Today many ministers are not telling people the truth. The only goal they have is to fill all the seats so they can make a great name for themselves. God moved upon Paul and inspired him to say, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor."

James wrote in James 1:21, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." It is not enough to restrain evil affections, but James said to cast them away from you. Today men are worshiping man and bowing down to man, bowing down to the creeds of man. Isaiah said in Isaiah

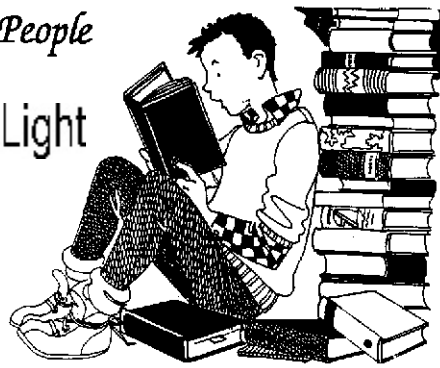
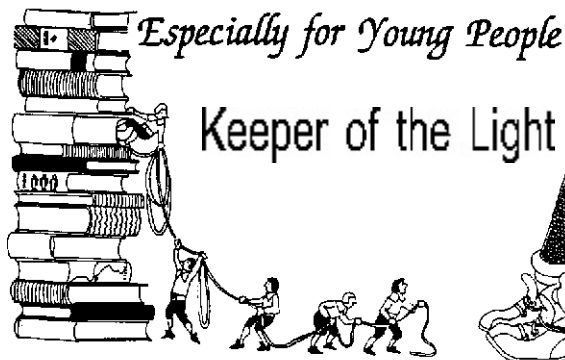
31:6-7: "Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. [They had deeply revolted against God. Friend, you ought to turn to Him, because He is your only hope. The world has revolted against God.] For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin."

You must lay aside all evil speaking. First Peter 2:1-2 reads: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Peter said to lay aside all malice, or ill will, a spirit to get even, guile, taking advantage of someone, and hypocrisy. These excess weights in the Old Testament and in the New Testament hindered their progress and defeated them. We are warned that we are in a race, and unless we lay aside every hindrance, we will not run the race successfully.

Paul wrote that we must lay aside every weight. It is not just if you can or if you want to or if it would be easier for you. No, he said to "lay aside every weight." You must lay aside anything that hinders you, and you know what hinders you. This is a commandment. Remember, disobedience is never overlooked by God. He tells you what to do, and if you want to run your race successfully, you must be obedient.

If you want to win the crown, you cannot become careless and think that you will have another opportunity. You may get careless in other things and regain them, but if you become careless about your soul, you will end up in eternal damnation. You must lay aside every weight to run the race that is set before you. Each of our races is different, and if you are going to make it, do not get your eyes on others to see what they are doing and what they are not doing, because your race is different.

(No Compact Disc Available)



Mary's father was the keeper of a lighthouse on the coast of England. The light of these lamps shines at night to guide ships on their way and to keep them from dangerous rocks and shoals. The lighthouse seems to say: "Take care, sailors, for rocks and sands are here. Keep a good lookout and mind how you sail or you will be lost."

One afternoon Mary was in the lighthouse alone. Mary's father had trimmed the lamps, and they were ready for lighting when evening came. As he needed to buy some food, he crossed the causeway that led to the land. This causeway was a path over the rocks and sands, which could be used only two or three hours in a day. At other times, the waters rose and covered it. The father intended to hasten home before the tide flowed over this path. Night was coming on, and a storm was rising on the sea. Waves dashed against the rocks, and the wind moaned around the tower.

Mary's mother had passed away, and although she was alone, her father had told the girl not to be afraid, for he would soon return. Now there were some rough-looking men behind a rock who were watching Mary's father. They watched him go to the land.

Who were they? They were "wreckers" who lurked about the coast. If a vessel was driven on the rocks by a storm, they rushed down, not to help the sailors, but to rob them and to plunder the ship.

The wicked men knew that a little girl was left alone in the lighthouse. They planned to keep her father on the shore all night. Ships filled with rich goods were expected to pass the point before the morning and these men knew if the light did not shine, the vessels would run upon the rocks and be wrecked. How cruel and

wicked they were to seek the death of the ships' crews!

Mary's father had filled his basket and prepared to return to the lighthouse. As he drew near the road leading to the causeway, the wreckers rushed from their hiding place and threw him on the ground. They quickly bound his hands and feet with ropes and carried him into a shed, where he had to lie until morning. It was in vain that he shouted for them to set him free; they only mocked his distress. They then left him in the charge of two men, while they ran back to the shore.

"Oh, Mary, what will you do?" cried the father as he lay in the shed. "There will be no one to light the lamps. Ships will be wrecked, and sailors may be lost."

Mary looked from a narrow window toward the shore, thinking it was time for her father to return. When the clock in the little room struck six, she knew that the water would soon be over the causeway.

An hour passed. The clock struck seven, and Mary still looked toward the beach, but her father was not to be seen. By the time it was eight, the tide was nearly over the causeway. Only bits of rock here and there were above the water. "O Father, hurry," cried Mary, as though her father could hear her. "Have you forgotten your little girl?" But the only answer was the noise of the waters as they rose higher and higher, and the roar of the wind as it gave notice of the coming storm. Surely there would be no lights that night.

Mary thought of what her mother used to say: "We should pray in every time of need." Quickly she knelt and prayed for help: "O Lord, show me what to do, and bless my father, and bring him home safe."

The water was now over the cause-

way. The sun had set more than an hour ago, and as the moon rose, black storm clouds covered it from sight.

The wreckers walked along the shore, looking for some ship to strike on the coast. They hoped that the sailors, not seeing the lights, would think they were far at sea.

At this moment Mary decided that she would try to light the lamps. But what could a little girl do? The lamps were far above her head. She got matches and carried a small stepladder to the spot. After much labor, she found that the lamps were still above her head. Then she got a small table and put a stepladder on it. But when she climbed to the top, the lights were still beyond her reach. "If I had a stick," she said, "I would tie a match to it, and then I could set a light to the wicks." But no stick was to be found.

The storm was raging with almost hurricane force. The sailors at sea looked along the coast for the light. Where could it be? Had they sailed in the wrong direction? They were lost and knew not which way to steer.

All this time Mary's father was praying that God would take care of his child in the dark and lonely lighthouse.

Mary, frightened and lonely, was about to sit down again, when she thought of the old Bible in the room below. But how could she step on that Book? It was God's Holy Word that her mother had loved to read. "Yet, it is to save life," she said, "and if Mother were here, would she not allow me to take it?"

In a minute the large book was brought and placed under the steps, and up she climbed once more. Yes, she was high enough! She touched the wick, then another, and another, until the rays of the lamps shone brightly far above the dark waters.

The father saw the light as he lay in the shed and thanked God for sending help in the hour of danger. The sailors saw the light and steered their ships away from the rocks. The wreckers, too, saw the light, and were angry to see that their evil plot had failed.

All that stormy night, the lamps cast their rays over the foaming sea, and when the morning came, the father escaped from the shed. Soon he reached the lighthouse and found out how his little girl had stood faithful to duty in the dark hours of storm.

Selected

Preparing Your Way Before the Lord



Brother Richard Talbot

Necessary Ingredients to Make a Successful Journey to Heaven

Spiritual might is something that not many people have found. God gives a formula in His Word for spiritual strength, spiritual success, spiritual stability, faithfulness, dependability, and reliability. In other words, all the necessary ingredients are there in the Word of God for you to make a successful journey through this life, from the day you are saved until the day you leave this world.

The Hebrew writer said that the Lord saves to the uttermost. Hebrews 7:25 reads, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." God can keep you all the way through to the end, but

not without your doing something. God will keep you, but He also has given you some things to do. In other words, you have some homework to do. You have some things to prepare yourself for.

As a teenager, I often wondered: "If God wanted me to go to Heaven, why didn't He make it easy for people to go there? Why didn't He make it so simple that I could get saved and then never have to worry about anything else again?" If you are going to God's Heaven, you have to really get down to the business of applying yourself to the things of God. I like what the Scripture says about Jotham. He became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord. He did not just serve the Lord, but he brought the Lord down to earth, as it were, and made the Lord his own personal

God. He worshiped God.

As we examine the life of Jotham, we find that his father Uzziah was only sixteen years of age when he became king, and he ruled Judah for sixty-eight years. We are told in the previous chapter, in verse 5, that as long as Uzziah sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. He did much good, and he was a great man with God. Uzziah was very successful, but he had a moral failure. He had a flaw in his experience with God.

In 2 Chronicles 26:15 we read, "... for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong." God marvelously worked with King Uzziah, and he became strong in the things of God. Although he became a strong leader and a man great with his God, the next verse says, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his

destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense."

You need to realize that you can be doing well for the Lord and striving right along, but the devil is there to work against you. He knows your every weakness, and he knows where to place the temptations. He knows how to twist your thoughts and how to get your thinking off course with the Lord, just as he did with King Uzziah.

King Uzziah's Moral Failure

Uzziah was doing well and ruled quite well for a long period of time, but after a while he became exalted in his own ability. He began to think: "Look what I am doing! Look what I am getting accomplished!" When he became strong, something happened to him. The idea of being self-sufficient got hold of him, and he became exalted. Therefore, his heart was lifted up to his own destruction. It blinded his eyes and clouded his pure vision of the power of God that was at work in his life. This was his moral failure.

The vast majority of spiritual failures are the direct result of moral delinquency. The word *moral* means "to be concerned with the judgment of the goodness or the badness of action and character; conforming to standards of what is right or just in our behavior; to be virtuous; arising from conscience or the sense of right or wrong; a concisely expressed precept of general truth; rules of habit or conduct, especially sexual conduct with references to standards of right and wrong."

Moral failures are a plague to the human race. Let us realize, beloved, that each one of us is subject to moral failure. We are subject to losing out with the Lord. None of us has it made in this life yet. We do not have a right to Heaven, but we have the right to earn Heaven.

Jotham's father was marvelously helped by God. I repeat, as

long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper; however, when he became strong, he began to be lifted up in his heart and mind to his own destruction. We are going to see what happened here. Since Jotham's father allowed his success to cause him to become lifted up to his own destruction, it led him to a terrible indiscretion. He was blinded to what was discrete and lost that holy ability to decide responsibly. Therefore, he transgressed against the Lord his God.

No doubt, the thought came into his mind: "I'm so strong, and God has blessed me mightily. I have been gifted by God, so I'll just go into the temple and burn incense to the Lord." He took upon himself to walk into the holy things of God where a man was not allowed unless he was a priest or the high priest, sanctified and set apart for that office. Even though he was the king, he had no right to go into the temple of God.

In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 26, we find that he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. Verses 17-18 read: "And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God."

Had King Uzziah listened and humbled himself, no doubt the story would have been altogether different, but when he was rebuked by those eighty-one priests, he became angry at them and his wrath was stirred. He had the censer in his hand, and he refused to listen to their wise counsel. They entreated him to leave while he could get out, but he refused to go.

As King Uzziah was showing his extreme anger before these men

of God, the wrath of God fell upon him. Verse 19 reads, "Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar." He was banished from his kingdom and lived in a separate dwelling until the day of his death.

While Uzziah sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. God blessed him. That ought to teach you some lessons. When you are seeking the Lord and God is blessing you, you need to be very careful never to forget where your blessings are coming from.

Make Every Failure a Stepping-Stone

Jotham took his father's place as king until his father died, and then he assumed the title of King of Judah. He had some major accomplishments during his short reign. It says in our Scripture text that he became mighty because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God. The name *Jotham* means "the perfection of the Lord" or "Jehovah is perfect." He shared history with the Prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah; their timelines overlapped. Jotham had some very good wisdom, and he was given wise counsel. He heard the prophets of old. He knew some of the very true things about God, and he knew why his father had fallen. He saw all that had happened. I can picture Jotham getting down to earnest business with God. He did not want to fail as his father had. He got down to serious business and prepared his way before the Lord his God.

When I talk about preparing your way before God, I want you to look at several things in this preparation process. One thing that Jotham did was this: he paid attention to where his father went wrong. Second Chronicles 27:2a reads, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, ac-

ording to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD." I can imagine that Jotham stayed far away from that place. He left that to the men who were ordained to perform the duties of that position. People need to leave things alone that are ordained for the man of God's position. They can get into much trouble by trying to take responsibilities that belong to the man of God.

We can learn from the mistakes that others have made. Have you ever made a mistake? I have made mistakes. If you are human, I can guarantee you that you have made mistakes in your life. We can learn from the mistakes that others have made. We can do as Jotham did and avoid those things that have caused others to fall. We must stay away from things that we know have brought down mighty men.

You can also learn from your own mistakes. You can look back on your own life and learn from your past failures. You can reach back and place that failure in front of you and use it as a stepping-stone and draw closer to God. You do not have to let a failure be your ruin. You might have failed the Lord from time to time, but you do not have to become a failure.

If you are going to be a winner, you must never quit. Winners run to win. You must be in this race to the end. If you stumble and fall or trip over something, you should not quit and say, "This is not for me." You can say: "Lord, I have made a mess here. I want You to forgive me. I am sorry for failing You." If you repent, God will be right there to lift you right back up, put you back on your feet, and say, "Let's go again." You need to make every failure a stepping-stone for the future so that you do not fail repeatedly over the same thing.

The Way Up With God Is Down

You need to prepare yourself with the wisdom that the Word of God gives. You must be a consistent

reader of God's Word and study it. You ought to become a familiar student of the Bible. Many people know much about the Internet, the sports world, and the automotive world; however, not very many people become students of God's Word. Studying the Bible is not merely good advice; it is an order from the Lord to study His Word. James wrote in James 1:21 that it is "the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Each of us ought to have the desire to be faithful to God, but not necessarily the desire to be mighty. We are not seeking to be great. This was written postmortem about Jotham. It was not something for which he was seeking, but it was a result of what he did and how he lived. The child of God should not strive to be great or mighty, but he should strive to be faithful and true. Jeremiah 45:5 says, "And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not."

God has given us an unusual formula for going upward. The world does not like this formula, and many church people do not like it. Nevertheless, the way to go up with God is to go down. You may say in your mind, "You can't go up by going down," but God says you can. First Peter 5:6 states, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." The way up with God is always down.

Another means of preparing your heart before the Lord was given by Jude in a two-part formula in verses 20-21: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, [Oh, how important it is for every child of God to live grounded in the faith of the Word of God, believing in the promises of the Word, holding to that which God has given you, exercising yourself daily in a faithful walk. In the midst of fiery trials or in the storms of life, God wants to see His children standing strong, firm, and tall with Him. In the time of affliction, through the

maze of terrible temptations, God wants to see you survive. He wants you to be on the winning side all the way, praying in the Spirit. This is the second part of Jude's verse of Scripture.] Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

You must keep yourself in the love of God. How can you prepare your way before the Lord? You must avoid bitterness and shun every hateful thought and ill-mannered temptation. You have to keep yourself under constant subjection to the will of God and be in full obedience to the Lord. You must live that way, and you must obey God. Do not obey your own intuition or your own impulses, but obey the Lord. You must obey the Word of God as you hear it coming across the pulpit.

Submission

I am old fashioned enough to still believe that God works through a pastor to shepherd His flock. You have only one pastor. That is the man whom God has set over you. Every child of God needs a pastor. You cannot pastor yourself. You need a flesh-and-blood man with feelings and temptations and a man who is subject to afflictions. God could have put an angel down here that did not have any feelings, but an angel would not know how you are hurting. An angel would have no way to sympathize with you or to have compassion. Therefore, He chose a man, a physical, flesh-and-blood human being. God instructed the flock to pay attention to him. If he is truly a man called of God, you have no excuse for disobeying his anointed, preached messages.

If you want to be successful, you are going to have to submit to God and the man of God. When everything is going your way, you do not have to submit. A wife does not have to submit herself to her husband when everything is going her way. However, it is when one has a stubborn or determined feel-

ing that the problem occurs. My father always used the word *determined* when my mother said he was being stubborn. When my mother disciplined me for being stubborn, I told her, "I'm not stubborn; I'm just determined." She did not like that. That was what my father sometimes said, but I could not get away with it.

I want you to realize that you must submit when your way clashes with whomever is in charge. The pastor is in charge of his congregation, but some people do not like that. The Word of God calls him "the overseer," which is a supervisor, or a boss.

In preparing your way before the Lord, you must keep yourself in the love of God and stay away from bitterness, hard feelings, strife, ill will, malice, and discontentment. If you lose the love of God, you will get restless feet that want to move around.

You need to stay close to the one whom you married. You need to keep your love to that one fervent. If you begin to lose that love, you will begin to compare others with your companion and look over the field, so to speak. Next, the devil will begin to work on your mind. Your job is to keep yourself in the love of God. He is not going to do that for you. You must pray in the Holy Ghost, building up yourself in the most holy faith. That is your work in preparing your way before the Lord.

Christian Virtues

Another method of heart preparation is found in the many Christian virtues. We have the fruit of the Spirit. Peter wrote a list of virtues in 2 Peter 1:5-6, which instructs you to give all diligence, and to add to your faith, your virtue, your knowledge, your temperance, your patience, your godliness, your brotherly kindness, and your charity. This preparation is a continual adding to these virtues. I am still talking about building up yourself in the most holy faith.

One who excels in his vocation of life is good in all points and areas that concern his work. A professional tradesman has to be able to figure calculations in his head. He must get a picture in his mind of what he has to do, and he has the tools and the equipment to meet every circumstance.

As a young person, I remember watching some of the older saints and thinking: "What an experience they have! I'd like to have an experience like they have." Their experiences did not come by wishing or by thinking they would like to be that way. Do you know how they got that quality of spiritual life? It was through a lifetime of hard, faithful, diligent work. You cannot gain a reputation for being faithful to God in a few days.

You cannot become a seasoned warrior for Christ in a short time, but it takes a lot of work. It is laboring every day, never breaking the cycle. You must be faithful, reliable, dependable, and true every day—when you feel good and when you do not feel well or when the whole world is turned upside down. You must remain faithful and true to God, believe in His Word, and lay hold of His promises. If you do, there will come a time in your life when others will watch you and say: "I'd like to have an experience like that. Wouldn't that be something!" You can be an influence for the good, but it does not come easily.

Getting right with God may possibly be the easiest part of the process, but living faithfully every day—through the battles, through the trials, through the misunderstandings, through the hurt feelings, through the upheavals—staying sweet in your soul, being true to yourself, to God, to your family, and to the Church of God is going to take much effort and much diligence, faithfully digging into the things of God.

Peter said to give all diligence. Why do we have to give all diligence? It is not going to be easy. Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "What-

soever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." In other words, you should meditate on them, dwell on them, and fill your mind with them. You must stay away from things that you know will bring discouragement to you. You need to keep your mind pure and clean so that you can truly focus on your walk with God.

Building up your holy faith is a work that is not done in a day or in a year. It is the work of a lifetime. You will never reach the end of giving all diligence to add to your faith, your patience, your temperance, your knowledge, your godliness, your charity, and your brotherly love. Peter wrote about all these things. You will never reach the end of that ladder. Every time you go up a rung, there is another one yet to climb. As long as you are alive, you will be climbing that ladder, developing Christian virtues, growing in the things of God, building up yourself, preparing your way before the Lord your God.

The Need for Divine Wisdom

The fourth step in preparing your heart concerns the need for a large portion of divine wisdom. Divine wisdom will enable you to determine your spiritual senses—the right from the wrong—and enable you to become strong. You need to exercise yourself by reason of use every day, working your spiritual muscles. You have to work them until it gets down into the very fiber of the muscle in order to do you any good. You cannot do this by merely thinking about it, but you must work those things, discerning right from wrong. Most of the time when people have questions about things, down in their hearts, they already know the answer. Oh, how you need to exercise yourself!

First Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." You must avoid any influence that could lead you away from your closeness with God. You need to be wary of anything or anybody that would drag you away from church services, rob you of your quiet time with God, or steal away your prayer time. Also, you need to be wise to the fact that these are the areas that Satan is well aware of. He knows what is important to your spiritual life. He will do anything to get you to stay away from church for no really good reason.

If a pastor were to start paying each person \$75 cash every time he or she attended a church service, no one would miss a service. People would probably come on stretchers if they had to. They would not want to miss receiving \$75. Individuals will go to work tired and worn out, with a hangnail, or with an ingrown toenail, limping along.

If someone were to ask, "Why are you here today?" a person would say, "I can't afford to miss. I've got to get a paycheck." On the other hand, that person may get up on Sunday morning with a little sore throat or a headache or a stubbed toe and say, "I think I ought to stay home and rest. I have to take care of my health." The devil is going to get you if you listen to him. You need to be in church every time the doors are open, if it is at all possible for you to be there.

Why go to church? A man wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper to complain that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. He said: "I've gone to church for thirty years, and in that time I have heard something like three thousand sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them; so I think I'm wasting my time and the preachers are wasting their time by preaching at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone

wrote this clincher: "I've been married for thirty years now, and in that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals, but for the life of me I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. However, I know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me those meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for spiritual nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today."

You cannot stay alive spiritually when you hit and miss on your church attendance. Those who are possessed with divine wisdom realize the need of being in the church services, and not only being there, but being there with a good attitude and a good spirit. We would not want everybody to bring into the worship place the spirit they leave home with. We would not want some people coming to church with the bad attitudes they have when they arrive in the parking lot. Some people drive to church arguing, fussing, fuming, bickering, and criticizing each other. Then when they get to the parking lot of the church and open the doors and someone greets them, inquiring, "How are you folks?" they reply: "Oh, just fine. We're doing wonderfully. Praise the Lord!" Then they expect God to bless them. We ought to go with the right attitude. Your bodily presence is necessary, but your having a right attitude is just as important. You have to come hungry, desiring to be fed, anxious for what God has for you. Every Sunday ought to be a challenge to you to see what God is going to do for you.

Conquering the Flesh

Proverbs, Chapters 3 and 4, teach you to trust in the Lord with all your heart and not to lean to your own understanding. In all your ways, you should acknowledge Him, and then He will direct your path. The writer said not to be wise in your own eyes, to fear the Lord,

and to depart from evil. He also said to keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. You need to ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. You must do all these things in preparing your way before the Lord. Following this, a child of God must be a person of self-command. You have to discipline yourself and police your own life. In other words, you have to keep yourself in line and stay true to God. It is going to take personal digging, dedication, and keeping yourself consecrated to God. It will not always be easy to conquer the flesh. Sometimes the flesh will put up quite a battle, but God is able to bring down everything the devil raises. There has never been a giant yet that was too big for God to bring down. There is not a mountain too high for God to make a way through.

Going back to our Scripture text, we find that Jotham was mighty before God because he prepared his ways. Every moral failure is due to a weakness of self-command. I thought of the Pharisee and the publican who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee was self-righteous. He boasted of all that he had done. He thought that he was a very good fellow, but he had a moral failure. He was flawed; his character was not perfect before God.

The publican would not even so much as lift up his head toward heaven. He said, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." That is all it took to bring down the power of God to him. Friend, you cannot get saved any other way than the old-fashioned way. You cannot get right with God any other way than the humble way.

Strive to Press On

Moral failure due to weakness of self-command opens the door for undisciplined ranks, and it makes for a very weak and unstable army. You need to stop trying to make excuses for yourself and attempting

to reason some form of justification for your lapses into self-indulgence. Every time you fail, the devil will give you a whole list of reasons for justifying your failure. You need to throw the reasons aside. You should not try to justify your failure; do not try to make it seem better than it is. You cannot play games with God.

If you have been wrong, if you have failed, you need to own it and confess it. Do not try to play games by trying to make it better than it is. You should not try to justify it or act as though it is not nearly as serious as you know it really is down in your heart. You need to own up to it and say, "I've messed up; I've failed; I've sinned."

There is too much lightness, too much carelessness, and too much being at ease in Zion. Too many people do not feel much of an obligation to God, yet they want to be great with God. You cannot be great with God unless you prepare your way before the Lord. You need to strive to be a pillar in the church. You need to strive to be someone the church can depend on, someone the pastor can rely on wholeheartedly without having to worry.

When a godly pastor notices that

you are showing a lack of real spiritual growth, it works on him because he loves your soul. He is concerned about you and wants to see you get settled deeply in the Lord. He wants you to be truly married to Christ, not attached to his coattails. You need to become a true pillar, proven by fiery trials over the years, through trials and afflictions, proven by victory that you have had over the various temptations of life, by faithful consistency, by excellency of character, by blameless behavior, and by the beauty of your life and spirit. You can be a blessing to the work of God.

None of these attributes come about in a couple of months, but they are the accumulation of things over the years. All successful persons in the work of God have experienced failures and have made mistakes. At times they have felt rejected, wounded, hurt, and alone.

A pastor has feelings. Sometimes he will feel that no one cares for him. I am not saying he accepts that thought or feeling, but that thought will come to his mind at times. You can be in a large crowd of people and yet feel all alone. I am talking about preparing yourself to

become strong in the things of God. You need to work at the job of becoming a pillar in the house of God and a supporter of the Truth in the place where you labor for the Lord. You must be faithful and true.

Jotham became mighty because he prepared his way before the Lord his God. The successful person must learn how to use the dark places in life as a means to build upon. You cannot let the past drag you down, but you must always strive to press upward and forward. Let us go on for God and be true to Him. Every one of us wants to go to Heaven when we leave this world. If you want to make it to Heaven, it is going to take a life of working at it while you are here. You have to labor at it to keep everything undesirable from getting hold of you. You must stay true to God.

Are you faithfully preparing your way before the Lord? Are you working at it day by day? Are you laboring with all that you have? I ask you to let God have His way. Dear one, there is help and victory for you if you will put in for it.

(Compact Disc TR-142E)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

Often individuals look and talk as a saint of God should; however, underneath all the veneer, they are harboring things that are not Christlike. These discontented individuals sneak around, working undercover to pull the unsuspecting soul aside or away from what is right. From all appearances, these people have much in common with Balaam, who refused to obey God's command. They could also be likened to Diotrefes, who loved and desired the preeminence over others.

Saint, you need to beware and alert when anyone tries to impose some new idea or thoughts contrary to sound Bible Truth. Some things may look and sound good at the

first, but they will lead to shame, disgrace, and defeat. You need to beware of anyone who begins in subtle ways to discredit or degrade a proven man of God. Some have entered congregations and began a divisive work that lead or swayed souls into error. Their cunning and divisive work also brought upon themselves total destruction when it was finished. God is not pleased with those who think and feel that they know how to direct the affairs of a congregation better than anyone else, or even the pastor.

What about you, dear reader? Are you keeping company with people whom God prefers that you do not? Are you becoming influenced by a disgruntle who is unhappy with God's way and God's

man? Are there things in God's Word that He has asked you to do and not to do? Do you feel that your spirituality is strong enough that you can handle life's situations on your own? If this is your case, then you need to realize that you are getting close to a place of being overtaken by a seducing spirit. If you fall under a seducing spirit, the devil will deceive you into thinking and believing that all is well and right between you and the Lord. You must beware of seducing spirits. The best way to overcome seducing spirits is to continue in those things you have learned and been assured of.

Selected

*Luke 15:1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.
2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*

"This Man Receiveth Sinners"



Brother Aurelius Raines

Who Is a Sinner?

The thought I would like to share with you is found in verse 2 of our Scripture text, which states, "This man receiveth sinners." This comment was made by people who had all the outward manifestation of being God's people, but in reality Jesus said they were full of dead men's bones. They did not really have what they professed to have, and they had the nerve to pass judgment on Jesus because He kept company with sinners. However, they said one thing that was correct, and that was, "This man [Jesus] receiveth sinners." He not only received them but also ate with them.

You do not find anywhere in God's Eternal Word where Jesus told sinners to get back. We know from

the Scriptures that God hates sin because He is holy. He cannot get along with sin, but He does not hate the sinner. God loves the saint, but He also loves the sinner. God was not content for man to stay in sin. If God can separate the sinner from his sin, then He can have fellowship with the ex-sinner, because what makes a person a sinner is the act of committing sin. If the sinner stops committing sin, he is not a sinner anymore.

God receives sinners, but in this politically correct age, many people deny being sinners. For example, people do not want to say they have committed adultery; they would rather say they had an affair. Often people in the world have a way of shading the truth. They think if they tell a "white lie," that is not the same

as telling a lie, but a lie is a lie. We are living in a day when people do not want to call a drunkard a drunk anymore. Instead people say he has a "chemical dependency." It is very difficult to get people saved when they do not believe they are sinners. You are not a sinner because you feel like one or because people think you are one. You are a sinner because you commit sin. If you commit adultery, that is sin. If you lie, you commit sin. If you are a gambler, you are a sinner. If God does not like what you are doing because it is against His holiness, it is sin.

The Bible gives three definitions for sin. First, it says that all unrighteousness is sin. God is the standard for righteousness. If you do not live right, what you are doing is sinful. Second, the Bible says that he that

transgresses the law commits sin, because sin is the transgression of the law. Third, the Bible says in James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." There is the sin of commission and the sin of omission. An example of the sin of omission is knowing that you ought to do something, but you do not do it. The Bible lets you know that is sin. If you commit sin, that makes you a sinner. What makes a person a mason is that he builds with brick and mortar. You are a sinner if you commit sin, and you are a saint if you live free from sin.

There is no such thing as a sinner saved by grace, because if you have been saved by grace, you are no longer a sinner; you are a saint. The Bible says that God has called us to be saints. The Bible lets you know that when one is a servant of sin, God does not expect that person to do righteousness. When one becomes a servant of righteousness, God does not expect that person to sin. Romans 6:18 states, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." When God saved me from sin, He made me His servant.

If you are still committing sin, you may preach, read the Bible, sing in the choir, and be a faithful churchgoer; however, if you commit sin, you are just a sinful choir member, a sinful preacher, or a sinful churchgoer. Committing sin is what makes you a sinner. Doing something else does not change the fact that you commit sin. If you commit sin and read your Bible, that does not negate the fact that you are a sinner. If you commit sin and do good things, that does not negate the fact that you are a sinner. If you do more good than you do bad, that still does not change the fact that you are a sinner. In order for Jesus to receive you, you must acknowledge the fact that you are a sinner. The devil is doing everything he can to convince people that they are not sinners. You can always find some good in everyone, but all your good-

ness and all your righteousness is as filthy rags; in other words, they have no value whatsoever.

How to Receive Strength to Overcome Sin

As much as Jesus hates sin, He loves the sinner. God loves the sinner because He wants the sinner to repent and become a saint. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The implication is that the sinner is going to perish. No matter how many good things he does, if he commits sin, he will perish. No matter how well he is connected with religious organizations, if he commits sin, he will perish.

The Bible teaches us there are only two roads in life: one road leads to life and the other leads to death. Each of us is on one of these roads. Those who are on the road to life have been made free from sin, but those who are on the road to death are still servants to sin. This is the reason that no matter how much good the sinner does, sin negates it because the sinner is a servant to sin. Even when someone says he is going to stop drinking, sin will not let him stop. When a person says he is going to stop smoking, sin will not let him stop smoking. If you say you are going to start treating your wife right, sin will not let you do it. If you say you are going to do right by your husband, sin will not let you do it. Because of these things, you are on your way to death.

The reason Jesus receives sinners is that He wants to change them. Romans 5:6 reads, "For when we were yet without strength [when we were yet sinners], in due time Christ died for the ungodly." You may say, "I'm going to stop doing this sin," but you keep going back to it. Part of the problem is that you want to stop one sin; you do not want to stop *all* sin. You are a servant of sin. You have to deal with the root of the problem.

A person is an alcoholic because he is a sinner. A person is a liar because he is a sinner. A person steals because he is a sinner. If someone catches a thief stealing and he has to go to jail, that is treating the symptom, not the sin. Many times when a thief gets out of jail, he will steal again. A sinner does not have the power to stop sinning. For example, he may stop smoking, but he cannot get the victory over lust. A sinner does not have the strength to stop committing sin.

The ungodly are simply the unholy. Through salvation God converts the sinner and makes him holy; then He gives him strength to overcome sin. Many churches teach people that they cannot help but sin, but that is not what the Bible says. When Jesus receives a sinner, He changes him. God made man upright, but Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "But they have sought out many inventions." Men started looking for another way.

Christ Died for the Ungodly

Do you know how the devil got Eve to commit the first sin? God told Adam not to eat of one tree in the garden, so Adam must have told Eve. The devil got Eve alone and, in essence, said, "Did God really say that?" The devil will make a suggestion and tempt you. You would think that with all the alcoholics in the world, you would never see a new one, but because people are under the control of sin, the devil convinces them that taking one drink will not make them alcoholics. One may think: "I'm only going to drink a little. I'm not going to become an alcoholic." However, as a person yields to that spirit, Satan's power overtakes him. Gradually, he starts to drink more and more.

Friend, when you do not have the strength to help yourself, remember that Christ died for the ungodly. If you are not saved from sin, you need to acknowledge that you are an ungodly sinner. Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have

gone astray." There was a time in my life when I fell short of the glory of God, but God saved me. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:4, "But God, who is rich in mercy. . . ."

Romans 5:8 states, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God loves sinners. God is making a move on behalf of sinners, but one must admit that he is a sinner.

The Bible lets you know what a great thing Christ did in Romans 5:7, which reads, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: [You will not find many people who will say, 'I know you. You're all right. I'm going to die for you.' You may read a war story about one soldier who gave his life to save his buddy, but that is an exception, not the rule.] yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." God wants to show you how much He loves you.

As much as God hates sin, He so loves the sinners that He sent His Son to die for them while they were still sinners. God wants to help and bless sinners, but if you go into eternity with sin in your life, you do not want to meet God. This is the reason we preach so hard against sin and plead for sinners to come to Jesus. Sin is not an incurable disease. You can be set free, but you have to help yourself by coming to Jesus and sticking with Him. Being sin sick is similar to being physically sick. When you get physically sick, you just do not stay there and say, "Oh, I'm sick." You may call someone and say that you are ill and ask what you should do. You do not just accept the sickness, but you try to do something to get better. That is just natural, because you want to feel healthy. You have a part of God in you. You have a soul, and your soul can get sick from sin; then you are unhappy, and you are not well spiritually. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to get help for your sin?

The Only Remedy for Sin

Some people believe that they are sinners because of where they live. I hear stories all the time about folks who grew up in the city and how they did not have a chance. They say that is the reason they have so much wrong with their lives. Some time ago I read a story in the newspaper in Chicago. They used to have these apartment buildings called "The Project." They were high rise buildings about fourteen stories high. The government built them all together in one area, and they took all the people who were living below the poverty level and gave them an apartment there.

A multitude of poor, struggling people was all around. Many people did not like to go to The Project, and even the people who were raised there and were able to move out did not want to go back. It was a rough area. The newspaper told about a five-year-old boy who was hung over a rail from the fourteenth floor and dropped to the ground because he refused to go in a store and steal something for a twelve year old. That spoke to me. Just because a person lived in The Project did not mean that he had to do something that was not right.

A person's environment has absolutely nothing to do with the fact that a person is living in sin. When folks make excuses for their wrongdoing, then people are going to act on what the expectation is. Consider the soldiers in Iraq. No matter how serious the combat they are engaged in, those soldiers are not expected to fire on innocent women and children. No matter how tough it gets, no matter how many ambushes they have been in, and no matter how many of their buddies have gotten shot or killed, they are expected to conduct themselves as they have been trained to do.

You can make any excuse that you want to make for why you are a sinner; nevertheless, you are not a sinner because of your environment,

because of how you were raised, or because of what you were taught. You are a sinner because you are giving yourself over to sin. Ezekiel 18:1-2 states: "The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" They were trying to say that the sin of the fathers was inherited by the son. They used that as an excuse for committing sin. God let them know that a day was coming when they would not be able to say that anymore. I want to let you know that day has come. Every sin problem can be fixed in Jesus Christ.

Verses 3-4 continue: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: [You have a soul that belongs to God, and that soul is getting sin sick. It is tired of sin, and God said it belongs to Him. Therefore, you cannot do whatever you want to do with your soul.] the soul that sinneth [or practices sin], it shall die." How does the soul die? God allows it to go to hell. The Bible calls it an everlasting day. In that day you will never receive any comfort, and you will suffer throughout all eternity, because when your soul was sick, you did not go to the only One who had the remedy.

The Only Name Given Whereby Men Might Be Saved

Many people think they will go to hell because of being a liar, a thief, an adulterer, a gambler, or a murderer. No, those are symptoms of being bound by sin. That does not mean people should do those things, but that is not the reason the sinner is going to hell. He is going to hell because he has rejected Jesus. That is the only reason anyone is going to hell.

Someone may say, "I'm strung out on drugs, and I can't get off

them." That is just a symptom. Sin is what got you there, and deliverance from sin is what it will take to get you back. Man has enough sense to get you off drugs, but he cannot remove the sin. You have to come to the only solution that God has given, and that is Jesus Christ. The solution is not in Buddha or Allah. The only name given in Heaven whereby men might be saved is Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

You cannot try to make up for your sin by spending all your money on feeding the poor or by helping the disadvantaged. If you spend all your goods trying to help folks, yet you are a sinner, you are still on the road to hell. None of that can remove sin. The only way to remove it is to come to Jesus Christ. That is the reason God sent His Son. Christ is the only way, and if you want to be saved, you must accept Him. That was Peter's message to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. Peter told them plainly that the Man whom they murdered, the Man whom they crucified, the Man whom Pilate would not release, the Man whom they did not believe to be the Messiah, was Jesus Christ. He had risen from the dead, and if they expected to be saved, they would have to be baptized in His name. Christ is the only way.

Someone may ask, "Do you believe that Christianity is the only right way?" That is what God believes. If you do not believe that Jesus Christ is the only way, do you think that will change God's mind? That is just like the guy who came knocking on my door claiming there is no fire in hell. His unbelief cannot put out the fire. Jesus is the only way.

Ezekiel 18:24 says, "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? [If a person is a righteous man and starts doing what wicked folks are doing, the question is, 'Will he stay righteous?'] All his righteousness that he hath

done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." It does not matter if you try to remove your sin with righteousness, it will not work. If you are righteous and you start sinning, your former righteousness will not count.

Verse 25 reads, "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" Some folks think that they can do wrong and still go to meet God in peace. However, God said, in so many words: "If I will not allow a righteous man who went back into his sin to enter Heaven, I will not allow an evil man to enter Heaven just because he did a little righteousness. That would be unfair. I am just."

Verse 26 lets us know that when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he will die for the iniquity that he has done. A backslider is not a Christian that the devil took advantage of and caused to sin. Jesus said in that situation, repent quickly. The backslider is a person who has turned his back on God. As he turns his back on God and starts committing sin again, all his righteousness is lost.

Turn Away From All Unrighteousness

Ezekiel 18:27 says, "Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness. . . ." Sinner friend, I want you to understand that God does not define wickedness the same way you may define wickedness. In Matthew, Chapter 25, you can read of a man who had three servants. He gave them some talents, and two of those servants went and used those talents to bring back profits for their lord. However, one servant, instead of using that one talent, buried it in the earth.

When his lord came back and asked that servant to give an account of the one talent that he had

given him, the servant said he had buried it in the earth and was going to dig it up and give it to him. In verse 26 the lord said, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." This man did not kill or abuse anyone. He might have been faithful to his wife, worked every day, attended church regularly, and raised his children to be respectful, upstanding citizens; yet because he did not use the one talent his lord gave to him, Jesus said the man was wicked.

I once heard a brother say that you do not have to do anything to go to hell. If you are a sinner, you do not have to do anything to go to hell, because you are already on the road. You must do something to get off that road.

Ezekiel 18:27 continues, "Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Sinner friend, all you have to do is turn from your sin. You must break away from all your wickedness. You cannot do it gradually.

Do you know what would have happened if I had asked my wife thirty-four years ago to marry me and then would have gone on to say something like this: "We're going to get married, but let me tell you something. There's this woman named Sally Sue, and I'm going to quit her next week. Then there is Jane. She's a real looker; that relationship will be a tough one to break off. It will probably take me at least six months. Then there is Sarah. I'm going to need at least a year to break things off with her." Do you think my wife would have married me? She probably would have said, "When you get your business straight, then you can come back and see if I'm still available."

Many folks want to come to God and want to wait to drop this sin one week and another sin the next week, and then next year maybe they will get over that one. They think God will accept that. No! They have to turn from *all* sin. I let my wife know

that I was not interested in any other young ladies. I was finished with them when I started seeing her. Likewise, when you turn to the Lord, you must be done with sin. You should not want it any more. You must be through with it. In fact, you should hate what it has done to you. I cannot stand it anymore. If you will do that, the Bible says that you will save your soul alive.

We are living in a day when people believe the false notion that they are sinners saved by grace. Many people believe that God is not looking at what they are doing but that He is looking at what they are professing. They think that as long as they profess to be Christians, God accepts them. On the contrary, Ezekiel 18:30a states, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD." God is looking at the way you are living. If you are still living in sin, you could testify all day long about how God saved you, but that would not change the fact that you are unsaved. God judges you by what you do. Your testimony ought to match your life. Some folks testify on credit, so to speak: they have not paid for anything that they testify about. God does not have "credit card" religion. You should not testify of salvation until you have the goods.

Ezekiel 18:30b reads: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity [or sin] shall not be your ruin." If you do not turn from your sin, sinner friend, sin will be your ruin. Sin does not help you. It might make you feel better for a little while. There is pleasure in sin for a season, but if you stay in sin, it will take you down and destroy you in this life, and then you will have to go to hell.

"Why Will Ye Die?"

Ezekiel 18:31 states, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit. . . ." God wants to do a spiri-

tual operation on you: He wants to take out your old sinful heart and give you a new heart. He wants to take out that disobedient spirit and give you His Spirit. Then He asked this question, ". . . For why will ye die, O house of Israel?" This was addressed to the house of Israel, but it is true for every sinner.

Verse 32 states, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Sinner friend, you can turn yourself and say within your heart, "I'm finished with sin." You need to turn your back on sin. Why not come to Jesus and live? Dear one, it is just that simple! It does not cost money to get salvation. You do not have to die with sin in your life. If you go into eternity with sin in your life, you will lift up your eyes in hell. Jesus Christ wants to save you, and He will save you now if you will let Him. It will not take Him all day either. Friend, I am trying to help you to make Heaven your home. God, through the Prophet Ezekiel, said, "Why will ye die?" Why should you let sin be your lord?

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus Christ said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The Bible says the way of a transgressor is hard. Also, the Bible says the wicked are as the troubled sea; they cannot rest. You do not have to tell me about sin. The testimony in the Scripture is true. If you want peace, you must stop rejecting the Prince of Peace. If you want happiness, you must quit rejecting the One who will bless you. Why would you choose to die in your sin?

If you are a sinner, I beg of you, do not continue to be a sinner. You can be saved today. This is the best deal you have ever heard. God is saying that if you will give up your life, He will give you His life. Once you make the change, you will feel that you got the best of the trade.

Are you willing to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Do not let sin ruin you. You should not be ashamed of what people might say or think. One day each of us will have to stand before God. When you stand before God, you will have to stand alone. I will not be able to stand for my wife, and she will not be able to stand for me. Each of us will have to give an answer to God for the way we have lived.

Satisfying That Inner Thirst

God is a gentleman, and He will not twist your arm and force you to be saved. God wants you to come to Him on your own. It is good to be a part of the family of God. I had no idea when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior how big God's family really is. I thank God for every brother and sister. I like to encourage souls who are yet seeking the Lord that there is nothing like getting saved.

What makes salvation so great is that God made man to live a holy life. God is a holy God, and He made a holy creation. Everything in Creation was created to glorify Him, but the devil got in and convinced men that they do not have to live holy. All that did for mankind was create problems. God does everything He possibly can to bring people back to Him.

A man in sin is like a fish out of water. If you take a fish out of the water, it will flop around and try its best to get back into the water, because that is its natural environment. Man living as God recreated him to live is in his natural environment. Since man is out of his natural environment when he is outside of Christ, he is just like a fish flopping around, trying to find his real place.

People drink alcohol because what they are really trying to do is satisfy the thirst for God that is in them. When God created Adam, He breathed the breath of life into him, and Adam became a living soul. God put a part of Himself in Adam, and now that part is in each of us.

That part of us is crying out to God, and without a knowledge of the Truth men and women turn to alcohol, drugs, and other vices. Without God men never will be satisfied. They constantly try to please the part that is crying out to God. Nothing in this world can satisfy the soul of man but God.

When I married my wife, I did not have much of anything. I was only twenty years of age and just getting started in life. I did not have a lot going for me, and there were other guys that she could have chosen. What made me feel really good about my wife was that she turned away from those other guys with

their fancy cars, their fancy clothes, and their wads of money and said, "I want you." When a sinner turns away from everything this world has to offer and turns to God, He knows that person is in love with Him, and that makes Him feel good. You can be saved by turning away from sin and turning to God.

Look at what sin has done. Sin has caused wars with children being killed. Some people want to blame God for that. However, God has done everything He can do to bring man to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ causes people to be at peace with one another. They do not have a reason to kill anymore. God made

them free, moral agents. Sin causes people to stay away from God, and sin causes them to do ungodly things and hurt God. He is not going to put up with it much longer. We are living in the last of the last days. God is getting fed up with how men are treating one another. They are glorifying sin and rejecting His Son. God is going to put an end to it, and if you are not ready to go, your end will be most miserable. The solution is to turn your back on sin and come to Jesus. May God bless you.

(Compact Disc TR-328M)

Meeting Announcements

Summersville, WV
July 9-11

REVIVAL: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Brother Earl Allen Borders, Newark, 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 304-872-4047
Visit our website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com

DETROIT, MI
July 16-18

REVIVAL: Bible Standard Church of God, 14601 Gratiot, Detroit, MI 48205
Evangelist: Brother Calvin Foster, Kensett, Arkansas
Service times: Friday-Saturday 7:00 p.m.; Sunday 11:15 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Samuel Oree, Jr., 14601 Gratiot, Detroit, MI 48205. Telephone: Church 313-526-0578; Cell 313-346-7180

Canby, OR
August 16-22

CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 522 NW 2nd Avenue, Canby, OR 97013
Service times: 10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. The first service begins Monday morning at 10:30 a.m. We welcome everyone to come and worship the Lord with us! To make lodging reservations contact Brother David Stegmeier by calling the telephone number listed below. Please make reservations in advance, if possible. For further information contact: Pastor E. David Stegmeier, 522 NW 2nd Avenue, Canby, OR 97013. Telephone: 503-266-9297

2010 Camp Meetings at God's Acres

August 1-8

(See page 27 for information concerning the above meeting)

December 26-29



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