

"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 Matt. 24:31

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 42 June 2012 No. 6



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Vol. 42 June 2012 No. 6

Guest Editorial

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

Psalm 122:1

LET'S GO TO CAMP MEETING

It is the first of June and almost time for another camp meeting season to begin at God's Acres. In a few weeks (June 17th), we will gather together on the old campground. It will be a time to worship together with the dear saints. As always, camp meeting is a special time of year when we gather in to enjoy the godly atmosphere. It is a time when, as saints, we can escape the hassles of life and have our souls refreshed. What a wonderful opportunity to feast on heavenly manna and to enjoy the good things that God has to share with us!

The Lord always prepares a table for His people so He can encourage hearts that need to be uplifted. He is so gracious to enrich our hearts with greater wisdom and understanding. In addition to this, He challenges the saints to keep pressing toward the goal. We, too, are like the Psalmist who said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." He knew the importance of going to the house of the Lord. There he received help and instruction for his spiritual needs. We surely believe the Psalmist looked forward to joining others to fellowship and to hear the Word of God proclaimed.

All things are being made ready for your arrival at God's Acres. The saints have been working hard to get the campground and the facilities ready for your stay. The appearance of God's Acres is certainly important, but

that is not our highest priority. Having a spiritual atmosphere for people to come into is our greatest desire and purpose. Our burden and prayer is for the Holy Spirit to be free to work and todo as He pleases in the services. When He is in the midst and having His way, needy souls are able to find help and hope. Camp meeting is for the lost and the downtrodden and also a time for the saints to have their strength renewed and their souls encouraged.

We are living in troublesome times, seeing the forces of evil turned loose against the people of God. Forces led by Satan are determined to destroy our faith and to defeat us, if possible. Satan's purpose is to turn away as many as possible from the path of holiness and true righteousness. Dear one, we need all the instruction and direction that we can receive of the Lord. Learning about the good old paths and understanding those things that please God are as needful today as ever.

The Hebrew writer instructed us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in Hebrews 10:25. It is through hearing the Word of God, believing it, and obeying it that brings victory to the soul. In James 1:22 James also proclaimed good admonition when he said to be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Saint, this is no time to relax your efforts or to become indifferent, but rather it is time to do as

[continued on page 6]

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed;

because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

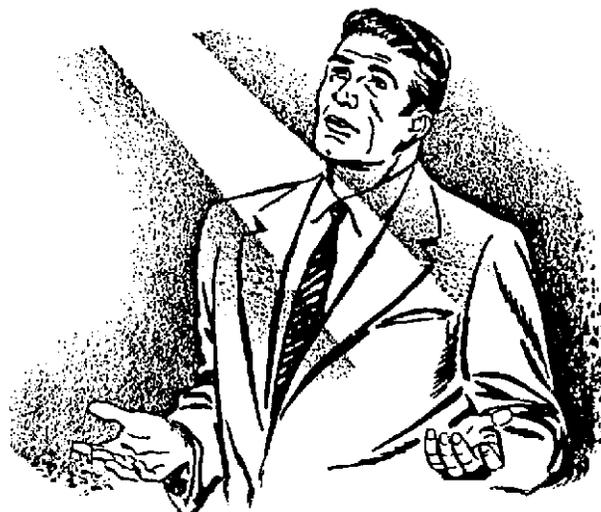
8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Being Justified



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Necessity of Justification

I want you to consider justification and the necessity of justification to become a child of God. The word *justified* means "to be free from blame, to be acquitted, or to be declared guiltless before Almighty God." When one is justified, he can have freedom to serve God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. If you have not been justified, according to the Bible, you are under the wrath of God, and you are in danger of spending eternity lost and separated, not only from that which

is good but also from God forever.

You may feel that you are a good person, and maybe you are. Perhaps you are a good moral person and have never done anything vile. Maybe you were raised in church from a little child up. Suppose you are not a drunk or a thief, you pay your taxes, you have never been arrested, and you are a good neighbor and support your family. All these things are commendable, dear one, but unfortunately that is what prevents many people from being saved. They feel they do not need salvation because

they are good moral people. Really they are in the same position as the Orthodox Jew was at the First Advent of Jesus Christ. They felt the same way. They had their own righteousness, and people's own righteousness is nothing more than self-righteousness.

In Romans 10:1-4 the Apostle Paul wrote: "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." What did they do? They established their own righteousness.

Paul wrote in Philippians 3:9, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." I am afraid that the spirit of self-righteousness has gotten hold of many people today. As long as they feel they are good family members, pay their bills, are good morally, and are friendly and helpful to others, they seem to feel that replaces justification. On the contrary, the Bible lets us know that every one of us needs to be justified, not only in our own eyes but also in the eyes of God.

If you are not justified, the Bible lets you know that you are considered to be an enemy of God. Dear one, I would much rather have God as my friend than my enemy. God is not going to justify the wicked in any other way than the way He has laid out in His Word.

The Bible says in Exodus 23:7, "Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked." We read in Psalm 7:11, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." It would not be very much fun to go to bed at night with God angry at you, and then wake up the next morning and face that same anger. God is angry with the wicked, not just once a week, but every single day.

The word *angry* lets us know that God is enraged because He abhors wickedness. Not being justified before God is dangerous. It is like walking around as a suicide bomber with a vest full of explosives ready to go off at any moment. You never know what a day will hold for you. There is a danger of appearing

before God in a lost condition. An accident or a tragedy can take place in a matter of seconds. You might not have time to pray or to do anything but hang on. You can be ready to face such things when you are justified before God, and He will be right there to help you through those situations. When you have prayed and you are justified, you are blameless and guiltless before God.

Sin Separates

All who are guilty of sin are under the penalty of sin, and that penalty overshadows their lives. Sin separates families, it separates brethren, and it separates one from God. It cuts one off from fellowship with God. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve once enjoyed fellowship with God, but when sin came in, they tried to hide themselves from Him.

The Bible lets us know in Isaiah 59:2, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." The only thing a sinner away from God can look forward to is continuing in that condition, facing the wrath of God's torments, and being lost forever in eternity. Think of that! Time passes so quickly. It keeps moving every second, every minute, every hour, every week, every month, and every year. Time has a way of getting away from us. Dear one, it pays to be justified—blameless, guiltless, with no sin in your account. Under the old Law, the blood of bulls and goats made atonement for man's sin. The Law had rites and rituals and the blood of animals to make atonement for men's sins, but those sacrifices under the old Law were just a type and a shadow of the good things to come. I thank God that the good things have come!

Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by

year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." Some people get hung up on keeping the sabbath, but the word *sabbath* is not in the Book of Genesis, and there is not one individual who ever kept the sabbath until the Law was given. All it says in Genesis is that God rested on the seventh day. It does not say anything about man resting until the Law was instituted. Thank God, Jesus Christ is our sabbath. We do not have to choose one day of the week to rest.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The keepers of the old Law were under the Mosaic Law. I repeat, the old Law was a shadow of good things to come, and thank God, the good things have come. The blood of animals was shed involuntarily. They had to drag the animal to the slaughter, but there needed to be a voluntary sacrifice. Why? Because we are creatures of choice. The animal did not have a choice, but our High Priest had a choice. He is different from all those under the Law. Hebrews 7:27 states, "Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself." Christ offered up Himself. He was not dragged to the Cross; He walked to the Cross.

John 10:15 says, "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep." Animal sacrifices could not remove the guilt of sin and satisfy the soul of mankind.

Hebrews 10:1-4 reads: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again

made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Justified by Faith

Being justified and able to stand before God means that one must believe in the shed blood of Jesus Christ. His blood satisfied the wrath of God. God was pleased with His Son.

Look at the Old Testament prophesy in Isaiah 53:10-12: "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

Second Peter 1:17 tells us, "For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In order for an individual to be justified, he must go through the blood of Jesus Christ. He is your sacrifice for sin. The blood of Jesus is the only way the guilt and the penalty for sin can be removed. If the blood has not been applied to your heart, dear one, you are still guilty, and you are still under the penalty of sin. Only the blood can free you from guilt and wrath.

Romans 3:23 reads, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It does not say that all were sinners, but it says "all have sinned." That is past tense. Every one of us has committed sin.

Verses 24-25 continue: "Being

justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." You are not saved if you have sin in your heart. When you get saved, every sin that you ever committed is washed away by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. No matter how vile you were, no matter how down and out you were, and no matter what side of the tracks you might have come from, when you come to Jesus Christ with faith in His blood, every sin that you have ever committed is washed away. Then you become as clean as a newborn baby just coming into this world. A baby comes into this world with no sin. A baby is guiltless. Likewise, when you are born again, you are no longer under the wrath of God, but you are under the blessings of God.

Romans 5:9 states, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The Holy Spirit does not take away sin. It is the blood of Jesus Christ that removes the sin. The Holy Spirit gives life; He gives victory, comfort, strength, and guidance. He leads you into all Truth, but He cannot wash away sins. The blood of Jesus Christ cleans up a man or a woman from the depths of sin.

You are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Your standing before God changes once the blood has been applied through faith. Again, what does the blood do? It takes away the guilt and the penalty of sin and enables you to stand before His presence. You come before the throne of grace and receive help right in the time of need. Jesus Christ died in my place, and He died in your place. He is the sacrifice for your sins and my sins. Thank God, He died for us when we were yet without strength. Jesus Christ died for you and me.

If you do not have faith in Jesus Christ and do not believe

that He is the acceptable sacrifice for sin, then in the eyes of God, you will not be justified until you are justified through Jesus Christ. You will be lost forever if you remain unjustified.

Being Reconciled With God

Our Scripture text says in verses 1-2: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In these two verses Paul mentioned at least three things that take place when you are justified. One is that you will have peace with God. Nothing is like having peace with God. That far outweighs any other peace we might know.

Those who have peace with God are at peace with one another. God is displeased with arguing, and somebody is going to have to answer to God for it. There is no reason that those who claim to be saints of God cannot get along. The Word of God lets us know that His people are peacemakers. Before I was saved, I was contentious and argumentative and ready to fight with anyone. When I got saved and the peace of God came in, I no longer wanted to fight.

We each had a carnal mind before we were saved, and a carnal mind is an enemy of God. Romans 8:7 says, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

The state of a sinner's mind is far from peace. In Isaiah 57:20 Isaiah said, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea." Have you ever been around a troubled sea, when the wind really kicks up and the waves wash up all kinds of mire and dirt upon the shore? I went down to the Cayman Islands after the big hurricane there, and I saw big rocks and boulders that had washed up out of the sea. I saw all kinds of mire on the seashore where the waves and

the hurricane came in and raised the water level. Of course, the water was turbulent and rolled many things out of the sea. That is what a troubled sea is like. It casts up mire and refuse. Isaiah said the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.

The sinner trembles when he thinks of God's laws. He fears God's judgment, and he is alarmed when he thinks of hell; but in God's plan of salvation, He wants to reconcile with you, sinner friend. He has made a way whereby you can be reconciled to Him. Isn't that wonderful? A holy God has made a way for every sinner to be reconciled with Him. You do not have to stay a sinner. If you want to be a friend of God and be a brother to Jesus Christ, you can be. You can reconcile with God. He is willing to reconcile. He is ready to pardon you, forgive you, and justify you. God's plan produces peace in your mind, and it is evidence that is felt when your heart is changed. Jesus said in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

The Way of Righteousness

Another thing that takes place when you are justified is that you will have grace to stand. The reason that some people are always in trouble and always seem to be in a scuffle is that they lack the grace of God in their lives to do better. Dear one, if you are ever going to make it into Heaven, Jesus Christ has to be your guide and your example. You must not follow other family members, but rather you have to be an individual who is justified before God for your own life.

As the saints of God, we rejoice in peace and rejoice in hope, which is the third thing that takes place when you are justified. We have trials and temptations just as everyone else does, but through the trials, the tribulations, and the temptations, we are never without hope. No matter how cast down we may

get and no matter how hopeless things may look, we always have hope.

How do you stand in your heart before God? Are you justified or are you under the wrath of God? You cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless you are justified. This is God's plan, and to try to climb up any other way is to deceive yourself.

The decision to serve God is up to you. You do not have to be justified. You can go on as you are. You have a right to do that, but you are walking on very thin ice when you try to choose your own time to be justified. You need to be justified when you hear God's Word and God's Holy Spirit is working on your soul. You need to be justified when God calls you, not when you feel that you are ready.

What does a man or a woman have to do to be justified? There is no justification without there first being obedience. We find in Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." If you want mercy and you want to be justified, there are a couple of things mentioned in verse 13 that must take place. You must confess your sins, not to other people or to your good friend, but to God. There is one more thing that you need to do: you must confess your sins and forsake, or turn away from, them. Those things are a must for you to be justified. When you have done that, the psalmist said in Psalm 32:1, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." You will go from being under wrath to being blessed.

Are you justified? This is God's desire. God would like to see everyone justified. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, and He wants to reconcile every man and every woman to God.

Proverbs 12:28 says, "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." In closing, how about your soul? Without justification you are under wrath. With justification you are

being blessed by God. Again, it is your choice. God is such a gentleman. He will knock at your heart's door and work on your mind, but He will never force you to submit to Him.

(Compact Disc TR-767M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2]
Paul said in Philippians 3:14, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." If you expect to make it through with victory, you must press firmly against the odds.

Camp meetings are designed with our spiritual welfare in mind. Our deep desire is to provide a spiritual atmosphere for those who come to God's Acres. We encourage you to attend the camp meeting to have your soul fed and your spirit refreshed. Although the cost of gasoline has skyrocketed, we are trusting that the Lord will make a way for you to attend. The Lord will surely amply repay every effort and sacrifice that you make.

Brother Decker extends a special invitation to each of you to join us here at God's Acres for the camp meeting. If you have not been here for a while, we will be eager to see you. Last, but not least, if you have not begun to pray for the camp meeting, we earnestly ask you to do so. God's direction and presence is most certainly needed in every service. Please pray for God to send the messages needed. Having Him in our midst as the Honored Guest is of utmost importance. He is the only hope of redemption for those who are lost.

**The Christian who
is pulling the oars
does not have time
to rock the boat.**

Psalm 37:1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.



Delight Thyself in the Lord

Brother Richard Talbot

God's Promise

Our Scripture text in verse 4 reads, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." In looking at this verse, what is the most meaningful word? It is the word *desire*. If you will delight yourself in God, He will give you the desires of your heart. The most important word to God in this verse is *delight*.

God is not so much concerned about your desires as He is about your delighting yourself in Him. Somewhere along the line, you have to get things balanced. You might have lots of desires and lots of things that you feel that you need. You might lack lots of things in your life that you want fulfilled; but in essence, God said: "If you want your desires fulfilled, you have to do something for Me." You must

delight yourself in the Lord, and then He will consider your desires.

Isaiah 58:14 says, "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." What a wonderful promise that is! If you will delight yourself in the Lord, God will cause you to ride upon the high places of

the earth. He will make your feet like hind's feet, so that you can leap and shout and praise God over the top of all your problems in life in all the dark and dreary days.

God is able to bring to the child of God an infusion of joy unspeakable and full of glory. God is able to lift the heart when nothing else can. He is able to satisfy the hungry, seeking soul when nothing else on earth can do it. God can break through the clouds and bring glory to your soul and strengthen you and lift you up. Nothing else on the face of the earth can do that.

You might have millions of dollars and a new car, but those things cannot come close to meeting what you need in the depths of your inner being. Jesus said in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

False religion makes a big claim on this verse. A lot of television evangelists and big speakers and powerful men in the religious world harp on this verse, saying: "God will give you the desires of your heart. Just ask Him. You can have two cars in your garage, and you can have this and that if you will seek the Lord and send *me* ten dollars; then God will bless you abundantly."

I received a pamphlet in the mail years ago from a man, and it had his hands traced on a piece of cardboard. It said that if you would lay your hands on top of his, anything that you prayed for would come to you if you would send him ten dollars. Ten dollars may not sound like much, but if someone could convince a million people to send ten dollars, that would equate to quite a bit of money. Needless to say, I did not do it. The world is full of such ideas.

God is calling on us to do some great things. "Delight thyself also in the LORD." The first prerequisite in getting your needs fulfilled is to delight yourself in the LORD. Desire must be understood. When your heart's delight is in the Lord, then

your desires will be God's desires. The things that you are longing for and needing will be things that will enrich your life spiritually.

God Will Provide

God is not promising you great wealth. If riches increase, that is fine, but you should not set your heart on them. God has promised to meet the needs of your soul and to fill it with satisfaction, peace, joy, happiness, righteousness, holiness, and all the things that you will need in eternity. You need to make up your mind to aim for Heaven. You need to settle it in your heart and life that you are going to Heaven, whether you have to go wealthy or poor, hungry or full, and whether you have all your earthly desires met or not.

I am going to live for God and set my goal on Heaven. If you will aim for Heaven, God will throw in many joys of earth along the way. On the other hand, if you aim at earth, you will not receive either. If you set your sights on Heaven, God will bless you on earth. He will meet your earthly needs as well as give you the joys of Heaven. If you set your sights on earth, you will miss everything.

One who has faith in doing this needs no explanation, but for someone without faith, there is no explanation possible. If you believe, it is simple. You may ask, "Why do you live as you do?" I do it because I believe in the Word of God. I have no problem with what I believe, but without faith there is no way to explain any of this to people.

What does the word *delight* mean? It means "to affect with great pleasure, to please highly, to give or to afford high satisfaction or joy and harmony." Just as we delight in God, He delights in us. Psalm 119:16 says, "I will delight myself in thy statutes." Romans 7:22 reads, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." We need to realize that to delight yourself in the Lord is more than what we think about

many times. To delight yourself in the Lord is to make Him your greatest object of living, to make Him the joy of your life, and to give Him your entire being.

The word *desire* means "to wish, to crave, or to want; to long for satisfaction, pleasure, or enjoyment; a strong feeling for something." Verse 4 of our Scripture text does not say the Lord will give you what your heart is set on; therefore, you must delight in Him. When you delight yourself in the Lord, you let Him be your joy, your fountain of happiness, and the object of your desire. If you will do this, your deepest wants and your highest aspirations will be satisfied in Him. Delighting in God includes your satisfaction and joy.

In whom or what are you to consider your delight? The answer is the Lord. You are to delight yourself in the Lord. That includes delighting yourself in God, in all that God is, in all that He represents, and in all that He stands for in the universe, in the world, in life, and in you as a person. You should delight yourself in all His glory as the eternal infinite Creator, in His power, in His wisdom, in His goodness, in His perpetual presence, in His unfailing care of the universe, and in all that God has declared Christ to be in the Holy Scriptures. Delight yourself in the Lord. Part of the job of every pastor is to keep his congregation delighted in the Lord and to inspire them to take a fresh hold and to get their sights where they need to be.

Church, we should delight ourselves in the Lord when we enter the sanctuary. We should go in ready to worship God, ready to give Him glory, ready to give Him praise, and ready to give Him honor. When we leave, we ought to leave with the same purpose. We do not stop worshiping God because we walk out of the church building. We continue our worship by giving God honor on the job, in the home, or wherever we go. On the job, the workers around you should know that your delight is in God. The people around you need to know that you delight in the Lord.

Pleasing the Father

In John 1:18 Jesus stated, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." How did Jesus declare the Father? He did not do it in any audible voice, but in His own person and life. He is the manifestation of God to the world. Jesus came to give glory and honor to the Father. He said in John 6:38, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." His whole purpose and ambition while He was here on earth was to please His Father. As a child of God, your whole ambition must be to please the Father in the home, in your marriage, and with your children. If you please God, He will be pleased to work with you. If you will delight yourself in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart.

The characteristics that we know of Christ, we also know about the Father. Jesus told Phillip, "When you have seen me, you have seen the Father." The only person we can identify with and the only personality we are familiar with enough to recognize is that of Jesus Christ. We recognize Him through the Word; He has shown us the Father. He is the image of the Father; He is the likeness of the Father. As He was, so are each of us to be in our aim, our ambition, and our desires to please the Father.

Not many years back, we often saw the letters "WWJD" displayed. It meant, "What would Jesus do?" Many people were putting those letters on bumper stickers on their cars, and some of the schools had stickers with these letters. As we each think about our lives, we need to consider what we are doing for Jesus. How are you living since 9/11? Many people have been saying, "God bless America," but oh how the people of America need to realize they need to get turned around and delight themselves in the Lord. If the people of America

were delighting themselves in God, the blessings would come as they have in the past. We must take delight in Christ to delight ourselves in God.

Colossians 2:9 teaches, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." You can know God by knowing His Son; you experience God by experiencing His Son. You can have God by accepting His Son. You can have answered prayer by pleasing the Father. You can experience the true joy of forgiveness because of the forgiveness that you have received from the Son. You can also freely and completely forgive others because of divine forgiveness. You can experience real peace. Jesus is the peace. You can experience the fullness of unity and the richness of fellowship because of His Son.

We have righteousness, peace, and joy because of His Son. I could go on and on describing the wonderful things that we have enjoyed and experienced in God, but the Scripture teaches us to delight in the Lord. It is telling us that our desires should not be in consideration.

The foremost pull on the soul must be the joy of the Lord. Isaiah 12:3 reads, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Delight is to be fully and completely satisfied with God being contented with us. Is God really contented with your life? Is God satisfied with how you are reacting with Him? There are so many people who have run out of delight, just like an automobile running out of fuel.

Setting Your Affections on the Lord

God wants you to learn that no matter what happens, your delight has to be in Him. You should not find fault with or question God no matter what happens, but you should delight in the Lord, no matter what happens. I had to learn that, have you? I am not saying that

I actually questioned the Lord, but the devil will throw things into your mind. You should not despair over your human failings, but you should delight in the Lord and keep your delight there. Do not run out on your delight. Too many times individuals get a little careless or a little lukewarm. They get tried in their souls, and their interest begins to spread to lots of other things, and that is always a detriment to your soul.

Our interest should be just like it is in a marriage. You might have a good marriage, but if you do not continue to work at the love in your marriage, your marriage is going to become stale, and then what is going to happen? Your mind is going to wonder. "I wonder what it would be like if I had married So-and-So" or "I wonder if I should have gotten married?" As your mind begins to wonder, your delight in your husband or your wife will become less and less. The same thing can happen in your experience with God. You may get discouraged because things are not working as you think they should, and what will happen? Your mind will begin to wander as your love waxes colder.

Wife, you need to be careful of what kinds of questions you ask your husband. Do not think that you can ask him just anything, because if he is honest with you, you may not like what he has to tell you. When a couple loses their delight in each other, trouble is going to come. You have to work at keeping your delight in your marriage. It does not come naturally. You have to work through differences, feelings, faults, and problems that you did not know about when you got married. Marriage is an eyeopener, but it is too late then.

Lots of people think living for God is wonderful (and it really is), but they do not understand all the hard places and the difficulties. You are going to have hard places even if you live for the devil. Living for God and having it rough is a far better way to go, because you have a God

in whom you can delight, and He will meet the needs of your soul. Man's greatest need is what he lacks down inside his heart. It is not material things such as money, cars, houses, or land; but it is that need in the depths of his being. Therefore, you must keep your delight in the Lord.

Do you really take great pleasure in the Lord? Are you really rejoicing in the Lord or do you delight yourself in your own heart, your own mind, and your own interests? Your entire focus of life should be fully and completely God centered. This does not mean that you cannot do anything else. You do have to work, maintain your home and your car, and go shopping and buy things. You have to do all the things the world does; but in the midst of all of that, you must set God as the center of all your activities and delight yourself in Him. You can do that while you are on the job or repairing the car. You can set your center of affections on Jesus Christ.

Making God Your Supreme Delight

In Isaiah 58:13-14 Isaiah said: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD." That is a very tight path to walk, turning your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on God's holy day.

Our holy days are every day. We are not to do our own thing in our lives. We are not to live our own way or to choose our own walk. Young person, you need to pray and get the mind of God for your future. It is possible that God might want you to go to college, but on the other hand, He might not want you to go. College is not the answer for every-

body, and every Christian may not be able to handle college. God knows what route for you to take. You need to ask God to help you choose your high school subjects. You need to pray and get the mind of God concerning what courses you should study. You must seek God in your life and make Him your supreme delight. God will never fail you; He will never let you down. Do not be like the world or fret yourself because of all the evil doers and look at how they are prospering.

You may say, "I want to go to college so I can get a good, big paying job." Dear one, you may get it and lose your soul in the process. You need to delight yourself in the Lord and ask, "God, what would You have me to do? Where should I go? What vocation should I pursue?" You ought to let God direct you, and if your parents are godly parents, you ought to listen to their advice.

During my last couple years of high school, I worked part time, and I have been working ever since. I worked in a S. S. Kresge store, which was a forerunner of the K-Mart store. They called it "the five and dime." I cleaned the lunch counter, scrubbed the garbage cans, and mopped the floor. I made \$1.15 an hour. After I was there for one year, I got up enough courage to go to the manager and tell him that I felt that I deserved a raise, and he said, "You think so?"

I said, "Yes, sir, I've been here for over a year and have never missed work. I've been faithful, and I think I deserve a raise."

He said, "Well, we will see about it."

On my next paycheck, I received a ten-cent raise.

After I worked there another year, I was graduating from high school, and the manager came up to me and said: "We are really impressed with your work for us. We would like to send you down to Frankfort, Kentucky. They are opening up their first K-Mart store. We would like to send you down there and put you in the management

training. We would like you to stay with the company and work your way up." I was excited!

I went home and told Mom and Dad, "Right after high school I get to go to Frankfort, Kentucky, and become a manager." I could just see the big dollars! I was eighteen years of age and that opportunity was laid out ahead of me.

My mother said, "Where would you go to church, son? I don't think that would be wise for you to even consider such a move. First of all, you are far too young to be out like that."

"But I am eighteen!"

"You are still too young."

Young person, you may get it into your head: "When I become eighteen, my mom and dad are going to see the last of me for a while. I am legally able to do what I want." You had better get another thought in your mind. If you have parents like I did, they would not go along with that law. My mother's will prevailed, and I surrendered that great ambition to God. I wanted to delight myself in the Lord. I did not want to lose my soul.

When my boss first told me of that opportunity, I did not think of anything else right then except that chance for advancement, but my mother brought me back to reality when she asked where I would go to church. That shot the idea down; there was not even an argument. I could not have gone down there and survived spiritually without having my soul fed, so I turned around to delight myself in God. Do you know what? God has given me more than Frankfort, Kentucky, could have ever given me. He has blessed my life abundantly. He has satisfied my desires and my longings. I do not have much, but I do not want for anything. I have no material needs. My wife was going to the store recently and inquired, "Do you need anything?"

I replied, "No, I don't know of a thing that I need." Oh, I could think of lots of wants, just like everybody else, but I do not have any needs. God has taken good care of us.

Taking Pleasure in God and His Word

You need to delight yourself in the Lord and really settle it in your heart that nothing is more important than delighting yourself in the Lord. Again, Isaiah 58:13 reads, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath [in our day and age, you would say holiness, righteousness, or godliness] a delight, [Very few Christians really think of holiness and righteousness as a delight. It is a liability to many. Holiness is a detriment and righteousness is a liability, even to the nicest of religious people. On the other hand, holiness is a delight to the saint of God. I love holiness, righteousness, and godliness. It has captured my attention so that I can focus my heart on things that delight the Lord.] . . . and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words."

Verse 14 continues, "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places." God is able to give you victory, power, glory, and strength in every situation of life. Delight yourself in the Lord so that even sorrows cannot hide the love of God in your soul, so that sickness and death will not rob you of your peace and contentment, and so that hopelessness and disappointment will never turn you out of the way.

When my wife had open heart surgery about fourteen years ago, I did not have any idea if she would come out of that alive. She had a very bad heart, and the doctor did not understand why she was still living as she was. As he did that surgery, we waited for seven or eight hours. I was praying in the corner because I did not have any assurance from God that she was going to be okay. I was trying to prepare myself so that if she should die, I would be able to handle it. I was committing her to the Lord and praying that God would sustain me

and keep me. I had given her over to God's control. I determined that if God took her, it was not going to effect me against God. I intended to continue to delight in the Lord.

We cannot let death, trials, disease, sickness, hardships, or poverty take away our delight in the Lord. You can read in some old books of brethren who came up from poverty who lived for God. What delight they had! They would gather around the table with only some stale bread and cheese or something else and pray and thank God for what they had, yet they sang hymns and worshiped God. They were thankful for what they had. That ought to teach us that delighting in God is not a material thing. It is not that you have everything you want. He said if you will delight in the Lord, He shall give you the desires of your heart, and the desires of your heart will be desires that are compatible with God. All of this is due to the fact that, even though material things, physical health, and life are good in their places, our hearts cry out to be fully satisfied in Him.

Did you ever think about being the apple of God's eye? How sweet that is! Sometimes I whisper in my wife's ear, "You are the apple of my eye." That is a very tender expression, and the Lord speaks of it in this way. He said in Deuteronomy 32:10, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."

The proverbial expression refers to the thought of anything particularly precious that would be liable to be injured unless guarded with scrupulous care. Israel was ever in the eye of the Lord and the object of His constant, tenderest care. Child of God, you are ever in the eye of God, and you are deserving as such the tenderest of His care. That is the reason the Lord says you are the apple of His eye. Apples have to be treated tenderly or they will become bruised and damaged. God used the expression "the apple of His eye" to

show that He takes tender care of His people. In other words, He was saying, "I am going to watch over you and be very scrupulous in My care of you so that you do not get damaged." That is precious!

Proverbs 7:2 says, "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye." As God's people, we are the apple of God's eye, but now, in essence, God is saying, "Keep my law as the apple of your eye." The Lord likes that verse, but we like the other one. Paraphrasing the verse, it could read, "Keep My commandments and live; and My law as the apple of your eye. Take care of the Word of God in your life and keep it with scrupulous, tender care. Keep My Word precious to your heart: love it, obey it, embrace it, cry for more of it."

Do You Love the Word of God?

You should let your pastor know that you want him to preach the Word of God just the way it is. I do not want to change it or rearrange it in any way. You ought to love the Word of God. I love the Church of God, and I love the Truth to be close and straight, so there is no question as to how I should live. Some say that is a little too straight. Well, would you like to have it a little too straight and make Heaven your home or to have it a little too loose and lose your soul? Let us give God the benefit of the doubt. You should not have the attitude that you want to see how wide you can stretch it. That is where people get into trouble. Many things that are not written in black and white in the Scriptures are written there in principle.

If one were to preach only what is written in black and white, that could open the door to about anything. You could not preach against using tobacco or against the evils of dancing, the movies, or television. No Scriptures give a formula straight out for these things, word for word regarding dating and

courtship, but the principle is there – holiness.

No Scripture tells us about the dress length for the sisters. The Bible does not say that they ought to keep it high enough so that when they bend over nothing shows. The Bible does not tell you exactly how to dress, but it says modest apparel, and today people have different ideas concerning what is modest. That is the reason you have a pastor to set a standard. The principle of God's Word establishes the pastor as a watchman on the wall to set a standard for things the church needs to abide by. Some people say that the outward standard does not really matter one way or another. If it does not matter, then why not measure to it? Why fuss about it? You need to delight yourself in the Lord.

Again, Deuteronomy 32:10 states, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." God has led me and talked to me and kept me as the apple of His eye. If you are the apple of His eye, He wants His law to be the apple of your eye. As you obey His law, He will take care of you. That is fair, isn't it? You must take care of holding the Word precious to your heart, abiding in it, loving it, and caring for it.

We are living in an age when a pastor needs the tact of a diplomat, the strength of Samson, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Solomon, and a cast-iron stomach. Sometimes the pastor's stomach might get tied up in knots, so to speak. It hurts when dealing with souls who oppose the Truth and who damage themselves and other people. When people fall out of love with the Word, there is nothing else a pastor has to help them with. If you do not love the Truth, there is nothing anyone can do to help you. We help people through the Word of God. There is no other way to help them except through Jesus Christ. If they do not want Him, there is no sense in

talking to them.

If you lose your love for God's Word, there is nothing anybody can do to really help you, because it is the source of all help. That is the reason the Proverb writer said in Proverbs 7:2, "Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye."

The plight of our age and our society is that most people have become so used to the ease of life. Everything is geared to the pleasure and the comfort of the human wants and needs. The body is pampered, and its wants are satisfied. If not, people become upset and agitated and hard to live with. They are spoiled rotten, just as King Ahab was when Naboth refused to give him his vineyard. Ahab turned his face to the wall, cried, and pouted. Then he had a wife who did not do him any good. When Ahab told his wife that Naboth refused to give him his vineyard and he wanted it, she said, "Come and eat your supper," and she had someone kill Naboth.

Wife, do you have a pouter for a husband? Do you pout to get your way? Ahab's wife should have said: "Get up, you ole pouting thing! You need to straighten up. You don't need Naboth's vineyard. You have plenty of your own, you big baby!" Sometimes a wife can help her husband. My wife has helped me lots of times. She helps to balance me, and I have helped her too.

As husband and wife, you should not condone wrong in each other. A wife and a husband can really help each other. It may hurt

your feelings and step on your toes a little.

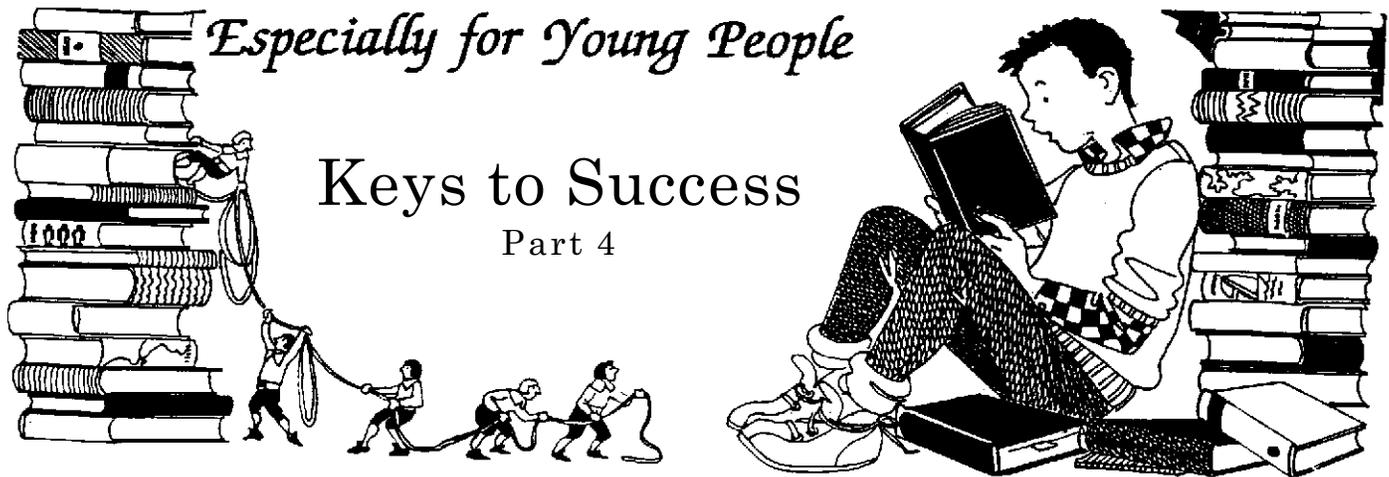
I have set my sights on Heaven, and I want to make Heaven my home. I have to keep my delight in the Lord and keep His law as the apple of my eye. It is a shame that God has to impose Himself on people sometimes to get them to do something for their souls. Sometimes He has to come down and almost shake people and say, "Wake up! This is for *your* benefit." If you have a need or a lack, if there is a lack of delight in the Lord in your soul, you need to wake up, get that need fulfilled, and let God rekindle the fires of love in your soul. Let God set you on fire of His Holy Spirit.

If there is a problem in your marriage, if your love has grown cold in your marriage, you need to let God rekindle that love. Do not stumble and keep going as though everything is fine, because it will only get worse. You need to keep yourself in the delight of God.

Mark 12:30 reads, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." Do you love God as you should? If there is a lack of delight in your soul, God can do for you what you need Him to do. You must be humble, submissive, and tender to the Lord if you want to make Heaven your home.

(Compact Disc TR-593E)

It is impossible for you to influence others to live on a higher level than that on which you live yourself.



Especially for Young People

Keys to Success

Part 4

In this issue I want to discuss how dedication can help you to perfect your spiritual success. God has a plan for your life that will help you to be spiritually successful, and He can perfect that success in such a way that you become a shining example of a child of God. I want you to realize that even though you may be successful in the eyes of God, you do have room for improvement. We can be perfect in His eyes, yet have room for greater perfection.

Serving God is the one thing in life that will bring satisfaction that can never be quenched. It always fosters something greater and more beautiful. That keeps us going, and that should be exciting to you. Young person, I want you to realize that you have an opportunity before you. You do not have to wait until a future time to start perfecting your spiritual success in the eyes of God.

Now is the appointed time for you to have a great desire to be more for God, to have a firm determination that you will stand for God no matter what, and to realize that a greater and more secure dedication to serving God will make you a wonderful example of a child of God. We can read about many young people in the Bible who did exactly what God wanted them to do. You have the opportunity to do exactly what God wants you to do, thus perfecting your spiritual success. Once again, we will look at the meaning of the word dedication. In

the dictionary we find that it means "a devotion with a quality of being devoted or committed to something, as in having dedication to duty; an inscription, a short printed text at the beginning of a written or musical work associating it with somebody esteemed by the author; a setting aside, an act of setting something aside for a purpose."

As we think about how dedication can play into our spiritual success and help to perfect it, we need to realize that in the setting aside of something, that setting aside should be you and I. God wants each of us to be set apart, to be something that is wholly His, with no attachments to anything but Him. When He can do that in a person's life, spiritual success is right there waiting.

One person who came to my mind in the course of studying for this message was Joshua. Joshua 1:1-11 says: "Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead: now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea

toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it."

We read many beautiful things in these verses, but we can see that

the Lord promised success to the children of Israel. It was a promise that He had made long ago to Moses and the children then. As God was bringing the same promise to light and into fruition, He also set forth requirements for Joshua. Again, verse 9 says, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Joshua knew that God would be with him. He also understood that God was requiring great dedication from him. Verse 7 reads, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest." The promise was there, but Joshua was commanded of God to keep all the Law, which had been commanded to Moses. There was a contingency on that promise. Joshua wholly followed God in such a manner that he was able to become a great leader to the nation of Israel.

As God granted Joshua a position of leadership, He required a level of dedication and commitment to Him in order for Joshua to sustain and perfect His success. That is exactly what God helped Joshua to do. He sustained him and perfected him, making him an incredible leader. As Joshua led the people of Israel, his dedication did not waver, but rather it increased and helped him to guide the children of Israel.

Joshua 24:14-16 reads: "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD [Joshua was speaking]. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood,

or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods."

Joshua had to tell the people to make their choice that day. He was determined that even if he had to go on alone, he and his house were going to serve the Lord. He had a desire to do what was right, and that required determination. He had been perfected in a beautiful way because of his unwavering and unfaltering dedication to God. He understood what it meant to be dedicated to God.

Like Moses before him, Joshua chose to give his life for those people, to lead them and to teach them what God had for them. In doing so, it came to the point where it seemed that the people wanted to go their own way. Joshua did not say: "I understand how you feel. It's all right for you to feel that way." He took a stand and said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." He was resolute and dedicated to the Lord, and he said strongly, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This is a beautiful example of what dedication can do. It can perfect your success.

In Joshua, Chapter 1, we read that God was ready to give Joshua good success, and He did. However, Joshua had to have a desire and some determination. A level of success was achieved, but Joshua did not let that level of success remain where it started. He dedicated himself wholly to God and His commandments, and then he was able to be perfected to the place where he could stand, no matter what he came up against.

If you dedicate yourself wholly to God, His Word, His work, and His kingdom, you will be able to stand when it is your turn to be called upon to stand. Young person, if you do your best, the time is going to come when you will be called upon to stand. It may be at school,

on the job, or in your own home. You might have to say: "I'm sorry, but I can't go with you anymore. I'm going to serve the Lord."

You will not be able to stand unless you dedicate yourself unreservedly to God. He requires that from you in order to be there when you need Him. As you journey through life, desiring godly success and being determined to be faithful to the very end, a complete dedication to the work of the Lord will lead you to beautiful blessings until the Lord calls us home. You will have the very best in life.

You can look in God's Word and find more in there than you ever thought possible. You can be more for God. You can be a greater success in the Kingdom of God. However, you have to realize that your plans, like Isaiah, Chapter 55, says, may not necessarily be God's plans. They may turn out to be one and the same, but you have to realize that if God has something a little different for you, then it is best for you.

Young person, God has something better for you than you have today. You may think: "I'm as happy as I can be. I have everything I want." That is good, thank the Lord; but He has something more for you. God can bring you into greater glory than you have ever known. I want you to realize that if you dedicate yourself wholly to the service of God, you will find that through life, God can give you more than you think you deserve. More than you might think possible is waiting for you.

Just as with Joshua, if you want that perfecting of success in your life, there has to be dedication on your part to God in order to show Him that you mean business in serving Him. God has the very best for the very best. God has the most wonderful blessings for the most wonderful people. He has exactly what you need when you realize that He is exactly what you need. I want you to understand that you have so much more room in

your life for greater dedication to God. If you do your best and put yourself out there for God, He has more for you.

Young person, you would be foolish to turn down what God has for you. So many times some people are not willing to dedicate themselves wholly to God. They do not want to put forth the effort. They do not want to dedicate themselves, their time, their finances, and everything they have to God. When they do not want to dedicate themselves to God, in essence, they are telling God that they do not want His blessings. It is a serious thing to turn down blessings from God.

Sometimes people who seem to have it all together in a spiritual sense can be as empty as they can be if they do not have real dedication to Christ. Someone might sit in church for thirty, forty, or fifty years, and that is all they do. If that is all you do, you are robbing yourself of so much that God has for you. There is much more to serving God than just attending the church services. A life of blessings is awaiting you, if you will dedicate yourself to Him. If you refuse, He will not bless you. God is fair and just. God does for those who do for Him.

As I thought of those who go through life very empty, but seemingly successful, I thought of the rich, young ruler. We can read about him in Mark 10:17-23: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.

"And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. [Think about that. Here was someone who came running, who saw that Jesus was Someone important. He was

someone who seemed spiritually successful. He said he had done all those things from his youth.] Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!"

I want you to think about this. He lacked only one thing. Jesus knew that young man was more dedicated to his possessions than those commandments that he had kept from his youth up. What hindered him from giving God wholehearted service? In his case, it happened to be riches. For some, it could be vain glory. For others, it could be a boyfriend or a girlfriend, a family member, a job, or a hobby. It could be many things. This rich, young ruler thought his possessions were the most important thing in his life.

This is one of the saddest pictures in the Bible when it says in verse 22, "And he [the rich, young ruler] was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." He declined the blessings of God. Jesus Christ Himself looked at this rich, young ruler and said, in essence, "I see that you have done all these things." Jesus did not disagree with him. He said, "One thing thou lackest."

One thing was so important and meant so much more to this rich, young ruler that he looked at Jesus Christ, the Savior of all mankind, and said, "Sorry, I don't want it." He wanted his earthly possessions more than what God had in store for him. Those riches meant so much to him that he declined Heaven. He was more devoted to his possessions than he was to wholly following the Lord.

You must be very careful that

you are fully devoted to the cause of Christ and unabashed in your service to Him, willing to give whatever it is that is required to perfect His love more fully in your life. You have to be willing to give whatever it takes. You have to be so dedicated to what you know as Truth and the beautiful things that you understand. You have to be so devoted, so dedicated, and so committed to those things that anything else that you have or could achieve or could acquire in life pales in comparison. Those things in the light of eternity are very pale.

Do you remember the definition of dedication, that there is "an act of setting aside for a purpose." You must be willing to set aside your personal desires, your goals, and your aspirations if you are to attain a more perfect level of spiritual success. That should be something that increases your desire and makes your determination more resolute. That should be something that helps you to realize that you do not want anything more than you want God. That should cause you to have greater dedication in serving Him.

One problem that youth face today is that we are living in an extremely selfish day. If you are not careful, this selfish day in which we live can creep into your own life. It can come in so quickly and so quietly that before you know it, it has you ensnared so that you will not have time for anything other than your own selfish motives. If you let those selfish motives dictate what you do on a daily basis, you will fall short of what God's will is for you.

You have to dedicate yourself more to the work of the Lord than to anything else in life. If you are always busy dedicating your time to your own earthly endeavors, then you can be assured that you are falling short. You are not measuring up. That is the point where you will be weighed in the balance and found wanting. If my day is continually about me and what I want to do, where I want to go, whom I want to see—if that is how I fill up my day, if those are the things that I find joy in—when God looks down at me,

[continued on page 26]

1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible

crown; but we an incorruptible.

26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others,

I myself should be a castaway.

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Running the Race



Brother Larry Dishman

Discard All Hindering Weights

One of the Apostle Paul's favorite metaphors for the Christian life was running a race. He viewed the Christian life as a race. Every Christian is in this race. I believe the Lord has a special track of service marked for every saint.

In a physical race there is a track, a goal, and a prize. So it is in this spiritual race. In a physical race there are spectators, and so it is in this spiritual race. Some encourage us and others discourage us. In a physical race the runner must

discard all hindering weights and hampering indulgences, and so it is in this spiritual race. You must lay aside every weight and every sin that so easily besets you. In a physical race the runner must concentrate with keen determination to press on. Likewise, in the spiritual race you must concentrate and be keenly determined to go all the way with God. In a physical race the runner must keep his eyes on winning the prize. Likewise, you must keep your eyes on the goal, the heavenly prize. It is worth it to live for God in this life, but beyond this life there is a

heavenly prize. I intend to win that prize, don't you? Anyone who has any hope of winning the prize must live and train with the prize in mind.

Friend, if you are going to win in this spiritual race, it requires self-control, discipline, restraint, and self-denial. The Apostle Paul did not call on others to do what he was unwilling to do himself. He also ran in this race. If you will study Paul's life, you will find that he practiced self-control, restraint, and self-denial.

In verses 26-27 of our Scripture

text, Paul said: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Paul disciplined himself and practiced self-control. Why? Had he done anything less, he would have run the risk of not completing the race, by stumbling and falling before he reached the finish line. The goal of running this race is to reach the finish line.

Paul stated that all believers are in a race. He was in a race, the Corinthians were in a race, and every believer today is in a race. Each of us is to run in such a way that we can win this race. Paul knew what it would take to win the race, so he said in verse 24 of our Scripture text, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." You cannot win a literal race if you do not give it all your effort. A half-hearted effort does not produce full success. So it is with the saint of God. If you intend to win this race, you have to put forth great effort. You cannot be half-hearted about your Christian life. You must commit your body, your soul, and your spirit to the task at hand, which is winning the race.

Pressing Toward the Prize

Verse 25a of our Scripture text states, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." This means that one must do all he can to make the body vicarious and active. He pursues a course of temperate living. The Christian must press toward a prize greater than any physical trophy for winning a race. The winner of an athletic contest in Paul's day received a prize. It was simply a wreath of olive leaves, wild celery, laurel, or pine. Those prizes withered away. However, Paul looked for a prize that would not die, one that was imperishable. In 2 Timothy

4:8 Paul said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." That could include you. For what are you striving?

Friend, it is simply not enough to be in this race. You must be determined, by the grace and the help of God, that you are going to win this race. It does not matter whether you are old or young, male or female. It does not matter whether you have been a Christian for two days or fifty years. Paul said everyone is in this race.

A physical race has only one winner. It would be nice if everyone who ran in a physical race could win. The wonderful thing about the Christian race is that, unlike the physical race, everyone can win. Each of us can win this race. When you get saved, God gives you everything you need to win this race. He gives you all the resources you need so that you can focus on the prize and pursue it diligently.

You need to take to heart the words of our beloved Apostle Paul. He said 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 for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Are you doing that? Paul said that he was pressing toward the mark.

In our Scripture text Paul said, in essence, "I exert myself to the utmost, that I may not fail in securing the crown." Friend, you have to exert yourself if you intend to hear God say, "Well done." May God help you to keep your eyes on the goal. One of the biggest problems today is that many professing Christians are aimless. It seems as if they have the attitude, "Okay, I am saved, so now what?" They have no idea what Jesus expects of them regarding their lifestyle. They do not

know that they have a responsibility to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. That is not optional, because this race is not a one-hundred-yard dash; it is a marathon.

It is staggering to think of the millions of Israelites who drank water from the river of God's provision, yet only two of them made it into the Promised Land. Paul likened their journey to our journey; also, he likened it to a race. He let us know that lots of people run, but few people really win. Out of the millions of Israelites above the age of twenty who started out, only two finished and entered into God's promise. Out of all that first generation, only Joshua and Caleb made it into the land that God had promised.

Take Heed Lest You Fall

In 1 Corinthians 10:6 Paul said, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." In verse 12 Paul stated, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Israel's failure should be a cautionary example for each of us so that we might finish and not end up as they did. The danger of losing the crown of glory is great, and it is a dreadful danger.

I want to encourage you in this race to drink all the water along the way. You must not allow spiritual dehydration to sap your energy and rob you of your vitality. The things of this life can run you down and make you very weary. However, Isaiah 40:31 tells us, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." I am glad there is a God in Heaven who can renew our strength when we get weak. If you will wait upon God, that is a promise in the Word of God.

Hebrews 12:1 says to lay aside every weight. Have you ever observed professional horse racing? Have you notice the size of the

jockeys? The owners make every effort to reduce the weight the race horse must carry. That means the jockeys have to be small. I have to wonder sometimes if some people are trying to run this Christian race carrying overstuffed suitcases. Even worse, some are trying to stagger down the course of life with a stack of baggage so high that they cannot even see where they are going.

Satan does everything he can to overload you with the baggage of the world and the entangling cares of life. He is endeavoring to overload you with the baggage of this world so that you will fail to be effective in running this race. On the other hand, God wants you to unload everything that He did not give you to begin with. He promises to help you bear your burdens, but only if they are His burdens.

Too many Christians have given up their sins, but they continue to be involved in things that do not advance the Kingdom of God or the purpose of God. These things are weights that God would have you to lay aside. Second Timothy 2:5 states, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." One rule that every runner knows is to get rid of unnecessary weights and other hindrances by setting aside anything that would slow him down in the race. You do not see someone running a race while wearing big heavy boots. No, that would be a hindrance.

Beware of the Little Things

First Corinthians 10:13 says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God promises that He will not allow you to be loaded with more than you can bear.

Life is filled with contradictions and complexities, but there are generally two kinds of weights that you find on your shoulders. The first

weight is that which comes through life, circumstances, and other people. Those are weights that come upon your shoulders through your daily living, through circumstances, and through other people. The other weight is one that you pile upon yourself. God really does not have anything to do with them.

Concerning weights, the first thing you need to do is make sure that you are not carrying the weight of sin. You may think that it is just a little thing; however, many times it is the little things that keep weighing you down. They may not qualify as sin, but they are unnecessary weights. If you are carrying lots of little weights, those little weights add up and can be as much as one big weight.

The Bible tells us to beware of the little foxes that spoil the vines. You must beware of the little things that you allow in your life. The little foxes are not big enough to reach up and eat the fruit of the vine, so they tear down the vines. Where a little pig goes through the fence today, a big hog will go through by and by. A little pig will get underneath the fence and go out in the other pasture and then come back under the fence. As it grows, it pushes the fence up a little more each time. That pig grows and ends up being a big hog. If you allow little things, those little things will grow into bigger things. You need to lay aside the weights that hinder you in your spiritual progress.

I want to mention some things that can weigh you down. First, frustration over things that you do not understand can quickly weigh you down. From time to time, things will happen that you do not understand, and the devil wants you to dwell on those things. I believe there were many things that David did not understand. David asked why twenty-nine times in the Book of Psalms. Even so, God called him a man after His own heart who would do all His will (Acts 13:22).

What can you do about things that you do not understand and

things that you cannot figure out? The biggest room in your brain should be reserved for the things that you do not understand. Every time you come upon a situation in life that you cannot understand, do not allow that to weigh you down. You need to remember the promise in Romans 8:28, which reads, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose," and then you can take the situation that you do not understand and lock it up in that big room in your brain and leave it there. If there comes a time when God wants to explain it to you, He will. If He does not explain it in this life, you will not need to know in the next life. In Matthew 27:46 Jesus asked the Father, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Things that you do not understand can weigh you down.

Neglecting Your Personal Relationship With God

Prayerlessness is another thing that can weigh you down. Satan does his best to keep you so bogged down in the things of this life that you can forget to spend time in prayer. Also, self-imposed limitations and personal problems will weigh you down. I believe these are some things that Paul was talking about when he said to lay aside every weight and sin. Unnecessary weights will weary your mind and turn you into a zombie in this spiritual world.

You can become so consumed with things, even with the work of God, and neglect your personal relationship with God. You can become so busy doing things for God that you sacrifice your walk with God. Here are questions I like to ask myself from time to time: "Can God interrupt my schedule?" and "Is all of this really necessary?" Something may be legitimate, but is it a weight nonetheless? A schedule can become a slave driver.

You need to ask yourself these

questions: "Can God interrupt me?" and "Have I made it impossible for the Almighty to get my attention without triggering a major catastrophe or sending fire down from Heaven?" Some of the greatest experiences that I have had in my life have come when I had something else planned and God interrupted my schedule. May God help you to be sensitive enough to realize when He is trying to interrupt your schedule. You need to be sensitive to the voice of God. If you decide to pursue your own agenda instead of God's, do not be surprised if you run into a brick wall and wake up with a headache, asking, "What went wrong?" God's response may be that you went wrong when you did not inquire of Him and seek His face.

Another weight can be focusing on things you cannot change. If you focus on things you cannot change, you will lose your focus on the Lord. If there is a situation that you cannot change, then it is not up to you to change it. You have to leave it in the hands of God and let God take care of it. Life gets difficult when you give too much weight to the things that you cannot change in life.

You may be doing well in the race. You might have laid aside many weights and the sin that was hindering you, but look out. Galatians 5:7-9 says: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." You should not allow anybody to hinder you. It is easy to make quick decisions, but you can get yourself in situations that are not easy to get out of. You should not allow people to influence you in the wrong direction or to influence you to make wrong decisions. Once you make wrong decisions, it costs much. You have to reap for the wrong decisions. That is the reason you need to hold steady, listen to God, and listen to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Look at spiritual people, people who have been steadfast over the years.

Other weights could be pride, vanity, worldliness, a violent temper, corrupt imaginations, or an improper or unholy attachment that you need to turn away from. Friend, the Word of God exhorts you to lay aside anything that prevents you from making your highest possible attainment in the divine life. You are to run this race without allowing yourself to be hindered by any obstructions and without fainting by the way; just keep running.

Keeping Your Eyes Focused on Christ

Many new Christians start with great enthusiasm in serving God. They read their Bibles, pray, and witness to others for God. They are faithful in their church attendance. However, when that first rush of excitement wears off, their spiritual legs begin to wobble. Perhaps some cannot do all that they want to do for God, so they feel like a failure. Others think that people have let them down, and they become discouraged. Their race has just begun, but they are ready to quit.

An enthusiastic start for God is a wonderful thing, but you need to learn to hang in there faithfully despite the hurdles, the disappointments, the discouragement, and the temptations that cause you to wonder if you should have started to begin with. When you feel that you are getting ready to collapse in the shade somewhere, you must keep your eyes focused on the One who has promised never to leave you or forsake you. When the race gets tough, you must remember that Jesus not only showed how to endure faithfully, but by His Holy Spirit He lives in you and He keeps your passion alive to cross the finish line.

Satan's most successful trick is to get you to race to false finish lines. He works tirelessly to get you to stop short and say you have made it now. He delights when he sees you fall or stop by the wayside, only to notice at the last moment that the

finish line is still ahead. The Apostle Paul knew what he spoke about when he said that he was still pressing toward the mark.

By the world's standards, Jesus would have been considered a failure during His lifetime, but certainly not by the Christian's standard. All He had to show for three and a half years of ministry was a handful of followers and a criminal's death. In truth, however, Jesus was thoroughly and completely successful, because He fulfilled everything that the Father gave Him to do. Jesus completed His race, giving His victory cry from the Cross when He said, "It is finished." He had completed the race.

In 2 Timothy 4:7-8 the Apostle Paul said: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

These are the words of a winner, of someone who was confidently expecting a victory celebration. At the end of this way, I am looking forward to a victory celebration. It is going to be worth it to get to the victory celebration. Nothing can be compared to it down here in this life.

Paul was probably very near the end of his life when he said to Timothy, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." When Paul talked about a race, he talked not only in terms of starting the race but also in terms of finishing and winning the race. Friend, it is not enough to be in the race, Paul was determined to win and to fulfill God's purpose in his life. Also, he wanted every believer to do the same. God wants us to win.

Running a Good Race

Paul learned through experience that the Christian life was a process

that required diligence, commitment, and patience. His life was fought with the most horrendous circumstances imaginable. His race was not run on an even surface, but rather it was run over constantly changing obstacles and difficulties. It made no difference what obstacles came Paul's way, he either ran over the top of them or he ran around them. He kept running, and so it must be with you. There are going to be obstacles in your way, and things are going to happen. The devil is going to put many things in front of you to try to stop you and to deter you, but you cannot allow anybody or anything to stop you. You are in a race and you have to keep running so that you can win the race.

The problem with so many people today is that they cross the starting line, but they never complete the race. They never venture far enough to become participants. They remain babies in Christ, never maturing beyond the milk of the Word. They never get down to the meat of God's Word. Such believers make themselves useless for God's purpose. Remember, friend, you can have a saved soul but a lost life. That is not God's purpose for you.

Paul was consumed with running a good race, preaching the Gospel, reaching the lost, and crossing the finish line with victory. He exercised self-control in all things to insure that he did not fail or falter along the way. He did not want to fail to complete his commission that the Lord had given him. Paul did not want to disappoint the One who had been so merciful and so gracious to him, his blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He said in verse 27 of our Scripture text, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away." The attitude of many today is "If it feels good, do it," but you will not finish the race if that is your attitude.

What was the image that the

Apostle Paul had in mind when he said, "I have finished my course"? He declared to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:24 after mentioning many afflictions that he had to endure, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Paul said "But none of these things move me."

Friend, have you allowed something to come into your life that has moved you? Have you listened to someone who has affected you? Paul was determined to complete the race. The course was laid clearly before him to faithfully proclaim the Gospel. He pressed toward the finish line. Are you going to give up? Paul was not a quitter. He was willing to be poured out as a drink offering for his Lord.

Finishing the Race Well

The Apostle Paul understood there is no prize without pain, no reward without discipline, and no victory without a vision. I believe Paul was proud of his King, and he sought to honor his King in all that he did. Paul was not careless about his conduct. He was concerned about honoring Christ and giving God everything that he had. He said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul was determined to be faithful to his calling and firm to his commitment.

The Bible admonishes us to finish well. Finishing well is more important than starting well. If you were once in this race and you did not finish, you need to get back in this race. Judas kissed Jesus, but he did not finish. How tragic to kiss the Door of Heaven and to end up in hell. The race is not the goal; the finish line is the goal. How you finish is far more important than how you began. It is possible to have a sensational beginning and a suicidal ending. What counts is be-

ing at the finish line when the race is over. I want to encourage you, do not quit halfway through your race. You must pursue your purpose until you fulfill it. If Paul were living today, undoubtedly he would say, "Go for the gold." If you finish the race, that also means you win. In the spiritual race everyone who finishes wins. The good thing about it is, none of us is competing against one another. We are not even competing against other churches. We are simply striving to live each day under the authority and the Lordship of Christ and to walk in His power and in His grace.

If finishing the race means winning, then winning means never quitting, no matter what the obstacles are and no matter how impossible the race may seem. You see, winning rarely happens by accident. It requires planning and preparation. Do you know why winners win? Winners win because they plan to win. Are you planning to win? Winning should be the focal point of all your training and all your preparation. At the end of Paul's life, he had satisfaction of heart and peace of spirit that he had completed his race. When you feel badly, do not give up. You need to wait until you feel better, and then you will not want to give up. Winners never quit, and quitters never win.

Giving up and starting over is never the answer. Philippians 2:16 says, "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." It would be foolish to quit. You must keep running. The good thing is, you are not running alone. Jesus is with you. He is even more committed to your success than you are.

The Power to Run and Endure

The Bible says Jesus is the Author and Finisher of faith. It also says that Jesus will complete the good work that He began in you. The Lord is prepared to finish what

He started in you, but He needs your cooperation. If you continue to yield to His Spirit and obey His Word, you will finish this race well. All you have to do is yield to His Spirit and obey His Word.

You may say, "I have tried and failed and tried and failed." Failure has a tendency to cause a person to quit trying. If you have been knocked down a few times or experienced some setbacks, do not quit. You need to ask God to forgive you. Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to forgive yourself and then get back up and go on for God. Successful people usually fail more often than others do. They succeed primarily because they will not quit trying. It is certain that any person who has been successful has also failed.

Just as a baby cannot learn how to walk without falling down a few times, you cannot make progress in the spiritual life without stumbling a few times. In American football the man who gets knocked down the most is usually the one who carries the ball the most and gains the most yardage for his team.

Friend, if you have failed, did you stop trying because you failed or did you fail because you stopped trying? If you get up one more time than you fall, you can make it through. A wise man is not a man who never makes mistakes, but a wise man is someone who learns from his mistakes and does not repeat them. I encourage you, do not allow failing to cause you to feel that you are a failure. You can lose lots of battles and still win the war. You will not lose this race because you fall, but you can lose because you fail to get back up and run. Jesus is your ever-present source of strength, your example of righteous-

ness, and the goal makes all the hard work worth it. It is worth it all to be His child.

Some things in life may not stop you, but they can slow you down. The enemy will always settle for second best. The devil wants to knock you out of the race completely, but if he cannot succeed, he will settle for second best. If he cannot stop you from serving Christ, he will try to slow you down by weighing you down. If he can weigh you down enough to make you walk instead of run, then he has won at least a partial victory. The power to run, the power to endure, and the power to stay focused rests with the ability to unload encumbering weights. Many things in life will come to deter you from your goal and to slow your progress. You need to exchange those weights for power to run the race.

Born to Win

Are there weights in your life, things that you have taken up, things that are hindering you? Some hindrances may not be sinful, but if something is hindering you, you need to lay it aside. If it is sin, you need to repent of it. A weight or a care that you have brought upon yourself must be laid aside to run the race effectively. You must free yourself from all the things that weigh you down. May God give you the grace to persevere and the passion to run this race. You must keep your eyes on the goal and run in such a way that you can win.

How are you running your race? Have you stripped off every encumbrance? Are you exercising self-control in all things in order to be fit for running this race? Most backslid-

ing is the result of not laying aside weights and sins.

You were born to win. You do not have to be defeated. You need to lay aside all sin and improper attachments, then never give up. You *can* win this race. You cannot win the race in the first lap; you must keep running until you are finally home, so pace yourself and be prepared for the detours and the trouble spots. When you hit hard places, do not give up the race. Remember, friend, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Are you giving this race all your effort?

During the marathon race of the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, a man by the first name of John, the runner representing the African nation of Tanzania, took a painful fall on the crowded streets of a city. He gashed his leg badly. Pausing only long enough to have his wound bandaged, this athlete struggled on with pain accompanying every stride. He finally limped into the Olympic stadium more than a half-hour after the first place winner had crossed the finish line. Most all the fans and the spectators had left. When they asked John why he continued to run when he had such a painful injury and was so hopelessly far behind, he replied, "My country did not send me seven thousand miles to start a race; they sent me to finish the race." That is the spirit of a winner. Friend, God sent you here to finish this race. There is a race to be run and a crown to be won. You cannot stand still. You must be vigilant. Revelation 3:11 admonishes you to let "no man take thy crown."

(Compact Disc TR-217E)

*There is no need to nervously to pace the deck of the ship
of life when the Great Pilot is at the wheel.*



Walk in the Way of the Lord

Brother Anson Johnson

Flee From Sin

God's Word tells us that God loves His own, and He will protect His own. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." When people follow after the flesh and the things of this world, it does not seem that they love our Father. When you were born into your earthly family, you loved your mother and father. When you are born into the family of God, you love your Heavenly Father and your brother, Christ. God is a loving God. He thought so much of us that He was willing to send His only Son to hang on the Cross and bear our sins. Romans 3:23 states, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

When you get saved, you are

supposed to flee from sin, resist the devil, and resist the flesh. The Christian does not commit adultery and do things he should not do. The Bible tells us there are no drunkards and adulterers in the church. God's church is a clean church. It is not defiled with sin. God sets you in the body as it pleases Him, and He knows what He is doing.

The Bible teaches us to repent, to believe, and to be baptized. I believe in doing what God says to do. If you do not do what the Word of God says to do, you will not be happy, but you will be happy if you are obedient to the Lord.

God loves His children, and He is watching over them. He is a wonderful God. Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He died for us for a reason. He died for the church that is set on a hill that can-

not be hid. The church is without spot or wrinkle. There is no defilement in God's church; she is a clean church, and she is heading upward. If you are on the highway of holiness, you are in the way that leads to a better place, the glory world. I want to see Heaven some day, so I do not want to defile myself. First Corinthians 3:17 states, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

You need to be careful of how you treat God. He is watching over you. He is also watching over our nation, but I am afraid she is heading downhill. We need to pray for our leaders. Those who say they are our leaders ought to trust in God instead of doing the things they are doing. They need to get back to praying at the White House. They

need to pray at other places as well. They need to be praying in the schools and teaching our children to fear God. We need to realize where we stand with God, because there is a day coming when we will have to pay for how we have treated Him.

God loves everyone, but He hates sin. If you are walking in sin, living after the flesh, you had better turn around and look toward Heaven and say, "God, have mercy on me." He is a merciful God. Lots of people think that He will not turn them into hell. He wants us to fear Him and not to fear man. In John 14:1 Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Walking God's Way

God's Word tells us about the One who created heaven and earth. Some people say that man evolved from the monkey, but they cannot tell us where the monkey came from. It is sad that men with lots of education cannot tell you the truth about these things. I can tell you about God because in 1959 I gave my heart and life to Him, and He has guided me along life's way. I stumbled a little, but I am thankful that I am still going.

I am glad that I am heading toward Heaven instead of toward hell, because hell is an awful place. The rich man in hell told us about it, and he wanted his five bothers to be warned. Today people need to be warned too. We need to be careful of the steps that we take in life, because many people are fouling up and going the wrong way. Families are being broken because of sin, because of the flesh, and because people love darkness rather than light. You do not want to walk in darkness. You want to walk in the way of the Lord, because His way leads home.

God's way is a narrow way. You have to put off evil, or sin, and the things of this life that corrupt. God loves the church. Some people say they are the church, but they walk

every way besides the right way. They will come up short at the end of the way, just as sure as you are living. It is wonderful to know that we have Someone who lets us live and breathe every hour. He watches over us. Man has corrupted so many things, but God's way is clean. It is a holy way. First Peter 1:16 says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Is your spirit free? Are you walking the way that God wants you to walk? Do you have His presence in your life? If you go down the highway and wreck and get killed, will you be free? Can you say that you belong to God? There is a lot more to it than saying, "Lord, Lord." We have work to do. Faith without works is no good, but when you put both of them together, they work. Signs will follow those who believe in God. Being a good person with a nice smile is not enough.

God's people are a happy people. If you are not happy, something is wrong. Is God leading the way in your life? Are you full of the Spirit of God, as the Apostle Paul was? People were amazed to see the things that Paul did. They were amazed to see what Christ did when He healed them. Are you seeking God with your whole heart?

Deuteronomy 4:29 states, "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." If you seek God with your whole heart, He will hear you and answer you. If something is wrong in your life, God will not answer you the way you want Him to answer you.

When you walk down the highway of life and go to work from day to day and hear things that you should not listen to, you need to turn away from those things, turn to the Word of God, and seek God's face. Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." You need to know God's way and walk in it. You can have favor with God. I would rather have favor with God than anyone

else I know of.

The world will look upon you, but it will turn its back on you. Thanks be to God, God in Heaven made heaven and earth, and He will never forsake you, even though you may go through sufferings. Second Timothy 2:12 states, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." I love Him. Do you love Him? He is a mighty God! He is more wonderful than anything in this world. Man's way is not God's way. Isaiah 55:8 reads, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

Many people set up other ways, and people join them. I am thankful that I was born into the Kingdom of God, and God set me in the body. You have to walk worthy. If you do not walk worthy, someone is going to see it. You want to be in the way, but you do not want to be in some sinner's way. You want to look to God and be what you ought to be so that others can look at you and say, "I'd like to live like that." The way of God is a precious way. It is a way that the world does not know. Second Corinthians 4:3 tells us, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

If you are lost and you have never been born of God's Spirit, you do not know what it is like to be free. The only way to be free is to be in God. When you can feel His presence, you can face the world and have a testimony. By your testimony, you can overcome. Do you have a testimony for the Lord? Is the devil troubling you? You can get him off your back by trusting in God. Walk in God's way and serve Him. He loves you.

A Close Walk

We read in Romans 8:8, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Those who walk after the flesh do many things against the Lord. They make promises that they cannot keep, and they are carnal minded. Lots of people try to serve

God in a carnal way, but it will not work. We have to walk God's way.

In John 6:37 Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Revelation 22:17 reads, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

People may say they are religious, but if they are not free in their spirit, they are lacking somewhere in their lives. Friend, you need to be free in your spirit so that you can look toward Heaven and say, "I know I'm heading that way." If you can say that today, that is well-pleasing to God.

You cannot please God and have a carnal mind. Romans 8:9 reads, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, [Are you in the Spirit today? Do you know that you belong to God? This experience is not guess work. When you are born of God's Spirit, you will know it because your life will be changed. You will have a loving spirit instead of a hateful spirit. You will not talk against the church. Some people do, and the Bible says in Romans 16:17 to 'mark them which cause divisions.' We need to help those who are in need of God's Spirit. We need to help people along the way. We walk together on this highway. We can rejoice going down the highway because it is the path that leads to Heaven. We will all have to die.] If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

I love God's Word. I do not want it to change, but some of the scholars are trying to change it. I like the plain Truth. It tells me to be on the right road. Romans 8:10 states, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Are you walking in the Spirit? Is your spirit free? If you are living in sin, you are not free.

The Lord said that He hates a proud look. Do not be proud. We

are just human beings. We are on a journey, and this journey will end one day. We have only one life in this world, and it leads to eternity, according to the Scriptures. The body will go back to the dust, and the spirit will go back to God who gave it.

God is a wonderful God. He made heaven and earth. Many things happen along life's way, but God is still true. He does not change. He has not forsaken His bride and taken off with another. He has been true to His children. His bride is the Church of God. She is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. There is no other way. You can be like you want to be, but if you are not God's child, you need to be. God loves His family; He loves His bride. The Bible says that one day He is coming back, and we will meet Him in the air.

We need to speak things that are pleasing to God, rightly dividing the Word. You need to settle down. Do not run here and yonder, but support the Church of the Living God. Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." This is a close walk. Are you walking close to the Lord? James 4:8a reads, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

The Way That Leads Home

Jesus said in John 14:27b, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The world is going on. We have evil in this world. People are doing things against the church, but I am thankful that the church will not be overthrown. She is heading home. Are you heading home? Are you on the path that leads to the glory world?

Romans 8:11 states, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus

from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Have you been changed? Has there been a change in your life? Do you know that you belong to God? He said we will know this way. Have you been born again? Do you know the Truth? Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

No matter who says what about you, God knows all about you. You do not have to wonder what people say or what they think about you, because as long as you are obeying the Lord, you look good to Him. First John 3:13 says, "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." Do not let the devil get you down or discourage you. If you know that you have been born again, do not let the devil take it away from you. Always look to God. He is the One who is guiding your life. He is the One who is giving you air to breathe so that you can live.

If you are sick and troubled in your heart, Jesus has the answer. He said in Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You need to seek Him with all your heart. Many people pray a little prayer and think it is over, but God said to seek Him with your whole heart.

If you doubt that you are going to make it across the ocean in a ship, there is no use to try, but if you have faith in God, He will take care of you. Do you have faith that He is going to take you to Heaven where you can see Him one of these days? Do you really trust in God? Do you know that you have it settled in your heart that you are going to trust in God and He will lead you home?

When you become afraid, when the storms rise, and when everything looks bad, when people are out of work and struggling in life, there is a way. God said, He would care for His own. He will supply your needs. I am looking to Him.

When the way gets weary and you think there is no way, you must keep trusting in Him. You may not have a dime, but you need to make sure you are right with God. When He sees it is enough, He will call you out of this world. Will you be ready?

God loves you; do not doubt it. Do not look at those around you, but look toward Heaven. You can trust in the One who has made a promise to you. He is your King and your Savior. God's way leads home. Man

will tell you lots of things and deceive you. You cannot even trust a friend with your salvation. You have to trust God who delivered you, and you have to know that you are walking worthy of the vocation wherein you are called. If you know that you are walking worthily in the Savior's love, you do not have to question any man. You can look toward Heaven and say, "God, I know I'm on the way." Can you say that?

Some people go to church, but when they are away from the house

of God, they do things that they know they should not do. God is not pleased with that. First John 1:6-7 states: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

(Compact Disc TR-815M)

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR

*The clock of time once more resounds;
Hark! It is now eleven!*

*The time to work is almost gone,
The time for service given.*

*Earth's harvest on its wide-stretched fields
Has long been ripe for reaping.*

*The night of time approaches fast
And multitudes are sleeping.*

*The hosts of Satan, long at work,
Continue on unceasing,
And bold their strategy pursue
Each chance and moment seizing.
More desperate they now become
To damn each tribe and nation,
More zealous to haste man and earth
To tragic consummation.*

*The ripened harvest whitened stands,
Still waiting for the reaper,
And heavy heads of priceless grain
Toward earth are bowing deeper.
So much of daytime has been spent,
Earth's final chance is nearing –
So near the eventide has come,
And Christ's own – re-appearing.*

*Once more the Lord of harvest calls –
For you he has been waiting.
Where have you been this harvest day?
God's will and call debating?
It is for you the harvest waits!
Without you souls are dying!
Through you the Spirit waits to work!
Why are YOU not replying?*

*Your witness to some sinner now
Is his last hope of Heaven!
God's only means to reach some souls –
Your money still ungiven!
Your fasting, prayer, and earnest tears
For souls in every nation
Can mean the choice 'twixt life or death,
Salvation or damnation.*

*At this the Saviour's final call
Still idle are you standing?
What will it take to waken you
To His solemn demanding?
If you fail Christ and man today
The blood of souls will stain you,
And at the judgment bar of God
What shame at last will pain you!*

Selected

**When we do what we can,
God will do what we can't.**

[Especially for Young People—contin. from p. 15]
every level of spiritual success that He had ever granted me will wane.

You have to understand that the more time you give to other things, the more time you take away from God. Taking time away from God can be an extremely dangerous endeavor. You do not have much time, but as a young person, often it seems that time is all you have. You have to be careful that you do not push God back and move Him away, by not giving Him the time that He so richly deserves.

Have you ever found yourself saying, "I can't wait"? Sometimes you can be in such a hurry to get to what is going to happen next that you find yourself not enjoying what is happening now. You have to be careful, young person, that you are not continually looking forward and trying to move on to something else. You need to realize that as you do that in worldly things, you are pushing aside the things that matter the most. "Time is filled with swift transition" one song says. Things happen quickly. The things that you see and feel and understand today are going to be different tomorrow, so you need to be careful to redeem the time.

You need to dedicate yourself to God in a greater way. You need to realize that it is the opportunity that God has for you to be something great in His kingdom. Now is the time for you to seek more perfect spiritual success. You can have it right now if you concentrate on dedicating your life to Him. I want to encourage you to give God what is due Him: your time, your firstfruits, and your efforts; then He will richly bless you. He wants your wholehearted service.

I want you to read a song entitled "Whole-Hearted Service" by C. W. Naylor. It reads:

I've turned from the world and its follies,
Forever forsaken all sin;

I've given myself unto Jesus
To ever and only serve him.

I will not be languid or careless,
Or formal, or cold, or untrue;
But, striving with earnest endeavor,
The will of my Lord I will do.

Since Jesus gave all to redeem me,
Since only through mercy I live,
It now is my joy and my purpose
A wholehearted service to give.

O help me, dear Lord, to be ready
The task that thou givest to do,
Not shrinking from labor or duty,
Devoted and faithful and true.

I'll put my whole heart in his service,
And do all he asketh of me;
I mean to live holy and blameless—
A Christian indeed will I be.

I am not going to be a Christian only in word or in appearance, but I am going to be a Christian in deed, in action, in the things that I do. That song is a beautiful portrait of dedication. You can become more dedicated than you have ever been by simply asking God to help you to get there. You must not get caught in the trap of being more devoted to your own desires than you are to God. You have to put your whole heart in His service.

The world believes that pleasing self is the most important thing in life. They say that life is all about the journey. Have you ever heard that saying? I have heard that it was popular in the 1960's and the 1970's. In that period of time, a group of people decided that life was all about the journey, and that is how they lived. They thought that life was all about right now and what feels good. They lived by the motto, "If it feels good, do it."

Being completely dedicated to a greater cause than you makes life about the destination, and a perfect journey ensues. We understand that being dedicated to a

greater cause than self is the cause of Christ, the work of God, being part of His kingdom, and being part of a brotherhood of fellowship that is divine and holy.

We understand that living that way is truly what life is all about. That is the way to ensure that you get to Heaven. In doing so, the wonderful thing about it is, the journey becomes the very best that it could ever be. You cannot have a better journey than the one the saints of God are on. If you are saved and serving God, it is the very best life that you could possibly have. Nothing is greater in life than being able to serve God. He has the very best for you. He wants you to be able to pillow your head sweetly at night and rest soundly. Also, God has the perfect companion for you and the perfect job.

How do you think your dedication compares with those who have gone on before you? The songwriter said, "I'll put my whole heart in his service." Is this the kind of dedication that you have? Are you determined that no matter what, no matter who, and no matter why, you will serve God in the low places, alone, or up on the mountain? If your determination is not exactly what it could be, you have an opportunity to make it so. You can have that same kind of dedication. If you will ask God for that same kind of dedication, then He will perfect the success in your life in a wonderful way. You can have a strong desire to want more of the things of God. You can have a firm, resolute determination that you will stand for God no matter what.

You can have greater dedication to the cause of Christ than you have ever had before. Think about the blessings that will bring into your life, the lives of those around you, and the life of the church. God wants willing, unre-served, wholehearted service. Won't you do your very best to give it to Him in a greater way? Do not be afraid to ask God to help you. He is there, and He wants you to be all that you can be for Him.

Brother Chris Wakefield

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time will soon be here!

June 17 - 24

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