

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 43 December 2013 No. 12



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in Newark, Ohio 43055.

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

This periodical carries no subscription price; however, it is partially maintained through the gifts and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the expenses being paid by the local congregation.

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

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

Email: pastor@godsacres.us

Phone: 740-344-2543 or 1-888-730-0461
Fax: 740-344-4737

Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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

CONTENTS

A Cluttered Heart 3
 Choices 7
 The All-Sufficient Grace of God 11
 Especially for Young People 14
 In What Way Are You Marked? 15
 Faith Beyond Improbability 19
 Announcements 23
 Winter Meeting Info 27

Vol. 43 December 2013 No. 12

Guest Editorial

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

Acts 1:8

We Shall Be Witnesses

When Jesus gave the Holy Ghost to His disciples on the Day of Pentecost, it brought power and boldness that they never had experienced. Instead of the Savior just being with them, He was now dwelling within their hearts. They became the temple, or dwelling place, of the Holy Ghost. Christ could now work through these disciples to accomplish the work that He had started. Through His power, they were able to do great miracles in Jesus' name. The power of the Holy Ghost is still needed today, and God is willing and ready to give it to those who desire and qualify for it.

What are the requirements for a person to receive God's indwelling presence? First, an individual must be born again, confess all sin to God, repent, and turn from every ungodly deed. Romans 12:1 tells us, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." You are to totally surrender yourself to Him. You must be willing to be used of Him in whatever capacity He desires. When your sacrifice is complete, God will send the power of Holy Ghost into the believer's heart. He gives you the power to be a faithful witness of His goodness.

Being a faithful witness for Christ is so necessary. As you can easily see, we live in a world steeped in sin with ungodliness

abounding on every side. Our society is saturated with false religions that believe and teach that you must sin a little more or less every day. The majority of people feel it is impossible to live above sin and corruption. However, 1 John 3:9 tells us, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed [the Holy Ghost] remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Being born again and possessing God's Spirit gives men and women power to live sinless lives! Living pure lives causes true Christianity to shine brightly. Unbelievers may argue about the doctrine, but it is difficult to refute a life that is lived in holiness and righteousness.

The world needs to see the true light of Christ shining in every place. A beautiful old song says, "What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him; What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him; He will bring joy and gladness, Take away all sin and sadness, What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him." One of the ways the world sees Jesus is through the life you live before them. A holy life being lived in a world that is full of darkness and sin is like lighting a candle in a room that has no light; it brings illumination. Jesus worded it like this: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a

[continued on page 26]

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

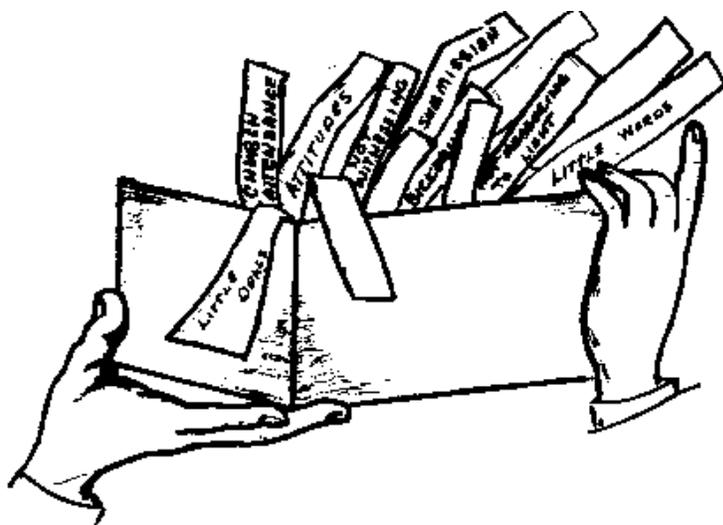
5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they

were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

A Cluttered Heart



Brother Roger L. Decker

No Room for Jesus

We want to consider the conditions surrounding the birth of Christ. It has been recorded that the Roman government took a periodical census for taxation and for military service, but the Jews were exempt from military service. The census required everyone to return to the city wherein he was born. Verse 1 of our Scripture text says, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." That means everyone who was under Roman providence at that particular time had to obey this decree.

The Scripture says that while

Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the child. The latter part of verse 7 is where I want to focus the message. The words "There was no room for them in the inn" are symbolic. What was really going to happen to Jesus? It started from His birth and continues through to the time in which we live today. There was no room for Him in the inn when He was born into this world, there was no room for Him in the hearts of those who professed to be His own people, and there is no room for Him in the lives of many people yet today.

When Jesus came into the world, the Scripture says He was rejected by the world and even by His own people. The Bible says in John 1:10-

11: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." In verse 7 of our Scripture text we see the words "no room for them in the inn." These words are symbolic of the hearts of men. The only place many of His own people could find room for Him was on the Cross.

As in yesteryear, Jesus still has a difficult time finding a place in the hearts of people. People will allow Him a place in a nativity scene, but they are even working to get rid of that now. Some people say Jesus can be in a nativity scene, in a school play, or in a play in a sectarian church. They allow Him to be sung about, but that is close enough. By

no means will they allow Him to come into their hearts. They do not want Christ in their hearts because He would expect too much of them. Without Him they can do as they please and keep Jesus at a distance.

For many people, the holiday times of the year (around Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) are enough time to think about Jesus, and even that seems to be too much for some people. To some, the story of Jesus is merely a tragedy that happened. To others, it is just a day to get off work. Some people think about Him at weddings and during times of sickness and death; but the rest of the time, they have no room for Him in their lives. By the way some people talk these days, you would think that everybody is right with God, regardless of how they talk or how they act.

Who Can Know the Heart?

Many people do not want to be pastored today. They want to do things their way. They want to go to church only *when* and *where* they want to go. They do not pray and try to get the mind of God regarding the matter. All a pastor has to do is preach something people do not like, and he will be branded. It is easy to blast the preacher, but one needs to be careful, because he might be speaking against God.

When people get lukewarm in their souls, often they blame others for their condition. Friend, if you have things in your heart that should not be there, it makes no difference who you are, it is your fault. How would Jesus act? He remained right in His soul. Wrong never becomes right. The one who is wrong needs to get right and turn from the wrong.

Why is it that people have no room for Jesus in their hearts? The heart is cluttered with too many other things. If Jesus was there, those things would have to go. The heart represents the center of one's affections. It represents the real you. Just as everything evolves around

the literal heart, the same is true with the spiritual heart.

The literal heart, that physical pump that feeds the blood to the body, can get clogged, and sometimes a person goes into cardiac arrest. The same is true with the spiritual heart. Things can clog those two golden pipes. When they do, they cannot empty the golden oil into the candlestick. What are those pipes? Those pipes are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. What is the candlestick? It is the church. The church needs those two pipes unclogged to stay alive. They feed the church. As a child of God, you are a part of the church, and you are duty-bound as an individual to make sure that they do not get clogged.

I want you to look at how the Word of God describes the heart. Psalm 44:20-21 reads: "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." One day every secret thing is going to be brought into judgment. You can keep secrets from your husband or your wife, from your children, and from your best friend; but you cannot keep any secrets from God. Your heart is an open book.

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 17:9-10: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

How deceitful is the heart? It is deceitful enough to make one feel that he is all right spiritually when he is sitting in the seat of the scornful. Who can know the heart? Jesus said, "I the LORD, search the heart." He tries the reins of the heart. What is in the heart will come out when the trial comes.

The Way of the Ungodly

What does the Bible say about

the seat of the scornful? Psalm 1:1 says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Some people are full of bitterness, yet they go right on attempting to cover it up. The peace they proclaim they have is really bitterness.

Isaiah 38:17 states, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Many times a person becomes motivated by bitterness. What happens? Well, I bought some apples at an orchard a few months back. I like to eat apples once in a while. When I reached in the container and grabbed hold of one, it was all mushy. A rotten apple was in there, and I saw that when a bad apple is laying against another apple, the good apple gets a spot on it. What happens when bitterness strikes the soul of an individual? The Bible tells you what will happen. Just like with the apples, many become defiled.

The Apostle Paul warned in Hebrews 12:15, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." The word *defile* simply means "to become contaminated." There was just a small spot on another apple that I could cut out, but that first apple was completely rotten. There was no salvation to that apple, but the other apple could be salvaged. However, if I had left the bad apple there, in time the others would have been contaminated too. People allow bitterness in their hearts. They fight against it at first, but often it overcomes them. The next thing they know, Jesus gets crowded out, little by little. It is not a big move at first, but soon they become defiled. An old adage says, "Misery loves company." In other words, those who are miserable love to keep company with others who are miserable.

When writing to the Ephesians,

Paul said in Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." You will notice that all these sins run together. He mentioned them all because they cling to one another: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking are the outgrowths of bitterness. It is astonishing that one would take the Christian name and yet be bitter.

What fuels much of division? It is fueled by bitterness. I have never heard of a bitter person doing anything but evil—never anything good. Paul also mentioned wrath and anger. *Anger* is a feeling of displeasure and *wrath* is strong, fierce anger. What is *clamor*? The word means "loud, boisterous talk." *Evil speaking* comes as a result of other sins that were not kept in check. Evil speaking, as it is used in this verse, means "injurious speaking"; it also means "blasphemy." These are words to hurt those against whom they are spoken.

Last, Paul mentioned the word *malice*, which is the desire to inflict injury, harm, or suffering on someone. It is a combination of all these sins that cause one to continue to look to avenge himself by the destruction of the object in view. The psalmist said in Psalm 64:2-3: "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words."

The word *insurrection* means "an act or instance of rising in revolt, rebellion, or resistance against authority or an established government." When you talk to those people, you dare not try to unchristianize them. They claim to be as saved as anyone else. If that is true, the standard of Christianity has fallen.

Dear saint, do not let an old, ecumenical spirit get hold of you, thinking that everybody is right. Everyone is right who follows the Word of God. We know there are

degrees of knowledge and understanding, but you need to walk in what you do know and understand. This old, ecumenical spirit that says "Everybody is going to Heaven" is a deceptive spirit. There is only one way to get to Heaven. When you go to certain cities, there are several routes that you can take, but except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God; he cannot see the way to Heaven.

Holiness of Heart and Life

God still commands holiness of heart. He commands that one lives a holy life. Anything less than that is unacceptable to God, and you are just fooling yourself. You may still claim to be going to Heaven but you are not going to get into God's Heaven without holiness of heart, holiness of life, and holiness of actions.

The Scripture says, "There was no room for them in the inn." Today there is no room for Jesus in the hearts of men and women. Some hearts are too full of the world to allow Jesus to come in as He ought. They are too full of the latest fashions, of the latest hairstyles, of keeping up with the latest crazes, or whatever they might be doing. That is how fashion designers make their money. They get you adjusted to one style, and then another style comes out. They know women like to look nice, and that is good. They also know that the husband might have a deep pocketbook, so the styles keep changing. Changing styles affect men too. Nobody is immune from them. Others are so occupied with what others think that there is no room in their hearts for really selling out to God and getting the goods as they ought. Other people's lives are cluttered with everyday living.

We all are creatures of habit. Did you know that? I thought about that when I got up one morning. I do the same things every morning when it comes to showering and getting ready for the day and going

to the study. We are creatures of habit in most everything we do, but that is not all bad. You need to get into some habits. However, you can get so caught up with everyday living that you spend no time with Jesus. You may not necessarily be involved in sinful things, but just busy keeping this appointment and that appointment, and what to do next. Sometimes the cares of life can be overwhelming.

Jesus said in Luke 21:34-36: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

What was Jesus saying? You need to guard against being overburdened by lawful things. Many people would never get caught in a barroom, especially not children of God. They would not get caught at rock concerts, but they might get caught up in lawful things, keeping so busy that they do not even take the time to talk to God. You cannot expect to receive any direction from God if you do not ask Him. You should not expect to get any answers to prayer if you do not pray.

Seasonal Pleasures

Other hearts are full of wickedness. They are too full to allow Jesus room in their hearts. Some are too busy having a good time. They think: "Why quit having a good time yet? Everything is going all right." You need to remember this, dear one, when you partake of pleasures that are wrong, you are into pleasure that lasts only for a season. There is pleasure in sowing. If there was not pleasure in sowing, there would be no temptation in sin. You are not tempted with something that is going to hurt you; you are

tempted with something that gives you pleasure from the beginning.

Speaking of Moses, the Scripture says in Hebrews 11:24, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." In other words, he refused to be the top one. What did he choose? Verse 25 tells us, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." How long? They last only for a season. The word *season* means "temporary." Enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season means enjoying sin temporarily.

You will notice the Apostle Paul used the word *pleasures*, but he did not use the word *happiness*. The reason is that real happiness is not found in sin. What does the word *pleasure* mean? It means "excitement; lust; sensual delight; desire." Although it is exciting, I want to repeat to you, it is seasonal, or for a short while. Young person, you need to keep that in mind. Young lady, when a young man tries to lead you astray, you need to keep that in mind. It is seasonal pleasure, but it is soon going to be over, and then what will happen? The reaping time will come. If a young man tries to lead a young girl astray, he is not a Christian. Whenever a man looks at sinful pleasure, it is worse than suffering reproof. He truly got his eyes opened to the awfulness of sin.

Sin is a destroyer. Had Moses stayed in Pharaoh's court, the pleasure would have been but for a season, and it would have soon vanished away. A life of sin is filled with calamity and disappointment. There is always some calamity going on when an individual lives in sin. Do not let the pleasure excite you to the place where you live a short life of pleasure here, and then go before God as an unpardoned sinner. You must keep in mind that when you are indulging in sinful pleasure, God could call you home. It makes no difference how young you are. Some young people drop over with heart attacks and other

conditions. Other young people get killed in automobile accidents or by overdosing on drugs. I want to repeat, while you are involved in sinful pleasure, you certainly would not want God to call you home. Do not throw your life away for a little excitement.

How Can You Make Room for Jesus?

In Luke, Chapter 2, we find to whom the message of the birth of Christ first came: it came to the shepherds, the common people, the people considered the off-scoured of that day, those who were hated by the Orthodox Jews. They were unable to keep up the ceremonial part of the Law. They could not keep up with all the hand washing and the rules and regulations, but they were a people who had time to listen to God. That is who the announcement came to.

To receive anything from God, you must humble your heart in obedience to what God has shown you. Have you made room for the Lord? God does not force Himself on anyone. If you want Him to abide in you, then you must make room for Him. He is not going to push you out of the way when you are engaged in something else and tell you that you have to get down and pray right then. That is not the way God works. God is a gentleman. He will knock, but it is going to take *you* to open the door and invite Him in. He will not force the door open. What door am I speaking of? The door of your heart. He will trouble your heart, but you have to open your heart's door and receive Him. If you will invite Him in, He will sup with you, and you with Him.

As a professing Christian, you need to be aware. Although you are acquainted with God's way, His teachings, His doctrines, and the church, you can get caught up in a gulf and a snare and begin to have a cluttered heart. If you are on the wrong path, you need to turn before you make shipwreck. Paul, writing

to young Timothy, said in 1 Timothy 1:18-20: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

The enemy would love to sear and destroy your conscience and cause you to defect from the faith. In the midst of all the trials, the temptations, and concerns, there is hope; that hope is found in Jesus Christ. I am so thankful that God loves us. You need to keep in mind, dear one, that you are still a human being, and that flesh of yours is not going to want to come to the house of God. That flesh of yours does not want to kneel in prayer, and that flesh of yours does not want to read the Bible. That is where the Spirit of God comes in to help your spirit to overcome the things of the flesh. Won't you make room for Him?

If Jesus is going to dwell within you, you are going to have to make room for Him. Serving God is more than just turning over a new leaf. You must seek God with all your heart. "Dear Lord, I haven't made room for You in the past, but from now on, I'm going to make room for You in a great way in my heart."

God understands that you have to do other things in life. You cannot talk to God every single moment, but I am talking about when you know that you need to make room for God, God expects you to do it, especially when you are professing to be a Christian. Even the Christian can get caught up with everyday living and get a cluttered heart. The next thing you know, those "pipes" will get clogged, and you have to do something to unclog them. The best thing you can do to unclog them is to repent.

(Compact Disc TR-1097)

Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.

19 I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.

Choices



Brother Leamon Whitehead

The Consequences of Choices

Your choices in life are going to determine your destiny. I thank God for the time that He visited me and gave me an invitation to be a Christian. He did not force me. He gave me an invitation, and I had to make the choice whether or not I wanted to serve God. I am so glad that I made the choice to serve Him, and I have never been sorry. I would do it all over again, because my life has been so blessed.

I would like for you to think about where some of your choices have taken you. Maybe you are lost and away from God or maybe you have backslidden. You need to consider the choices in life that have brought you to where you are today. Your choices will determine your

destiny as you go through life. I know there is religious teaching stating that God is going to choose only certain people and that He is going to force them to serve Him; but that is not so, my friend. You must choose whether you want to serve God. If you will be on God's side, He will be on your side. When trouble and the storms of life come, you will find that God will be right there to help you and to take care of you, because you made the choice to stand for Him.

Down through the ages, people have made many choices. God gave Adam and Eve a choice. Genesis 2:16-17 says: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou

shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Oh, the sad choices that mankind makes in life. When I was young, I made some bad choices, and no doubt you have too. My friend, some of your choices were not for your good. It was not in your best interest that you made particular choices.

God put Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden eastward in Eden. There He put the man and the woman whom He created. He gave them everything they needed, and He told them that of all the trees in the garden they could freely eat except one tree, lest they die. We know from the Word of God that Eve was deceived. The serpent beguiled her, and she ate and gave her husband to eat, and they lost their

fellowship with God. The decision that they made brought spiritual death to them.

Choices affect not only you but also the people around you. They affect your family and your loved ones. Adam and Eve made the decision to eat of the forbidden fruit, so they were driven out of the garden and lost the paradise that God had given them. Choices are ever before you, and if you make the wrong choices, you are going to be in trouble. The late country music singer George Jones sang a song entitled "Choices." In it he said: *"I am living and dying by the choices that I make. Since the day that I was born, I have had many choices, and I heard many voices that told me right from wrong."* The life of George Jones was sad because of his alcohol and drug usage. He made the wrong choices. I am not advocating that you listen to country music, but this shows you what choices will do.

The Faithfulness of Noah

I want to talk to you for a while about a man by the name of Noah. I thank God for men like Noah. Noah was six hundred years of age when God called him to service. Noah lived in a perilous time. There were no churches or no prayer meetings to go to. He lived in a wicked time. Noah is a wonderful example of a man persevering and pressing on and fighting the battle while staying true to God. Noah remained faithful to God.

Genesis 6:5 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This was the wicked time that Noah lived in. Sometimes people say, "I cannot live for God because there is too much pressure." Noah had only one place to look, and that was up. He looked up to God because the people around him were very wicked and far away from God.

Our lifetimes are short compared to Noah's. Noah lived to

be nine hundred fifty years of age. He lived about ten of our lifetimes, yet he stayed true to God. Noah walked with God, and he loved God. We, too, can live in this old, wicked world and stay free from sin and be true to God. Glory be to God! Noah stayed true to God even in the troubled times.

I want to stress the point that Noah lived what would amount to about ten times that of our normal lifetimes. The point I want to make is that sometimes people (and I am saying this kindly) cannot stay saved from one revival to the next. Many times people are climbing up the rough side of the mountain, and they are having such a struggle. I want you to think about Noah. He was six hundred years old when the Flood came. God found a man who had been faithful to Him.

Noah did not have anywhere to go for encouragement. Wickedness was all around him; sin was everywhere. Someone may ask, "Was it that bad?" Well, when Noah finished the boat and everything was loaded, God shut the door. Soon the rain came down, and the Bible says that every living thing outside the ark perished. It was so bad that Genesis 6:6 says, "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." God's heart was broken. God created man to serve Him.

If you have been whining about how hard you have it, how steep the mountain is, and how heavy your burdens are, remember, it will not always be that way. It can only last for a while. What if you had to live nine hundred fifty years as Noah did? In that day, the devil was alive and well, just as he is today. In the midst of all the evil, Noah made a choice to be true to God and to serve God. The Bible says he walked with God. You have to be clean in your heart to walk with God. Noah made that choice. God does not make your choices for you. The decisions you make can draw you close to God or drive you further away from Him.

God's favor was on Noah. Gene-

sis 6:8 says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Noah found favor with God because he was a just man and perfect in his generations. Today people want their food perfect, they want their car perfect, and they want this and that perfect; however, when it comes to living perfect for God, they say no one can do that.

Doing the Right Thing

Noah was just and perfect in his generations. The reason Noah found grace in God's eyes was due to Noah's choice to walk with God. He was six hundred years old and he had been living for God, walking with God, and doing the things that God would have him to do. It pays to serve the Lord. The devil will whisper to you and say, "It is no use," but do not listen to him. Just keep living right.

When you are in a little turmoil and you do not know what to do, the number one thing to do is keep on doing what you know is right. Do not let down, but keep living for God. Some people stop going to church and stop praying. They stop reading the Bible, and that is the wrong thing to do. It is right to go to the house of God, it is right to read your Bible, it is right to pray, and it is right to think on the things of God. When you get in a stormy place, do not give up. If you will honor God, He will honor you. He will never let you down.

God looked down and saw that the wickedness was so great. God said that it repented Him that He made man, and He was going to destroy the world. Nevertheless, Noah found grace in the eyes of God. When you put God first and live the way God wants you to, you will find grace in His sight. No matter how bad the storms of life are, you will find strength in the Lord. He will supply the needs that you have.

Noah found grace in the eyes of God, and God had a job for him. He told him to build an ark. Noah did

not say, "I'll think about it, but I'm awfully busy" or "I have plans, but I'll do it when I get around to it." The Hebrew writer stated in Chapter 11 that when God told Noah to build the ark and told him about the things that were to come, he moved with fear. Glory be to God!

Wickedness can be all around you, but the trouble comes if it gets *in* you. A little boat can float in deep water as well as the shallow water. How can it do that? The boat is in the water; the water is not in the boat. Likewise, you are in the world, but the world need not be in you. Thank God, you do not have to get spotted with the sins of this old world. You can stay true to God just as Noah did. If Noah could endure temptations for nine hundred fifty years, do you not think you can handle sixty-five or seventy years? You ought to be on cloud nine, so to speak, because God is so good.

During perilous times, Noah did not give in. He stayed true to God, and God told him to build an ark. He told him how to build it and what kind of wood to use. During that time, God was giving the people that He pronounced judgment on an opportunity to change their minds and to make the choice to serve Him. First Peter 3:20 reads, "The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing."

What was God waiting for? He was not waiting on Noah, Noah's wife, or his three sons and their wives. The longsuffering of God waited for the people to repent. Noah preached about one hundred twenty years as he worked on the ark. All the while, God was giving people an opportunity to get right. My friend, God was giving those people a choice.

The Day of God's Visitation

Your destiny is going to be determined by the choices you make. I can imagine seeing someone build a big boat like the ark in the desert, in a dry place, and people

going by and mocking him. They did not know that was the day of their visitation. They did not know that the judgment of God was looming in the near future. Friend, you do not know when your time clock is going to make the last tick and it will all be over for you. That is the reason you need to put God first, get your soul right with God, serve Him, and be ready when He calls for you.

Noah was out there building an ark and telling the people that God was going to destroy this world with a flood. Genesis 2:5-6 says: ". . . for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth. . . . But there went up a mist. . . ." It had never rained on the earth. However, on that day when God got ready, it rained. A song about it says, "*My, didn't it rain?*" It rained forty days and forty nights. The rain began to raise the ark. Noah, his family, and all the animals that God had brought into the ark were just floating along on top of the water. Praise God!

In the midst of a tornado, you may feel wind from it, but God is taking care of you. The next time you think about giving up, I hope God brings the thought of Noah. Hang in there, my child! When God is in your heart and life, you can make it through.

Noah's faith saved him and his family. Unbelief caused the rest of the world to perish. Again, Noah worked about one hundred twenty years. In all that time, God was giving those people many opportunities to turn to Him. I really do not know how many times God knocked on my door. I thank God for the opportunities that He gave me. I am glad that one day I said, "Yes, I am going with You, God." God is good!

If it were not for the goodness of God, the faithfulness of God, and the patience of God, many would not be serving Him today. If you get a little slack, through the faithfulness of God, the Holy Spirit will speak to you. I am glad that He does that. You never know how close to

danger you get sometimes, but He takes care of you.

My friend, you may become a little weary in well doing, spiritually speaking. That is when the Lord will stir you. I thank God for His faithfulness and His goodness.

Hebrews 11:6 reads, "But without faith it is impossible to please him." Second Peter 2:5 lets us know that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God was giving an opportunity for souls to get saved. In 1 Peter 3:20 we see God's love for humanity manifested. It says, ". . . when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

In Jonah's day, God pronounced destruction on the city of Nineveh. He told Jonah to go down to Nineveh and preach to those wicked people. God had already decided to send judgment upon them in forty days. He told Jonah to go down and preach to them. What was God doing? He was giving those people a choice. It was a great city of many people. They did not know their right hand from their left, according to the Bible.

Jonah rebelled, but after three days in the belly of a great fish he submitted to God and went to Nineveh. Jonah went about a days journey into the city, and he started preaching. Do you know what happened? Those people, from the king right on down, began to fast and pray. That king pulled off his robe, put on sackcloth, got down in the ashes, and began to cry out to God for mercy. The people ceased their evil ways, and God changed His mind. The people of the city of Nineveh took advantage of the opportunity that God had given them, and God spared their city.

Life is full of choices, and your choices have consequences. I thank God for good parents that raise their children right, but the parents cannot make their children choose to go with God. This life has many disappointments and many problems. Oh,

how we need God! If you want to have God in the troubled times, you had better take Him into your heart in the good times; then God will be there when you need help.

Which Way Will You Choose?

Jesus, speaking in Matthew 7:13-14, said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If you do not know the Lord, I beg of you to choose life, choose good, choose to serve God. The choice is in your hands. Jesus has already paid the price. He died for the sins of the whole world, and that includes you. He is waiting to hear you say, "Lord, please come into my heart." If you will do that, the Lord will certainly move in and save you from a life of sin. However, you must make that choice. My friend, God is such a gentleman, and He will not force His way upon you.

Matthew 24:37-39 says: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

These words ought to cause the fear of God to grip every lost heart. You do not know when your time to die is coming. Those people went right along as if everything was fine. When Noah and his family and everything else was on board the ark, the Bible says God shut the door. Everyone else was shut out. Again, Matthew 24:39 states, "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Oh, how people need to listen to the preaching of the Word of God!

Luke 17:26-30 tells us: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they mar-

ried wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."

I will leave the choice with you. You do not have to accept God. You do not have to serve God. Serving God is a service of love. He will not force you to serve Him; but someday you will have to die, and then you will have to face the Judgment. What a terrible day that will be if you do not know Jesus! Friend, before your choices take you even further down the road away from God, won't you choose to come to Jesus and make Him Lord of your life? May God bless you.

(Compact Disc TR-1185)



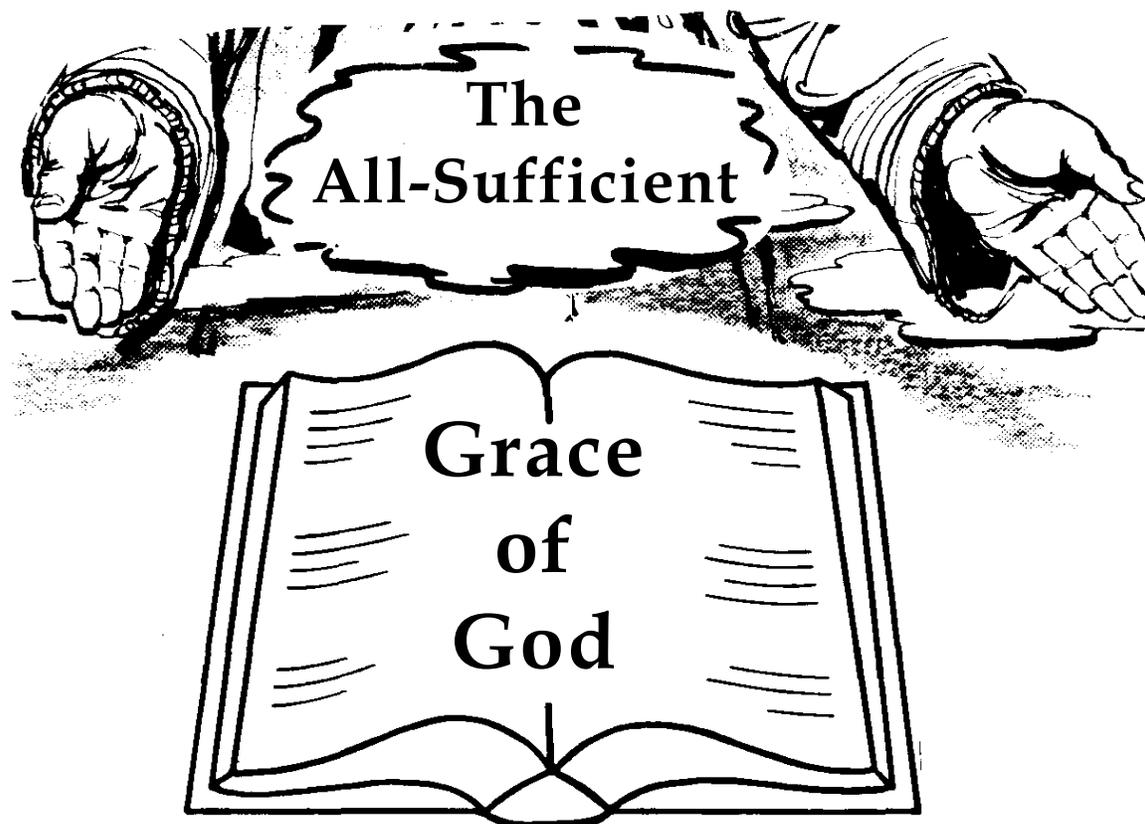
2013 Winter Bible School

Please Join Us

games Date: December 27 - 29, 2013 singing
Time: 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.
Ages: K - 6 (including 12 yr. olds)

story Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055 crafts
www.GodsAcres.org

*John 1:16 And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*



Brother Larry Dishman

The Principle of New Testament Christianity

As you read God's Word, you will find the word *grace* used many times. The Apostle Paul used it in every one of his epistles when he began them and when he closed them. This word means "unmerited favor; kindness which bestows upon one that he does not deserve." I thank God for the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul had much to say about the grace of God. He said in Romans 1:5, "By whom we have received grace. . . ." He closed the epistle in Romans 16:24 by saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." He wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:3, "Grace be unto you." In the Book of 1 Corinthians

Paul talked about grace. When he ended 1 Corinthians 16:23, he said, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

Paul decided to write another letter to the Church of God at Corinth, and he began the letter the same way. In 2 Corinthians 1:2 he said, "Grace be to you." He wrote thirteen chapters, and then he finished the last chapter (in 2 Corinthians 13:14) with "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." He wrote in Galatians 1:3, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ." He ended in Galatians 6:18 by saying, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:2, "Grace be to you." Then he wrote six chapters and ended in Ephesians 6:24 by saying, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." When he wrote the Book of Philippians, he began Philippians 1:2 with "Grace be unto you." He ended the epistle by saying in Philippians 4:23, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." He wrote the Book of Colossians and started by saying, in Colossians 1:2, "Grace be unto you." He closed it in Colossians 4:18 by saying, "Grace be with you."

In 1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul began "Grace be unto you." He ended the epistle in 1 Thessalonians 5:28 when he said, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." In 2 Thessalonians 1:2 he

said, "Grace unto you." He wrote in the last chapter, 2 Thessalonians 3:18, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen." He began the Book of 1 Timothy 1:2 by saying, "Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." When he wrote the last chapter in 1 Timothy 6:21 he said, "Grace be with thee. Amen."

When Paul started 2 Timothy 1:2 he said, "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." He closed it by saying in 2 Timothy 4:22, "Grace be with you. Amen." In Philemon, verse 3, he said, "Grace to you." In verse 25 he closed that chapter by saying, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

The Bible is full of Scriptures about grace, and we find that God's grace is sufficient for every need. The words that came from our Savior's lips were words of grace. Luke 4:22a tells us, "And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." The words of Christians are to impart grace to the hearers. Ephesians 4:29 reads, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." The Bible says to let our speech be seasoned with grace.

Sinners are saved by grace. All of us who are saved can testify to the fact that it was the grace of God that saved us. None of us can say, "Well, I deserved it; God owed it to me." Christian friend, whatever you were before you got saved, whether you were a good moral person or living in the depths of sin, it still took the grace of God to lift you up and to save you. Whatever you are today, you are because of God's grace. Whatever you hope to be, it will be because of God's grace.

Do you know what the Bible talks about in the Book of John when it talks about grace for grace? It is

talking about grace just heaped up, and that is what God does. He keeps heaping up grace in our lives. Grace is the whole principle of New Testament Christianity. Friend, it is the reversal of fallen man. We cannot comprehend it or understand it; it is the work of God. Only God can truly understand the meaning of the grace of God. Do you know why? It is unsearchable; it is past finding out, and it is the reason that God would save an old, dirty, rotten sinner. Yes, friend, it is definitely amazing. It is no wonder that John Newton wrote the song that says, "*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found. 'Twas blind but now I see.*"

I thank God for the grace of God. Someone may ask, "What is it?" It is help for the helpless, hope for the hopeless, and healing for those who are wounded and scarred; it is a balm for your broken heart. Friend, the grace of God is all I need, and it is all you need for life.

Our Access to the Grace of God

John 1:16 says, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." John did not say that a few of us have received grace, but he said that all of us have received grace for grace.

All that grace ever was, all that it is, and all that it ever will be is ours. However, that is only a part of the picture. If you were to put God's grace in a pile, and pile that same amount on top of it, and pile that same amount on top of it, and then pile that same amount on top of it, and just keep piling it up, that is what the grace of God is.

I want you to think about all the grace that it took to save every one of us and all the people that have been saved down through the years of time. It took the grace of God to save all those people. Then there are all the trials that people have gone through. It was the grace of God that brought them through all those trials and hard places. The grace of

God just keeps piling up and piling up until you might wonder whether God will run out of grace one of these days. No, friend, of all the things that are happening, all the sinners that have gotten saved, and all the things that He has done for you and me, He still has a storehouse full of grace. It is full to the place where the Bible says we can come boldly to the throne of grace and find mercy and help in the time of need.

Acts 4:33 calls the grace of God "great grace." Acts 13:43 says that we are to continue in grace. Acts 14:3 says that God gave testimony of that grace. Acts 15:11 says that we are to believe through grace. Acts 20:32 says we are built up by grace. Romans 1:5 says we receive grace for obedience. Romans 3:24 states that we are justified by grace. Romans 5:2 says we have access to this grace. Romans 5:17 tells us that we have an abundance of grace. Romans 5:21 says that grace can reign in our lives through righteousness.

There are people in our world who take the word *grace* and twist it and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. I do not think we ought to be quiet about it, because the grace of God is what saved me, the grace of God is what keeps me, and grace has brought me safe thus far. If I make it to Heaven, it will be by the grace of God. If you make it to Heaven, it will be by the grace of God.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain." Here is the great man of God, the one who started and ended all the epistles with the word *grace*, saying, in essence, "What I am, I am by the grace of God." We do not deserve anything that God has given us. It has been because of the mercy and the grace of God. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he

became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

In 2 Corinthians 9:8 he stated, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Then in 2 Corinthians 12:9 he said His grace is sufficient. Galatians 1:6 says that grace calls us. Ephesians 1:7 reads, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Second Thessalonians 2:16 says grace is our good hope. Titus 3:7 states, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

God's Grace Requires Holy Living

Again, Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Friend, there are times when I need God and I need the grace of God. In all these years that God has blessed me, I have always found that His grace was right there when I needed it. God has never let me down, and He has never failed me. There have been times when I have failed God, but God has never failed me.

Hebrews 13:9 lets us know that grace is what establishes us. In 1 Peter 1:2 we read that grace is multiplied. First Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

With those Scriptures in mind, I want you to look at what grace will do and what it requires. First, grace requires some things. God's grace requires holy living. We are still serving a holy God, and God still has a holy people.

As I was studying for this message, my mind went to a young man who went to college. It is sad that so many college professors are

atheists and agnostics teaching the young people, but that is true. For the most part, they are liberal professors. That is one reason our country is in such bad shape; the colleges are changing young people, and many times they come out of those institutions with liberal views.

A young man went to college in Tennessee, and he told me the first day the professor got up and said: "I want you to forget everything that you have been taught religiously and politically. We are starting over this morning." They want young people to forget everything that they have been taught about God. They want young people to forget their conservative ideals and those truths of God's Word; then they want to pump them full of their liberal trash. This young man who decided to go to college was not going to back down. He wanted to be what God would have him to be, and he bucked the tide. His daddy was a preacher, and his grandpa was a preacher.

One day the professor thought he was going to put him on the spot. The professor said: "Now, So-and-So here believes in God, so I am going to ask him to come up front. On the chalkboard, I want him to write one word that describes God. I do not want a sentence." The young man got out of his seat, walked up front, took the chalk from the teacher's hand, and wrote *h-o-l-y*. Holy describes God; He is a holy God.

The professor did not like that, so he started telling about terrible things that have happened in our country and about people being killed. He was trying to say that God had allowed those tragedies. He talked about many tragedies that have occurred in our world.

After the professor had spoken for some time, he said: "All right now, in the light of all that I have said, I want you to come up here again. Now I want you to write one word that describes God." So he humbly walked back up front and took the chalk from the professor's

hand. In front of the class, he wrote after the word *holy s-t-i-l-l*. God is still holy. No matter what people do, no matter what goes on in the world, God is still holy. He always has been holy, and He always will be holy. No matter how far man may fall, God is still holy.

I am glad that I have had the privilege to serve a holy God. He always does what is right. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He always does right because He is too good and too wise to make a mistake, and He has a holy people. God's grace requires holy living.

The Bible tells us in Titus 2:12-14: "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Someone may ask, "What does that have to do with the grace of God?" The grace of God has appeared to all men. What will the grace of God do? The Bible says it teaches men and women to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. I have heard lots of preachers get on the radio and preach about the grace of God, but I have never heard anyone tie holy living to the grace of God. However, this is what the grace of God will do for an individual. I repeat, God's grace requires holy living, and holy living requires the grace of God; it works both ways.

Growing in the Grace of God

Living soberly, righteously, and godly requires the grace of God. Friend, you cannot do that in your own strength. How do you do it then, if you cannot do it yourself? The Bible tells us in Philippians 2:12-13: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye

[continued on page 24]

Especially for Young People



A Little Old Lady



"On a gloomy morning a few years ago a little old lady entered a large department store in New York. She was wet and disheveled and seemed to wander aimlessly about as though she was looking for nothing in particular. It was early and the clerks had not yet settled down to work. They were gathered in groups about the store, noisily discussing their personal affairs. No one paid the slightest attention to the little old lady until a young clerk noticed her aimless wandering and hurried to her side. 'What can I show you, Madam?' he asked. With an apology for the delay in waiting upon her, he quickly secured the article she desired and explained its merits courteously and thoroughly. After the purchase was made, he left his counter and escorted her to the door, where he assisted her with her umbrella and the bundles she carried. Before the woman left, she asked for his card.

"A few days later this store received a letter from a woman ordering the complete furnishings for a great estate in Scotland. 'In addition to this order,' she wrote, 'I want you to send your Mr. — to personally supervise the installation of these furnishings.' The man she designated was the young clerk who had treated her so courteously that rainy morning. 'But Madam,' said the store manager later on, 'this young man is one of our most

inexperienced clerks and in no way fitted to carry out such an important mission. Let me suggest that we send our Mr.—, who is one of the best interior decorators in the country.' 'I am sorry,' the woman said, 'but I wish to have this young gentleman sail for Scotland at once and take immediate charge of the work.' So this youngster, who knew the value of courtesy and a smile, crossed the Atlantic to direct the furnishing of one of the world's famous palaces. The little old lady was Mrs. Andrew Carnegie."

Young person, may you take the lesson from this true incident. Courtesy, a smile, kindness, thoughtfulness, regard for others, and unselfish service cost but a trifle and are invaluable. In fact, we can hardly hope to succeed, in the true meaning of the word, without these qualities. Anyway, whether it brings us any apparent return or not, the pleasure and satisfaction we get from the exercise of these qualities is sufficient reward.

Recently, a large publishing house in a city had one of their reporters to dress as a tramp and call at the back door of every minister in the city, asking for something to eat. Almost all of the ministers or their wives refused aid. One minister in particular invited him in and shared with him his meal, treating him as a fellow man. In the next issue of the paper, he learned in the write-up that the

reporter gave him that he was one minister of the city who had treated him courteously.

One of the slogans of the Boy and Girl Scout movements is, "Do some kind act to somebody every day." Let us do even better, with the old saying, "Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in as many ways as you can." Real, applied Christianity will cause us to do this. It will help us all and make the world a better place in which to live if we put in practice these good principles.

A. T. Rowe

The Real Meaning of Prayer

1. *Prayer is not God doing things for us; prayer is God helping us to do His will.*
2. *Prayer can change circumstances; prayer changes us.*
3. *Prayer is conquest.*
4. *Prayer should not be as much talking to God as it is listening to God. Prayer is not so much telling God what we want Him to do as it is listening to see what He wants us to do.*

Selected

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

3 For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4 But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

6 Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.

7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.



In What Way Are You Marked?

Brother E. David Stegmeier

"Love Not the World"

I want to dwell mainly on the last five verses of our Scripture text. Paul was indifferent to the attitudes and actions of this world. We need

to be as Paul was. We are in this world, but we are not of this world. My mind is occupied with the Spirit of God, His work, and the furtherance of God's cause, and these mean everything to me. Paul had died out

to the world. He was not in love with it.

John wrote in 1 John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the

Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh [the world is going after the things of the flesh; these things are on their minds continually], and the lust of the eyes [buying everything you see and desiring every new gadget], and the pride of life [that which money can buy], is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

John categorized the things of the world into three classes: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It seems that people should be satisfied, especially Church of God people. We ought to show the world that we are a satisfied and happy people, content with whatever we have. Too many people have the attitude, "I want this, and I want that." God's people ought to be a contented people.

Paul was not concerned with external religious practices. His concern was that people become new creatures. Paul said in Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." God's children are those who have had a spiritual heart transplant.

Bearing the Marks of the Lord

For the sake of Christianity, Paul willingly and happily suffered much persecution. He was marked, and we are marked as well. My Scripture text says in verse 17, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." The Living Bible reads, "From now on please don't argue with me about these things, for I carry on my body the scars of the whippings and the wounds from Jesus' enemies that marked me as His slave." Slavery and the marks that slaves received were familiar to

the people of Paul's day. His words would have been easy to understand. Slaves were common in the days of the Roman Empire. Historians say that in some cities there were more slaves than citizens. The slaves were marked in case they ran away. Some slave owners would put a mark on a slave's body. An unkind and heartless slave owner branded his slaves with a hot iron.

We are marked either by Christ or by sin. One song says:

*I have lost my reputation,
Since I turned my back on sin.
And a lot of friends went with it,
Since I let the Savior in.
Now they pass me by unnoticed,
Where they once passed with a smile.
For they think I'm very foolish,
And they say I am out of style.*

*Now they say my life is ruined,
All my talents are thrown away.
They just can't understand it,
When I made such plans one day.
I know what I surrendered
When I promised to go through;
I got something far better,
When God made me all anew.*

*Now they think I'm very foolish,
They say I'm but a crank;
But the truth is, I am drunken
On the wine that Peter drank.
Well I'm filled with the Spirit
He received at Pentecost,
And I gained, O glory!
Far more than the little I lost.*

*I'm marked, marked, marked,
I'm marked wherever I go,
I'm marked, marked, marked.
What I am everyone seems to know.
I'm saved, saved, saved,
I'm saved by His power divine.
O glory to God, hallelujah!
I'm His and I know He is mine.*

Before Paul was saved, he received some marks. He was marked by the church. In Acts 9:13 Ananias said, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusa-

lem." Men bear either the marks of God or the marks of sin and the devil; you are marked by one or the other. The devil is a hard taskmaster. You will carry some marks and scars for your entire life. By the help of God, I want to be marked by spirituality, not carnality. There is too much carnality in the world.

Some people are marked by their goodness, and others are marked by their wickedness. Some are marked by their love for others, and others are marked by their self-centeredness. Could it be that sometimes you are too self-centered? Some are so marked with self-centeredness that the pastor cannot ask them to do anything because they have other matters to attend to, such as painting the bathroom, planting the garden, harvesting the beans, stitching a dress, or perhaps company is coming.

The Marks of Sin

Philippians 2:19-20 reads: "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state." You need to be like-minded with your godly pastor; when your pastor wants you to do something, you should do whatever it is with all your heart. Timothy had an awesome mark. He was a man who was concerned about others; he was the opposite of self-centeredness.

Verses 21-24 continue: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." What kind of mark do you have? How do people identify you?

Sin marks people in their minds, in their spirits, in their personalities, and in their bodies. Alcohol marks

people by their master the devil, and those are horrible, destructive marks. I never drank, thank the Lord, and I have no desire to do so. Proverbs 23:29-32 says: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? [It seems that people who are really inebriated like to fight. They feel stronger when they are under the influence of alcohol.] who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?"

"They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, [In Canaan red wine was the very best. The devil will try to lure you with the best he has.] when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." Sin is a terrible thing. That is the way sin is—like an adder. Therefore, you need to leave it alone. I knew of a man who had a snake. He was trying to be really smart by playing with it while people were watching, but it bit him, and he almost died. Someone cut off the snake's head, but it was not the snake's fault. It was the man's own fault. You need to stay away from sin. I do not want any part of it.

Those who are controlled by nicotine bear the marks of their master in their hands, in their breath, and in their countenances. They lose their independence and become helpless slaves. Paul was marked as a voluntary slave of Christ. People in sin are marked as involuntary slaves. I know what I am doing, and I love it. I love being a Christian. I am having the time of my life! No one has more fun than Church of God people.

Resentments, bad tempers, evil thoughts, and ungodly ways mark a great host of people. I thought of a man in the Bible named Nabal. He had a wonderful wife by the name of Abigail. She was sweet and willing to help people. The Bible says Nabal was "churlish," which means "ungracious, ill-bred, rude, arrogant,

haughty, and domineering." It was a part of him; he was marked. God's people are marked too.

How Do People Label You?

In the Bible we read of many people who were marked by good traits and many who were marked by evil traits. Judas was branded as a traitor. As a teacher, I have taught thousands of children, and I have never had one student who was named Judas. Some individuals in the group were probably like Judas, but none bore his name.

The mark of Judas was not just back in the first century. Today there are those who could be branded as traitors. Ananias and Sapphira were branded and marked as liars. Some people cannot tell the truth, so they are branded as liars. Part of the Bible standard is telling the truth. Often people think of the standard as merely pertaining to clothing, but the standard also includes being honest and upright. Jesus is our standard. The Bible tells us that the Creteans were marked as being evil beasts and lazy gluttons. Pilate was branded as a political opportunist. He took advantage of every opportunity he had without thinking of the principles involved. If a person violates one principle of the Word, he is guilty of violating them all.

When I was a child going to Sunday school, I learned about David and Goliath, Jonah and the whale, and Daniel in the lions' den. Through these stories, I was taught biblical principles. These were not, as some would say, "fairy tales," but they were inspired by the Word of God.

How do you suppose you are being branded? What label are people putting on you? Abraham was branded as the friend of God. Jesus was branded as the friend of sinners. We often think of Peter as being impulsive, of Paul as being courageous, and of Martin Luther as being the lion-hearted reformer.

Our nation's sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln, was labeled

"Honest Abe." He led the fight to save the union and to abolish slavery. His upbringing was awesome, but he had very little education or experience in politics. However, he had keen judgment and a great love for humanity. He earned the greatest respect that any president has ever earned. One time a survey was taken in America as to who was the greatest president, and Abraham Lincoln was voted number one. I often think of his immortal words, which he uttered when he took his second oath of office near the end of the Civil War. He said, "Malice toward none, charity for all." Those words are awesome. It was not but a few days later that someone shot him. How could anyone hate a man who was the personification of equality, love, and benevolence? Yet people did.

As the church, we do not live modest lives, dress modestly, and live holy lives merely to earn our way into Heaven. We do it because we love to. We see the importance of following the Word of God. You would be concerned if a doctor came to the operating room wearing blue jeans with holes here and there, no shirt, tobacco coming out of his mouth, and an earring in his ear and in his eyebrow. You would probably say, "I've decided I'm not going to have this operation today."

Many people want to make Christianity popular, agreeable, pleasant, and easy to obtain. However, Jesus said in John 15:18, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." Some people hate the church. If you get along well with the world and if you are compatible with it, you might as well take the sign down and replace it with a sign saying, "Ichabod," meaning "The presence of God has departed."

What Kind of Mark Are You Bearing?

Jesus said in John 15:19, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not

of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The world is going to hate the Christian and hate the Bible standard. Jesus said in Matthew 23:26, "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." First, you must cleanse the inside and then the outside will be cleaned up as you walk with God.

Second Corinthians 7:1 says, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

I like what one man wrote: "Jesus invited us, not to a picnic, but to a pilgrimage; not to a frolic, but to a fight. He offered us not an excursion, but an execution; death to self, sin, and the world. He challenged us to take up a cross, to let the dead bury the dead, to pluck out the offending eye, and to cut off the offending hand or foot." We are to come to Him without any reservations, leaving behind nominal religion. Many people are not willing to bear the reproach. They desire recognition.

I thought of Diotrephes, who John wrote of in 3 John, verses 9-10. Diotrephes was marked as a man who loved to have the preeminence. Some people have that mark today.

People in false religion are marked. The Bible says in Revela-

tion 14:9, "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand." False religion receives a mark. What does that mean? The right hand of fellowship puts you in. In some denominations, all you have to do is shake the preacher's hand and you can become a member. In others, you must receive a mark in the forehead, or in your mind.

My family was in false religion when I was a little child. My grandfather used to preach in that religion, and they taught a catechism. At twelve years of age, a person went before the preacher, and the preacher would give that person a quiz. If the person passed, he stood in front of the congregation and became a member of that institution. I do not think I ever read a word out of that catechism book. It was the Holy Bible that gave me grace and strength.

Some people receive a mark in the forehead or in the hand. In false religion you have to have that mark to buy and sell. God's people have a peculiar mark, as they worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. They hear the voice of God and obey it.

What kind of a mark are you bearing? When you leave this world, you are going to leave your mark. You will be remembered for some quality. Something will be said about you. How are people marking

you? Are you kind and gentle or do you come across as being grouchy? How about your children? How about the dog? Does it run when it sees you? A good man treats his animals right.

One dear brother was won to the Lord by witnessing such a case. He was raised in a false religion, but the Church of God came to town, and they were holding services in the school house. The people of the town called them "holiness people." He watched them, particularly a certain convert. Meanwhile, a man from his church had gotten his team of horses stuck in the mud. He began thrashing that team and screaming and cursing. He acted devilish.

About that time, along came the man who had converted to Christianity and who was a member of the Church of God. As he was going by, the Christian said, "Do you want my help?" Then quietly and kindly, he hooked his team up to that man's wagon, hit the reins on those horses, and pulled him out. The young man looking on was so impressed with what he saw that he said, "Dad, I want to take my stand with those people," and he did. He won his family to the Truth. How are you being marked? I hope you are bearing a mark of honor and not a mark of reproach.

(Cassette C-5054M)

**When we cannot see our way, let us trust and still obey;
He who bids us forward go, cannot fail the way to show,
Night with Him is never night, where He is, there all is light,
When He calls us, why delay? They are happy who obey.**

Mark 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven

thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Faith Beyond Improbability



Brother Vernon Plyler

Praying for the Impossible

I love the stories in the Bible, from the Old Testament all the way through the New Testament. I love to imagine myself having been there and having been able to be a part of some of those events. Our Scripture lesson is quite remarkable. Christ was a very sought after person. He did works that no one had ever seen

done before.

The Bible tells us that He went to Capernaum, and soon it was noised about that He was in a certain house. One person told another, and another, and another, and soon the whole town came alive with the news that this Man who heals people was in town.

The people gathered tightly around Jesus as they had many

times prior to that. Those people were so eager to hear Jesus that the house was full and the crowd overflowed outside. Some men carried a sick man to the house, but they were unable to get in. The Bible says he was borne of four, which means he was carried by four people. His friends had heard about this Man who could heal people, so they decided to get their friend to Jesus

so that he could be healed, but no entry into the house was possible. They looked for a way, but there was no practical way to get to Christ.

Have you ever prayed for what you would call an impossibility? I have. Everything I pray about is impossible. There are some things that I do not have to pray about because I have the strength, the ability, and the knowledge, so I just do it. For example, I do not need to pray about brushing my teeth because God gave me the strength and the knowledge to do that. Everything I pray about is an impossibility. They are things that I cannot do. I cannot heal someone, I cannot save someone, and I do not even have the power to give myself a good day.

Faith beyond improbability is faith beyond what you think probably could happen. Those four brethren in our Scripture lesson could not heal their friend, so they put him on a stretcher-like bed and carried him to where Christ was in Capernaum. They said, "If we can just get him to Jesus, he will be healed." However, when they got there, there was no easy way to get to Christ.

If you have served God for any length of time, you have been at "Capernaum" a time or two in your life. Perhaps you have thought, "If I could just . . ." and when you got to the word "just," it looked impossible. It looked like everything was going to work out, but when you got so far, it was not working out anymore. No doubt, those four men were excited about getting their friend to Jesus, but as they got closer to the house, they saw that it was not only full but also overflowing.

I am sure they talked among themselves and said: "What should we do? We brought our friend here, and he is crippled and cannot walk. We have carried him all this way. How are we going to get him to Christ?" They could have just sat down and waited until Christ came out of the house, but instead they said: "This is really important. We need to get him to Christ right now,

lest the devil discourage us and find a reason to tell us it cannot happen. We're going to Jesus right now!"

The healing probability looked really slim to them, but their faith did not waver. They had faith in the face of improbability. Oh, for the faith of those four men when it looks as though a loved one will not find the Lord because he has lived in sin all his life and is getting into his upper years, yet he still shows no sign of coming to Christ. Maybe a young person for whom you have been praying and fasting is going further away from God. You need to have faith in the midst of improbability. When it looks as if he will not get saved, you need to keep the faith. The devil would like to discourage you.

Faith in Action

In Jesus' day the houses had flat roofs. The Bible says they broke up the roof and uncovered it. They had to get on the roof before they could tear it up. When I read this story, I am inspired by the amount of faith and ingenuity they had to put their faith to work. Maybe the men could hear Christ preaching or teaching down below. They could not just make a small hole to look through; they had to open a hole large enough to lower a man lying down on a bed through. I can just imagine that the gainsayers were saying: "What are you doing? This isn't even your house!" Those men went up on top of another person's roof and began to tear off the roof. They knew Christ was in the house, so they commenced to tear up the roof. Sometimes there are gainsayers when it comes to our faith too. We have faith, and we are determined to see it through. We have the promises of God's Word to stand on.

Sometimes well-meaning people do not understand your circumstance and do not know how hard you have prayed and fasted. They do not know what you have been dealing with in your life in trying to see this thing through, so they come

around like Job's comforters. If you are not careful, the devil will take what they say to try to discourage you from doing what you ought to be doing to bolster your faith in God.

Our Scripture lesson says in verse 5, "When Jesus saw their faith, [That thrills me. Whose faith did He see? He saw the faith of the sick man's friends.] he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He used a word of consolation; an endearing title was applied by the Savior. He showed His compassion and His confidence to assure him that He would heal him. He saw the faith of those four men. If you are not careful, your faith will not be visual, because the devil will discourage you from letting it be visual faith.

John 3:13-18 reads: "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Christ knew the very heart of the man they brought to Him. The faith that persisted for his healing obviously caused him to believe on the Son of God for salvation as well as for physical healing.

If Christ knew the sick man believed and He knew his sinful heart, did He not also know that he was on the roof? Christ perceived that, and He also knew when those four men were on their way. The Bible lets us know when He saw their faith in action, that faith

persisted for the healing of the body and for the healing of the soul. I want you to notice that Christ allowed them to exercise their faith. They put their faith in action.

Keep Praying Until the Answer Comes

One song says, "*Don't stop praying and the answer will come.*" I am sure you have people for whom you are praying on a regular basis, and you are hoping for an opportunity to talk to them. Sometimes I feel like Elijah, looking for a little cloud. When I see one, it makes me really happy. Christ fed the hungry to reach out to them. Sometimes we need to reach out to people even in a simple way, as Christ did by inviting them for supper. It might be a way to get on common ground and make them comfortable so that you might have an opportunity to speak to them about the Lord. Sometimes we need to stop looking for the big and the powerful and start looking for a little cloud.

When Elijah prayed for rain, he sent his servant and said, "Go look again." On the seventh time, the servant came back and said, "In the sky there is a little cloud, and it is about the size of a man's hand."

Elijah said, in essence, "Get off the mountain, for it is about to rain." Sometimes we are too easily discouraged because we are looking for big dark clouds. We are listening for thunder and looking for lightning. I want to encourage God's people to bolster their faith. Do not be discouraged when what you hope will happen looks as though it is probably not going to happen. The devil paints such an ugly picture, but hold right on to your faith. With the help of God you can see the things happen that you want to see happen.

When the four men broke up the roof, they broke up the barrier that kept them from Christ. Sometimes you have to break up the barrier that keeps you from Christ. You need to increase your faith when

things seem improbable. Have you ever heard anybody say, "Well, it probably won't happen"? Perhaps you have heard someone say, "Well, they are calling for a little rain today, but it probably won't happen." We use those words liberally in our vocabulary, do we not? If you are not careful, the devil will come along and say, "It probably won't happen." That is when it is time to go back to God another time. It is not after the first or the second time that you say, "It probably won't happen." Often it is after you get tired of praying, after the devil tells you that other things are more imminent than this. Maybe it is the sixth time. If so, you need to go back the seventh time, and there will be a cloud about the size of a man's hand. Something will be there to encourage you in your prayer life. You need to keep praying for the impossible, but do not forget to pray about the improbable. You need to keep bolstering your faith and keep going back again.

The Importance of Being Where God Wants You to Be

In Queen Esther's day, she and her people (the Jews) were about to be totally trampled out. Mordecai came to her and said in Esther 4:14, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" You never know when it is "such a time as this" that you are where you are today. You are in the life of someone who needs God. You ought to invite people to church. Sometimes you may invite them repeatedly, but they will not come.

At times I invite people over for dinner. I found that most people have a hard time refusing a good meal. We do not necessarily start witnessing to them as soon as we get them seated around the table. No, often we have to build a relationship with people before we can witness to them.

Young person, you might think you can go out and sow your wild oats and live how you want to live

and someday get saved. Well, by the time that "someday" comes, your children may be grown, and they may go out into sin. You may come back and say, "O God, forgive me!" However, then you will have a bigger job on your hands in trying to get your children in church where they have never been. They will know nothing about God because you were out living your own way and doing your own thing.

When Elijah's servant reported a cloud about the size of a man's hand to Elijah, in essence, Elijah said, "You had better get off the mountain, because there is going to be an abundance of rain." Remember, it was a little cloud. If I leave you with anything, I hope it is this: look for a little, bitty cloud while you are praying, while you are hoping, and while you are believing. Sometimes you need to look for the little things. If you only look for the big things, the devil will try to discourage you and say, "It probably isn't going to happen." You may be tempted to stop praying because your prayer has gone unanswered for so many years. Perhaps throughout the years, your loved one has gone further and further away from God. That is the reason I often pray, "Lord, if he won't come here, will You go to where he is? Will You meet him where he is while we are calling his name out in prayer?"

How Is Your Faith?

Matthew 8:5-10 reads: "And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he

cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Verse 13 says, "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." That means he was healed immediately. Christ offered to go there and heal the servant. He saw the man's faith and his humility. The man said, in essence, "I'm unworthy for You to come on my property." It was not that he did not want Christ there, but he felt unworthy to have Christ come. He said, in so many words, "If You will just speak the word, that's good enough." Christ called his faith "great faith." He had not seen greater faith in all of Israel. How is your faith? Would Christ be able to say of you, "No greater faith have I seen?"

Many people relied on Jesus to touch them. They had seen Him reach out and touch others, but this was a new thing when Jesus said, "Go your way, and your servant will be made well." Many people brought their sick to Him, and He commended their faith; yet this centurion man came alone. It might have looked improbable to those who were looking on, but this man had faith like the four men who also came to Capernaum. The Bible says some things only happen by prayer and fasting. You may say, "I'd surely like to see my loved ones saved." You are not going to see them saved unless you wholly consecrate yourself to God. You are not going to see them saved just by showing up for the church services whenever you feel like it and letting the cares of life take preeminence in your life. It is going to take effort on your part. Christ must see your faith in action.

Sometimes people seem to get the wrong impression that faith is just praying. Sometimes faith is doing something about your prayers. At times, you can pray and pray and not see results. James 5:16b

reads, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James did not say how long that effectual, fervent prayer ought to be. If you are not careful, you will get the idea, "If I pray long prayers, it might happen." In reality, if you pray an effectual, fervent prayer and put your faith in action, God will answer you.

Get Rid of Preconceived Ideas

We live in such a busy society with many fancy gadgets that should make life so much easier. You do not even have to go outside to start the car and warm it up. You can push a button and start it while it is out in the driveway. We have fax machines, e-mail, and smart phones. You can send a message around the world in mere moments of time. These devices ought to make life easier. They ought to allow us more time to pray, but they do not.

If you are not careful, these devices will take away from the action part of your faith. Jesus said to go out and compel others to come in. He did not say, "Pray and maybe they'll come." Sometimes we have family days at church, and we invite people to come. We send out invitations to invite family members to come in. You may say, "That would take some time." Yes, it does, but are you going to put your faith into action or are you just going to pray about it?

I get a lot of consolation in seeing a little "cloud." Elijah did. Again, in essence, he said, "Get down off this mountain. It's going to rain." If you will put faith in action, I can tell you on the authority of the written Word of God, it is going to "rain." It may not rain the way we think it will. Sometimes a nice light drizzle of rain would be good.

If you are not careful, you will get a preconceived idea of how healing ought to come. I do not merely mean physical healing; I mean spiritual healing as well.

One time I went to an auto parts

store to get some items. When I came out, a young man had pulled into the parking lot and had run out of gas right behind me. I helped him push his car out of the way. I had on a brand-new pair of leather-soled boots. I never gave thought to the fact that they were still slippery. So when I put my hands against his bumper to push, my feet slipped, but my hands hung onto his bumper and my shoulders wrenched. I tore the rotators in both of my shoulders. The right one was horrible, and the left one was not quite as bad. I could barely move my fingers. I could not lift my right arm for several months. I had to use my left hand to pick up my right arm to use it. To use the GPS in my car, I had to pick up my arm and prop it on the dash to type.

When I was studying and typing for sermons, I had to prop up my arm on the desk. A doctor said it probably would not heal on its own. I did not have money to go and get it fixed, so two sisters in the congregation said, "Brother Vern, we will pray for you every day until your shoulders are healed." Did it happen overnight? No, I preached for about a month with my right hand in my pocket so it did not hurt so much. If I moved too quickly, pain shot through the top of my body so badly I could hardly see straight. I would have liked to have seen my shoulders healed right away, but thank the Lord, they did heal.

Sometimes you may get preconceived ideas about how things ought to be, but God will do things in whatever way He will receive the most glory for Himself. People have asked me, "Why doesn't God heal some people?" I believe God gets more glory from some individuals' deaths than He does from their healing. Lazarus died, and his sisters bewailed his loss. In John 11:21 Martha said to Him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

We read in John 11:4, "When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God

might be glorified thereby." All they saw was that Lazarus was dead. Verse 23 says, "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." He tried to get them to exercise their faith by telling them that he would rise again. When they went to the tomb where they had laid Lazarus, Christ said, "Lazarus, come forth," and he came out bound in his grave clothes, and they just stood there. They could not believe it. If they would have believed it, they would have gone and unwrapped him.

Christ had to tell them, "Loose him, and let him go." They were stunned. Christ had been trying to tell them, and they did not get it. I wonder how many times Christ is trying to tell us something, but we do not get it because we have a preconceived idea of how we think it ought to work. Do you need to increase your faith? We serve a real God, but there is a real enemy of souls out there. He knows he cannot get you to go out and be part of the illicit acts of sin any more, but he can try to discourage you.

Allow Your Faith to Grow

Sometimes you may look for God to act in an affirmative way in regard to your prayers. However, as

He did with Lazarus, He may choose to move in a way that He gets more glory. He sees things from a heavenly view; we see things from an earthly perspective. If you fly in an airplane and look down, things look much different from up there. Imagine God's view, the Creator of it all. He looks down and He says, "Be still; I'm working on it." God will work so that He can get the most glory.

I challenge you to pray, "God, help me to allow You to get more glory." Sometimes people get so desperate in what they want that they forget to leave room for God to get glory out of the situation. Your faith needs to grow and become strong. Do you know how it grows? When you see someone else's loved one get saved, you may think, "Wow, there's still hope for mine," and your faith begins to grow. Christ will say, "I see your faith."

You need to pray: "Lord, help me not to predetermine how You should work. Help me not to just have faith for healing, but also for saving power." God wants to do greater things for us. Sometimes you can get too caught up in the cares of life. You need to make sure that you read the Bible and pray every day. You may go about thinking that you

have done your part because you have prayed earnestly for others. Well, what have you done about it? Have you physically done anything? Now, don't say, "I've got to get to work for God," and just charge ahead and do foolish things. Only under the power and the direction of the Holy Spirit should you go. It is time to start asking God, "Lord, show me what I can do for You today." It might be one less golf game this week so you can have someone over for dinner. Sometimes it might mean that you have to put aside your own desires just a little.

True service to God is usually not convenient to the flesh. When the phone rings and you are tired, are you going to serve or are you just going to pray? If it is an area that needs service, you are going to have to pull yourself together and serve. You ought to prepare yourself in advance that you are going to be of service in His kingdom, and then put a little action in it. If you do not, you will find yourself saying: "It probably isn't going to happen. It looks like it may never happen." Do you have faith beyond improbability? If so, then you need to live it. If you do, you will be encouraged.

(Compact Disc TR-1040M)

Announcements

Summersville, WV
December 6-8

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

Newark, OH
December 26-29

WINTER CAMP MEETING: The Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055
Service times: **Please note that the first service is Thursday @ 7:00 p.m.;** Friday - Sunday 10:00 a.m., 3:00, & 7:00 p.m. Morning prayer services Friday - Sunday. Heated dormitories. Three meals served daily in dining hall, plus the snack stand is open in the dining hall after the evening services. The book store is open after every service as well. Bedding is supplied; please bring your own towels. For lodging reservations contact Brother Dave or Sister Ruby Bush, 725 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055, or call 740-345-1213. Please make reservations in advance, if possible.
For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 87 Decrow Ave. Newark, Ohio
Telephone: 740-344-2543

[The All-Sufficient Grace—contin. from p. 13]
have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." You cannot do God's will if God does not work it in you. It is God that works in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

In Galatians 2:20 the Apostle Paul said, in essence, "The life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God; it is not me that lives this, it is Christ that liveth in me." Again, holy living requires God's grace. The Bible tells us in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." I thank God for the grace of God!

Dear one, you must also grow in grace. This is especially true if you are going to live a holy life. Peter commands you to grow in grace. It is not enough to experience God's forgiveness. Thank God, that is wonderful! That is how it all begins, but God does not want you to stop right there. God has growth in mind. He wants you to mature and grow. The Apostle Paul said there was a time when he was a child, and he spoke as a child and thought as a child; but when he became a man, he put away childish things. God wants you to grow spiritually and to put away childish things.

God wants you to be pliable in His hands. The song says, "He's still working on me." If He is not working on you, that means you are not pliable. As long as you will remain pliable, God will work on you. In 2 Peter 3:18a we read, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." You have to grow in grace.

God's grace is sufficient to keep all who are truly saved. His grace is sufficient to keep you after you get saved. You are saved by grace, and it takes the grace of God to stay saved. The Bible says in Jude, verse

24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling." Somebody may say, "I would get saved, but I am afraid that if I did get saved, I would fall," but He is able to keep you from falling. Someone may say, "You do not know the problems I have," but God is able to keep you from falling. He can keep you from falling and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Praise God!

I am going to give God the praise and the glory, because it is His grace that has brought me thus far. It is His grace that kept me saved. The man who started all these chapters with grace and ended them with grace said in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." It takes the grace of God to perform that work in each of our lives.

Someone may say: "But So-and-So does not like me, and he is giving me a hard time. I don't think he wants me to make it." Friend, no one can stop you from making it. John 10:27-29 says: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

God's Grace Can Lift Fallen Man

God's grace is sufficient to lift you up when you fall. We do not encourage people to fall. We believe a person can live above sin, according to God's Word; but there is that exception in the Bible. In 1 John 2:1-2 we read: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." If you have fallen, God's grace is sufficient to pick you

up. If you want to be saved, if you want to come back to Father's house, if you feel as if you have messed up, you do not have to be lost, because you have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

In the story of the prodigal son, we find out that he started as a son, and because of the grace of God, he ended up a son. Someone may say, "I used to be a son." Well, you can become a son once again. You can be adopted back into the family of God. The grace of God lifted up the prodigal son. It matters not how far you have fallen. God has enough grace to pick you up again. Do not let the devil keep you in the "hogpen." You can come to the Father because He has grace heaped upon grace, and He can bring you back into the fold of God. That fallen boy could not understand why his father would put a brand-new robe over his sin-ravaged body, but I believe his father whispered in his ear, "It is grace, son; it is grace." The prodigal son could not understand, and he could have thought: "I have wasted my substance with riotous living. Why kill the fatted calf for me? Why would my father have music playing for me?"

His father could have said: "I am not doing this because you deserve it; it is grace." That son just could not understand why his father gave him new shoes, but it was grace that bought him the shoes. So it was with each of us. We did not deserve to have God pick us up out of the miry pit of sin and set our feet on the highway of holiness, but it was the grace of God. His grace is sufficient.

I have found that the grace of God is sufficient. I am no different from you. I am just like everyone else. Every one of us throughout our lives has periods that we carry heavy burdens. Today you might have a heavy burden, but His grace is sufficient for the heavy burden. The grace of God has always been sufficient. There have been times that I have had trials that I have never faced before, and the devil is always right there, saying, "Now

what are you going to do?"

I say: "I have been through lots of other things, and God has brought me through every time. I believe He will take care of this also." The devil says: "But this is different. You have never had anything like this."

I say, "That may be true, but I have confidence in God." As I look back over my life and think of what God did then, I consider how God worked out this and that. I look back to all the times that God has come to my rescue. His grace was sufficient then, and it will be sufficient in the future. The grace of God is sufficient for whatever happens in your life. God has so much grace in His storehouse that nothing is so big that He will run out of grace. He just keeps pouring on the grace. The bigger the problem, the more He keeps pouring on grace. He is not going to run out of grace. He has all the grace you need for whatever you are going through.

The Sufficiency of the Grace of God

The Apostle Paul sought the Lord three times that He might remove a thorn in his flesh, but Jesus said in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee." God's grace is still sufficient. Things may not always be as you would like them to be. There are times that I have wet my pillow with tears at night. There have been times when my heart has been broken, and there were times when I thought I was going to die. Sometimes your troubles will seem to have you pinned to the wall, and the devil will say, "You are down for the count," but God steps in and says, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Maybe poverty has overwhelmed you and your family. God's grace is sufficient. Maybe your pain is so great that you do not think you can bear it, but God's grace is sufficient. Maybe death has touched your family and your heart is aching. There is no pain like the

pain of losing someone close to you in death. There is no pain quite like that pain, but God's grace is sufficient.

God's grace is sufficient to help you to do any work that God has called you to do. If God has called you to do the work, His grace will be sufficient. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." God has a plan, a purpose, a provision for you. He has a work that He has called you to do. You need to find that work and do it. You will find that the grace of God is sufficient. You may lose friends, but trust the grace of God. You may suffer loss, but trust the grace of God. Trust it, use it, lean on it, look for it, rest in it, and tell others about it. Tell what He has done for you. God has been so good! Do not quit! If you will hang in there, God will see you through.

God has enough grace to save every sinner. It makes no difference how deep you are in sin, God's grace is sufficient to save. Titus 3:5-7 states: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." His grace will reach all. It reaches the best and the worst. Jesus said He would in no wise cast you out.

The grace of God was sufficient for me, and it will be sufficient for you. The grace of God was sufficient for the woman at the well. In John 4:29 she said, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did." His grace was sufficient for the woman who was caught in the act of adultery, which you can read about in John, Chapter 8. His grace was sufficient for the Apostle Paul. It was sufficient for Peter when he cursed and swore and said he did

not know the Lord. It was enough for Zacchaeus, the tax collector. God's grace was sufficient for the wicked jailer. It is enough for the poorest man on earth and for the richest man on earth. It is sufficient for the most intelligent man and for the simple-minded man. It is sufficient for the most powerful individual and for the famous individual. It is sufficient for the most wicked, vile person on death row. God's grace is sufficient. His grace is enough for anybody that will come to Him repenting, turning from sin, and placing faith in the Son of God.

God's Wonderful Love

There is a song that I heard, and I like it. It says: "*I am so glad that God saves old sinners. I am thrilled and amazed that He sets them free. But the biggest surprise in saving old sinners is that He saved an old sinner like me.*" I am still glad that God saves sinners. Do not give up on your lost loved ones, because God's grace is still sufficient. Do not think that you cannot make it, because God's grace is sufficient.

There was never a love like the love the Father had for His Son. I believe that I love my sons as much as a father could love his sons. I believe I love my daughters as much as a father could love his daughters. Yet there was never a love like the love that the Father had for His Son. Never was there a Son so lovable, and never a Father so loving. There was never so precious a relationship, so sensitive a parent, and so beautiful a child as God the Father and God the Son. Nevertheless, God was able to give Him up without any reservations. John tells us that God gave His only begotten Son. That took the grace of God. Yes, friend, it is the grace of God that saves you.

I am going to tell you about a Brazilian teenager named Christina who longed to leave her poor neighborhood and see the world. In her home there was just a little pallet on the floor on which to sleep, a wash

basin, and a wood-burning stove. Christina dreamed of a better life in the city. So she got up one morning very early, and ran away, breaking her mother's heart.

Knowing what life on the streets would be for her young, beautiful, attractive daughter, the mother, Maria, hurried and packed what she needed and got on a bus to try to find her daughter. Right before she left, she went to the photography booth, closed the curtain, and spent all that she could on pictures of herself. With her purse full of small photos, she boarded that next bus. Maria knew Christina had no way of earning money. She also knew that her daughter was too stubborn to give up.

When pride meets hunger pains, humans will do things that they thought before were unthinkable. Knowing this, Maria began her search in bars, hotels, night clubs, and anyplace with the reputation for street walkers and prostitutes. She went to many of them. Every bar she went to, every nightclub she went in, and every hotel she went to, she left her picture taped on the bathroom mirror, tacked on a hotel bulletin board, or fastened to a corner of a phone booth. On the back of each photo, she wrote a note. It was not too long before the money and the pictures ran out, and Maria had to go home. This weary Mother wept as the bus began the long journey back to the small village.

A few weeks later, young Christina descended the stairs of a hotel. Her face was tired, and her brown eyes no longer danced with youth, but rather spoke of pain and fear. Let me tell you something: sin has a way of marking you! It marks people. Sin takes away the youthful beauty. Her laughter was broken, her dreams, like the prodigal son's, had become nightmares. A thousand times over, she had longed to trade these countless beds for her secure pallet. Oh, if she could just go home and sleep on that pallet in her mother's home one more time, yet the little village was, in too many

ways, too far away.

As she reached the bottom of the stairs, coming down from this hotel room, she noticed a familiar face. She looked again, there on the lobby mirror was a small picture of her mother. Christina's eyes burned and her throat tightened as she walked across the room and removed the small photo. Written on the back was this compelling invitation: "Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, it does not matter. Please, come home." She did. Dear one, that is the invitation that God is sending to you. Whatever you have done, whatever you have become, come home. That is God's invitation to you. It does not matter what you have done or what you have become, God says, "Just come home."

(Compact Disc TR-1004E)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]
candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Your witness for Christ and holy living is vitally needed.

Standing firm for the Truth and showing a sweet spirit at all times has a great effect on sinners and unbelievers. Saints who faithfully endure severe opposition as it is hurled against them prove that the Bible is true. This shows the onlooker the grace of God in powerful demonstration. It illustrates God's ability to keep a trusting child secure through the tests and trials that befall him or her. Honest hearts are watching to see if Christianity really works when the pressure is applied. A Christian's faithful witness has often been the convincing element that has won many a precious soul to the Lord. A home where a saved individual lives with an unsaved spouse has often been able to win the unsaved companion to the Lord by living a godly life.

Living the Christian life and

being faithful to the Lord will never go unnoticed or unrewarded. You may not see the fruit of your witness as you would like, but the Lord is keeping the record. He is accomplishing in you that which He desires. Do not be discouraged at what you see with your physical eye. Continue to press forward in your efforts for the Lord. Do you remember reading about faithful Stephen? He was just an ordinary man whom the Lord chose to work through. The Lord uses the humble to do great things for Him. Stephen witnessed for Jesus in the midst of a crowd of unbelieving Jews. These same men were responsible for crucifying Christ. Stephen boldly proclaimed the Word of God and pointed his finger at these religious professors. In Acts 7:51 he said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Stephen's faithful witness made an impression on a young man standing in that crowd. That man was Saul of Tarsus who was later saved and became the Apostle Paul. We know that Paul was used of God in a mighty way. Oftentimes one man's faithful witness and great service for the Lord will lead another man to salvation.

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

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

Selected



Winter 2013

Camp Meeting

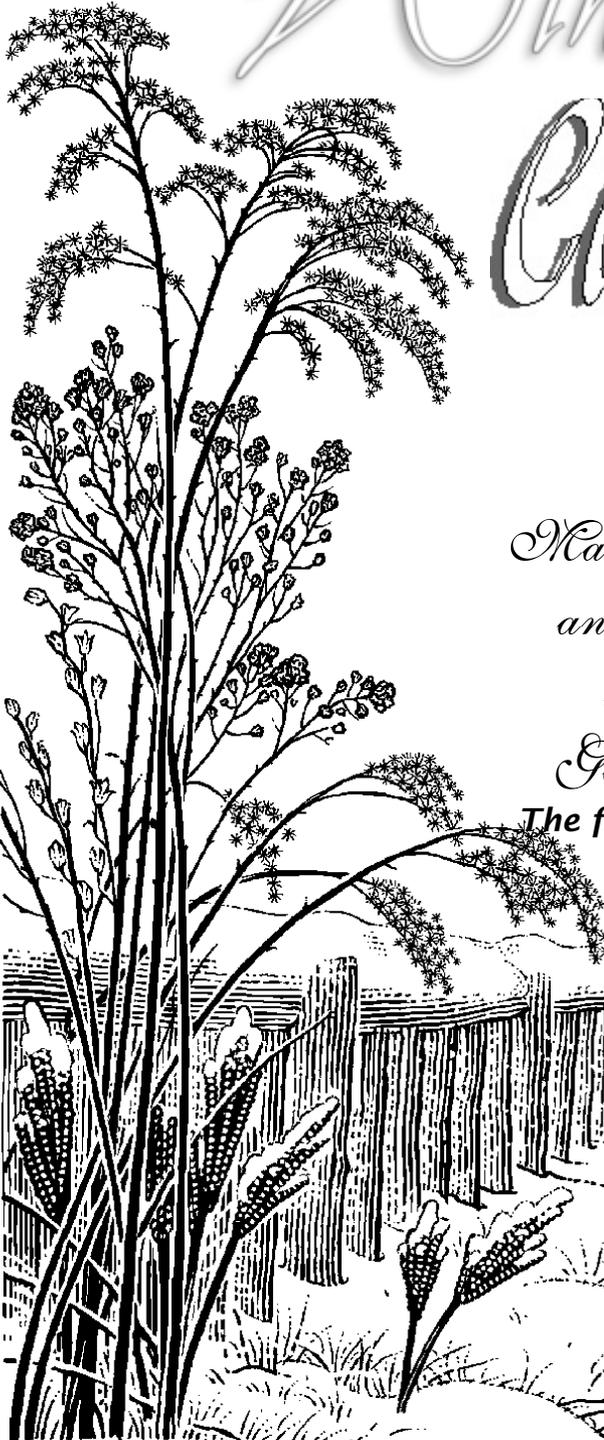
December 26-29

*Make your reservations now to come
and worship the Lord with us in
an old-fashioned meeting at
God's Acres, Newark, Ohio*
**The first service begins Thursday
evening at 7:00 p.m.**

Send reservations to

*David L. Bush
725 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Oh 43055*

Or call (740) 345-1213



Postman send form 3579 to:

The Gospel Trumpeter

675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055 U.S.A.

PERIODICAL POSTAGE PAID
AT THE POST OFFICE IN
NEWARK, OH 43055
USPS # 871620

REQUEST FOR NEW SUBSCRIPTION, CHANGE OF ADDRESS, OR CANCELLATION

NEW SUBSCRIPTION: To receive *The Gospel Trumpeter*, we need your complete name and mailing address, including country.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: If you have moved or if your name or address is incorrect, please notify us as soon as possible.

NOTICE OF CANCELLATION: If you no longer wish to receive *The Gospel Trumpeter*, please contact us using one of the methods below.

YOU MAY CONTACT US BY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING METHODS:

Mail: *The Gospel Trumpeter* 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055 USA

E-mail: subscribe@gospeltrumpeter.com **Telephone:** (740) 345-1312

(Please Print or Type)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____

ZIP CODE: _____ COUNTRY: _____

Please check the appropriate box below, and for changes or cancellations return this entire page with the old address.

- Subscription Incorrect spelling of name or address
 Change of address Cancellation