

The Gospel Trumpeter

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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 41 September 2011 No. 9



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

Guest Editorial

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PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:

Roger Decker, Pastor
83 Decrow Ave.
Newark, OH 43055

Email: pastor@godsacres.us
Phone: 740-344-2543 or 1-888-730-0461
Fax: 740-344-4737
Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material for any reason. We are not responsible for unsolicited articles or items.

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Thank You for Your Support

We want to take this opportunity to thank to all our readers for their faithful support of The Gospel Trumpeter. We appreciate your prayers, your thoughtful giving, and your letters of encouragement. It is due to the continual efforts of prayer, labor, and finance that The Gospel Trumpeter is reaching thousands of homes, businesses, and institutions across the United States and many foreign countries. We must acknowledge our deep indebtedness to the Lord for the ability and the strength that He grants to each of us here, and also to our readers for the support that helps to keep the good news being published. The work of God's Kingdom is a great work, and it is especially rewarding when we receive reports of how it has helped other souls. We are thankful for the privilege that God has given us to be a small part in His great work.

The publishing of a religious periodical is not an easy task. There are many aspects to it. Selecting the right messages and short articles to be used in The Gospel Trumpeter involves time and consideration. Finding the right material that will provide spiritual nourishment for the souls of our readers is very important. Exposing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost is always a great concern. We greatly covet the Lord's guidance and direction. This periodical has been in print since 1971, and we have learned of many souls who have been won to the Lord because of reading articles that brought an awakening to their souls. Thankfully, they turned to God for mercy and pardon. Having a part in winning souls for Christ brings great rewards to each worker who has contributed a part!

As you all know, the rising cost of materials and postal rates is a matter of real concern to us. The Bible teaches that we are not to be slothful in business matters; therefore, we do strive to be as frugal as possible in our purchase of materials. By the way, have you moved recently? If so, have you sent in your change of address to us yet? When someone moves and fails to inform us about it, the Post Office returns the issue to us and then charges us for the return postage. The return postage at one time cost us ten cents per copy, but now it has been raised to a considerable amount. We sincerely ask you to send any change of address to us as quickly as possible so that we might keep the additional cost to a minimum.

Also, we kindly ask that if you submit a new name to be placed on the mailing list, please be sure that individual truly desires to receive this publication. Some people who have received it were not interested. They have let us know that they do not want The Gospel Trumpeter sent to them. Dear one, we do not want to refuse anyone from receiving this paper, but we do feel that God expects us to be wise as to where and to whom we send it. Unfortunately, some people simply are not concerned about spiritual things. They are not interested enough in their own soul's eternal welfare to read this religious periodical. Endeavoring to send the paper to them may only aggravate them and result in causing the Gospel to be spoken of in an evil way.

There are many honest hearts who are seeking and searching for the good news of the Gospel. There are ones who are asking for the old paths, looking for the good way so that they can walk in

[continued on page 27]

Job 4:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

2 If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?

3 Behold, thou hast instructed

many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

5 But now it is come upon thee, and

thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.

Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Supporting the Weak



Brother Roger L. Decker

"A New Commandment"

Not long before Jesus went to the Cross, when He was in Gethsemane, He said in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." God's people have always been taught to love one another, but Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you." Love was always commanded even under the old Law. We read in Leviticus 19:18, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD."

It was not a new commandment

to love one another, but it was a new commandment to *love as Jesus loved*. Oh, what a difference from the old Law! Jesus said this was a mark that the whole world would know that you were a follower of Jesus Christ, if you have love one to another. This is a mark that even a Christian would know that he was a child of God when he could look any man straight in the face without anything wrong in the heart, without any wrong attitude, without any animosity at all. He could have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. Not everybody can do that. Oh, it is talked about, but too often it is not practiced.

John said in 1 John 3:14, "We know that we have passed from

death unto life, because we love the brethren [but he did not stop there]. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." He was not talking about physical death; he was talking about spiritual death. He was letting you know that if you have aught in your heart against your brother or your sister, it is just the same as though you were sitting in a penitentiary on death row.

I want you to look at the Apostle Paul's admonition to the elders of the church in Acts, Chapter 20. The Word of God is full of Scriptures admonishing the strong to support the weak. In Acts 20:35 as Paul was admonishing the elders at Ephesus, he said, "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye

ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." In Isaiah 35:3 the Prophet Isaiah said, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees."

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:14, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." Then we read in Romans 15:1, one of our main Scriptures, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." All of us at one time or another had to have help in weak areas, and God sent us someone to help us until we were strong enough to keep the victory through Jesus Christ. It does not make any difference how spiritual you are, somewhere along the line, you had to have some help. God sent that help to assist you until you became strong enough to support yourself in that area.

This is where love for one another has its greatest impact among the saints. There is a great need to be supportive of one another. Too many people are not patient and long-suffering with one another. My mind went back to my own life, because I know more about myself than I do anyone else. When I was first saved, there were many areas that were strange to me. Many things, even in the preaching, were strange to me. Many areas almost overwhelmed me, but God was good, patient, and long-suffering. You see, these are attributes of God, and they should be attributes of every child of God.

The Kindness of the Lord

You can read of some people in the Word of God who, without the assistance of another, probably would not have made it. We esteem them highly in the Word of God. Do you remember reading about Mephibosheth? He was the son of Jonathan and the grandson of Saul,

and he had the label "death" marked all over him. His future lay in an unmarked grave somewhere. He was destined for death, but David took him in and cared for him personally. He dwelled at Jerusalem (a type of the church), ate at the king's table, and had servants waiting on him.

Mephibosheth was crippled as a child and was considered to be helpless. Somebody had to take care of him. Wherever he went, he always had to have a nurse or an aide to help him. Second Samuel 4:4 says, "And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth."

In 2 Samuel, Chapter 9, we read of David inquiring about the household of Saul, because he had made a covenant with Jonathan. He inquired whether there were any still alive. Someone mentioned that Mephibosheth, the most helpless of the whole household, was still alive. David promised that if Jonathan was killed, he would take care of his family.

After word came that Saul and Jonathan had been killed, David remembered his covenant, just as God remembers His covenant with you and me. David was a type of Jesus Christ. Let us read about this promise. First Samuel 20:14-17: "And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. [In other words, Jonathan was saying, 'I want you to remember this promise for as long as you are alive, David.' Jonathan recognized that his father was no longer anointed king. David was in control.] So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even

require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

When brotherly love is operating as it should be, you do not see people leaving one another. You do not see couples breaking up in the home. When other things get in and steal away the love, that is when things get testy and begin to deteriorate.

Mephibosheth was helpless. Had David not shown kindness and mercy, Mephibosheth would not have survived. He was weak and unable to support himself. He was unable to work for a living. What kindness did David show Mephibosheth? Second Samuel 9:3 tells us, "And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet." This kindness was of the highest degree. It was extraordinary kindness, just as when God deals with men, showing extraordinary kindness. Think of it. Mephibosheth was of the household of a dethroned king, and the dethroned king was dead; yet David showed him the highest degree of kindness. His father could not speak for him, and his grandfather was no longer in charge.

Mephibosheth was without physical strength, just as you and I were without spiritual strength. What does the Roman letter say in Romans 5:6? "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." God cares for the weak. Oh, yes, God cares for all people everywhere. Certainly He does not like what many people are involved in and bound up with, but God loves all people. He cares for the unstable and the downtrodden, and He cares for the one who has many faults.

Friend, God cares for you. He wants to make you strong and stable. God wants to cleanse you of every fault, or human imperfection.

No matter how holy you may live, you might have some characteristics about you unknowingly that turn people off, but God loves you and wants to help you.

Peter's Image of Himself

Let us go to the New Testament. Do you remember reading about an apostle by the name of Simon Peter? Simon Peter was the disciple who first recognized Jesus Christ. Matthew 16:13-17 reads: "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. [Let me warn you that you have to be careful of what *some* say. Some people have it wrong every time.] He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? [In other words, Jesus was saying, 'Never mind what some say. What do you say?'] And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

It is interesting to note how the Gospel writers recorded this. Each of the three Gospel writers who recorded this had his own version of the saying of Peter. Matthew wrote, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Mark was the briefest of all in Mark 8:29. He said, "Thou art the Christ." Luke was the clearest of them all. He wrote in Luke 9:20b, "Peter answering said, The Christ of God."

Peter had some human faults. He had some faults before and after Pentecost. If he had not been worked with, he could have easily made shipwreck. He was one of the chief of the Apostles before and after Pentecost. However, Peter often spoke before he thought. Many times when he spoke, he had a much higher image of himself than

he really was. He did not need anybody to puff him up. He boasted of his own loyalty and commitment and nearly lost his own life by association.

Luke told it the best of all, I believe. I want you to read Luke 22:31-32 and notice how Jesus spoke to Peter: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: [You need to be careful. The devil would like to sift you as wheat. What did Jesus say? It is one of the best exclamations in the Bible.] But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted [Jesus had confidence in His prayer], strengthen thy brethren."

Jesus said He had prayed for Peter. Where would Peter have ended up had Jesus not prayed for him? Jesus worked with Peter. He did not cast him off because he boasted in his own strength. Peter had many human faults that God worked with, because his heart was always in the right place, seeking God. He always wanted God. He loved Jesus Christ even though he was loaded down with faults. Peter boasted that he was the most loyal of all. He boasted that he was more committed than anyone else. Whenever anything came up, he was often the first one to speak of his loyalty. Many times He was in the forefront.

Peter's Dissimulation

There was one thing more about Peter: he was prejudiced. Yes, and it even showed up after Pentecost. He felt that only the Jews had access to God. Let us read a little about his prejudice in Acts 10:9-17: "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners,

and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

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

I want you to notice that the sheet was lowered three times. God was gradually breaking down the wall of prejudice that stood between Peter and the Gentiles. First, the vision started with the Law and mentioned those things under the Law that the Jews were forbidden to eat. The sheet was lowered down to an Apostle who knew the Law and who was very prejudiced for the Law, even to the degree that he thought the Jew was the only one who could be saved.

Peter said in Acts 10:34, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Look how patient God was with him, in taking him through that trance. Cornelius had seen a vision, and God just brought that vision and trance right together. Even though Peter perceived a truth, he still had some prejudice that he had not gotten rid of yet. Peter said he perceived a truth, but he also had some humanity rise up within him that overrode that truth.

In Galatians, Chapter 2, we can read of another incident concerning the Apostle Peter after Pentecost, just as Acts, Chapter 10, took place after Pentecost. At this time, Peter had the Holy Spirit, and he let us know in Acts 10:34 that he had perceived a truth. Let us see if he still had some humanity hanging on.

Verses 7-18 read: "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) [Some of the Jewish brethren were coming. These brethren were some of the elite of the Law.] And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. [These three brethren were going to get this thing worked out. Some of them were going to go with the heathens and some were going to go with those of the circumcision.]

"Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. But when Peter was come to Antioch, I [Paul] withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found

sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor."

Paul's Rebuke to Peter

Peter had come to Antioch. At first, he disregarded the old taboos about eating with the Gentiles and separating himself and shared the common meal with both the Jews and the Gentiles. No separation was going on. Next, certain of the Jewish party came from Jerusalem, and you see that they used James' name. They worked on Peter so much that he got up (remember that he was saved and full of the Holy Ghost), walked away from the table, and sat down with the Orthodox Jews.

Humanly speaking, Peter still had some things that needed to be corrected. Although he was saved and full of the Holy Ghost, he was leaning to his own understanding. The Scripture lets us know that because of the influence of the other Jews, Peter withdrew himself from the Gentiles. Even Barnabas was involved in this dissimulation. No doubt, Barnabas thought, "If Peter has done this, it must be right." Also, others got up and moved. Barnabas was one of the leaders. He was one of the individuals who went on missionary journeys with Paul, yet he got carried away in this dissimulation.

The word *dissimulation* implies that one is a stage player, or a hypocrite. Also, it means that one is pretending to act from one motive, whereas another motive really inspires the act. When this happened, Paul spoke with all the intensity of which his passionate nature was capable. He saw things quite clearly. In both of these instances, with Jesus and with Paul, the rebuke was not done to destroy Peter, but it was done to destroy the work of Satan. Neither Jesus nor Paul were out to destroy Peter. Sometimes people get under a spirit, and they do not know what spirit they are of. Unless God has mercy and breaks that spirit,

they are going to be doomed to a lost eternity.

Peter was salvaged in both instances. In the Bible you can read of what a great gift of healing Peter had and of how he was used in the morning-time church. He was salvaged because Jesus took time, because Paul took time, and because God took time to bring him out of those human faults and helped him to perceive more truth. Peter not only perceived truth, but he walked in the truth that he perceived.

The Young Man Who Became a Deserter

Let us look at another one who needed help. There was a man who was a deserter. Now, you probably know what happens to a deserter in the military. He is tried, and he can receive the death penalty. In the New Testament you can read about a man who turned from the heat of the battle. He was the center of a heated controversy between Paul and Barnabas. This young man's name was John Mark, and eventually he wrote the Gospel of Mark. His mother's house seemed to be at the center of the church at Jerusalem. Acts 12:12 says, "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying."

Paul and Barnabas took John Mark as a helper on a missionary journey with them. He was Barnabas' relative. However, he deserted them; he turned and went home. The battle was raging really hot. You can read about it in Acts, Chapter 13. Verse 2 lets us know that the Holy Ghost had sent them on their journey. They had preached the Word of God in the Jewish synagogues, and they were receiving persecution. They had dealt with a sorcerer, to whom judgment was sent in the form of blindness, and he had to be led by the hand. The persecution became hot. Acts 13:13 tells us that John Mark left and went

back to Jerusalem. The reason is unclear. It could have been that he missed his mother, since he was just a young man, and her house was in Jerusalem. It could have been that Paul was in charge and before his relative (Barnabas) was in charge. It could have been that he was fearful of the danger along the way. It could have been because of the heat of the battle. They were in a treacherous battle. It seemed everywhere they preached, they were contested, persecuted, and threatened. Whatever the reason, John Mark left and went home. The Scripture seems silent on the reason for his leaving; nevertheless, he departed from them.

Contention Between Paul and Barnabas

In Acts, Chapter 15, you can read that Paul wanted to visit the same brethren on another journey. He wanted to encourage them and see how they were doing. Perhaps he wanted to see if they had any increases in the congregations. A difference of opinion got between Paul and Barnabas.

We read in verses 36-41: "And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches."

In these verses of Scripture it seems that Paul had very little patience with a quitter. Paul was a born adventurer, and he did not stay long in one place. He decided to

take to the road again, but the preparations for that journey ended in a tragic breach. There was a real separation between the two. You can read over it lightly if you want to, but they never worked together again. Now, I am sure they did not physically fight; they were Christians. However, they certainly had a difference of opinion, and they both were strong in their opinions.

Paul's opinion was this: "I don't want John Mark to come along. Right when we needed him, he took off and went back home." Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, but Paul would have nothing to do with the man who had been a deserter in Pamphylia. The Scripture says the contention between them was so sharp that they parted company, and they never worked with each other again. Now, this did not mean that they went out and started another church and taught different doctrines. They just did not work together.

It is impossible to say whether Barnabas or Paul was right, but this much is certain: John Mark was fortunate that he had a friend like Barnabas, regardless of his kinship. The name *Barnabas* means "son of consolation." What Paul lacked in patience, Barnabas made up for. In the end Mark became the man who redeemed himself. It seems as though it was the friendship of Barnabas that gave John Mark back his self-respect and backbone and made him determined that he was going to do well. Barnabas was patient with him. It is a great thing for a man to have someone who believes in him. Barnabas believed in Mark, and in the end Mark justified that belief.

Twenty years passed, and John Mark had grown up to be quite a man. I want you to read what the Apostle Paul had to say in 2 Timothy 4:11. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." Twenty years later, Paul said that John Mark was profitable to him for

the ministry.

John Mark did not have much knowledge. He loved God, but he had a human imperfection. He could not stand against all the battle; but Barnabas, the son of consolation, took him and comforted him: "Come with me. I am going to go to an area where there will not be so much battle." Twenty years later, Paul asked for him. John Mark had really grown, and Paul had heard good reports about him. He was a deserter at one time, but he had more than redeemed himself.

The question that we need to ask ourselves is, "What would Jesus do in certain situations?" Some people were constantly tempting Him, and they thought they were righteous. Instead of receiving long-suffering and mercy, they received woe. May God help us to know the difference.

We Are Our Brother's Keeper

Let us read of the first physical death between brethren recorded in the Word of God. Genesis 4:5-9 reads: "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?" This question was sent straight to the conscience of a murderer. Cain spoke, and when he spoke, he spoke a half-truth.

We cannot be around our brother all the time and watch over him, but we are there to help protect him when we are around him. We do not harm him or let any harm come to him that would cause him to fall.

We are there to help our brother. We are not to tear down a weak brother. We are not to step out of the way and let the vultures have him. When we are around him, we are our brother's keeper. We care for our brother. We desire to see our brother do well. If our brother is not measured up exactly the way we think he should be, we pray for him, just as Jesus prayed for Peter. We do not destroy what God has already started. We are to help fan the flame as his brother. We want to do all that we can to help him not to fall back into sin or into harm's way.

Maybe our brother is not dying physically as Abel was, but there are those who are weak spiritually. We ought to reach out to them. In our Scripture text in Romans, Paul said this: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." That was one of Paul's desires as he admonished the elders at Ephesus. It takes patience, long-suffering, and mercy, but God has an ample supply for every one of us. Regardless of how spiritual you are, you have faults. You have some human imperfections that need to be worked on through the preaching of the Gospel. If those things are not corrected, they can lead you into sin.

I want you to know one of the signs of a true minister. One sign that should be in every minister's life, regardless of how much Scripture he knows, regardless of how long he has been preaching, regardless of how he was raised or how many schools he attended, is humility. He can take correction, and he does not whip somebody with a Scripture. He is long-suffering. He can get the same thing accomplished by speaking in love. Also, he does not go around telling people how much he knows.

What did Paul say? He stated in 1 Corinthians 15:9, "For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet [or fit] to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." One earmark we always saw in our former pastor, the late Brother

Emerson Wilson, even with as much knowledge as he had, was that he did not try to take the Scriptures and beat someone with them. He was always patient and long-suffering. Where would Peter have been, before and after Pentecost, and where would John Mark have been had God not been patient with them? Another mark of a God-called minister is that he never feels that he can do the job that God has called him to do.

In the Old Testament you can read about how Gideon felt when God called him (Judges, Chapter 6). In 1 Samuel, Chapter 9, you can read about how humble Saul was at first. In the New Testament Paul said he was the least of the Apostles. Why did he say that? He was one of the Apostles later on, born out of season. He was one who persecuted the church. The other Apostles did not. Judas fell, but he was not a persecutor like Paul was. Paul said he was not even worthy to be called an Apostle, but he said he was what he was by the grace of God.

True Teammates

I want you to read a story in closing. A motivational speaker told about a school sports leadership camp in Oregon. He said, "This area of the state produces many athletes that go to Division 1-A college programs." The speaker told how he was asked to coach one group of athletes in preparation for a competition toward the end of the camp. The coach who headed up the camp asked to have his son put on this gentleman's team, and he consented to do so. The only condition was that he was to be treated the same as all the other athletes. Once the coach's son found out that he was on the gentleman's team, he started to run over to the rest of the group. While running, he tripped and fell. You could tell by the body language of the rest of the group that this young man was not wanted. They had no hope of winning the competition as long as this young man was on their

team.

The young man was asked what part of the competition he wanted to participate in. Once all the options were given, he chose the relay. The rest of the team could not believe what they had just heard. They had just seen him run and fall down, but of all things, he chose the relay.

As practice went on day after day in preparation for the competition, this young man fell down numerous times. Bloodied and scraped up a little more each day, he still did not win the approval of his teammates. They now knew they had no hope of winning this competition, and they resented the fact that he was on the team. How were they going to win now? This young man could not run the first fifty yards without falling down. The night before the competition, there was a bonfire, and this young man asked to speak.

Again, it was apparent by his teammates' body language that he was not accepted as a member of the team. It was as if they were thinking, "What has he got to say?" This young man told the group that he had been the starting quarterback his sophomore year in high school and could hit a receiver anywhere on the field. He also played basketball, and he could play with the best of them. But baseball was his sport, and he had great aspirations of one day playing professionally.

One night while traveling home from a game with his mother, a train hit the car, killing his mother. It then was not a matter of getting the young man out of the car, but getting the car out of him. The young man went on to tell how he spent a long time in the hospital due to his severe injuries. The doctors thought he was exceeding expectations when he was able to get out of bed and into a wheelchair. They thought he was doing really well when he graduated to a walker. Soon he was able to leave the walker behind for a cane, which he had only quit using a few days before coming to this camp.

The young man went on to say how much he appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the team. Even though he knew he was not wanted, He wanted to personally thank every one of them. What this young man said that night had a profound impact on each of his teammates. The next day when this young man ran his leg of the relay, he fell down. No, the team did not win the relay, but every time that young man fell down, every one of those team members was right there to help pick him up until his part of the race was run.

We are our brother's keeper. We have the weak. We have those who cannot run very well or for very long. We need to be there for them to help them, to lift them up. Maybe, for whatever reason, they have a fault about them that takes them so far, and they have a struggle getting victory over that fault. They struggle, and they fall back again. We want to be there to pick them up, take them on, so they can finish their part of the race also.

The Need of Perfection

I brought the message to help you to realize that, as much as you see other people's faults, you have

faults of your own. You probably have more than you really see. It is so much easier to see somebody else's faults. Always remember, the Apostle Peter had some problems that, if not worked with, there was no telling where he would have ended up.

John Mark, as young as he was, and no doubt young in the Lord, being raised in the Truth by his mother with the church at Jerusalem, still was unable to stand when he got into a real battle. Barnabas took him under his wing, worked with him, helped him, comforted him, and no doubt prayed with him and counseled him to hang in there. Later, Paul asked Timothy to bring him, because he was an asset to the church.

Then you take poor Mephibosheth. If you read any history of the Old Testament, you will find that when a king was dethroned, that meant his family was wiped out also. Anyone who was a member of that family was killed. They took out every seed. Mephibosheth had the sentence of death on him because of Saul being dethroned, and he could not walk. David, a type of Jesus Christ, extended mercy to him, just as Jesus did with you and me.

When we were yet without

strength, Christ died for us. Think of that! We had no strength to turn from the iniquity of our own way, heading down the highway of destruction; but Jesus was standing there, reaching out to us. When we were weak, He died for us and made a way so that we could end the sin business. We did not have to be sinners anymore. We were washed in Jesus' blood. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, but the blood of Jesus can wash away every trace of sin. God pours Himself into you and gives you the power to say no to the devil and yes to God. He did that when you were weak.

After you are saved, you still have some things that need to be perfected, but they are not sinful things. Some people think too much of themselves. They look at everybody else's faults, but their own faults never come into view. They are always praying about the faults of others, but sometimes they need to turn that prayer around and pray for themselves. As I close the message, I want to remind you that we are our brother's keeper.

(Compact Disc TR-418)

Meeting Announcements

Newton, KS

September 4-11

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

Evangelist: Bro. Irwin Seshier, Heath, OH

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

For further information contact: Pastor Sandy Killfoil, 415 SE 6th St., Newton KS 67114

Telephone: (Home) 316-842-5127; (Church) 316-283-1830

Medina, OH

September 5

LABOR DAY MEETING: Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH 44256

Service times: 10:00 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.

Dinner and supper meals will be served by the congregation.

For further information contact the church at 330-725-5993.

Summersville, WV

October 24-30

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

Evangelist: Brother Calvin L. Foster, Kensett, Arkansas

Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Sat. 6:00 p.m.; Sun. 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

John 3:1 *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:*

2 *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

3 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,*

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4 *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8 *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Being Born Again



Brother Calvin Foster

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

The words "born again" seem to be a fashionable saying for people today. It is almost impossible to find a sinner anymore, because so many people claim to have been born again. According to a survey that I read a few years ago on this subject, about fifty million Americans claim to be born again. That equates to

about one third of the adult population. This survey may not be accurate now, but the words "born again" are very precious words to me, because I truly have been born again.

The devil will use religious terms to fool people and to confuse them. To some people, being born again may mean looking at a beautiful picture and being moved to say, "Oh, this is like being born again."

Others may feel a breathtaking sensation as they look at a lovely sunset while holding the wife by the hand and saying, "Look, honey, this is just like being born again." Some people might have a strong impression that comes upon them, and they decide that from then on they are going to be better persons. You may think one of these things describes being born again, but none of them do.

The devil will make people feel

that being born again is a feeling, an idea, or an impression, but being born again is to have a miraculous experience of salvation that will free you from sin. Having this experience of salvation will change your life completely. I am born again, and I hate sin. I am glad for this miraculous gift from God. I cannot explain to you how God moved upon me, but I thank God that I am born again.

You should not let the devil fool you about what being born again is. If you have not received an experience that has delivered you from sin and caused you to turn away from your wickedness, you have not been born again. Being born again is not being confirmed through a religious ceremony, being sprinkled with water, church joining, being catechized, or being baptized. Being born again is when a person becomes sick of self, sick of living in sin, forsakes sin, and asks God to save him and deliver him from sin.

In the Scripture lesson Jesus was teaching that men who are dead spiritually can be made alive spiritually. Before I found God, I was dead spiritually. Sin separated me from God. I thought I was alive and thought I knew about life, but I was dead spiritually. Jesus said a man must be born again. I was born once in the flesh, when I came from my mother's womb, but Jesus said, "Ye must be born again." A man cannot fully live until he is born again spiritually. You do not know what life is all about until you have been redeemed.

Before I found Christ, I was dead spiritually, trying to work out my life by following the flesh and by following people. However, when I found Christ, I said, "Glory! Look what I have been missing! I found what I had been looking for when I found Christ. I should have gotten saved a long time ago. What an experience!"

A dead man cannot work out his life. In verse 3 of our Scripture text, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he

cannot see the kingdom of God." You cannot see God's kingdom by joining a church or by being baptized. You must be born again. Romans 14:17 says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. It is not material things. Some people may think the Kingdom of God is eating and drinking and having a big time, but that is not so. When you are born again, that is when you see the Kingdom of God. When you are born again, you enter into the righteousness, the peace, and the joy of God.

Discerning Spiritual Things

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 the Apostle Paul wrote: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." To enter the Kingdom of God is to enter into a place where you can see spiritual things. When you are born again, God will enable you to understand spiritual things, just as when you are born in the flesh you begin to understand natural things. The things that you learn about daily living are natural things, but when you are born again, you begin to understand spiritual things. The things you cannot see with the natural eye become a reality when God opens your understanding.

You cannot see spiritual realities without being born again. No matter how much education you have or how much you study the Bible, you cannot see spiritual realities until you have been born again. You cannot see them with the natural eye. If you have not been born again, you cannot become acquainted with spiritual things.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14 Paul said, "But the natural man receiveth not

the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man does not enjoy sitting in church and hearing somebody preach or sing. These things are foolishness to him. The natural man does not understand what it means to get alone with God and read the Bible and pray. He does not receive any blessing or joy from that. Why? Because he is a natural man, but the saints of God enjoy doing that. The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. We cannot help but tell others because we know what they are missing. They are missing out on the greatest blessing that life can offer any man or woman. You are a natural man until you are born again.

Are You Serious About Serving God?

In Jesus' ministry He expressed three "musts." In John 3:14 He said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so *must* the Son of man be lifted up." In John 3:7 He said, "Ye *must* be born again." Jesus *must* be lifted up, and you *must* be born again. Jesus said in John 4:24, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him *must* worship him in spirit and in truth."

If you are unsaved, you have been blinded because of sin. Ephesians 4:17-22 reads: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

"But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt

according to the deceitful lusts." Regardless of what some preacher or some religious person might have told you, unless you have put off the old man and his deeds, you have not been born again. Are you born again? We are living in a time when some people merely act as though they are saved. They know how to play church. If you were to die right now, would you make Heaven your home?

Young person, if you say you are saved, are you obedient to your parents? Do you sass your parents? Do you have something hidden in your bedroom? How have you been acting at school? Do you have a genuine experience with God? Maybe you have not gone out into deep sin, but are you serious about serving God? Has God removed sin from your heart? You need to be determined that no matter what others think or say about you, you are going to serve Jesus. You should not be ashamed of Jesus. If you are saved, you ought to testify for Him.

Many people say they have been born again, but are you born again right now? Do you hate sin and unrighteousness enough that you desire never to go back to the old life? Sin separates you from God. A man cannot have fellowship with God when he is living in sin. When a man is born again, he changes, and he turns away from sin.

A man who is living in sin is dead spiritually. Many people who profess religion are dead spiritually. Often they call right wrong and wrong right. First Peter 1:22-23 states: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

If you go to church and profess to be saved when you are not really born again, you are damaging yourself. Also, you cannot get to Heaven by following someone else.

You must be born again, not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible seed.

Be Determined to Live for God

In 1 Peter 2:1-3 Peter said: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." I praise God that I have tasted of the Lord. The Lord is gracious! God touched my heart, mind, and soul and set me on fire, spiritually speaking.

We read in John 8:21-24: "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

If you have not been born from above, you may die in your sins. Therefore, you need to get serious with God. Jesus said the wise man built his house upon a rock. You need to dig deep and make sure that you have a born-again experience. You need to make sure that you have the Holy Spirit in your heart. You must be determined to live for God and not go back into your sins. The Christian has experienced two births: the natural birth and the spiritual birth. Praise God!

Romans 5:6 says, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Without strength you are a servant of the devil, and whatever the devil says to do, you will do. You have no power over yourself. Satan will cause you to say and do things that you do not want to, things that you said you would never do. Christ knew that man would be without

strength to turn away from sin. Therefore, He died so that we could be free from sin.

In essence, Jesus said, "Man was born weak, but I have made a way for him to be born again of this heavenly birth." We are living in a time when many people are self-righteous and feel they have no need of Christ. Without Christ they claim that they live as good as any child of God. They will flap their suspenders and say: "I'm all right; you can go and help the man in the gutter. I don't think I need any help." This self-righteous spirit is all around us today.

Becoming a New Creature

Romans 10:1-4 reads: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

It is not within man's own power to overcome sin. Just as a leopard cannot change its spots and an Ethiopian man cannot change the color of his skin, so it is with mankind. In your own strength, you cannot make yourself righteous enough to be acceptable to God. All your righteousness is as filthy rags. That is the reason God sent Christ. You *must* be born again. You might have been around the church for a long time and know the doctrine, but if you have not been truly born again, you are hurting yourself. You may fool those around you, but you cannot fool God, and you cannot fool yourself.

Paul worded it very strongly in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 when he said: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And

though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." This is a Scripture that every Christian should know. If you do not know it, I hope you will learn it.

Another Scripture that every Christian should know is 2 Corinthians 5:17, which reads, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Being born again is a divine birth, and it is instantaneous. A person could walk in the door a sinner, pray and be born again, and walk out a saint. You do not have to read all the Books of the Bible and study them before you can get saved. You can kneel down and pray, ask God to forgive you for your sin (and really mean it from your heart), and be born again. Then you will become a new creature. The devil wants to scare you away from getting saved. He will tell you: "You are not ready to do that. What are you going to do about this? What are you going to do about that?" Friend, do not worry about those things. The devil is putting all of that in your mind. God will take care of your problems. If you will be born again, you will never regret it.

Diligently Seek Him

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

All a person has to do is say: "God, I want to be free. I want to be delivered from my sins. I want You

to change me." You have to be sorry in your heart for your sins and sorry for the way you have been living. In the past, you might have tried to change and it did not do you any good. Perhaps you found yourself in more trouble, and you wondered why your troubles did not go away.

Friend, God is knocking on your heart's door, but the latch to your heart is on the inside. God is a gentleman, so He will not break the door down to come in. You have to open the door and invite Him to come in. The devil will bring many thoughts to your mind concerning why you should not get saved, or he may tell you to wait until tomorrow, but tomorrow is not promised to you. You never know when death will come.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." You must have faith when you come to God and say: "I believe that God is real, and I believe that God is going to do what He said He would do." When you come to God by faith, He will reward you if you will diligently seek Him. You must mean business and be serious with God.

An Individual Experience

You can have power over the devil with Christ in your life. God does not want you to be up and down in your Christian experience. We are living in a time of testing. God has a right to test every one of us to see if we really have the goods. Some people testify high but live low. You had better be honest. You had better testify right where you are and speak what you know.

Matthew 25:31-34 says: "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."

The saved are in the earthly part of the Kingdom of God now, but we are looking forward to going to the heavenly part of it. In reality there are only two groups of people: those on the left hand and those on the right. Those who are born again are on the right hand. By the grace of God, I am going to stay on the right hand.

Some people will try to confuse you. Paul pointed that out in his day. Some said they were following Paul, and others said they were following Apollos. Paul told them in 1 Corinthians 3:5, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" People get so wrapped up in following men. You had better mind the Lord. You need to get your faith off man's coattail and get your eyes on Christ. Let us never forget that men die. When you get wrapped up in people and they fail, you will be saying: "Oh, no! I did not think they would go down. If they went down, I cannot stay saved either."

Some wives may say, "My husband doesn't want to go to church, so I don't want to go." Dear one, you had better get salvation for yourself. Salvation is an individual experience.

Church, you need to consider the parable of the ten virgins. Matthew, Chapter 25, says five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. In this lesson Jesus said in verse 41, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." May God help you to examine yourself. You need to be very sure that you are born again.

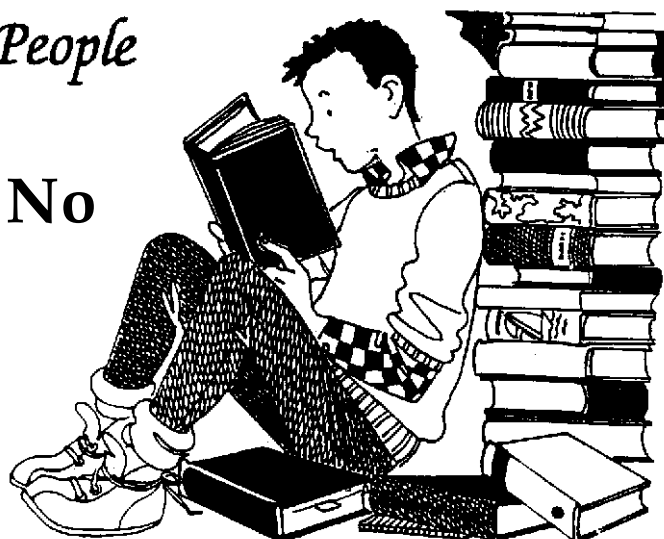
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Especially for Young People



Living With No Regrets

Part 1 of 2



Philippians 3:13 states, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." Life has many great moments, regardless of your age. There are landmark times in life that you will always remember. The day you get married will be a landmark that you will remember for the rest of your life. You will always remember the day your first child was born. I remember my thirteenth birthday. Becoming a teenager is an important milestone for young people. It is a good thing to advance in life and have great memories. It is an important part of life.

In our minds we like to relive memories connected to happy times, such as graduations, weddings, special birthdays, and vacations. Vacations are especially great memories. Often we take pictures to help us to remember. We can remember great amounts of details, even without the assistance of a photograph. The human mind is like a photographic memory bank that can hold a wealth of experiences in a lifetime. When you ponder how the brain works and what the mind can remember, it is incredible.

If I were to ask you to imagine in your mind your favorite moment in life, what would you think about? Do you remember your first car or getting your driver's license? It is

amazing how your mind can sort through all the many things that have taken place in your life and recall one event to reflect on. God has created us this way so that we can remember events in life. The mind is an amazing thing that God has created.

The unfortunate part about the mind is that it remembers the bad times as well as the good times. Young person, you need to be careful of what you look at on the Internet. By looking at something ungodly, you can get an evil image in your mind, possibly a pornographic image, that will never leave you. No matter how much you want to forget that image, the devil will be sure to bring it back to your mind. It is very important that you are careful of what you allow your mind to see, because that picture will be imprinted in your mind forever. Your mind will remember all your failures, and it will remember the pain.

Some things that often come to my mind are my weaknesses, my past failures, and my fears. Images came back to my mind of the things that I have done wrong in the past. The enemy can use the mind to take away joy in your daily walk with God. Those images can hinder your ability to advance in the things of God. The mind is awesome, but it certainly stores more images than family vacations. Have you ever

heard anyone say, "If only I had not done that." I believe everybody has "if only" places in life. If only I had not run through the warning signs that God placed in front of me, how different things could be. If only I had prayed and read the Bible more. If only I had been more focused. If only I had run a hundred miles away from temptation.

You do not want to lie in bed at night thinking, "If only . . ." You do not want to lie in bed at night looking at the ceiling, shaking your head, and thinking, "If only I had not done that." Young person, you are not too young to commit vile sins. The devil can lure you into drinking alcohol, having illicit sex, or doing things that you know are wrong. You are not too young to make life-changing mistakes. Many young lives have been ruined by sin. Everyone who has been overtaken by sin has an image seared in his mind with which he has to deal for the rest of his or her life. If you commit fornication, drink alcohol, use drugs, or smoke cigarettes, such memories are not going to leave you.

I can tell you exactly where I was the first time I smoked a cigarette. You will remember all the evil that you do in your life, like a picture in a book. The devil will keep your mind refreshed on those things. They will haunt you, and the devil will use them against you to

hold you down and to keep you from going forward for God. Trust me, I know. I am living it.

You may think, "If I do one little thing wrong, nobody is going to know." The next thing you know, it will turn from being a little step to being a big step. While you try to hold on to God, you will let the devil gradually pull you away at the same time. Before you know it, you will take a giant step and then a leap. You will go off a cliff and think, "How did I get here?" That is how it works, no matter who you are and no matter how pure and holy you might have lived up to that point. You are not made of steel. We each have that one thing that could take us down, and the devil knows what it is. The good news is, God also knows what it is, and He will be glad to help you, if you will lean on Him.

In speaking of my failures, I hope to warn young people. In my failures God gave me ample opportunity to escape, and He will do the same for you. The problem lies with the person that you see in the mirror every day. You are the only one who can take you through all the warning signs. The devil wants to see you destroyed. The Bible lets you know that the flesh is weak. You are not stronger than the devil, and he would delight in taking you down. You may think you are strong because you have been raised in the church, because you have a strong family, and because you have strong influences. However, many people just like you have fallen, although it does not have to be that way. You can keep yourself pure before God.

Again, Philippians 3:13 states, "Brethren, I count not myself to have

apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." He is willing to help you do that. God *is* willing to forget the things you have done, if you will repent.

Your sins can go into the sea of forgetfulness, as far as the east is from the west; but right while you try to forget and go on, the devil will be there to remind you. He will not let you forget. Sometimes he works through people, but the true church will be there to help you. I have found the church to be uplifting. God's people want you to go forward and make it. While your mind says, "That is what I want to do," it is not easy to forget and to go forward. My advice is to keep your regrets to a minimum.

I recently read a sign that said, "Know God, no regrets." That is so true. The word *regret* means "pain of mind as a result of something done or an experience in the past, with the wish that it had been different; looking back with dissatisfaction, grief, and sorrow." You need to make good decisions and think about what you are doing. You must think about the results of what you are doing. You need to think about having to live with regrets on your mind. Young person, you are mere steps away from making big decisions. You need to be alert, you need to be awake spiritually, and you need to pay attention.

Genesis 25:29-34 says: "And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob

said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

Esau is a good illustration of reckless behavior. He did not care about his birthright. He recklessly sold it for a bowl of pottage. This sounds foolish, and you can be sure that lying in his bed at some point he thought, "If only I had acted differently and had made a better decision.

We can read about Esau's "If only . . ." in Hebrews 12:16-17, which states: "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Another translation of this same Scripture says, "For ye know that even when afterward, he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for a change of mind from his father, though he sought it diligently with tears." Esau made a tragic mistake. Young person, you can weep and cry and try to change a situation after the fact, but it will never be changed. The image of the things that you have done will be in your mind forever.

Brother Jeremy Hupp

**YOU CAN'T HAVE ROSY THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE
WHEN YOUR MIND IS FULL OF BLUES ABOUT THE PAST.**

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

30 Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

31 In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.

32 Remember Lot's wife.

33 Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.

34 I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.

35 Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

36 Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

"One Shall Be Taken"



Brother Allen Polston

Examine Your Spiritual Condition

In beginning a message such as this, I feel that it is necessary to go back to some very evident truths in the Bible. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." The eyes of God are in every place, including those places that people feel are secret or isolated. God is taking account of not only all the evil but also the good occurring in this world.

Hebrews 4:13 reads, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." God is continually evaluating the spiritual status of mankind. He is taking account of your spiritual condition at all times. He operates in this manner to assure that justice and judgment are kept intact. God is taking account of all the evil so that the necessary judgment can be applied. I am not just talking about the

judgment that a sinner feels when he leaves this world unprepared to meet God, but God pours out judgment on people in this world for the evil that they partake of.

At the same time, God rewards those who live holy and righteously in His sight. We do not have to wait until we get to Heaven to receive the blessings of God for making the right choices. We begin to partake of Christ and enjoy the rich, full happiness of Christian living right in this world. Friend, you do not have to

wait until you leave this world to enjoy being a Christian. You can enjoy it today. It is a wonderful way to live. The peace that God gives and the joy that flows from within needs no igniter and no entertainment. It is there when you wake up and when you go to bed. It is there in the hard times and in the good times. You can partake of Christ now. You do not have to wait until you go to Heaven.

Proverbs 15:11 says, "Hell and destruction are before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?" God has your heart's condition in mind. He sees exactly how you are this moment. God knows about the things that you might have hidden from your companion or from others. Surely it is a blessing to send your sins ahead so that God can forgive you and put your sins in the depths of the sea, not to mention all the other benefits that God gives.

I have been in hospitals and noticed the medical devices in the patients' rooms that constantly monitor the patients. Some medical devices give a constant reading of what the physical heart is doing, how fast it is beating, and the rhythm it is keeping. The medical staff often examines the outputs of those devices, and then they decide what they are going to do, if anything.

God is examining your spiritual condition. He cares about your health, and He will help you physically; however, He is most concerned about your soul. The kind of condition in which He finds your heart determines how much more God can do with you and what He can bring to your life. Do you wonder why you do not have the joy that other Christians have or why your life is void of real happiness? How is your heart toward Almighty God?

Allowing God to Rule Your Life

In our Scripture lesson I would like to call your attention to some

activity that was taking place. First, in verses 34-36 we find two people mentioned in each verse. In each of these Scriptures, we find that the two people mentioned are either engaged in the same activity or found in the same place.

God wants you to realize there is no middle ground when it comes to Him. There is no such thing as being almost saved or partly saved. When it comes to God, either you are among those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness or you are not. God wants to eliminate divisions and segments present in the world that allow men and women to think that they can go on living with wrong in their lives and yet make Heaven their home.

God wants you to have a clear understanding that if you want to be a child of God and go to Heaven when your life ends, you must get serious about serving God. You must repent of your sin, submit to God, and allow Him to be the ruler of your life, not just tuck a Bible under your arm and show up for service. There is more to serving God than merely being engaged in activity.

There is more to being a Christian than attending the church services once in a while. There is more to getting to Heaven than simply knowing someone else who is going to Heaven. You have to get an experience with God. You must be willing to forget about pressures, friends, relatives, or whatever hinders you from getting serious with God. Friend, you have to forget about your background and church affiliation and any church memberships that you might have and get down to business with God. You need to let Him know that you are not holding anything back. You need to put it all on the altar and allow God to come into your heart.

It is unfortunate that we live in a time when there is so much deception in the religious world. They tell people to join a church and do the best they can. Friend, they are deceiving people. You can be on fire

for God. You do not have to drift around in religion. God lets you see in this Scripture lesson that either you are going to get saved and live for God or you are not going to be saved at all. You need to think about that.

You Cannot Serve Two Masters

Sinner friend, God wants you to be saved. He does not want you to live your life in a sinful condition and be lost. You need to realize that trying to hold hands with the world while trying to hold hands with God will not work. Matthew 6:24 says, "No man [or woman] can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Friend, God wants you to take a position where you hate the devil and the ways of this wicked world and love God with all your heart. When you love God, you will be open to whatever He wants in your life. When you love someone, you are willing to surrender a little so the other person will be happy. You are willing to live your life looking out for his or her best interests. There may be times when you will have to do without some things so that person can be happy.

When you love someone, you do not think, "How can I inflict some kind of wound or hurt upon this person?" If you should say something too quickly and realize that it has hurt someone, you ought to go right back to him or her and straighten it out.

When you love God, you will not have a problem submitting when God deals with you along certain lines and issues. You will want to please God. You see, Jesus died for you. He made a sacrifice for you, and He has done so much for you. He made a way so that your life can be blessed and so that you can go into eternity with great expectations of happiness forevermore.

Again, Jesus said in Matthew

6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other," which is just what God wants you to do. You must hate the devil and love God. It is a miserable position to hold on to the world and despise God. It will cause you to want to fight against everything the preacher says, just looking for something to pick at.

Friend, if that is your present condition, you need to tell God: "I am through with the world, the sin, and the ungodliness. I am done with the way that I have been living, and I am going to live for You. I am going to make some changes to put my life in Your hands." You need to quit trying to hold on to sin and hold on to God. If you do not, your life will be totally uncomfortable living that way.

God is not a supporter of those who ride the fence. It is no fun, and it will not get you anywhere. There is no middle ground with God. Many people are not committing the atrocities in which some are engaged; nevertheless, they are just as lost in the sight of God. The morally good sinner will go to the same hell as the homosexual, the adulterer, the murderer, and anyone else who does not repent and let Jesus come in. The person who tells a few lies every now and then will go to the same eternal destruction as the one who tells many lies. Either you are saved and obedient or you are not.

"Denying the Power Thereof"

As previously stated, there is more to being a Christian than being engaged in a certain activity. In our Scripture text we find two people in each verse who were employed in the same activity. However, in each verse only one was taken. What is the message in that? Just because you are engaged in activity is no indication that you are ready to meet God. You may be engaged in religious activity, but that is no indication that you are ready to meet God. Your heart must be right with God. Your spirit must be right in the

sight of God.

Second Timothy 3:5 instructs, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Those who have a form of godliness (in other words, a Christian name, a Christian association, or merely a profession of Christianity), from such you should turn away and go another direction. Why is that? If you are not careful, the devil will attack your mind by questioning: "Is it really that important to live so strictly? Is it really that important to dedicate yourself so much?" Yes, it is! You must love God to the utmost. If you do not, other things will begin to creep in and try to crowd out your affection for God.

Sometimes we have to stand and call things out by name because they are dangerous and begin to get hold of your affections. You may be well versed in Bible doctrines, but friend, if your heart begins to wander and you become lukewarm, you can slip away, as so many other people have. I thank God for those who are still standing strong.

The Apostle Paul said, ". . . but denying the power thereof." What is this power? The power is the Word of God, and it is power to us. Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is quick and powerful. A large percentage of religious people and religious groups are denying the Word of God. In this day and age in which we are living, many are denying the Word of God, either by changing it, by replacing it, or by tossing it out altogether. I like the song that says, "I don't want to change it or rearrange it. I love it just like it is." I do not want to toss out the Word and bring in some athletic program. I love the Word of God just like it is.

If you are not living for God, you ought to pity yourself. I am enjoying serving God. It is wonderful to be free from the life of sin and to know that Jesus is with you day and night. That is a blessing! Do not feel sorry for me. I feel sorry for you if you are not a Christian. Do not

think I am suffering because I go to church week after week, two times on Sunday, three times a day during camp meetings, and each evening during revivals. I love this old-time way! One song says, "*I'm free from the fears of tomorrow. I'm free from the guilt of the past. I've traded my shackles for a glorious crown. I am free, praise the Lord. Free at last.*" Thank God!

People are denying God's Word, and it is quite obvious. Paul said in Titus 1:16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him." Are you denying God in your works? You can profess to know God and yet deny Him in your works. If you really know God, it ought to show up in the way you live.

Will There Be a Secret Rapture?

In our Scripture text we read the phrase "one shall be taken." Although some teach that is a definite sign of a coming rapture, Jesus does not have to steal anything. He purchased the church, so it belongs to Him. Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." I repeat, Jesus does not have to steal anything, because He has already purchased the church; she belongs to Him.

God did not intend for these verses to mean there would be a secret rapture. Some people use these verses as a primary support for their teaching of a coming rapture. I have seen bumper stickers that read, "Warning: in case of rapture this car will be unmanned." Again, God does not have to steal anything.

In 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 4, the Apostle Paul let us know a little about the end of time. Verses 16-17 read: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, [That does not sound secretive to me. Any time I have tried to slip up on a ten-point buck, I did not do it

with a shout.] with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

The church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord." When we are called to meet the Lord, we are not coming back down for an earthly kingdom to be established. We are not coming back down to ride around on a white horse. He said, ". . . so shall we ever be with the Lord." This is going to take place simultaneously. He is going to descend from Heaven with a shout, the dead in Christ will rise, and then we who are alive and remain and who are serving God are going to be taken up. It will be then that we will truly fulfill the song, "I'll fly away."

Another Scripture speaking of the end of time is found in 2 Peter 3:10, which says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise. . . ." Someone may say: "There it is! It says the Lord will come 'as a thief in the night.' He is going to steal the church." No, Peter was saying that this day is not going to be announced. A thief will not knock on your door and say, "Let me in! I'm here to rob you."

The only thing that Peter was stating in this verse was that when the end of time comes, it will not be announced. The radio station is not going to know about it, the newspaper will not print an article about it, and no one else will know the day or the hour. It may be a time when we are in a Sunday morning service or perhaps during a camp meeting. You may be at work, on vacation, or nestled in your bed. The Bible lets us know that Christ will come with a shout and without forewarning. You will not have time to do anything except answer the call of God.

Second Peter 3:10 continues,

". . . in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." That does not sound like a secret rapture will take place. We read in 1 Corinthians 15:52, "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." That does not indicate a secret rapture or a secret stealing away.

Friend, the Bible makes it clear that if we are still living when God calls this world to an end, it will happen very quickly. There will be no flaws in the plan, and there will be no interruptions. It is going to happen just as the Bible says it will. No one will have time to repent, to make changes, to make apologies, or to do anything that he or she should have done before. God, in His mercy, is giving you many opportunities to take care of the needs in your life now.

Rightly Dividing the Scriptures

When God calls this world to an end, there will be no time to call out to Him for salvation. Friend, it will all be over. You may inquire: "If that is so, what is this lesson dealing with? If Jesus was not talking about the end of time, what was He talking about in these verses?" Certainly, this lesson does speak of someone being left behind; that is obvious. However, by rightly dividing the rest of the Scriptures and not privately pulling one aside, we know that He was not talking about the end of time.

We need to realize when we think of the First Coming of Christ and the Second Coming of Christ that Jesus has come again, but not in a physical sense. The Bible lets us know that Jesus has come by way of the precious Holy Spirit. John 14:16-18 states: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of

truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

Jesus was speaking to disciples who had been living and traveling with Him for approximately three years. He was preparing them for what was about to happen and letting them know that He was going away. He let them know that the people were going to crucify Him and put Him in the grave. Then, in essence, He said, "I am going to rise again, but though I go to be with the Father in Heaven, I am going to come back to you." Jesus said in verse 17, ". . . for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Jesus dwelled among the disciples for a number of years. He was not going to be there anymore in a physical form, but He was there by way of the Holy Spirit.

Another verse of Scripture that applies here is Matthew 16:28, where Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." They were actually going to see Jesus coming, not physically, but spiritually, through the Spirit of God. Through the eyes of faith, they were going to see Jesus come in His kingdom, or in His church. On the Day of Pentecost, they saw Christ return by way of the Holy Spirit of God.

We read in John 16:12-14: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. [When was He going to say those things to them? When He returned through the Spirit of God.] Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."

These are Scriptures that indicate that Jesus did come again

through the Holy Spirit of God, just as He still comes today to visit the hearts of mankind. If you reject God's Holy Spirit, you are saying what the people said in Bethlehem to Joseph and Mary when they said, "I am sorry, but we do not have any room."

The Day of Grace Is Here

When you reject God's Holy Spirit as He knocks upon your heart's door and you feel the urge that you really ought to get things taken care of and allow God to have His way, you are basically saying the same thing that the innkeeper told Joseph and Mary: "I have no room here." Sad to say, this is the same thing that people have been telling Jesus down through the years of time. Today people say, "My life is full. I'm trying to raise my children, work a job, and maintain my marriage. I don't have time for God right now."

In verse 30 of our Scripture text we read, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." This is not speaking about the end of time, but rather when the Son of man is revealed to *you*. The Holy Spirit reveals to you that the Savior has paid the price for you and a way has been made for you to escape the life that you are living so that you can find victory over those things that have defeated you.

When the Son of man is revealed to you, it is a revelation of the saving grace of God. You are being given a prime opportunity to have your sins washed away and to have your life made anew. You can be what God has always wanted you to be.

Through the preaching of the Gospel, the Spirit of God will begin to reveal to you, "Your day of grace is here." What a sad thing it will be when the day of His grace is passed! One day you will no longer have the ability to tap into the grace of God if you continue to resist Him and rebel. Friend, the love of God is trying to warn you so that you will change

your mind and be converted. Romans 10:17 tells us, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Friend, God is giving you an opportunity through the preaching of the Word, in songs, and in testimonies. He will inspire faith in you, but He will not force you to get saved. He inspires faith, and then He says, "You have to make the decision." Why not make the right decision today? Why continue in what you know will not do you any good? You may think that you will never get involved in certain things, but when God turns you loose, the devil may destroy you in ways that you never imagined. One thing is definite: if you resist God, destruction is pending.

God has the power to afflict your body in a second of time with a disease or an illness that you may never recover from. It would be so easy for a car to accidentally veer over into your lane, and your life could be snatched out of this world. Destruction is pending for those who continually trample underfoot the grace of God. You had better listen, because this is what God's Word bears true. God does not waver; His Word is sure.

People are making eternal decisions carelessly and haphazardly. Their hindrance could be pride or a passion that they have picked up. Possibly they are afraid of what someone is going to say because they have such a reputation among them. What a terrible thing to die and go to hell! What a terrible thing to die lost because you are concerned about what somebody might say or think! You ought to forget about what others may say or think or do and run to God. You need to turn to Him while you have an opportunity to be saved.

Responding to God's Call

Verse 31 of our Scripture lesson says, "In that day, [What day was Jesus speaking of? When God reveals that you can get saved, when

God makes known to your mind, 'This could be the day that begins the rest of a blessed life for you.'] he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back." These illustrations are ways that God is helping you to see that, whether you feel there are many things hindering you or just a few, you should not let any of them hold you back when God calls upon your heart.

I thought about being on a housetop, and I suppose in that day it was comparable to the way we use a deck on our homes. It would not take very much time to get your belongings. Friend, what God is saying through His Word is this: do not to let anything keep you from responding to His call and His plea upon your heart. You need to let God take care of your need, and then He will help you with those things.

You may think, "I am going to get saved, but not for several years down the road." The man who was out in the field would have quite a journey to make to get his stuff, but God would say, "You need to come." No matter what condition you are in, no matter what your problem is, no matter how deep in sin you have gone, you need to give attention to His call. You could get saved today if you would surrender to Him. As you realize these things, you should not let anything hinder you or hold you back.

Sad to say, today many people are allowing things to keep them from getting saved. Perhaps an attitude is hindering you. You may say: "I don't have any confidence in this person" or "I'm going to get saved; I'm getting closer. I'm going to get saved within a year." You ought to forget about whatever is holding you back. You need to put it all behind you and take your need to God.

Friend, destruction is looming, and it could be today! The devil may be saying, "You have heard these

things before," and you probably have. God, in His love and mercy, keeps bringing them back to you to give you another opportunity. It is going to happen, friend, just as destruction happened to the people in Noah's day and in Lot's day. Salvation came to some, and the rest were destroyed.

Making the Right Choice

Verse 32 of our Scripture lesson tells us, "Remember Lot's wife." You need to remember what happened to her. If you seek to hold on to the things of this world, you will lose your soul. If you keep being stubborn about this thing and taking chances, you are going to be lost forever. It is not worth it. No pleasure, prestige, or pomp that sin can offer is worth losing your soul forever. Going back to our Scripture text, why is one taken and the other left? Because the one is honest and says: "Yes, I'm lost, and I'm going the wrong way. I need help, and I need it today." That is the one taken. When God reveals Himself to that one, rather than trying to think of everything else, he says, "I need to do something about my condition." Though the devil wars against him, he musters up enough strength to take that first step in giving his heart to God.

On the other hand, the other one does everything within his might to push God's call out of his mind, to block it so that he can resist God yet another time. Oh, how many people are regretting, even at this hour, the decisions they made to resist God! Billions of people in eternity today regret the foolish choices they made in turning away from God. You do not have to be lost. God will help

you this very moment if you will determine and purpose in your heart to follow Him. You need to forget about the things that hinder you from giving your heart to God. If you will take the first step toward God, He will help you. God saved my soul after I took that first step, and there was momentum with each step following it. My walk with God has gained power as I have continued.

There is no coming rapture where the saints are going to be taken away and the sinners will be left. There would be no reason for sinners to be left in a godless world. God's people are the light of the world. In a Christless world, there would be much more murder, havoc, and chaos. Jesus was dealing with whether or not you will be left behind as God reveals Himself to you and makes known your need. That is how God works. You see Him, and then you see yourself. As He shows you a mirror image of yourself, you realize, "I have spiritual needs."

Jesus will show you His sacrifice that He made for you with His blood flowing from His hands and His feet. Someone may think, "Oh, that's just a story," but it is a painfully true story. He had a flesh just as we have, and He suffered immensely. He reveals His love to you through the scene of Himself on the Cross. Then He shows you yourself living in sinful pleasure, rebelling against God for a moment of thrill here and there. What a disgrace! Next, He shows you His love, His mercy, and Himself; then He says, "You need to look at who you are, doing the things that you are doing."

God reveals Himself to you so that you will realize your need of

Him and your need for salvation. In the day that He is revealed, you will not have to worry about anything that is pressuring your opinion. You can say: "Lord, I am going to serve You with all my heart, starting right now. I am going to surrender all to You." In doing so, God will not leave you. You will escape the destruction that overtook those people in Noah's day.

You will escape the pending destruction, and God will make you a part of the church. He will give you a place in the body of Christ. God will go to great lengths to be faithful to the soul who is serious about his or her condition. God is not limited by the conditions around us, and He will not leave anyone behind who is willing to ask Him into his life.

Sinner friend, you need to give God an opportunity to talk to you. Do not start looking for a way to shove Him out of your mind and put up the "No Vacancy" sign. You must make room for Him today, and you will never be sorry. If you will surrender your all to God and not hold anything back, you will never be sorry that you did. You will thank God that you made the right decision.

Friend, if you do not, the day of His grace will pass. How sad it will be for those who go past the grace of God and are never delivered from wickedness. They will have to go into eternity forever in darkness. Do not be left behind, dear one. You need to forget about everybody else. Do not worry about what others may say. You need to do what you know you ought to do. Come to God, and let Him work in your life.

(Cassette C-4985M)

Kind words pick people up when troubles weigh them down.

2 *Thessalonians 2:1* Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, or by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing

himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and

signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

The Tragedy of Finding Pleasure in Wrongdoing



Brother Esau Brooks

The Consequences of Not Believing the Truth

This very familiar portion of the Word of God is solemnizing. The great Apostle Paul spoke directly of the time in which we are living and revealed some dangers with which we are now being confronted in the spiritual realm. The Bible informs us that these things were written for our admonition. Verse 12 of the Scripture text states, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Two solemn facts are

brought forth in this very concise portion of God's Word. The first one is that "they all might be damned who believe not the truth." The second one is that they "had pleasure in unrighteousness." You must bear in mind that Paul was talking about real people, not imaginary creatures. He was warning this Thessalonian congregation regarding a certain forthcoming development that would have far-reaching effects and consequences. Many times in preaching this particular portion of God's Word, there is a tendency to direct the message

mainly to those who are in Babylon, or in sectism. While it has much to do with those who are there, we must become aware that none of us is immune to the effects of that which these verses portray so vividly.

The great Apostle Paul was making some very serious and heart-arresting declarations concerning these last days before the Second Coming of the Lord. In verses 1-2 of our Scripture text, notice the warning: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering

together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken. . . ." A few years ago in reading this Scripture, you might have wondered what all these words entailed, but today as you look at developments all around us, you cannot but acknowledge that this is a very serious warning. We are in the midst of a shaking time. On every hand, people's confidence in God is being shaken, almost to the very foundation.

Many people are giving in to unbelief and skepticism. It is no wonder that Jesus said in Luke 18:8b, "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" There are developments that, if you are not careful, will shake your experience and your confidence in the Word of God. There are some people who, no matter what happens, are not going to be moved to accept the Gospel.

The declaration of our Scripture text states "that they all might be damned." Can you envision a people set apart to be damned? Can you envision a people sitting under the full light of the Gospel who are unaffected by the message? Many times in these last days I have wondered what it is going to take to awaken men and women to their need of God. There must be a greater striving to awaken people to the seriousness of our time. Why is more not being done for God? If everyone who claims to be a Christian was where the Lord wants him or her to be, it would have a soul-stirring effect on the lost. It is time to become aware of the powerlessness prevailing in the lives of men and women as far as God is concerned.

Let the Mind of Christ Be in You

Can you not see how dangerous it is for you to linger in sin? One of the hardest things to do is to get people thoroughly burdened for the unsaved. In 1 Peter 4:18 Peter said, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Men and women have allowed the devil to

cause them to accommodate whatever ungodly condition arises, and that is dangerous. Why? Because there is a particular goal that one must strive to attain.

The Apostle Paul penned in Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark [Why?] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It goes without saying that if you do not reach the mark, you will not receive the prize. Everything about life teaches us that lesson. You cannot afford to allow yourself to become shaken from that which the Word of God requires. You cannot allow the pressures of life to shake you and cause you to lose interest in that which is required by the Word of God. God's people are required by God to be obedient to His Word.

If you plan to make Heaven your home, you must understand that it is going to take more than just a trip to an altar, more than just requesting prayer, more than a good desire, and more than making a resolution to get you through the portals of glory when this life is over.

Paul could see what was developing back then, and he was endeavoring to open the eyes and the minds of this congregation at Thessalonica regarding these dangers. He warned them not to be soon shaken in mind, because as the mind goes, so goes the life. When Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem and beheld the ruin, he embarked on the journey of repairing the city. He said that they rebuilt the wall because the people had a mind to work.

In Philippians 2:5-8 the Apostle Paul instructed the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. . . . he humbled himself, and became obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross." You must let the mind of Christ be in you. God's children have the mind of Christ. We must be aware that forces, spirits, and powers are at work to shake us regarding the things of God. You must bear in mind that if there is any shortcoming in your life along the way, it will not be overlooked on Judgment Day.

Harden Not Your Heart

The Apostle Paul saw the signs of the first apostasy. Elements were rising among the brethren back then, endeavoring to stir up their minds and to get their minds agitated concerning wrong. Paul, moved by God and the Holy Spirit, wrote to them, not only to put their minds at ease but also to make them aware of where the true dangers were.

He warned them not to be soon shaken in mind or they would be in trouble. Today many people are in great trouble with God, and it seems that no amount of preaching can straighten them out. They have developed their own frame of mind regarding how they think things should be without consulting the Word of God. They do not base their decisions on the Word of God. Regardless of how God is striving to awaken them, they let it pass and continue in that state.

In the letter to the church of the Laodiceans, in Revelation 3:15-16, Jesus said: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot [God will not tolerate that condition], I will spue thee out of my mouth."

One of the hardest things for the Jews to understand back in the days of Christ was how God could give them up and choose another people to fulfill His purpose. They absolutely refused to accept that as a fact. Instead of accepting it, they went on and crucified the Lord of Glory. They persisted in their rejec-

tion of God's Son only to see Jerusalem demolished and their fellow brethren destroyed. With all the destruction that befell them, many of their descendants today are still holding on to the same rebellion and unbelief of their forefathers.

The writer to the Hebrews tried to paint a picture before those brethren. In Hebrews 3:1-6 the writer penned these words: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Hardened Through the Deceitfulness of Sin

The confidence and the rejoicing of this hope must be held steadfastly. Hebrews 3:7-8 reads: "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear His voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Even back then, a hardening process was developing among the chosen people of God. Paul wrote to warn the brethren in his day to beware of this. He recounted the quotation by the Psalmist David referring to the Israelites in the wilderness and made an up-to-date application of it. Friend, do not let this hardening get hold of you.

I wonder what Paul might say had he been living in these days. Undoubtedly he would emphasize that people not harden their hearts. He would have admonished people

not to repeat the same mistake that the forefathers made back in the wilderness when they tried to prove God and His mighty works for forty years. In spite of the acquaintance they had with the works of God, they allowed their hearts to become so hardened that they would not obey God's Word. I fear that is what is happening to people today. You have to guard yourself against that happening to you. Believe me, it can get hold of you just as surely as it got hold of those people back then.

We read in Hebrews 3:10, "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways." You may contend that the Israelites were not saved, and I agree that they had not had the blood of Christ applied to their hearts. However, you must bear in mind that this message to the Hebrews was to people who had the blood applied to them. In Hebrews 3:1 the writer was calling them holy brethren. They were partakers of the heavenly calling, and the Hebrew writer was calling on them to consider the possibility of their making the same mistake that their forefathers made. There is such a thing as taking too much for granted.

Verses 11-13 continue: "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." That message was to the Hebrew people in Paul's day, but it still serves as a warning to this generation. That same condition is just as possible today as it was back then. Today people are being hardened against God and against the things of God.

"Let No Man Deceive You"

You may wonder what all this has to do with 2 Thessalonians. Paul said not to be shaken or you will be

in trouble. Today the religious world is in trouble. Lots of churchgoers are in trouble with God. Sinners are also in trouble. This is a troublesome time. Jesus, in His closing message to His disciples, just before going to Calvary, said in John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled. . . ." He was calling the disciples' attention to things that would soon come. He had been exhorting them regarding His going away.

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

Jesus was forewarning Peter that he was going to deny Him and that he was going to fail. Jesus went on to say in John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." You need to have your confidence rooted in that which God has promised.

In John 14:8-9 we read: "Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"

Jesus went on to warn them about the tribulations that they would encounter in this world. These exhortations were recorded to serve as a warning to us today. Some people may say they do not see anything to be alarmed about. This condition that I am speaking of is not localized, but it is working throughout the world. You are not immune to it. Therefore, God is warning His people not to become shaken. The Apostle Paul made it very plain that becoming shaken in your experience increases the possi-

bility of being deceived. How do we know? Paul went on to say, "Let no man deceive you by any means" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Take Heed

Paul went on to tell the people of other dangers with which they were being faced. He was warning them of the developing of Roman Catholicism. I must remind you that the same spirit that produced Papal Rome (or Roman Catholicism) is still around today, working the same disastrous work. That spirit did not automatically disintegrate when the prophecy concerning Roman Catholicism was fulfilled, but that spirit is still working.

Again, Hebrews 3:10 reads, "Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart [not in their head, not in their thoughts, not in their beliefs, but in their heart]; and they have not known my ways." This experience with God has to do with the heart. If you keep the heart right, the head will be right; but merely keeping the head right will never make the heart right. It takes the heart being right to get the head straightened out.

Too many times people are striving to straighten out the head when the heart is defective. That is the reason it is going to take more than going to church to establish a relationship between your soul and God. The sin condition is not skin deep; it goes down into the heart. Paul said to take heed, to exhort one another, and to admonish one another every day. Why? Lest you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 3:14-19 reads: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom

was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." The point that the writer was striving to make was that you can take for granted the mercies of God to the degree that you reach the point of no return.

Going back to our Scripture text, Paul said not to be shaken or you will be in trouble. What will the trouble be? You may become deceived. People who at one time contended for holiness now are rejecting and opposing it. People who once stood and cried out against Babylon are slowly but surely slipping back to the courts of Babylon. Some people never fully left sectism, because they never got rid of the spirit of it.

God took the Israelites out of Egypt, but it took Him forty years to get Egypt out of them. Some of them never did get it out of them, and they perished in the wilderness. Whenever a rough situation came along, they would throw it in Moses' face and say, "We would to God that you had left us in Egypt." Even when they were right on the border of going into the Promised Land, some of them wanted to organize an expedition that would take them back into Egypt.

Not Receiving the Love of the Truth

In Acts 7:51 Stephen stood up and looked his opposers in the eyes and said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." My friend, you need to be careful that you do not walk in that same way and make the same mistake. This thing is very serious. The wording of our Scripture text declares "that they all might be damned."

Those religious people did not receive the love of the Truth. It is

one thing to know the Truth, and it is another thing to love the Truth. Jesus said when the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth. You must open your heart and make room to receive it. You must be willing to make sacrifices in order to get this love of the Truth, but it is worth it. Without the love of the Truth you will be damned.

Paul stated that God would send a strong delusion that will make one believe a lie rather than the Truth. Look how sinful the world is becoming. When God sends a message from the pulpit that gets close to people, some take exception to it. Some people are looking to be entertained at church, and once it is no longer entertainment, they want nothing to do with it. Some people prefer to pull up the blanket, flip off the switch, and go to sleep, spiritually speaking. The tragedy that lies in such a practice is expressed in Verse 12 of our Scripture text: "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Paul let us know that this unsettled state of being shaken in mind and in spirit will open the way for deception. You see, the deceit will come after you are shaken in mind. Sometimes people become stirred for no reason other than their true condition has been presented to them. Too often they get stirred and become rebellious to the point of walking away and never coming back. They take up membership in some so-called church or go back into Babylon. These actions and developments are taking place today.

Verse 3 of our Scripture text reads, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." There are two actions here. One is the action of falling, and the other is the action of wandering away from that which they have fallen from. Look at the developments today, and you will see the workings of this thing. Sometimes I stand amazed at the way history

repeats itself. The very conditions from which the people suffered back in the beginning of this Christian dispensation are being renewed in the last days of this Christian dispensation.

Opposing God's Way

Hebrews 6:1-6 states: "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

In dealing with this Scripture, many people think this is talking about backsliding, but it is referring to something more serious than backsliding. This by no means is teaching that a backslider cannot find his way back to God or that a backslider cannot get saved again. Paul said in the Scripture lesson that a falling away would come first, and that man of sin would be revealed, the son of perdition. He was talking about the apostasy that developed into popery. Unfortunately the same possibility still lies before God's people. Today people are still falling away, and as a result, they are being revealed as men of sin because they oppose the right way; they oppose God's way.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:1-2: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with

a hot iron."

This is an illustration of what this falling away implies. Very few of the people in the first Christian dispensation who fell away from the apostolic teaching recovered. Seldom do people recover when they have departed from the Truth. They may go on with a profession of religion, but that does not mean that things are clear between them and God. Paul emphasized that one must go on to perfection. One must desire to reach out after more and more of the things of God.

The brethren in Thessalonica were told there would be a great falling away from the Truth and that the man of sin would be revealed. That refers to popery, but I do not believe it is restricted solely to that. I believe it has a wider scope of meaning. I am simply saying that the same spirit that produced the first pope is still around. Today there are a lot of little "popes" rising up who have no regard for God, His Word, or His Spirit. They attempt to make their own way. They are putting forth all kinds of teachings, and people are receiving them. They are not bringing people nearer to God and producing a better people for God, but they are dragging people further away from God. You need to be aware of these developments and the dangers of these things.

The Spirit of Divisiveness

The latter part of verse 3 and verses 4-9 of our Scripture text read: ". . . that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; [Who is he?] Who opposeth and exalteth himself [You have to be careful about opposition. This generation has taken the attitude that they are free to oppose whomever and whatever they choose. The first sign of the man of sin will be a spirit of opposition and a spirit of self-exaltation. This spirit of divisiveness, of division, and of opposition is hiding behind the cloak of religion, and it is not of God. People need to get saved from that spirit and get deliverance

from it or they are going to be lost.] above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

"Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? . . . For the mystery of iniquity doth already work [It is only being restrained because of some who dare to stand up for what is right]; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

I never thought I would see the day when these things would happen, but it is being done in these last days. I can yet remember the days when these things could only be applied to Babylon. If people have the spirit of sectism, they are still in Babylon. Having the name Church of God over the door does not make you Church of God. You must have the Spirit of God in your heart and life and live according to the mandates of the Word of God. You have to guard against this condition and not allow it to overpower you and destroy you.

The spirit of ease that is overtaking people today is detrimental to Christianity. It is time to rise against it. It has gotten to the place where churches do not hold services on Sunday nights anymore because the people will not attend. Some places do not have services on certain nights during revivals because the people will not come. It hurts me when I see how many people are allowing the enemy of their souls to rob them of the opportunity of being useful for God and His kingdom.

Give God First Place

Paul wrote in the Thessalonian letter of a shaking time coming. This shaking is to bring people out of the

condition they have gotten in. Whenever you squeeze a sponge, whatever is in that sponge is going to come out. Whenever God puts the squeeze on people, whatever is inside is going to come forth. If it is good, it is going to be good. If it is bad, it is going to be bad. If you have an experience with God, it ought to be deep enough that it can stand some shaking. You had better reexamine your experience.

Paul warned of consequences that would be far reaching. He said this condition that developed back in those days and has developed now in our time is a condition that will produce pleasure in wrongdoing. Paul warned that they all might be damned who have not obeyed the Truth and who had pleasure in unrighteousness. Many people are so far away from God and yet so pronounced in their rejection and their rebellion to the overtures of God's mercy. If anything about you does not please God, it will be worth everything for you to get it out of your life. Sinner, it does not matter what sin you are bound with, it will be worth everything for

you to let Jesus save your soul. You need to let Jesus deliver you.

I am not going to tell you that Jesus is coming next week, next month, or next year; but I am saying that according to the Scriptures, things are shaping up to the point where you can look for Him any time. If you are planning to make Heaven your home, it is time for you to awake and arise from the dead and let Christ shine into your heart. He wants first place in your life. You must give Him first place in your affection and your devotion.

Surely we all know that as long as God allows us to stay in this world, He has a reason for it. No matter what transpires along the way, all things are designed to work for our good. We need to tell Him often that we really appreciate what He does for us. We are living in a world that is very changeable, and the god of this world is working to blind the eyes of people so that the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ might not shine to them. Nevertheless, with all that Satan attempts, the Scripture states that God's kingdom

"ruleth over all" (Psalm 103:19). You can be encouraged in living for God. There is no need to despair and to become discouraged.

There is no question that sin is prevailing on every hand. Evil spirits are lurking around, seeking whom they may deceive and devour; yet through it all, God is still in control. The Apostle John said in 1 John 4:4, "... greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The best thing that anyone can do with his or her life is to give it to God.

In Matthew 22:37 Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." You need to remember that if you do not, you will not be included in that number. God does not want you to be lost. He wants you to be saved. You can, by the grace of God, make it safely through to Heaven if you will obey His voice. May God bless you.

(Cassette C-2072E)

[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2] the Truth. You can be assured that they are out there. It is going to take the Spirit of God to lead someone to where they are. We all are workers together with Christ for the purpose of winning souls to Him. Please do not feel that your efforts or your help is unneeded, unnecessary, or insignificant. Many hands are needed to accomplish the task, along with much prayer. May

God guide and direct those who are financially able to support this work.

When this life is finished and the rewards are given, each one will be grateful to have had a part in winning men and women to Christ and to His true church. Our desire and intention is to use this publication as a means to "proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"

(Isaiah 61:1) and to cry aloud, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city" (Revelation 14:8). Also, we want to see the people of God "stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Revelation 15:2).

If you are not already carrying a burden for this work of publishing the good news, we sincerely ask you to join us now. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated!

Again, we say, "Thank you!"

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