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

Psalm 122:1
**Guest Editorial**

"Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them."

Psalm 62:10

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:33

**LASTING RICHES**

In our society today we can see that many people are bound by the spirit of materialism. They are never really satisfied with what they have. Some continually yearn to reach out for more, thinking that it will bring them happiness. Others strive to gain fame and popularity among those around them.

The writer is in no way saying that it is sinful to have wealth or possessions, neither does being financially well off mean that a person is evil. The ability to be frugal in business matters is not necessarily a sign that a man or a woman is wicked or greedy. Also, because a person holds a prominent position is no evidence that he or she is crooked in his or her business dealings.

The evil comes whenever a person allows worldly riches, possessions, or position to gain control of his or her heart and life. If one is not careful, spending too much time seeking earthly gains that will soon rust or decay can become dangerous. These things can subtly take first place in a Christian's life if he or she does not stay on guard. Anything placed ahead of Christ will soon rob the soul of peace and joy, thus rendering that individual unfit for true service to the Master.

You need to remember that worldly fame or wealth is never proof of an individual being in a right relationship with the Lord. At times, riches have been mistaken for spirituality. Unfortunately, some people have thought they were pleasing God because they had an overabundance of wealth. God sheds His goodness on the just as well as the unjust. When the Lord sends the rain it blesses the sinner's crops as well as the righteous man's crops.

In 1 Timothy 6:9-10 the Apostle Paul tells us: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Earthly riches can become a snare because men are tempted to place their trust in the riches instead of God who gave them the riches. They are much like the rich, young ruler who came to Jesus seeking soul rest. He had obeyed all the commandments from his childhood, yet he lacked one thing: something was missing in his life. When Jesus required him to go and sell all that he had and share it with the poor, his flesh cringed. He turned and went away sad and empty that day because he loved his wealth more.

[continued on page 7]
Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 
20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 
21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 
22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 
23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 
24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 
25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 
26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 
27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: 
28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 
29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 
30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 
31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

What the Lost Take to Hell With Them

Brother Roger L. Decker

The Dangers of Prosperity

In Chapter 16 of Luke, Jesus mentioned a rich man twice: once when He was speaking of the unjust steward and another time when He was speaking of the rich man who went to hell. It should be noted that because a man is wealthy is no sign that he is lost. Having riches is not a sin, but it is when a person trusts in riches. 

Mark 10:23-24 reads: "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" Verse 26 states, "And they were astonished out of measure." They could not believe what they were actually hearing. They were amazed that Jesus would say such a thing. 

Why was this saying so astonishing to His disciples? The reason for their amazement was that Jesus was turning accepted Jewish standards of thinking upside down. The Jewish thinking was just the opposite of what Jesus was saying. They believed that prosperity was a sign of a good man. For example, if a man was rich, they believed that God must have honored him and blessed him. To them, wealth was proof of excellence in character and favor from God. In Psalm 37:25 the Psalmist said it this way: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed [or his children] begging bread."

It is no wonder that the disciples were astonished above measure. They would have argued with Jesus that the more prosperous a man was, the more certain he was
of entry into the Kingdom of God. Jesus repeated His saying a slightly different way to make what He said clearer. Again, Mark 10:24 says, "And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it [or how difficult is it] for them that [put their] trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

Jesus saw the dangers of prosperity and of having much material goods very clearly. I am going to name some dangers of prosperity. First, material possessions have a tendency to fix a man's heart to this world. He has a large stake in it. He has so great an interest in it that it is difficult for him to think beyond it, and especially difficult for him to think about leaving it.

Second, if a man's interest is in material possessions, it tends to make him think of everything in terms of a price tag, that he can buy whatever he desires. He may well forget the values in this world that are far beyond money, things which are priceless. There are precious things that money cannot buy. Spiritually speaking, it is fatal when a man begins to think that everything worth having has a price tag on it. Third, a man who trusts in himself and in his possessions cannot be saved.

The Reality of Hell

In Luke, Chapter 16, Jesus pulled back the cover of a lost eternity. We have a picture before us of what hell is really like. Many people, especially certain religious groups, do not believe in hell, but that does not change the reality of it. Those who end up in hell deserve to go there. No one in hell deserves to go to Heaven. Also, no one in Heaven deserves to go to hell. I have heard people say, "God doesn't send His children to hell." That is right. God does not send His children to hell. Those who end up in hell are not His children. People use all kinds of arguments to discredit the thought of hell, but the Scriptures proclaim the message that there is a hell.

In our Scripture reading, we have two different individuals. One was rich and the other was a beggar called Lazarus, which means "God is my help." The two men had two very different lifestyles, two different deaths, and two different rewards. When an individual goes into eternity, he takes with him the real person.

Now, I want you to pay close attention to these Scriptures. Mark 9:38-48 reads: "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. "And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Acts of Kindness Through Love for the Savior

We want to back up a little in Mark, Chapter 9. Jesus began these verses in this text by letting us know that the smallest acts of kindness will be rewarded. In verse 41 He said, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water," which signifies the lowest form of service rendered, will be graciously noticed by Jesus and rewarded. What is easier than to give a cup of cold water to a thirsty child of God? However, it must be given in His name; that is, a Christian must give it out of love for Jesus Christ. This is very different from giving it from a mere motive of common kindness. If the act of kindness is done with a love to Christ, it will be rewarded.

Matthew 25:31-40 states: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."
Look at the simple things that Jesus expressed: giving a hungry man a meal, giving a thirsty man a drink, welcoming a stranger, cheering the sick, giving clothing to the poor, and visiting a prisoner. These are things that anyone can do. It is not a question of giving away thousands of dollars or of writing our names in the annals of history. It is a case of giving simple help to the people we meet every day. The feeblest service will be accepted, and acts of love that may be forgotten by man will be remembered by Him and rewarded in Heaven.

Proverbs 19:17 says, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." In the New Testament we read in Hebrews 6:10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Again, the acts of kindness are not through good morals, but Jesus said they are to be done in His name through love for the Savior.

The Punishment of the Wicked

In the Scripture in Mark, Chapter 9, Jesus gave a very solemn warning. In Mark 9:42 Jesus threatened those who offend His little ones, who wilfully become an occasion of sin or trouble to them. He said, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea." In other words, Jesus said whoever grieves any true Christian (though he may be the weakest), opposes his entrance into the kingdom, discourages or obstructs his progress in serving God, hinders him from doing good, draws him into committing sin, or draws him away from a congregation, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea. According to Jesus, his punishment would be very great, and the death and ruin of his soul would be even more terrible.

Jesus was saying that his punishment would be unbearable. Commentators say the millstone that Jesus was speaking of was a great millstone. There were two kinds of mills in Palestine. There was the hand mill that women used in the house and a millstone so great that it took a donkey or a horse to turn it; it was called a "great millstone." If it were attached to one's neck and he cast into the sea, he would have no hope of ever returning or of getting away.

Jesus mentioned the same thing in Luke 17:1-2, which says: "Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

In Mark 9:44 Jesus states, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." This was taken from a figure of speech found in Isaiah, Chapter 66, where the Prophet Isaiah described the great prosperity of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Isaiah said that the people of God "shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against" God (verse 24). Because of help from the Lord, he said they would be overcomers. Their enemies would be overcome and slain and the people of God would triumph. The figure of speech therefore denotes great misery as well as certain and terrible destruction.

These verses in Luke, Chapter 16, speak of that state beyond the grave and are intended to denote that the destruction of the wicked will be awful, widespread, and eternal. "Where the worm dieth not" is an image of loathsome, dreadful, eternal suffering. That suffering beyond the power of the grave will be beyond what any living mortal could imagine.

Hell has been talked about by the world and used in a slang expression, probably more than any other slang word. People have been condemned by others to go there. People have made jokes about hell, saying that if they go there, they will have plenty of company.

As I said previously, many people do not even believe in such a place; but many of those who do not believe in hell say they believe in God's love, His kindness, His mercy, His judgment, and Heaven. The truth is, you would not know a thing about God's love, His kindness, His mercy, His judgment, or Heaven unless you read about it in the Bible, and the same Bible also teaches about hell. Why would you believe only part of it and not all of it? Heaven is real, and hell is just as real. Why would you believe all these other attributes taught in God's Word except hell, which is taught in the same Bible? The Bible speaks more about hell than about Heaven. Why do people pick and choose what they want to believe?

Scriptural References to Hell

I want you to read some Scriptures pertaining to hell. These are in the King James Version of the Bible. Matthew 5:22 reads, "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." He said in Matthew 23:33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

What do the lost take to hell with them? Well, we certainly know it is not materialism. The rich can-
not take their money, their certificates of deposit, their homes, their cars, or their music recordings. Friend, you will not be able to take any of those things to hell with you, but there is something that you will take with you when you go into eternity.

Luke 16:23 says, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." The rich man took his sight and his feelings with him. He could see what he was missing by going to hell, and he could feel suffering, which he had not known in his earthly life. This individual fared sumptuously every day. He could speak, because he had his voice, and he pleaded for mercy. What else went with him? Remember, Jesus said that the worm dies not. Along with his soul, he took his memory. Also, he saw something else: he was in a fixed condition. He had compassion there at the end of that chapter, something he had not shown in his earthly life.

All the things that I mentioned are attached to your soul, and they will follow your soul when the soul leaves the body. These things do not go into the grave with the body, but they are faculties of the soul. What did the rich man see? He saw the same man, Lazarus, who laid at his gate hungry, but he saw something different about Lazarus. He saw Lazarus being comforted, no longer a beggar. Who did the rich man want to bring relief to him? He wanted Lazarus. No doubt, his memory was quickened instantly, and the memory of a mistreated Lazarus was fresh in his mind. Now he had time for the beggar. He acknowledged the beggar for his own gratification, but it was too late.

The Reaping Is Greater Than the Sowing

Look at how the two men changed positions. Now the rich man has all eternity to consider Lazarus. In the rich man's earthly life, what Lazarus wanted was a nuisance to him; he was just another beggar at the gate. He probably saw all kinds of beggars, and his name was known around the neighborhood. Perhaps people said, "If you want some crumbs, why don't you try the rich man's house." No doubt, he had seen lots of beggars, but this beggar, Lazarus, stood out to him.

All Lazarus wanted was the crumbs. He did not want a full-course meal. Certainly, he would have taken that, but he knew he was not going to be invited to the rich man's table. As a beggar, he knew that he would not even be invited into the house or even on the porch, so all he asked for was crumbs.

The rich man's request was not unreasonable. It was small, but in this life even the smallest request from Lazarus was denied by the rich man. The rich man was more than able to supply Lazarus with a full meal, not just the crumbs. Likewise, God was able to send Lazarus to the rich man with a pitcher of ice water, not just a drop. They were both capable of supplying the need. God was capable, and the rich man was capable. God could have given Lazarus a pitcher of ice water and a glass in which to serve it, but He would not even give so much as a drop. That is in the Bible, the same Bible that you read and believe in the love of God.

Consider how the reaping was greater than the sowing. The reaping is always so much greater than the sowing. The worm dies not. The rich man's memory was alive. He was accustomed to Lazarus being at his gate, and he was so accustomed to seeing, "Send him away!" The rich man's memory was quickened and the picture of Lazarus came before his mind, because the "worm dieth not." He could not detach his memory; it followed him into the region of the lost. What he saw was not pleasing to his eyes: he saw that he had traded places with Lazarus.

Verse 25 of our Scripture text says, "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." The rich man traded good for evil, and his memory was part of his torments, because "the worm dieth not." Abraham told the rich man that in his lifetime he had received good things. Dear one, the good things that you receive in this lifetime are not good enough to get you by the judgment seat of Christ. You must be born again.

Good morals are great, but they will not get you by the final Judgment. Being good to your companion and being good to your parents are great attributes, but they will not replace being born again. A change has to take place inwardly in your life. Every sin that you have committed or are committing is against God. It may involve somebody else or something else, but it is all against God. It is the eternal man, or the soul, that exists. He looks out through the windows that God has provided. He needs his flesh on earth, but the soul is eternal, and God is eternal. The "worm dieth not."

Your memory and all the faculties of it will remain in eternity. I can imagine that the rich man's memory became alive with thoughts of Lazarus immediately after his death, like a big panorama. No doubt, he got a vision of his own house and his own supper table and a view of Lazarus begging for something to eat at the gate. What he saw condemned him.

The Worm Dieth Not

Dear one, in hell you will remember those pleadings to repent, those testimonies of what God can do and has done, the messages that dealt with your soul, the conviction that has gripped your soul, and those tears that ran down your cheeks as you fought off conviction. After death, the warnings, the pleadings, and the begging will be
gone; but you will remember your concerned mother and father and the pleas to be saved. You will remember the tears that you saw run down your mother’s cheeks and the stern rebuke of your father. All those things will be gone in eternity, but the memory of them will continue to be with you where the "worm dieth not." In eternity you will recall the words of the song calling you, "Come home, poor sinner"; but the sad part of it will be, your destination will be fixed and settled.

Luke 16:26 reads, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Besides the rich man's torment and Lazarus' comfort, Lazarus could not come to the rich man. Just as he would not go to Lazarus in this earthly life, Lazarus was not allowed to go to the rich man. It was settled and fixed.

As I begin to close, I want to say this: I believe that hell is going to be many times worse than we could even imagine. The human mind cannot comprehend its awfulness. Just as Heaven will be glorious, hell is going to be many, many times worse. I believe that one of the worst tragedies in hell will be the fact that you did not have to be there and the fact that you have had plenty of warnings and plenty of opportunities to get saved, but you would not.

It is not just the fact that you smoke cigarettes or drink beer that will cause you to end up in hell. It is the fact that you have rejected Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord that will cause you to end up in hell. If you accept Jesus Christ, you will not have to worry about the tobacco, the alcohol, the drugs, the bitter spirit, or the unforgiveness.

When I got saved and got up from the altar, I loved everybody. First John 3:14a says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." I did not choose whom I loved by their race or because I knew them; I loved everybody. This is the change that God brings into your life. Many people are too satisfied living in sin, trudging their way along in this life, one foot following another, day in and day out. Friend, there is going to come a day when this life will be over, but the "worm dieth not."

We are not living in the Dark Ages, a time when the Bible was closed. Today in this country it is very easy to get a Bible if you want one. Almost everyone has a car so he or she can attend revivals and camp meetings. They can press into the services. People have transportation, telephones, and cell phones. Most people are never without a phone. They have all these things going for them. They are going to answer for the opportunities to be saved that they failed to take advantage of.

The Word of God is going to judge us. Hell is unchangeable. My advice to you is to take the blood of Jesus with you to the Judgment; take a life that has been washed in the blood of Jesus, take a life of holiness, take a life of safety. Do not let the undying worm of memory of a past life cause you to be tormented throughout the ceaseless age of eternity. Why not be safe in the arms of Jesus?

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Someone may say: "I know a lot of rich people who cover their sins. They have never been saved, and they are prospering." You have to look at the Scripture right. It means that you are not going to prosper with God if you cover your sins. If you will confess and forsake your sin, the memory of a past, haunting life will not follow you to the Judgment. Does the thought of going to a lost hell trouble your soul?

(Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2)

than he loved or wanted Jesus.

The Savior desires that all men seek the true and lasting riches, riches such as living a holy life, working in the kingdom, visiting the sick, winning souls, and doing many good deeds that manifest a Christ filled life. These are valuable riches that are laid up in Heaven and never fade away. As long as you remain true and faithful, they will not be taken away from you. In Matthew 6:20 Jesus said, "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor

heart to be kind and caring to others. As Jesus came here to serve mankind, you must also be ready to serve wherever and whenever possible.

Let your heart be encouraged and challenged to seek the lasting riches. There is great joy in serving others and striving to be a blessing whenever opportunity presents itself. Being physically rich may be pleasing, but being spiritually rich is far greater and far more rewarding.

Selected
Luke 22:31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

33 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.

34 And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.

35 And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing.

36 Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

37 For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

38 And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

Purse, Scrip, and Sword

Brother Richard Talbot

Spiritual Development

I want to focus on verse 36 of our Scripture text, where Jesus said, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." There is much for us to learn in this lesson, just as there was for Peter and the other disciples. Jesus was laying some groundwork for their future. Realizing that He was nearing the end of His earthly ministering, Jesus was preparing His disciples for a great change that was to come into their lives. Verse 37 says, "...for the things concerning me have an end." Things were not going to be as they had been. That is how it is in our lives. We are living in a world of great change, a time of disruption of things as they have always been.

We want to look at what was happening in the previous verses. In verse 31 Jesus gave a strong warning to Peter. Warnings should never be taken lightly. A pastor can preach a message of warning concerning various things to the church, such as seducing spirits, wrong attitudes, and other things, and it seems the only people who take it seriously are those who are spiritually grounded in the things of God. Many people shrug off the warning and go on their way, while others take it very seriously. Those warning messages affect their thoughts, their planning, and their actions from that time forward. The pastor gives the warning, and if you are wise, you will heed the warnings. Many people do not heed the advice given ahead of time, and then they get themselves into much trouble.

Peter was being cautioned. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Sometimes you need to allow things to sink in. You need to listen and absorb them. James tells us in James 1:19, "Be swift to hear, slow to speak." You need to be quick to hear the voice of God, the voice of warning to your soul.

Satan desired Peter, and he desires each child of God as well. Satan is after every honest-hearted child of God. He is on the warpath to destroy your soul and mine. He desires to get his clutches on you and bring you down from your
spiritual plane of holy living. He wants to destroy your testimony of freedom and salvation. He wants to bring the Church of God down from its high plateau of holy living and put it on the same level with all other religious organizations. He will not be happy without having you.

The word sift means "to move to and fro, to cause to be moved about." This is what Paul was dealing with in Ephesians 4:14 when he said, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro." In 1 Corinthians 13:11 he stated, "When I became a man, I put away childish things." While you need to develop and mature to be strong for the Lord, you also need to learn that you have to put away some things in order to further your spiritual development. Sometimes you have to help develop your maturity and spiritual growth. This is the reason you have to deal with problems, trials, and situations in life. God sends trials, and He allows tests to help you develop spiritually and to become strong in the Lord.

Thinking Too Much of Yourself

I believe John Bunyan made the statement, "When I am faced with severe temptation, it only causes me to draw closer to my God." Oh, how Satan would like temptation to draw you away from God! You need to allow every hard place, every misunderstanding, and everything that tears you apart to bring you closer to God. You should not allow anything to cause you to lose heart. People get put out sometimes. They get frustrated and disgusted with others. One big problem you have to deal with comes from other people who affect your life one way or another.

Jesus knew there was only one way to help Peter snap out of his immature behavior, which was obvious by the way he responded to Jesus. In my imagination I can picture Peter saying, "Lord, I am ready to follow You to prison, and even to death." Jesus knew that He would have to say something to take this man down a peg or two, because he was too confident. He thought too much of himself. Jesus needed to bring him down to reality. Peter never planned to backslide or to deny Christ. That was the furthest thing from his mind. He never planned to do what he did. He fully intended to do what he said would do.

The Scriptures warn about thinking too much of yourself. First Corinthians 10:12 states, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." I believe that in the wisdom of Christ, He saw this taking place and allowed it to go on. He warned Peter in verse 34 of our Scripture text, "The cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." In verse 32 Jesus told Peter, "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." This same Christ, sitting beside the throne of God, is making intercession for you so that your faith will not fail.

You may ask, "Am I going to be tested?" Yes, absolutely! You are going to face some very serious trials. You may say, "I have already had my share." Well, take a deep breath, because more is coming. Peter's intentions were good, but he did not really understand the weakness and the frailty of the flesh. Peter needed help to snap out of his immature behavior. When Peter told Jesus that he was ready to go with Him both to prison and to death, he was overconfident in his own ability, and this is usually a very dangerous deception. In Romans 12:3 we are warned not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly or maturely.

God warned the children of Israel about the same thing. Isaiah 5:21 reads, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" They were judging themselves according to their own measurements and standard of comparison. In our own sight, we have our own measurements of comparison. Paul said we should not compare ourselves with one another. To do that, we are comparing according to our own set precedence or understanding. We cannot justify comparing anyone else to ourselves. Sometimes people pick up a Pharisee spirit that places them in a better light than others. We ought to look upon others as our equals.

God Gives Grace to the Humble

We read in Luke 18:9-14: "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:5-6: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." This Pharisee in the parable had an overrated opinion of himself, but he was blind to his own condition. He was boasting in his strongest point as if that was all that was necessary, but he was not concerned about his weakness. Each child of God is strong in certain areas of his life but very weak in other areas. You should not boast in your strength without taking into consideration your weaknesses. That is the reason no one
should say, "I will go with you even to death and to prison." You may think you have that strong point, but we all are beset by weaknesses.

It would be great if we all could be 100 percent strong in everything, but it is not that way in the flesh. No matter how strong you may think you are right now spiritually, weakness is lurking in your life. You need to constantly work hard to combat it. No one can boast as the Pharisee did and say he is not like the publican. Some may be more like that publican than they realize. Peter had some strong points, and he also had some great weaknesses.

The Process of Failure

Every man, woman, and young person has areas in life where he or she feels less vulnerable. You need to be very careful, lest you say, "I would never yield to that kind of temptation." You had better be careful not to make any boast such as that. You ought to remember to say: "By the grace of God, I will not do that. If it was not for the grace of God, I might have done the same thing, but God has kept me." Some people feel they are less likely to be tempted and to succumb to a temptation when they are filled with much confidence in themselves. The warnings just do not sink in.

When you really think you are strong, the messages that the preacher preaches to warn about things do not seem to register. That is what happened to Peter. The warning that Jesus gave him did not register with him. Sometimes people wear spiritual blinders, and they are hindered from seeing the real condition of their lives. They are poised on the edge of a cliff and ready for a terrible fall, yet they cannot seem to sense it. The pastor can work with them, pray with them, counsel them, and preach messages that God lays on his heart to help them, but it seems as though they will not heed the warnings, and over the cliff they go.

Peter was more of a man after he wept bitterly than he was before. Let us keep a humble spirit, broken before the Lord. Then we can say, "God, if You do not help me, I cannot make it. If You are not my strength, I cannot handle this situation." Satan desires every one of us.

Failure is usually a process of errors. Sometimes it is a sequence of bad decisions. Seldom does one fall or backslide suddenly. There may be pure blindness or a range of emotional feelings that refuse to admit to wrong. When a man who seems to be strong fails, in hindsight a trail can be seen that led to his point of failure. Every time you fail, you can look back and see what brought you down. You can learn from that mistake and use your failure as a stepping-stone toward success. Remember this, saint of God, if you have failed in the past, it does not make you a failure for the future. You do not have to remain a failure. You need to weep bitterly and repent, ask God to forgive you, ask the saints to forgive you, clear the path, and go on for God. You can do it! God wants you to, the saints want you to, and the pastor wants you to. No one wants you to become a complete failure.

Peter was overzealous and presumptuous in his talk without taking time to consider all the angles of the situation. His attitude was actually blazing a trail that led to his eventual downfall. Jesus knew that Peter's downfall was coming. Peter began to follow afar off. He might have thought about this situation getting out of his control. He began to feel the pressure of others in his life. It was not just Peter. The Scripture says they all forsake Jesus and fled.

How to Become a Mighty Warrior

Peter was open with his life, but Judas was deceitful. That makes a great difference. When I was growing up, my mother said, "One good thing about you, Richard. You do things right out in the open." I was not sneaky. I just did what I did and took the consequences for it. Peter did what he did openly. Judas played the role of a deceiver. You can get more help by being open with yourself than you can by being a deceiver.

You should not be deceptive, hypocritical, or profess one thing when you know you do not have it. If you backslide or fail God and lose the joy of salvation, you are better off to pull the flag down and let everyone know your true condition. You should say, "Pray for me; I am backslidden." You would be better off to confess so that you would receive help than to play a hypocritical role, trying to fool people. You may fool the pastor, the saints, or your spouse; but eventually it will blow up on you, and it will get out of your control.

Many a person who has fallen as Peter did became overconfident, boasting beyond the grace of God and beyond his own experience. I have heard some testimonies that I wished down in my heart that they were real. It is easy to say words; you had better be true to your testimony.

Many a man has fallen as Peter did, and like Peter, he needs to get back up to go forward for God. After Peter's denial, when Jesus turned and looked at Peter, no words were spoken. I can just imagine, as Christ made eye contact with Peter outside in the courtyard by the enemy's fire, the terrible feeling in Peter's heart. Reality struck Peter like a lightning bolt that he had miserably failed. Until that time, I do not believe it registered in Peter's mind what had taken place in his process of failure. However, when Christ caught Peter's attention and made eye contact with him, it brought shock to Peter's experience, broke him, and crushed him down to tears and weeping and prayer. Out of that, we have the Apostle Peter of the New Testament. On the Day of Pentecost, he became a blazing, flaming warrior of the Gospel.
History states that when Peter was put through the crucifixion, he asked to be hung upside down because he said he was not worthy to die like his Lord. Oh, what a change took place in Peter that night!

If you have been a failure, one who is not very strong and one who is up and down in your experience, you need to let go and let God have control. You need to get hold of God. You can be a mighty warrior for the Lord. It is not in your strength, but in the power of God. He can fill you with the Holy Ghost and with power and strength so that you can be successful. Many people have failed because the enemy attacked them in areas of least expectation.

**Areas of Weakness**

I have read of forts that were captured during our American Revolution. These forts that the British held were secured on three sides, and the fourth side might have been on the edge of a cliff, leaving no way of getting to them on that one side. The American generals found a way to do the impossible. They climbed up the cliff and attacked the fort. In their weakness, they defended their position. With his soldiers one night, George Washington was on the other side of the Delaware River. The British across the river were having a big Christmas party, drinking and carrying on. No one thought an army could possibly cross that river. With his army George Washington crossed over and destroyed the British garrison. That battle was the turning point in our history. They attacked at the weakest point.

The enemy of your soul is working exactly that way. He knows better than to attack you at your strong points. He knows there are areas where you think he cannot bother you. There are areas where you might not have much artillery, spiritually speaking. You may not even be guarding that corner of your life, but Satan plots, plans, and attacks when you least expect it. He is always there. Satan is wise and experienced in his destruction of souls. He knows how to exploit your weaknesses. The strongest places in your life can often become your weakest areas unless you continually watch and pray. What you think is strong can eventually become very weak.

In 1 Samuel 15:17 Samuel said to King Saul, "When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?" Saul grew out of his littleness and became overconfident in his own strength. Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

Samson, Saul, and Solomon developed a pattern of bad decisions. They blazed a trail that no one should follow. Satan blinded them and held them fast on a course of self-destruction. Solomon, the wisest man in the Bible, the man most blessed of God, is not even mentioned in the hero list of Hebrews, Chapter 11. Solomon's name was not mentioned among those great men of faith. It is not in our own strength that we need to glory, but in the God of our wonderful salvation. While others could plainly see what was happening, these men were unable to see it.

**Beware of Satan's Tricks**

Going back to our Scripture text, Jesus was dealing with the disciples about who would be the greatest. In Luke 22:24-30 we read: "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." They were fussing over who was going to be the greatest, and then Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Simon, Simon." This expression is noted as an expression of love, manifested by a warming tone.

Can you remember your mother calling your name after some kind of mischievous deed that you might have done? In frustration my mother would say, "Richard, Richard." Other times she would call me quite angrily, but sometimes she would say, "Richard, Richard." That would hurt. I could deal with her being upset and hollering at me in anger, but when she said it in tones with a little bit of love, that showed me that she was really disappointed in me. It showed that I had hurt her and disappointed her expectations of me. I believe that the Lord has spoken that way to me also and probably to you as well. When Jesus said, "Simon, Simon," there was some pain that Jesus was feeling. He knew what was about to take place.

A mother often seems to know what is going to happen before it ever happens. She usually is able to tell you that if you do this or that, such and such is going to happen. My mother would say, "I do not want you boys to get involved in that." There is something that God gives to mothers that He does not give to anyone else. They have a sense and an intuition. It almost seems as though they have eyes in the back of their heads. A mother is one step ahead of you, and she knows what you are going to say before you say it. My mother often told me, "Don't you say that." How did she know what I was going to
say? She knew me well.

Jesus knew what Peter was going to say to Him, so He said, in essence: "Simon, Simon, please settle down. You need to get hold of yourself. Things are going to get out of control if you don’t. Some things will take hold of you that will be beyond your ability to control. Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you and toss you to and fro just like the chaff of the wheat." Peter said, in so many words, "Do not worry about me. I would go with you to death or to prison." Jesus knows how cheap words are. It is as if Jesus wanted to say, "While you and the others were contending, arguing over who is going to be greater than the other, Satan was right there desiring to have you and to destroy you." This whole lesson was to prepare the disciples for what lay ahead of them.

Preparing for the Journey Ahead

Again, our Scripture text reads in verses 35-37: "And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end."

The disciples began to look for those items and said they had two swords. They were missing the whole meaning of what Jesus was trying to tell them, and Jesus just said, "It is enough." He was trying to prepare them, to let them know that the things concerning Him had an end. Things were not always going to go as they were used to. We also need to learn that those whom we love the most are going to leave us one day. Sometimes life is going to treat us roughly. Congregations never remain the same over the course of years. Pastors die, parents die, and children are left without their mothers and fathers. The husband dies and leaves the wife or the wife dies and leaves the husband. Change of some sort is ahead for all of us.

The way our society, our nation, and our world are going, we may be facing dramatic changes in our lives. All things must change because they are temporal. Anything temporal is going to change over the course of time. The only things that do not change are those of eternal values; they will never change. Young person, life is going to be full of drastic changes. I enjoy living to the fullest. I love life. God has given me a good life, but it has been filled with rapid changes. I am the type of person who does not like things to change, but life is full of big changes.

The things that you have confidence in are going to change, and situations will change. Sometimes you will feel as though the rug has been jerked out from under you and your world is turning topsy-turvy, but God never changes. He was the same God before that happened, and He is the same God while it is happening, and He will be the same God afterward. You should not give up on God. He is the only One that you can get hold of who will never change. He will be with you every step of the way.

Jesus said to His disciples when He sent them out that He would fully provide for them. He knew they would be provided for, but He was saying, "You need to take along a purse, a scrip, and a sword." A scrip was a bag in which personal provisions were carried. Also, He said to take a sword. They were going to be sent out on a new mission into all the world, and they needed to take thought to make some preparations and plan for themselves. He said they needed a purse for their money, to support themselves, and they needed a sword for their defense and also for offensive moves.

Being Ready for the Task Ahead

In the Bible the sword is the Word of God, but Jesus was not talking about the Word of God. He was talking about a literal sword in case they were beset by wild beasts in their travels; then they would need a form of protection.

You may say, "I thought God was going to protect me." God will protect you, but you must use your sword. If God is going to protect you, why do you lock your doors at night? God is going to protect you, but you have door locks that He expects you to use. If somebody were to break into your house, you would not just pray and ask God to take care of it. No, you would defend your family with whatever means you had available. A man's natural instinct is to protect his home and his family. We trust God, but He also gives us a natural instinct to take care of our own. This is what Jesus was telling His disciples. In so many words, He was saying, "From now on, I am not going to be here with you like this, so you need to take a purse, a scrip, and a sword. You are going on a new mission. You are going out into the world, and you will have to care for yourselves."

I want you to realize that our Christian life is not just sitting back in ease and expecting God to take care of everything. God expects us to prepare for some things. Some people go to college, but not everyone is college material. College can destroy some individuals if they are not strong enough spiritually. If God leads some people that way and they can handle it, that is good. We need educated people in the church. We need some millionaires in the church. It takes money to operate, but not everyone can handle a million dollars.

I remember Brother Emerson Wilson saying many times that people say, "If I had a million dollars, I would give it to the church."
WANTED: A PAIR OF SHOES

A pair of shoes is needed. Nothing fancy. The main requirement is that they be motivated by a heart of love, love so strong that it causes feet to walk to a distant apartment or the house next door to tell the people who live there about the love of God.

Search your closet to see if you have a pair of shoes that might be willing to get involved in the ministry of telling others about Jesus Christ.
Matthew 25:14-25 reads: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. "And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliverest unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine."

Each young person has different talents. Some are inherited from their parents, some are learned from school training, and some are learned on their own; but all talents come from God. A young person may want to learn to sing and enroll in a music school, but if he does not have a talent for singing, he will never learn. However, he might have a talent in another field.

Tools are an important part of realizing your talents. In my job as an electronic technician for the telephone company, I use many basic tools to help me complete my job. They are just what I need. I would like to illustrate the tools I use, and what they accomplish on the job.

I work in several different offices, each office representing the first three digits of exchange of a telephone number. Every time someone dials their telephone, it goes through one of my offices, if a person is calling to or from certain exchanges. Years ago, before the computer system was established, we used a mechanical system. Every time someone picked up the receiver to make a telephone call, a "line finder" would complete the call. Each number dialed would be searched by a selector that absorbed each digit dialed until the line was connected to the number someone was calling.

After working on this mechanical system for about twenty-five years, I had everything memorized and could easily do my job. One day, however, this system was hit by lightning, and within thirty-six hours we had a new digital computer system. This was a different world than I had ever been involved in. I had no idea what was going on. The company sent me to several schools, and I had to learn my job over completely.

Now that we are in a digital system, I need to explain what the interiors of my offices look like. They contain several metal frames with thousands of feet of different colors of electrical wire attached by several small pins, plus several computers. One end of each wire goes to the computer system, and the other end of the wire goes through an underground cable system, out to a pole, and to people's homes.

The first tool I use often is a simple pair of needle-nose pliers. I use them to get little pieces of wire out of tiny places. I thought of how I could liken those small pliers to
my spiritual life. When God spoke to me one day, there were lots of little things in my life that I could not reach, things I could not remove. When God reached down to me, He found all those little sins that I could not get out of my life and removed them. My literal pliers specialize in finding small things in hard-to-reach places and pulling them out. That is just the way it is when Christ finds us. You may say, "These are just small things." Yes, but the small things separate a person from God. Any small problem in an electrical circuit, such as a ground, will knock out a telephone line. The devil would like to knock out every one of us.

The next tool I want to tell you about looks just like a pencil; it is called a wire wrapper. Each wire is covered with plastic insulation and must be unwrapped to work with it. This tool really does a good job of unwrapping wire, but sometimes that little rascal can cause more trouble than you can believe. You can unwrap a wire and get called away from the job, and that little unwrapped wire blends in with the other wires; then you cannot find it until someone calls in having trouble with their phone. You can look and look for it, and it looks fine, but something is wrong. It is like the devil coming along and sneaking something into your life and saying, "There's no problem here," but there is!

After I skin the wire back, I use a tool called a wrap gun to shoot the wire on a pin that holds it on the frame. It does a neat job and holds the wire so tight that you cannot unwrap it from the frame. (It is just like a good connection with God. You must have it to live for Him.) When one of the guys with whom I work comes in and says we have a dead wire somewhere, I will look, and sure enough, there is a loose wire. We must have a good connection with the electrical circuit; likewise, we must have a good connection with God.

I also use a simple pair of side-cut pliers every day. I use them to cut and trim wire to make the finished job look neat. As I listen to our pastor or an evangelist whistling on me, digging around me, and skinning me a few times, I realize that he is just trimming me back and making me look better spiritually. I appreciate this!

The last tool I want to mention is an ohmmeter. An ohmmeter tells me if there is trouble on a line and where that trouble is. It will tell me if the current is flowing through a certain line. I compare my ohmmeter to my Bible. My Bible shows me all my trouble spots, all my weak places, and where the current has stopped flowing. That is the reason we each need to read the Word of God. If you study and eat it daily, you will save yourself much trouble.

The Bible is just like my tool belt. I just reach down and get whatever I need. I use some tools more than others, but my tools never get jealous of one another. They never say to me, "You use him more than you use me." None of us can do the same job equally. Some have talents greater than others. Some can sing, others play the piano, and some can speak well; but we all have to do our part to utilize the talents that God has given us. God will help you with the talents He has given you.

Young person, if I could give you some advice, it would be not to neglect the good part of your life, which is serving God, to gain things from this world. One of these days you are going to leave this world, and then your earthly possessions will mean nothing to you. You will leave this earth completely to meet God, so why not work and use your talents for those things that will last eternally? You need to get as close to God as you can and use all your talents for Him.

Brother Paul Chapman

The Choice of Friends

Be very, very careful in choosing your friends, and prefer friends who will benefit you to those who will not. Choose your company for profit, just as you do your books. This is as much a matter of habit as anything else.

We are known by the company we keep, for when unrestrained, we are prone to choose and associate with those whose manners and dispositions are agreeable and congenial to ours. Hence, when we find persons frequenting any company, we are disposed to believe that such company is congenial to them, in regard to their moral disposition and their particular manner in life.

Good company improves not only our manners, but also our minds. If our companions are pious, they will improve our morals. If they are polite, they will tend to improve our manners. If learned, they will add to our knowledge and correct our errors. On the other hand, if they are immoral or vulgar, their impress will most surely be left upon us. Therefore, it becomes a matter of no trivial concern to associate with proper company while avoiding that which is certainly prejudicial. We should seek the company of those who are known to possess superior merit. We should value persons, not according to their wealth or position, but rather according to the respect in which they are held.
2 Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.
9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Confidence and Determination

Brother Paul Prinkey

Facing Fiery Trials

The word confidence means "full trust or belief in the powers; trustworthiness; reliability in a person or thing." The word determination means "the act of coming to a decision, affixing, or settling a purpose." One thing that can cause Christians to falter and even lose out with God in their service for the Lord is their lack of confidence and determination. Living for God requires both of these to enable you to stay true to Him. Paul was a strong man of God. He had a strong, spiritual experience with God. As we read of him throughout the Scriptures, we see all the great and mighty works that he did for the Lord.

Second Timothy, Chapter 4, lets us know that the Apostle Paul had great confidence in God, and he had a strong determination to stay true to God. However, that did not keep him from going through tests and trials. All Christians have to face trials. They are a common occurrence in every child of God's life. Facing hardship is something that comes to every one of us. We cannot avoid it, and we cannot dismiss it. If you have not faced hardship up until this time, look out, because it is on the way. If you live for God, you will face tough times that will try your faith. That is the reason Peter said in 1 Peter 4:12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you. . . ."

The Apostle Paul, as strong as he was and as great a work as he did for God, was tested and tried by the enemy of his soul. Acts, Chapter 16, tells of a certain damsel who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and Silas and repeatedly proclaimed that they were men of God, but she began to vex Paul's soul, and he turned around and cast the devil out of her. That resulted in trouble for Paul and Silas. They were beaten and put in prison, but that did not stop their determination and the confidence they had in God. At midnight, they were praying and singing songs to the Lord. They stayed true to God through their hardship. The devil knows every one of our weaknesses. He knows where we are most susceptible to attack. This is one of the places where the devil attacked Paul.

In Weakness Made Strong

Our Scripture text states in verse 7, "And lest I should be ex-
and maintain the determination in his own experience. Never-get up to preach when he is struggle. Sometimes a minister might have to strengthen, and you will struggle. He will sap your spiritual strength, and you will struggle. Sometimes a minister might have to get up to preach when he is struggling in his own experience. Nevertheless, he must pray and press on and maintain the determination that he is going through for God.

He must maintain the confidence that God is with him. The devil does not have me or he would quit working on me. Thank God, I know I am still God's child, and I am going to be faithful to the Lord and to His cause. Dear one, you have to keep your confidence and your determination.

Paul had trouble getting an answer to his prayers. He said he prayed three times, trying to get an answer and it would not come. Paul was in a situation similar to Job's. He called on God and could not find Him. Think of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. If anyone should have been able to get hold of God, it should have been His Son. We find Paul in the same position. He said, in essence, "Thrice I prayed that this would be taken from me." Finally, he got an answer. After struggling and praying, sometimes it may seem that your prayer is not getting above the ceiling. You may struggle to get a prayer through. Friend, God hears you the first time you pray, but you may not know it. You cannot tell because it does not seem that your prayer is getting through.

Paul's prayer got through and the answer came, but it was not the answer he wanted. Has that ever happened to you? You pray and say, "God, I need help." You may call on the Lord, and finally the answer is on the way, but you are disappointed. You may say, "That's not what I asked for." Paul got his answer, but it was not what he wanted. Sometimes you may do what James talked about: you ask amiss. Your flesh desires things a certain way and your mind can only figure out one way that it can work out. You are so bent on praying a certain way, and you cannot see any other way for it to turn out, but God has many other ways that He can work it out for you.

**Strengthened Through Hardship**

God did not take Paul's thorn in the flesh away. God is faithful! Is that not what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth? Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will . . . make a way . . . that ye may be able to bear it." God did not take away Paul's thorn, but He gave him the strength to deal with it. God did not give Paul what he wanted; He gave him what he needed. Many times you may think you know what is good for you, and for the situation that you are in, but God may give you another answer. He may not give you what you want, but He will give you what you need. God knows just what you need.

Paul seemed to have a hard time getting his prayer answered. He prayed three times that the thorn might depart from him. All the while this was going on, Paul could have easily thrown up his hands and said, "I quit. I've been through enough. After all I have done for the Lord, I don't deserve this. I should be getting something better." Many people are doing that, and lots of people in the past have done that. They have thrown up their hands and said, "That is it; I quit! If this is the way living for God is, I do not want any part of it." How is your determination? Determination is something that is essential to stay true to God. You may say, "My prayers have not been answered, and whenever they were answered, it was not what I wanted." This reminds me of a story about a fellow who was on a trip out west. He was staying in a hotel next to an Indian reservation, and he got sick. The people of the town heard about him, and they sent for the Indian medicine man to come. So the medicine man went to the man's room and set up a couple of candles at the bottom of the man's bed and lit them and stood there. In his native Indian language, he chanted and prayed for the fellow.
The man said later, "I did not get better, but it rained in my room for three days." Sometimes things do not always turn out the way the flesh likes.

The Apostle Paul did not have things turn out his way all the time. Every preacher who gets up and preaches would like to hear someone say amen now and then. The Apostle Paul stood up and preached one day, and he said, "No man stood with me." No one backed him. He preached the Truth and laid it out, line upon line, precept upon precept, and when he got through preaching, no one said amen. Additionally, a fellow named Alexander the coppersmith did him much evil, fought him on the message, rebelled against him, and rose up against him in the congregation. Paul could have easily said: "That is it. I have had enough. I quit," but he did not. In 2 Timothy 4:17 he said, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

You may say, "Well, I did not feel that strength while everyone was rejecting me and fighting against me." No, you will not always, but if you will hold on a little longer and stay determined to live for God and keep your confidence in Him, He will strengthen you and bring you through that hardship. God will help you as you go through a time of rejection, a time when people are working against you, a time when the devil is afflicting you. God will strengthen and help you to stay in the fight, and you will come through with victory. It is the victor who gets to sing the victory song. The loser sings the blues. I do not know about you, but I like to sing the songs of victory.

**Enduring Trials for Christ's Sake**

Paul stayed true to God and hung in there. He did not throw up his hands and quit whenever things got hard on the flesh. Is that not one of your biggest battles when the flesh begins to suffer? When you begin to suffer in the flesh, it becomes hard to keep the faith. However, if you will hold on and have confidence in God and trust in Him, He will bring you through with victory. Jesus said in verse 9 of our Scripture text, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." If you do not experience weakness, you will never experience the great strength of God that makes one perfect. Paul said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities."

Have you ever been in a trial and gotten up and testified anyway or gotten up and sung a song for the glory of God anyway? Have you raised your hand and said, "Thank the Lord anyway?" In the Old Testament you can read about what Habakkuk had to say about hard times. He said things were not going well. He said there may not be any calves in the stall, and there may not be any grapes on the vines. Things were looking very bleak, yet he said he would rejoice in the God of his salvation.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 reads: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Habakkuk still had something to rejoice about, and his determination had not slackened off. He was determined to stay true to God and to fight the battle through to the bitter end. Paul said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities." It may be a little tough for you to take pleasure in infirmities. Paul said to do it for Christ's sake. Paul was not enduring these things because of his own mistakes or because he was being punished for his own faults. This was for Christ's sake, and he said he would take pleasure in that. There is no glory in being buffeted for your own faults, but when you are living for God and you are prayed up and everything is clear with the Lord, you can rejoice. When there is nothing between your soul and the Maker, then you can know that God is on your side. You can be confident that God is still with you, and be determined to go all the way with Him. You need confidence and determination.

**Having Confidence in God's Grace**

Again, Paul said in verse 10 of our Scripture text, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." God's strength is made perfect in weakness.

I have a few quotes that I would like to share with you about the two words confidence and determination. This was said by a person about confidence: "I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship." I thought about that. The longer you live for God, the more storms you will go through. You learn how to go to the Lord and rely on Him for what you need. The storms should not frighten you as much as they did when you first came to know the Lord and you entered into your first trial or temptation. It also has been said, "Confidence is contagious, and so is a lack of confidence." If you show confidence as you go through your storms, other people looking on your experience and watching you go through hard places can take courage to know that God has been with you, and He will be with them.

On the flip side of the coin, it is just the opposite. If you show a lack of confidence, you are going to cause other people to be disturbed. May God help. When you go through your storm, you should have confidence in God. It will not just benefit you, but it will benefit others who are looking on. People whom you may not know are watching your experience, and they
will take confidence if you have confidence.

Martin Luther had this to say: "Faith is the living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that a man can stake his life on it a thousand times." That is a strong confidence. You can have confidence in God’s grace so sure that you can stake your life on it a thousand times. When has God ever failed you? God has never failed, and you can stake your life in true confidence on the Lord’s grace and His sufficiency to help you.

It has also been said, "With confidence you have won the race even before you started." In most races they only allow one winner, but in this race of living for the Lord, everyone can be a winner. You do not have to be the first one across the finish line to win. You just need to cross the finish line. Everyone who lives for God is a winner.

Be Determined to Succeed

Concerning the word determination, it has been said that where the determination is, a way can be found. If you are determined, you will find a way to get yourself through. The main thing about determination is that when you are faced with a problem, do not look for a way out; look for a way through. You have to get up early every morning with determination if you are going to go to bed with satisfaction. Do not get up with a loser’s attitude. You must get up with the determination that you will go through with the Lord and you will go to bed satisfied. Failure will never overtake someone if his determination to succeed is strong enough.

I am not just talking about human determination. By the grace of God, you have to be determined and settle it in your heart and mind, just as Joshua did when he stood before the children of Israel and said, "Choose ye this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). He determined that this was the right decision; so he stayed with God, and God saw him through. You need to do the same.

This is my favorite saying: "When faced with a mountain, I will not quit. I will keep striving until I climb over, find a path around, tunnel through, or simply stay and turn the mountain into a gold mine. I will not be defeated by this mountain." You need that kind of determination, so that whenever you are faced with a mountain, you will not quit. You will find a way over it, through it, around it, or turn it into a gold mine. You need to be determined that you will not be defeated by this mountain. May God help you to get that kind of determination. More people would be sitting in the church pews today if they had determination like that.

Too many times people become discouraged when they are faced with a mountain. They become overwhelmed, and then they quit serving God, the only One who can help them. I never did understand that. Some people have said, "Well, it got so hard living for the Lord and things got so rough that I could not take it any more; so I quit serving Him." They quit the only One who could have help them, the only One who could have brought them through with victory. They were faced with a problem, perhaps with other people giving them a hard time, and they gave up on their only true Friend. How could that have helped them?

It is certain defeat if you give up on God. There is no question about it. This is the reason you need to have confidence in God and a determination that you will not quit, back up, turn around, or run. If you cannot go through it, around it, or over it, you need to turn it into a gold mine and say, "I will make this mountain pay me; I will not be paying it." May God help you to have a strong determination. Are you determined to live for the Lord? Do you have faith and confidence in God?

Unshakeable Confidence in God

I like to think about David's life when I consider the thought of confidence. David had unshaken confidence in God. When he was only a young man, he went out to the valley and saw the giant Goliath standing over on the far side of the valley, shouting out his challenge to the children of Israel. David said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?" He did not care how big he was, how mean he looked, how many weapons he had, or how many armor bearers he had around him. He said, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David was ready to fight him if no one else would.

David's brother tried to belittle him and talk him out of it, but David would not quit. Saul called him in and said, "This man has been a man of war from his youth, and you are but a ruddy youth."

David said: "Let me tell you what happened one day. A lion came and tried to take one of my father's sheep, and I grabbed him by his beard and slew him." That was getting awfully close to a lion! He did not stand afar off (as I would have) and say, "Give me a rifle, and I'll kill him for you." David grabbed him by the beard and killed him.

David also said: "Another day a bear came along and tried to do the same thing. I taught him the same lesson." He continued, "This uncircumcised Philistine will be just like that lion and that bear." That was not the end of it. David went out to meet the giant Goliath, who said: "What is this? Are they sending their children to fight me? Don't they have a man of war?" He said to David: "Come here, little boy, and I will make this quick. I will feed your flesh to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field."

David said, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear... but I come to thee in the name of
Do Not Be a Quitter

In Philippians 1:6 Paul said, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Paul had confidence that God is able to start things, and He is a finisher. Friend, you need to be the same way. Too many people have started but never finished. May God help you to finish what you start. He will help you. You can put your trust and confidence in Him. He who has begun a good work in you will also finish it. He will perform it until the very day of Jesus Christ.

God will not back out on you, but you must put your trust and confidence in Him. God will not let you down, I promise you. One of the beautiful things about God is that He cannot lie. What He said, He will do. He said, "Have I not said it and will I not do it?" In Malachi 3:6 He said, "For I am the LORD, I change not." God is just the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In 2 Timothy 1:12 Paul said, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The Apostle Paul used a word that I like a lot: persuaded. Sometimes he used the word persuaded and then sometimes he used another word in front of it: fully persuaded. I like that word because the Apostle Paul was determined and confident, and he refused to back up.

Again, Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:12, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed [he had studied about God, and he knew the history concerning God], and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Peter said in 1 Peter 4:19, ". . . commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing." You must commit yourself to God, have a strong determination to stay true, and follow through. The Apostle Paul was not a quitter. He did not quit when he faced a mountain; he went through it, around it, over it, or made a gold mine out of it. In the last letter that he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7 he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Paul did not quit.

Are you going to stick with God or are you a quitter? David said, "I have stuck to thy commandments." David was not a quitter; he was a sticker, and he stuck to the Lord. There was not another man quite like David in the history of the Bible. He stood out from all the others. There was something that was an identifying characteristic about David that others did not have quite as strong as David had. His heart sought after God so hard, he said in Psalm 42:1, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." David thirsted for the Lord. He was not a quitter. I encourage you to put your confidence in God; do not quit on Him. That is a temptation. Satan will buffet you from time to time. You will have to deal with hardships, afflictions, and reproaches, but do not quit God. You may say, "I do not know if I can hold on much longer, preacher." You can do what Paul did and pray until you get an answer. Do not quit praying. Just hold on a little longer, and the answer will come.

How is it with you? Are you going to stay with the Lord? You may say, "I don't know what is going to happen down the road." That is the good thing about determination. You do not need to know what will happen two weeks away, a month away, or a year away when you are determined to live for God. You can settle it in your heart and say, "I do not care what comes my way. By the grace of God, I am determined to stay with the Lord. I am not going to give up."

It means something to stay true to God. I am thankful that I have never once entertained the thought of giving up on the Lord. God has proved Himself true over and over, and He will keep doing it as long as I put my confidence in Him and stay determined to be true to Him. God will not give up on you if you do not give up on Him. The Lord will encourage you and lift you up and hold you by the right hand of His righteousness.
2 Kings 7:3 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4 If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

6 For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life.

8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it.

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.

Sharing the Good News With Others

I want to call your attention to the four leprous men in our Scripture text. First of all, we can see in verses 3-4 that those four leprous men all stayed together. They were in a bad situation. The city was besieged; nothing could go out and nothing could come in, so they reasoned among themselves. I want you to notice how they remembered the starving people in Samaria who were shut in because of the siege.

In verse 4 of our Scripture text, they said, "If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syr ians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die." They reasoned within themselves, and it seems that they had good sense in the way they reasoned. They realized that someday, somehow they were going to die. Today many people are living as though they think they are never going to die, like they are going to be here forever.

Let us look at these leprous men. They went into the camp and entered a tent, and they were able to eat and drink. Next, they carried away silver, gold, and some clothing and hid it all. They went back again and entered another tent and did the same thing. These were leprous men. They knew if they were to go back into the city, they would probably be separated from everyone else. Those leprous men said, "Look what has happened to us."

Verse 9 of our Scripture text reads, "Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that
we may go and tell the king’s household." This was a day of good tidings, a day of good news!

The four leprous men in this chapter had good news to share. They remembered the starving people who were shut up in Samaria, and they said to themselves: "We are not doing right. Here we are enjoying ourselves. Let us share this with others. We cannot remain silent." Friend, today is the day of good news. We cannot hold our peace. It is not good for us to hold our peace. We have the greatest message that man can know anything about.

The leprous men had physical and social disadvantages, yet they thought about others. They were very thankful for what they had found. They could have given up, they could have become slaves, and they could have been killed, but they suddenly came into good fortune. When you first got saved, God took you out of the mucky mire. No doubt, you were at your wit’s end. If it had not been for God, some of us might be in jail or messed up on drugs, but look what we found! This is the day of good news, and we need to tell others about it.

There is a song that says, "I can tell the world about this. I can tell the nations I’m blessed. Tell them what Jesus has done. Tell them that the Comforter has come, And He brought joy, great joy to my soul." Jesus has come into my heart. I have to tell others what God has done for me. I cannot hold my peace. This is the day of good news! Those lepers thought, "It is not good to keep this to ourselves." They said to one another, "We do not well." Whatever they were eating, they were probably enjoying it and throwing the clothes over their backs. They might have even clowned around a little, putting the clothes over their heads, saying, "Look what I have, I'm a blessed man." However, they woke up and said: "Wait a minute! This is not good. This is the day of good news! Look what God has done for us. We must go and tell others about this."

Saint, this is the reason we have to tell the world about Jesus. Do not make excuses for a lack of ability. You can tell the world about Jesus. I believe that people should always use common sense and good reasoning before they make decisions. If you are unsaved, you need to think about the decisions that you make. You need to do some sound reasoning before you make these important decisions, but you need to make sure that you do not listen to Satan. If you do not listen to God, you will listen to Satan, and you will mess up your life. You will be sorry that you did not listen to God. If you have already messed up your life, I have good news for you: Jesus can fix it!

These leprous men had good reasoning before they made that decision. They thought about it, and they reasoned with one another. They did not just run off and leave one another. They stayed together, because they knew they were in the same condition. We all are heading for the Judgment, and we all are going to stand before Christ one day. We might as well stick together and help one another.

**Sound Reasoning**

Let us consider some of the reasoning we should do. People should always use good common sense and good reasoning before they make decisions. For example: "Should I quit my job without having another one lined up? Should I just go to work tomorrow and quit?"

In today’s economy if you do not have something else lined up, you could find it lonely out there. You need to think about this question: "Should I move to a place where there is no church to get my soul fed?" You may say, "But I can make more money there." If you should lose your soul, is that good reasoning? Before you move somewhere, you need to find out if there is a church there where Truth is preached so that you can get your soul fed. False prophets are out there waiting for you. This religious world is mean. God let us know that it is like a beast that will chew you up and spit you out. You could even end up in a mental institution.

You need to think about that.

Here is another question that every single child of God needs to consider: Should I marry an unsaved woman or an unsaved man? You may think: "I am going to change him" or "I am going to change her" or "I am so handsome that I know I can change her" or "I am so pretty that I know I could change him." Is that good reasoning? There will always be someone who is better looking than you are.

Young person, you may wonder, "Should I obey my parents?" If you do not obey your mother when your father is out of town, when he gets back home, you know she is going to tell your father, and it will not bode well with him.

Another question that you might have as a young person is, "Should I stay in school and get my necessary diploma?" Today’s world is mean and serious. In reality, without the diploma, without a trade, without an education, not many doors are open. The factories that many older men worked in are shutting down.

If you are a sinner, you need to consider this: "Should I do drugs or should I not do drugs?" Everywhere you go to apply for a job will drug test you. Do not be a fool. Do not listen to people who tell you what kinds of tricks you can do to get past it. Sooner or later, they are going to catch up with you. If you want to get into the health care profession, you must get in line to be drug tested. If you want to work for a department store, they will drug test you. Now many places do spot drug testing. You might show up for work and they will tell you it is time for you to go and be tested. You may try to make an excuse concerning why you do not want to be tested, but they will say you still have to get drug tested. If you were
to fail a drug test, would it be worth it? No! Your reputation is at stake; your future is at stake. These drugs that people are taking are causing them to lose their souls.

Another question that you may be considering is, "Should I backslide or stay saved?" The best time in my life has been since I have been saved. The Bible says backsliding is like a dog returning to its vomit. Have you ever seen a dog vomit? It will walk away for a minute or so, and then it will turn right around and lick it up. That is what it is like when a person backslides. What are you going back to? Friend, life is short. If you leave the Truth or God's work, where will you go? All you have to do is accept the Truth, live for God, and go on to Glory. You need to keep your eyes on Jesus.

**All Things Become New**

Those lepers were doing some thinking. They said: "If we stay here, we are going to die. If we go over there, we are going to die." You may need to ask yourself these questions: Should I live a double life? Should I be one way at church and live another way at home, at work, at school, or other places? If you were to do that, that would be living a double life or a hypocritical life. Some people are trying to trick others by living a double life, but the Bible says that the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. You cannot get away with living a double life.

Those leprous men did not consider their own physical or social disadvantages. They thought about others. Saint, we have to tell the world about this great salvation, this treasure that we have in our earthen vessels.

The Church of God is built up of all nations. Isaiah 2:1-3 says: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

People in the Church of God are from many different physical and social advantages and disadvantages, but we still want to tell the world about Jesus. This reminds me of how the Bible speaks of the Day of Jubilee in Leviticus, Chapter 25. If you are a saved individual, you are enjoying your jubilee. That jubilee in the Old Testament was a shadow of good things to come. It was a shadow of this day and time in which we live, a day when we can enjoy this great salvation.

Jesus said in Luke 4:18-19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

On that Day of Jubilee, the trumpet sounded, and every man began anew. We read in Revelation 1:10, "...on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet." The Word of God, or the trumpet, is sounding and every man begins anew. What does that mean? Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." If you are unsaved, you are really taking a great chance on life. You are playing Russian roulette with God. You may think you are such a good person that God will overlook your sins and let you into Heaven should you die. No, He will not. The blood of Jesus must wash away your sins, and Jesus must come into your soul.

Do not try to fool yourself.

**The Day of Jubilee**

Jesus paid the debt for my sin, and I thank Him for it. When I think about that Day of Jubilee, I think about how happy I will be on Judgment Day. If you were to lose your property and you were able to get it back on the Day of Jubilee, you would rejoice. Likewise, we rejoice in our Day of Jubilee. This is a great day! This is a day of good news!

What do we get back now? Through the first Adam, man lost fellowship with God, but the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the second Adam. We get back fellowship with God. That great Day of Jubilee was a day of rest. What did Jesus say? On that day of rest, no plowing was done. The land was left untilled. However, when Jesus came, He said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you are having a hard time in life, Jesus Christ can give you rest from your labors. He will give you rest from that heavy load of sin on your back.

I thank God for Jesus Christ saving my soul. Without Christ we are nothing more than servants of sin. You may think you have power over your life and that you can make your own decisions, but you do not have any power. God can give you strength, but without Him you do not have the power to stop sinning. No one has the power to stop sinning without Jesus Christ. The day I got saved, my debt of sin was canceled, and all my sins were forgiven.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you were to receive a telephone call stating that all your debts were paid? You would be happy and rejoicing. One reason the saints are so happy is that all their sins have been forgiven. All their sins have been washed away, and God will never bring them up again. The blood of Jesus Christ cleansed my debt of sin. That was a great day of
Jesus said in John 8:31-32: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." If you are on the broad way that leads to destruction, do not miss out on this day of good news. Do not look at other people's faces. Do not look at anybody else's life. God came to give you peace and joy and an abundant life, and it is found in Jesus Christ. This is the day of good news! God is well invested.

The Way That Leads to Life

Some people say, "I am not ready to be saved yet." Jesus said in Matthew 7:13, "...broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Many people are going the broad way. You may ask, "How can all those people be wrong?" God said that many would go on the broad way, but strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life; few people find that way. Do not be surprised that there are few travelers on this way. Many people are turning down the Gospel. They want to go another way. The only other way to go is the broad way that leads to destruction.

We need to be ready to share the good news with others. Have you ever missed an opportunity to speak to somebody about the Lord? Sometimes the Lord will bring an opportunity to you. You may think, "I should have said something to that person." Just keep living for God. You might have missed that opportunity, but you need to be ready the next time. You need to take an opportunity and make something happen. Do not be ashamed to say something for the Lord.

I was at a barber shop one time, and a fellow was telling me about his problems, and he was using profanity. As I listened to him, the Lord told me that was a good opportunity to witness to him, so I gave him my testimony. Your testimony means something. You may not understand the Bible that deeply or get into quoting Scriptures and interpreting Scriptures to people, but you can tell them what the Lord has done for you. You can tell them how the Lord saved you.

As a young man, I used to be rebellious to my parents. I did not listen to my mother or my father. I was very rebellious, and I fought with my brothers and sisters. I was mean and selfish, but when Jesus came into my heart, He changed me. I love my mother now, and I obey her. That is a testimony for God. Do not be afraid to tell your testimony. That is good news to a sinner.

God is looking for that one person He can save. Matthew 18:11-12 reads: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?"

God is interested in that one person who will give his life to Him. God will stop at nothing to seek the lost. If you do not know the Lord, God wants you. He wants that one sheep; one soul is worth it all. If one person gets saved, it is worth every ounce of labor. It is worth everything if one person gives his life to God. Christ came to save sinners.

Calling Sinners to Repentance

You may say: "I am deep in sin. I have done all kinds of bad things, and I am in trouble." Well, you are the one whom Christ came to save. He is looking for you. Some of us were once on that route, but we have been saved a long time now.

Saint, how many people have you talked to about the Lord lately? You need to think about that. The Pharisees asked in Mark 2:16-17: "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? [But Jesus said] They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If you are saved, you need to get your mind on telling the good news. This is the day of good news!

Many young mothers are struggling to raise their children. They cannot handle them and do not know what to do. We have the message to tell them how to give their lives to God and let God calm the family down. Some married people are ready to call the lawyers and break up their home, but we need to tell them the good news. God does not want their homes to break up. God wants you to get saved and give your life to Him and hold the family together. This is the day of good news.

There is a lot of trouble going on in the world, but as long as God allows the Gospel to be preached, as long as He is sending ministers to different parts of the world to preach the Word of God, this is the day of good news. Whether you see it or not, it is still the day of good news. Christ came to call sinners to repentance. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." We do not want to hold this back. We are enjoying ourselves. We are so blessed, and God does not want us just to sit around.

You should not bite your tongue when it comes to telling people about the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is the day of good news! Romans 1:17 says, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." May God bless you is my prayer. Be encouraged, saint. The devil wants to shut you up, but as one song says, "Get all excited and tell everybody that Jesus Christ is King."
Enduring Hardship for Jesus Christ

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

2 Timothy 2:3

Our text gives us some very necessary, useful advice on this topic. It bids us remember that it is not an easy thing to be a Christian. It bids us remember that to be a soldier of the Cross requires effort and self-denial and constant endurance. "Thou therefore endure hardness," or as it could be paraphrased, "Thou therefore take thy share of suffering, take thy portion of hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

In thinking of those who have endured hardship for the cause of Christ, one's mind naturally goes to the many missionary heroes.

One missionary to Africa endured much for his Master. He began his work with companions as eager as himself. One by one, they succumbed to the terrible climate. He buried three. The others he took to the coast and sent home. Then he turned back, alone in the midst of hundreds of thousands of men who had never heard the name of God. Again and again, he tramped the blistered plains, with his tongue swollen he could not speak. Thirty times he was stricken by fever with no one to care for him. Three times he was attacked by ferocious lions and narrowly escaped death. Several times he was attacked by rhinoceroses. A number of times he was ambushed by hostile natives. For fourteen months he never saw a piece of bread, and numbers of times had to eat anything from ants to rhinoceroses to keep alive. These hardships he counted as nothing, however. He said: 'I know the great joy of walking with Jesus Christ in the midst of all of this. I stand ready at this moment to go through it all again for the joy I have had of flashing the word 'Savior' into the darkness of a great tribe. Is it God's will? That makes the wilderness a garden; that makes the desert glow with the very presence of God!'

A young American woman went to the Armenians as a missionary. Although threatened with tuberculosis, she was consumed with eagerness to work for God in foreign lands. The American board, impressed with her importunity, finally appointed her. Although warned to guard her strength, she quickly undertook work enough for two or three strong men. During the Armenian massacres, she was foremost in the work of relief, and without seeking fame, became famous. At Urfa she established a great orphanage and industrial school. Hundreds of men and women thought of her as a mother.

During her years in Armenia, she always lived on native food and slept on a native pallet. Night and day she busied herself in devising ways to feed, clothe, teach, and Christianize the people among whom she lived. She was cautioned again and again to guard her health, but she felt she could take little thought for her own comfort and ease when those around her were in such desperate need. Knowing her days were limited, she gave of the best of her strength to her Master and the people she loved.

When Allan Gardiner heard of the disagreeable climate of Tierra del Fuego and the ferocity of the natives there, he longed to carry the Gospel to them because he feared the situation was such that no other missionary was likely to choose the island as a field of labor. So in 1850, after many discouragements and reverses, he set sail for the island, accompanied by six other men, one of them being a surgeon. They found the natives as reported, being exceedingly ferocious and degraded in the extreme. Although the missionaries labored hard with hearts full of love to help and convert them, their efforts brought only persecution. The nine months that followed arrival on the island were filled with privation and suffering for the heroic little band. Supplies from England did not come as promised. Their boats were their only place of safety, their only hope, and two of these were lost in a terrible storm.

With the natives becoming increasingly hostile, the party decided it was best to go to Spaniard Harbor for a time, and they put out to sea in their one remaining boat. Terrific storms overtook them, and they sought refuge from wind and snow in deep rock caverns. Great suffering followed. They were driven from place to place by the natives and cooped up through the long nights of almost perpetual ice and snow in a small boat whose cabin was so tiny that the iron deck was only a few inches above their faces. Eventually they all died of starvation, but they died triumphantly. A journal found later by rescuers contained Captain Gardiner's last recorded words, written shortly before his death: "The Lord has seen fit to call home another of our company. . . . Yet a little while and we, through grace, may join that blessed throng to sing the praises of Christ throughout the ceaseless age of eternity. I neither hunger nor thirst, though five days without food. Marvelous loving kindness to me!"

The surgeon's testimony was: "I do love God with a love I had no concept of, with a love that actuates every faculty of my whole soul, and the love of God in Christ. I feel beyond expression. . . . Should anything prevent my ever adding to this, let all my beloved ones at home rest assured that I was happy beyond expression the night I wrote these lines and would not have
changed positions with any man living."

After considering the hardships those men endured for Christ, the question comes to us: "What hardships are we enduring? What self-denials and sacrifices are we making for our Master?"

Sacrificing for the cause of Christ is one form of enduring hardship. The first principle of sacrifice is self-denial. What have we denied ourselves for the cause of Christ? How much are we willing to give up to win the world to Christ? What of worldly pleasure have you denied yourself? Are you willing to sacrifice that intended trip to do a noble service? Would you forego that evening of pleasure to attend the services of God's house? What have you denied yourself of time for your Master? How many hours a week do you spend working for Him? Would you risk losing a business deal to attend to the business of the King? Have you denied yourself of any material substance?

The second principle of sacrifice is suffering. "Let him take up his cross." The Cross is the symbol of pain and sorrow and heartbreak. How much pain have you borne for the sake of Christ? Can you show scars of the battle waged against sin? To bear physical pain is an honor for one's country, but many people shrink when it comes to bearing it for our faith. Do you suffer any mental anguish over that unsaved son or daughter or that friend who is out of fellowship with Christ?

The third principle of sacrifice is self-surrender. How full is our surrender to Christ? His Cross is lifted above us. It beckons us to follow. Will we give a full surrender to it?

If we are true Christians, we are every one of us soldiers. It is not an easy thing to be a Christian. To be a soldier of the Cross requires effort and self-denial and constant endurance. If we are true followers of Jesus Christ, somewhere in our lives, the note must be telling of definite sacrifice. Christ's view of life is not an easy view. It is on the whole a severe view. It demands sacrifice. Fear not to make some sacrifice for Christ. Pant not so eagerly to have your own ideas of life realized. Have faith in eternity, and meanwhile take bravely your share of the hardships."

D. S. Warner wrote the following song:

Who will suffer with the Savior,
    Take the little that remains
Of the cup of tribulation
    Jesus drank in dying pains?

Who will suffer for the gospel,
    Follow Christ without the gate?
Take the martyrs for example,
    With them glory at the stake?

Lord, we fellowship thy passion,
    Gladly suffer shame and loss;
With thy blessing pain is pleasure;
    We will glory in thy Cross.

Selected

Parable of the Dead Church

A man once called a pastor to say that he wanted to attend a church, but he went on to explain that he didn't want to worship every week, study the Bible, visit the sick, witness to non-Christians, or serve as a leader or a teacher.

The pastor commended him for his desire to attend, but he told him that the church he sought was located in another section of town. The man took directions and hung up.

When he arrived at the church, the man came face-to-face with the logical result of his own apathetic attitude. There stood an abandoned church building, boarded up and ready for demolition.

Meeting Announcement

**Summersville, WV**

**REVIVAL:** The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evangelist: Brother Michael Wilks, 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 telephone: 304-872-4047
Visit our website @ [www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com](http://www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com)
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to attend the

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July 31 - August 7

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___Number for boys’ dorm
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