

# The Gospel Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

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

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished. Rev. 10:7 Matt. 24:31"

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 43 February 2013 No. 2



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

*Psalms 122:1*

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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# Winter 2012 Camp Meeting Report

## Slightly Delayed

There was a slight delay in the starting of the Winter 2012 Camp Meeting at God's Acres. A strong winter storm brought several inches of snow and ice that created a real hazardous condition on the roads. This inclement weather also presented a hindrance to the many who planned to be at the meeting. As one brother stated, he and his family started for the camp meeting but then turned back. After being chided a bit, he determined to come and trust the Lord to help them. He was surely glad they pressed on, for God blessed them immensely.

The snow and ice made it necessary to cancel the service Wednesday evening and Thursday morning. Thankfully, after the delay, things cleared up enough so that other saints could make their way here and the meeting could go on. We are again reminded that the Lord is the One who controls all things, including the weather.

On Thursday evening, December 27, 2012, the camp meeting officially began at 7 o'clock. Pastor Roger Decker welcomed all who made their way to camp meeting and opened the service with prayer. Although the meeting was shortened by two services, it certainly did not hinder the overall quality and enthusiasm of the meeting. The Lord amply repaid us all for putting forth the effort to attend. He demonstrated His acceptance by manifesting His presence in a magnificent way throughout each service.

Brother Richard Talbot from Ovapa, West Virginia, was the

evening evangelist for this meeting. His preaching was blessed in a special way as he delivered deep, pointed messages anointed by the Holy Ghost. Brother Talbot preached the Gospel with simplicity, bringing enlightenment to our hearts along the lines of holiness. Living in days of uncertainty and turmoil as we do, it is necessary that God's people are made aware of the many snares and traps Satan have planned for us.

Other ministers in attendance brought forth soul-stirring sermons that encouraged and challenged the saints as well as convicted the sinners of their need of a Savior. God's desire is that all men everywhere will be saved and come to a real knowledge of the Truth. He sees our lives, and He knows our every thought; therefore, the Lord faithfully stirs His servants to prepare messages to bring help. It is very important that after we hear God's Word, we are careful to obey it. We are truly happy to report that several souls received help during the meeting.

It is always a blessing to hear the hallelujah's roll as the saints rejoiced in the Holy Ghost. As the Lord moved throughout the services, many stood to their feet and glorified God. Some jumped and shouted, others walked the aisles praising the Lord, and others wept with joy as God blessed their hearts. It was a wonderful privilege to be in such a sweet atmosphere.

It would not be camp meeting without the singing of the songs of Zion. Praising God in song is a

[continued on page 13]

*Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen*

*gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*

*38 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*

*39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not*

*see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*



## When Love Turns to Wrath

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

### "Fill Ye Up Then the Measure"

We want to back up a little in Matthew, Chapter 23. Verses 29-33 read: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Again, verse 32 reads, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." Jesus was giving a prediction

of what was about to take place. He was saying they were going to act out their true spirit. They were going to prove what they were and make clear to all that they had the same spirit that their fathers had. They were going to put Christ to death and persecute the Apostles.

What is the measure? I was raised on a farm, and we had horses. My dad used to send me to feed them, and I would say, "Dad, how much oats do you want me to give them?" He would say, "Give them a measure." We had a scoop, and that was the measure.

When Jesus said, "Fill ye up then the measure," He was saying, "You are filling up the full amount. You are going to make it complete by slaying Me. What was lacking in the iniquity of your fathers, you are

filling up until the measure is full (until God cannot bear the sin any longer), and then you will be destroyed."

Verses 34-35 say: "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar."

In these verses Jesus was letting the Orthodox Jew know that persecution and bloodshed were always in the history of Israel. All the way back to Abel and Zacharias, there

was persecution in their history, and He was letting them know that it was still there; it had not changed. Then He brought up two righteous men. He mentioned Abel and Zacharias to impress upon them that the spirit of rejection and bloodshed was still among them.

Again, Jesus said in Matthew 23:29, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous." The tombs were by the wayside, and it was a Jewish practice to whitewash the tombs. As one journeyed along the roadside of Palestine, those tombs would glow in the sun, but within they were full of bones and dead bodies, and those who touched them were defiled.

Again, verse 30 reads, "And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." Jesus knew their hearts. He knows the hearts of all men. He knew they were in the same condition, if not even worse shape spiritually, than their fathers. They were about to fill up the measure of their fathers.

### Meeting God's Conditions

Our Scripture text lets us know that even though they were in such a wretched condition, Jesus would have gathered them, but they would not. In our Scripture text, we have a picture of many professed Christians today. They look good outwardly, but inside where salvation starts, they are void of having a real experience with God. As far as the outward appearance is concerned, you would say, "Surely, they are children of God." However, inwardly they are just like those whitewashed tombs. They are void of having a real experience with the Lord. They appear righteous, but inside spiritual death reigns. They act religious, but on the inside they have hatred, envy, and strife. They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof. They ap-

pear to men as righteous, but within they have hypocrisy and iniquity.

There is no love like the love of God. Today we hear so much about the love of God, and it is certainly needed. It needs to be heralded throughout our land; however, there is another side to God, and that side also needs to be proclaimed. There is the wrath of God. We see in Matthew 23:38 that a change was going to take place in Israel. That verse says, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Whenever your experience is left desolate, God is no longer in your temple.

Jesus let those people in our Scripture text know that a change was going to take place in their house of worship. Later in the Gospels, you can read that Jesus made several attempts to cleanse the temple. He even drove out the moneychangers, trying to cleanse the temple in that day, but to no avail. We want to look at some truths in our Scripture text. One is, it shows the patience of God. No one is as patient as God is. Often we want God to move right away, but God moves in His own time, and He is very patient.

Romans 15:4-5 states: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." What does the word *patience* mean? It means "to continually wait and endure." I repeat, God is patient.

Jerusalem had killed the prophets and rejected the message of God, yet God did not cast them off or destroy them. God sent His Son in an attempt to turn their hearts back to Him in repentance. How patient God is! I wish more people would turn to God. He has been very patient. He has put up with people's rebellion, He has sent messages of love, and He has sent warnings of destruction; yet they continue in sin and rebellion, just as

Jerusalem of old did. Jerusalem of old got caught up in rebellion and idolatry to the place where God did not even speak to them for four hundred years. From Malachi to John the Baptist, the prophets were silent. When God does not speak to you, you have little chance of salvation.

The worst thing that can happen to a sinner is for God to stop talking to that person. God is willing to forgive people, but the reason that He cannot grant forgiveness is that they will not forsake their sin. They love their sin more than they love serving God. They love their bad habits. They love their tobacco, their booze, and their party time. They love all those things instead of God, and He is not going to force them to quit this or that. He is not going to twist anyone's arm to serve Him. If you serve God, it must be because you love Him more than you love your tobacco, your booze, and your partying. You must love Him more than you love all these things of the world. You must meet God's conditions.

### Every Work Will Be Brought Into Judgment

God is willing to forgive you, friend. He pleads with you through the preaching, through the Gospel singing, and through brothers and sisters in Christ talking to you. Are you going headlong in your rebellion? Perhaps God has talked to you about the dress standard, but to no avail. Some people who claim to be Christians go right on dressing as the world does. Young sister, if you want a spiritual husband, you need to be spiritual and dress right. God requires His people to dress modestly. The sisters should dress as godly women should dress. The brothers should dress as godly men should dress. A woman should not put on a man's garment, and a man should not put on a woman's garment. God does not have transvestites in the Church of God. Men are men and women are women, and you can tell them apart. Godly

women have long hair, and godly men have short hair.

God talks to people about their attitudes, yet some continue to hold bad attitudes. He talks to people about their secret sins, but many refuse to repent. Have you ever had a secret sin? Others may not know about it, but God does, and He will trouble you over it. He will send a little prick to your conscience, and that secret sin will light up as though everybody knows about it.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 reads, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." A secret thing is that which is hidden, or that which is concealed. It could be an extramarital affair. It could be something that you stole. It could be something that you lied about. God is saying, "I'm going to bring all hidden things into judgment."

Do you need to make restitution for something? What is keeping you from making it? No doubt, there are things that you did when you were out in sin that you cannot make right, but you must have a heart that desires to do so.

All hidden things will be revealed at the Judgment. Right now, God is very patient, just as He was with Israel of old. God sent the prophets to warn them, but they killed the prophets. They went into idolatry, and then somebody would turn back to God, and God would hear their cry. Then God sent them another leader, and it was not long until they were involved in idolatry again.

### **The Pleadings of the Gospel**

The next truth we notice in our Scripture text is the pleading of Jesus. Jesus was speaking in our Scripture text as a lover of souls. No one loves souls like Jesus Christ, and the only means of appeal He uses is love. The Bible lets us know that He stands at the door of your heart and knocks very patiently. He will not force the door open. It is just a

steady knock on your conscience.

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, [What does that tell you? You have to open the door from the inside. Jesus is not going to open it.] I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Jesus never forces Himself on anybody. He patiently waits for man to consider his ways and to turn from sin to God.

As I look back over my life, I can see how God was so patient with me. I did not know what salvation was. I came to Ohio reveling in sin, and I was married. I had an attorney, and my wife had one. We were going to end our marriage. I was one miserable individual to live with. She was a little miserable. God, who is patient, gave me an opportunity to hear the Gospel.

It is the Truth that sets you free, and it is the Truth that many people do not want to hear. They do not want to hear about themselves. They want to be told what good fellows they are. The Gospel is going to reveal every secret thing about you. If you have envy, strife, and bitterness on the inside, the Gospel will reveal these things. You cannot be a child of God until you get cleaned up on the inside. You can join all the churches on the face of the earth and still miss Heaven. God will give you the opportunity to get right with Him. How many opportunities will He give? I do not know. That is up to Him, but God will give you an opportunity to turn from the old life.

Another truth that we can see in our Scripture text is God's willingness to forgive. Also, we can see the hardening power of sin. You see, people think they can do things and just quit anytime they want to, but that is not so. People mess around with tobacco, and the next thing they know, the nicotine gets into their bloodstream, and they get addicted to it and cannot lay it down. Young person, if anybody offers you the first drag on a cigarette, you ought to turn it down. If anybody

offers you marijuana, you ought to turn it down. If anybody offers you a sip of alcohol, you ought to turn it down. No alcoholic ever started by drinking a fifth. He started by drinking a shot first.

Sin starts out little. Adultery starts out with a look, and then some communication is made, and then it happens. It starts out little at first. That is the reason the Bible lets you know that you need to kill the little foxes. The little foxes spoil the vine. Why? The little foxes cannot stand up and eat the grapes. They have to pull down the vines to reach them.

Proverbs 28:14 says, "Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Proverbs 29:1, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Men can look into the face of Jesus Christ and hear His pleading words and still be unmoved. That is the hardening power of sin. Sin will cause you to turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of the Gospel. As I said before, the latch of the heart is on the inside. It must be opened from within. Jesus will knock and trouble your conscience, but in order for Jesus to do anything about it, you have to let Him in.

God sent the Law, the prophets, and John the Baptist as a forerunner to Christ. The people of Israel were getting themselves in a position of receiving God's wrath. God sent them Jesus Christ. When God turns away from people, He will let the devil destroy them completely, and it is a sad thing.

### **The Consequences of Rejecting the Gospel**

Next, we want to look at the consequences of rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Psalm 9:17 says, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." When Jesus made this appeal, He was looking forty years up the road. Remember that He told them their

house was left to them desolate. About forty years after Christ's last appeal, in approximately A.D. 70, Jerusalem was reduced to a heap of ruins. People could not even tell that a city once stood there. It was nothing but a heap of rubble. There was no mercy and no escaping. The measure was filled up. It had reached its capacity, and there was no more room for love. Love could not even get in the measure. The only thing left was wrath. If only the Jewish nation had accepted Jesus Christ, then the power of Rome would have had to stay its hand.

History records what the Bible says was to take place. Jesus said in Matthew 24:21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The tribulation that the Bible speaks of has already taken place with the literal destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus said there never was a tribulation like it since the world began, and there never would be. You may ask, "Don't you believe in tribulation?" Absolutely! I believe in tribulation according to what Jesus said. He said in John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." That is the tribulation the Christian is in.

When love turns to wrath, that is a sad thing. Dear one, you never want that to happen to you. You never want God to turn His wrath upon you. You could not handle it.

Not a doctor around could keep you alive, and not a minister around could pray through for you. Nothing could be done for you if God were to turn His wrath upon you. You may think you are getting along fine right now. Perhaps you have a good job, a good education, and everything is going well. However, you cannot rest in that, because when God pleads repeatedly with people, and they are in the same condition that Israel of old was, His love will turn to wrath. Friend, you never want that to happen to you. You never want God to take you on.

Israel thought they were God's people. God had come to their rescue many times. Why would He not still come to their rescue? The truth of the matter is, when Jesus Christ came and they denied Him, they filled up the measure. Jesus Christ was the One who was sent to rescue them. He was the One who was sent to bring them back as God's people, but they rejected Him. Sinner friend, you should not fill up the measure of rebellion and sin, but rather you need to repent. You need to turn yourself over to Jesus Christ. Do not put another rejection in the measure. You can start your life anew. I am so glad that I did! You can start your life in the arms of Jesus Christ.

#### **"Now Is the Accepted Time"**

For Israel of old, love was turned to wrath, and mercy was turned to judgment. In our court system, we still have mercy. Regard-

less of what a man does, there is still a feeling of mercy in the court. Regardless of how the people feel, how the lawyers feel, and how the jury feels, there is still a little sense of mercy. However, when God moved on literal Israel in A.D. 70, mercy was laid aside. Some of the most severe things that could ever happen to a nation happened to Israel. It was some of the worst wrath ever seen. The historian Josephus made the statement, "Surely, this is the wrath of God."

Dear one, do not let time run out for you. Second Corinthians 6:2 reads, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)" Time is swiftly moving along. Sometimes you may wonder, "Where did the time go?" When I was young, I never thought I would get old, and I never thought my parents would die. I thought they would always be around, but time moved on. Today my parents are gone, my wife's parents are gone, all my father's siblings are gone, and all my mother's siblings are gone. Time is moving on. Dear one, if I were you, I would take God's love. You never want to take God's wrath. Won't you take His outstretched hand bidding you to come to Him rather than His hand telling you to depart? You need to prepare for eternity.

*(Compact Disc TR-1027M)*

## **"I'VE FOUND THE SON"**

A Chinese businessman said: "I've studied all China's religions and found they did not satisfy. Then I heard the Gospel and read the Bible. These 'religions' were as small lamps that flicker and go out, but now I've found the Son."

*Nehemiah 6:1 Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)*

*2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.*

*3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the*

*work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?*

*4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.*

*5 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;*

*6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.*

*7 And thou hast also appointed*

*prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.*

*8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.*

*9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.*



# Nehemiah

*Brother Richard Talbot*

## Responding to Situations

In the Bible we can read of David and Goliath, Daniel and the den of lions, and the three Hebrew children and the fiery furnace. Certainly, they were all great heroes and great men of God who won great battles in their day, but we

want to read of Nehemiah and Gashmu. Nehemiah fought a battle that was as great as David fighting Goliath, as great as Daniel in the lions' den, and as great as the three Hebrew boys when they faced the fiery furnace. They were fighting a battle of wills: an iron will against iron wills. They were fighting a

battle of the mind against the spirits of evil and wickedness. Nehemiah was in a tremendous conflict. It is not much different from the battles that you and I are in today, although we are not faced with a fiery furnace or a literal giant like Goliath. Nevertheless, every one of us is faced with battles of the mind, battles against

the will, and powers of the spirit world against the power that rests in us and our God.

We are in a real battle and a real struggle, but there is no reason to lie down and die or to be a pushover. There is no reason to step back, fold our arms, and say, "We just can't do it, so we might as well quit." Nehemiah showed that we can win. We each can come out victoriously and defeat every conflict that comes against our souls.

We want to consider Nehemiah, Chapter 6. As the pressure of this conflict built, Nehemiah was not used to this any more than you are. He was called out of a serene setting of life. He got involved, probably not realizing where it was going to take him and how it was all going to end. He got himself into something by asking a question. He inquired as to the welfare of the children of God. He wanted to know, "How are my brothers and sisters doing?" When he got the report, it so disturbed him that he went to prayer. He began to pour out his heart to God, not having any idea that he was getting himself involved in something that would change his life forever.

It is exciting to serve God. You do not know from one day to the next when an event is going to take place in your life that will set you on a certain course for the rest of your earthly days. Psalm 37:23 says, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD." Nehemiah involved himself, but in Nehemiah 6:9b, look at the source of his strength as he prayed: "Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

I think it would be good to consider the things that made Nehemiah the man that he was. The way you respond to situations makes a difference. One brother told a story about a stock boy in a little five-and-dime store. He stocked the shelves and cleaned. As the stock boy was working in the store, the telephone began to ring. So he stopped what he was doing and went over, aggravated because it was interrupting his work and he

was running behind, grabbed the telephone, and said, "What do you want?"

The voice on the other end said, "Son, that's no way to answer the telephone, is it?"

"Yea, I think it is!"

"Oh, well, suppose it was your wife calling?"

"That doesn't make any difference!"

"Well, suppose it was your mother calling you?"

"Don't make any difference!"

Then he said, "Well, suppose it was your boss calling?" It did make a difference! That was his boss on the other end of the line.

God is going to talk to you. It makes a big difference how you answer His call. You need to answer Him with a good attitude. This call may come in different ways. It could be from your pastor. It may be that some need has arisen in the congregation that gets hold of your heart. God is watching and taking note of how you respond and what your attitude is in responding.

If your pastor were to say, "I need you to do this or that," and you look at him and smile and say, "Okay, brother," but as soon as you turn your back on him and walk down the aisle you respond, "Why'd he have to ask me?" and you grumble and complain, remember, God is watching. Why do you not do that when you are looking right at him? You know that he would not like that. God would not like it either if you were to turn your back and do that.

### **Your Inner Character**

When you get saved in Christ, you become a new creature; you are made new. Old things pass away, and behold, all things become new. However, a man's personality and his inner character must be taken into account. His character can be either a blessing or a curse. Your inner character can either help you or destroy you.

There are things that salvation,

by itself, will never change. There are some things that you are going to have to work at to change in your life. If you are lazy before you get saved, salvation will not necessarily change that. If you are careless in your attitudes, careless in your behavior, neglectful about things around the house, neglectful in your school work and your studies, or careless in your living, salvation will not necessarily correct any of these problems. You have to get hold of some things and realize: "This is one of my weaknesses, and I've got to work on it. I've got to bring this thing under control. I want to be a real saint for God." Sometimes you have to get down to business, face yourself in a mirror, and recognize your own faults and shortcomings. Then you need to get down to business to bring these things in line with your salvation.

It is not what meets the eye that is so important. Young man, it is not how strong you are or how tall, dark, and handsome you may be. Young lady, it is not how pretty you may make yourself or how well you fix your hair. It is not the outward beauty that counts, but it is what is on the inside that makes all the difference in the world.

You need to develop good work ethics and good habits of life. It is important to get into the habit of doing good things. You may need to rearrange your life to get out of the routine and the rut that you are in. Sometimes you need to do something good for yourself and develop good habits. Good habits are okay in their place; however, the Christian life cannot be lived as a habit.

I encourage people to make it a habit to pray. Then there are times that you are really going to be praying. There is nothing wrong with making a habit of prayer, but then there are going to be other times when something begins to burn down in your soul, and it is going to drive you to a place of prayer. That is when you will begin to really pour out your heart to God, touch Heaven's throne, and feel the power

of God moving in your soul.

It does not hurt to develop good habits such as honesty, integrity, reliability, and dependability. When you tell somebody that you will do something, you ought to do it. You should not renege on your word. If at all possible, you need to keep your word. Too many people say, "Oh, yes, I'll do it," but then they do not remember. They forget about it. One way that some people get out of things is to say, "Oh, I forgot!" God knows whether you tried to forget or you honestly forgot.

Honesty, dependability, reliability, faithfulness, being helpful, and being caring are good characteristics to develop. Also, it is good to get involved in other people's needs, not in any unusual way, but in being observant, in being helpful, in being a good friend, in being a good brother or sister in Christ, and in being a help in a congregation.

### **Having Good Characteristics**

Deficiency in character can be corrected by salvation, but not without much personal discipline. What do I mean by deficiency in character? I am talking about having a streak of laziness, being careless, not being attentive to the important things of life, being a time waster, and not having self-drive. You are not going to do much for the Lord if you are unable to get yourself moving in the right direction.

I want you to look at the character of Nehemiah. He had real compassion and concern for others, determination, and enough gumption to make an effort to change situations. Do you know how Nehemiah got involved? He offered himself. In so many words, he said in his prayer to God: "Send me! I'll go, Lord! I don't know how I'll do it, but I am a willing vessel." God is not necessarily looking for talent; He is looking for faithful men and women. When God gets hold of the heart, He can give the ability that is needed.

From all that I have been able to

find out about Nehemiah, he was not skilled in building, he was not an architect, and he was not a craftsman by trade. I do not know what he was before his Babylonian captivity, but in Babylon he was a cup-bearer. He waited on the king in the king's palace. Evidently, he was a good servant to the king. The king thought well of Nehemiah, so he must have done a good job even as a slave in captivity. He did not let a bad attitude spoil his ability to work for God. Nehemiah could have gotten a raunchy attitude from being captive in a foreign land, and every time he took a glass of wine or served the king, he could have shown a bad attitude or a nasty spirit. Had he done so, he never would have gotten anywhere.

Nehemiah had good characteristics about him. Let us consider how Nehemiah got involved in this great work. First of all, he asked a question. Second, he became burdened. Third, he entered into prayer and fasting. Fourth, a door began to open. Fifth, he prayed again. Sixth, he offered himself. Seventh, he went over to the burned out city of Jerusalem and scouted out the facts.

Eighth, Nehemiah made no big fanfare about himself. He did not boast about what he was going to do. There was no self-edification. He traveled around unknown. In the darkness of night, he looked over the broken walls and saw the rubble. You do not have to sound your own horn, so to speak, to get the work of God done. You do not have to be bold and brassy, proud and arrogant, or pushy and forceful to do the work of God. Ninth, Nehemiah went in there and began to share his insight with the people. Tenth, he explained how the hand of God came upon him. Eleventh, he overcame by confidence in his relationship with God. He had no doubt in his mind that he was God's and that God's hand was resting upon him.

Church, we need congregations filled with men and women who have no doubt in their minds that God's hand is resting upon them. As

you go out and face the enemy and face the trials and the persecutions of life day by day, you need to know that God's hand is resting upon your life; then you can have boldness of heart to stand in the face of the enemy and defy the kingdoms of Satan, not because of who you are but because you know that God is with you.

We find that Nehemiah was not a man to be pushed around. The sooner that you find out you can stand against the devil, the better off you will be, the more successful you will become, and the more confidence you will gain in yourself. We need some people with confidence, not in a bad way but in knowing: "I'm saved and living for God. I have not willfully, knowingly, or intentionally committed any sin; therefore, God's Spirit is with me." You can have confidence in your experience in dealing with the forces that come against you.

### **Beware of the Enemy's Tactics**

Consider how the pressure was building when they found that Nehemiah was serious about what he was doing. He was actually accomplishing the work. Again, Nehemiah 6:1 reads, "Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein. . . ." That stirred the old enemy. The enemy does not get too stirred when he sees you go a little way and stop, go a little way and stop. The devil is not upset about that. However, when you get down to business and begin to lay those walls in your soul, or those building blocks in your experience, when you begin to lay up an experience with God that is solid and settled and get ready to bring the inner you in line with the will of God, and the devil sees that you are getting serious about this thing, then he is going to work on you.

Tobiah and Sanballat stood around the walls for a while, laugh-

ing and snickering, but one day they woke up and said: "He's got that wall built! He's doing it! We have to do something about this." I can just imagine all the devil's little imps getting together and having a meeting and saying, "We are going to find out what they have done." They came up with some powerful things. A powerful Satan has his eye on every true child of God. He is set to bring your life down. He is set to stop you from continuing spiritual progress. He does not care how he does it, but he is determined, at all cost, to stop you and to bring your spiritual life to a halt. He will use any means he can. He will use friends, people, situations, things you do not understand, things that come from a far-off land, and ideas that come floating into your mind. He will do anything he can to stop your spiritual growth. He is good at doing it because many people lack confidence in their experience with God, so much so that they can be easily talked out of their salvation.

The enemy thought it was time to bring Nehemiah's work to a halt. His first approach was to invite Nehemiah to come down for a talk. There were two reasons for Nehemiah to reject this appeal. First, coming down would have meant that he would have to leave the work and the building of the wall. That was a big thing. The devil will try through somebody or some circumstance to get you to stop your work for God. That ought to raise your eyebrows and stir your soul. You should think, "I may be hurt and discouraged, and I might have come across some hard things in my life, but old devil, I am not going to stop working for God." This ought to be the very first thing that you realize. Anything that tries to get you to cease your spiritual progress is something that you had better stay away from. Do not let it get to you.

Second, Sanballat and Geshem wanted Nehemiah to come down to the plain of Ono. Ono was a neutral place in the land of Benjamin, and it was actually a place where God

would favor. The plain of Ono was a very pleasant valley, and in essence, the enemy said, "Come on down. Let's talk in the plain of Ono." Nehemiah, because of his character, realized immediately that something was amiss.

Have you ever had a hunch down inside that something just did not feel right? I found it does me well to pay attention to those feelings and not to override them. Even if those feelings are wrong, you are not going to lose anything. If those feelings are right, they can protect you. Sometimes offers and situations have come my way, or the devil might have brought up things that looked good on the surface. You need to take care to listen to that inner voice. God gave it to you for a reason.

I am glad that I have a good, godly wife. Sometimes she has said, "Honey, I don't feel right about this. I just don't think this is something we ought to get into." That makes me stop and reconsider the matter. Usually I say, "All right, if that's the way you feel, we won't go that way." I may never find out whether or not that hunch was correct, but an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

### Handling the Pressures of the Enemy

In verse 3 Nehemiah very plainly stated his position: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." He did not say, "I might" or "I will think about it," but rather, "I cannot come down." The word "cannot" means you could not even if you wanted to. He was involved in a great work. Verse 3 continues, ". . . why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?" What was he doing? He was putting those accusers, those tempters, those workers of evil in their place. He was letting them know they had no relationship to the work he was doing. He said, in essence, "Why should I leave what I am doing and come down to the likes of you?" Still

they hounded him four more times.

In verse 4 Nehemiah said, "I answered them after the same manner." You would think the devil would get tired and run off, but now we come to the next round of battles. The pressures and the threats increased on Nehemiah. The fifth time, they sent an "open letter." An open letter was identified as a letter often of protest or criticism addressed to a specific person but intended to be broadcast publicly. They sent an open letter saying, "It is reported among the heathen. . . ." Here came the pressure. I want you to notice how the pressure grows. It does in your life and in mine. Satan does not let up. If he cannot get you one way, he will build the pressure and come back another way.

Our Scripture text reads in verses 5-6: "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it. . . ." Who was Gashmu? He was the same fellow in verse 1 called Geshem. *Strong's Dictionary* lets you know that both of those names represent the same person.

Have you ever heard somebody whisper something and add, "So-and-So said this"? Why did that person add that? He did it to add a little more authority, or a little extra punch. They said, in so many words, "The heathen are saying this, and not only the heathen, but also Gashmu." (Saint, you had better watch out for the Gashmus.) Nehemiah 2:10 is the first mention of Sanballat and Tobiah. In Nehemiah 4:1, we read of Sanballat again. In verse 3 we find that Tobiah was standing beside him mouthing off his feelings, and then in verse 7 Sanballat and Tobiah are mentioned together. Can you see how these spirits come together? Next, Geshem (or Gashmu) joined them in Nehemiah 6:1.

Satan always has what he thinks is an "ace" up his sleeve, so to speak. Nehemiah could stand against

Sanballat and Tobiah. He did not have much trouble with them, but then Geshem (or Gashmu) arrived. The pressure was building, and most of the time when you think you just about have a thing whipped, the devil will throw you another curve. He is determined to break your will, to break your spirit, to trap and ensnare you, and to stop your spiritual progress.

It was no secret that Gashmu was in friendship with Nehemiah's enemies, Sanballat and Tobiah. These three were working as one in their desire to keep Jerusalem weak and to try to keep the walls from being built. When they said, "Gashmu saith it," they thought that would carry conviction of peril, even to Nehemiah, and bring him to a standstill. They thought that by adding the influence of this man, it would suddenly shake Nehemiah to the place where he would stop.

Gashmu evidently was a man with a great reputation. He took care not to hastily commit himself. He not only thought before he spoke, but he chose words that would pack the most striking thoughts. Some people are gifted with the tongue, and they can say things sharply, right to the point, and startle you. Sometimes they can shake the foundation on which you are standing.

### **Be on Your Guard**

Gashmu's words were a quoted opinion, and you know how they go. Those quoted opinions that Gashmu said traveled far and wide. They went from one end of the country to the other. Bad news travels like wildfire, but good news may take weeks to get to the other side of the country. Often bad news gets there before the sun sets.

Gashmu was a man great in criticism. If there was a fault in anybody, he could spot it quickly. No number of excellences could blind him to a fault that he could see. He could see past an individual's goodness and godliness and zero in on a

fault and bring it out. He had a gifted way of digging out things in people's lives. Have you ever known anybody like Gashmu? Such individuals are evil to the core. They have good quotes, and they have influence. They build themselves a reputation, to where some people think their word is almost like God's: "Gashmu saith it!"

Gashmu was able to draw a following after himself. Yes, he was the type of fellow who never commended anybody, but he saw something wrong with everybody that was doing good. He had a clever tongue with a bad heart. You would be surprised how many people have a clever tongue and a bad heart. With that clever tongue they are able to pull innocent sheep off to the side to destroy and slaughter them.

Satan has a clever tongue. Satan has a way of working, but he does not come along and just whisper out in the air. He uses people to whisper in your ear and to get your attention sidetracked. He has a way of throwing traps your way. If he can get this particular thing to happen over here and then something over there, it is a series of traps and snares that come to a final climax when he springs the final blow. The devil is sly, sharp, and cruel. Remember this: he is out to keep you from living for God.

Godly men and women must be on their guard in their effort to live purely and to serve God by serving their fellow man. Somewhere along the line, you will meet someone like Gashmu. You must never allow such an individual to hinder you from doing God's will. First Peter 3:9-11 tells us: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."

Nehemiah was doing just that. He was a noble man with love for

his people and love for his God. He had given up an honorable and very lucrative position in the Persian court. If Nehemiah was depending on outside sympathy for the persecution and the completion of this work, he might as well have packed up and gone back to Babylon. Do you know what hinders many people today? Sometimes the devil whispers: "Nobody cares about what you do around here. Your name never even gets mentioned. You work and do this and that, and nobody even knows you do it." Dear one, God knows what you do. Are you doing it for the Lord or are you doing it for personal recognition? You need to think about that. Your heart has to be in this for the right reason.

Nehemiah was not after praise or a pat on the back. He was not seeking somebody to toot a horn and say, "Here comes Nehemiah!" No, he was doing what he was doing because he loved his God. Receiving credit is good, if it should come. We welcome the inspiration of kind words. We appreciate somebody saying: "I really appreciate the way you are working. I see how you are laboring. You are doing a good job." That makes you feel good, does it not? Everybody likes kind words. When you do something, you like somebody to say: "Well, I noticed you did that. I really want to thank you for that." That makes you feel inspired, but you should not be looking for that. You should turn around and give all the glory to the Lord.

The kind eye, the warm hand grasp, the love kindling appreciation—how welcome those kinds of expressions are! These expressions make a difficult duty easier and cause a burden of life to be lifted of its heaviness, but you should not live for that and look for it. You should live a life that lives without the need for personal recognition. You must live a life for God.

## The Bonds of Iniquity

You should not let the opinions of others, or adverse opinions, dishearten you or discourage you. You may hear of people complaining about you, but not to your face. Nobody is bold enough to do that anymore, but they whisper around. Sooner or later, it winds its way back to your ears. By then, it is very long, and when you start to track it down, nobody remembers anything.

You may ask, "I heard that you said this about me. Did you say it?"

"You know I wouldn't say anything about you, bless your heart," comes the reply.

You need to remember that God is listening to and watching everything that is going on. You need to trust God and live for Him. You are going to hear adverse opinions about yourself. People are not going to be happy with everything you do. The pressure will build against you, especially if you are really involved in things. The devil is working overtime to stop you because you are building and laboring in the Kingdom of God. Satan wants to bring your spiritual progress to a stop.

If you hear enough griping and complaining about yourself, and you fail to stay strong in the Lord, you will quit, and when you quit, it will not be long until somebody else will be knocked out. One weak brick loosens another brick, until there is another breach in the wall. We need those who will stay put. We need God-fearing men and women who have enough confidence in themselves and in their relationship with God to stand against all the pressures that build up over a day, a week, a month, and even a lifetime.

Gashmu was a man who, whatever his worldly shrewdness and reputation, was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. Do not let people fool you, no matter how godly or righteous they may appear. If their words are words of discord, if their words are words to get you to stop your work for God, do not be fooled. Those words ought

to set off an alarm in your soul that this person is in the gall of bitterness or he would not be running his mouth against you. You need to make sure that you live so that others do not have a reason to say something about you. Some people's complaints might be justifiable, but whispering through the congregation is not the way to handle it.

Do you have a charge of sin against somebody? Did you hear it happen with your own ears? Were you there? What were you doing there anyway? Your pastor is the man to take it to. He is the head of the congregation. However, if you do not have enough nerve to face somebody, you should not even bother to make a charge. Often people like to talk, but when it comes down to it, they do not like to show up and face people.

Who was Gashmu? He had keen hatred, but Nehemiah's belief in God was the root of his devotion. Nehemiah lost no time in carrying out the rebuilding of the ruined wall. He would not allow the quick and responsive zeal of the people to be affected. He did not allow pressure to build up and affect the people. He was working to keep their focus on the work of God. Every pastor has to be able to do that. He has to keep the saints working on their focus, not on fighting for themselves, but to focus on working for God. Sometimes people spend a lot of time fighting for themselves, and the work of God is laid aside.

## The Long-Reaching Fingers of Evil

The fact that Nehemiah refused to partake of an invitation to talk was as gall and wormwood to Gashmu. Gashmu could not tolerate any effort to move forward unless he was the one to receive credit for it. Some people are like that. They do not want any good done unless they can receive recognition for it. They like to have the spotlight. Gashmu was a man skillful in reading motives. Soon the report was

told among the surrounding heathens and the Jews that the Jews intended to rebel against the Persian Empire and that Nehemiah intended to be their king. In that letter he told Nehemiah that they knew he had already sent prophets to broadcast the fact that he was going to be the king of Jerusalem. When gossip gets started, somebody has to start it. You may never find out who that person was, but Judgment Day will reveal it.

The talk got around, and the letter had an effect on Nehemiah. The living rumor goes on in its journey, and Gashmu saying it gave it extra punch, even though there was not an ounce of truth in it. Gashmu smiled and nodded and calmly whispered into willing ears the lie that no amount of confidence and conceit and cleverness could make true, but his lie was written.

I want you to consider the long-reaching fingers of evil and how they wind through situations to continually and effectively work evil among the people of God. Verse 9 of our Scripture text reads, "For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands."

Was Nehemiah finished with Tobiah and Sanballat? In Nehemiah 3:1 we read, "Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel." Eliashib the high priest was a double agent. He was serving both sides. We find that he was allied to Tobiah. Later when their efforts failed to stop Nehemiah, Eliashib brought Tobiah in and made him a chamber among the highest offices in the house of God. Nehemiah was not done with these guys even after the wall was built. It is a sad thing, but many great things done for God are hindered by people who are not true in their hearts.

Proverbs 25:19 says, "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint." When it comes to standing, not everybody is going to stand as you think they should. We find that this high priest made room for Tobiah. He brought him right inside the camp and made a chamber for him. You can read that Nehemiah found out about it in Nehemiah 13:7-9, and he was sorely grieved and reacted accordingly. He cast out all the stuff of Tobiah and ordered the chambers to be cleansed.

### **Do You Have Victory in Your Soul?**

Making further checks, Nehemiah found that the people and the priests themselves had become polluted by mixed marriages. Nehemiah 13:26 states, "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even he did outlandish women

cause to sin." No matter who you are or who you may think you are, there is an enemy out there who will work any work he can to stop you in your spiritual growth. There is never any end to it. Every day you get up, you are going to face a fight with the enemy of your soul.

In Nehemiah 13:28, we find that the high priest, Eliashib, had a son, Joiada, who had a son that married Sanballat's daughter. Nehemiah chased him clear out of the city. Josephus said that Manasseh, who by Sanballat's interest procured liberty to build the Samaritan temple in Mount Gershom, to which those priests who married strange wives or otherwise were criminals moved from the city to Mount Gershom, and after them, others of the people in the same or like circumstances moved there also. Josephus said they were chased from Nehemiah's presence, from the court, from the city, from the temple, and from the congregation and church of Israel. This great, victorious accomplishment was the result of one man's strong confidence in his relationship with God. He knew

God's hand was upon him.

Dear one, are you living so that you really know and have confidence that God's hand rests on you? Without that you are no match for the enemy of your soul. Every child of God can know that God's hand rests on his or her life. If you are God's child, you can have confidence in yourself and in your relationship with God so that the devil cannot take away what God has given you. If you doubt your experience, or if things happen to cause you to grow cold in your soul, you will become lukewarm in your spirit, and that confidence will be broken down. It will not be what it needs to be to give you strength, power, and might against the enemy of your soul.

Are you enjoying your salvation? Are you living with victory in your soul? If you are, then build that character from deep within. You need to build yourself up in the love of God by prayer in the Holy Ghost. There you will find real keeping power in Jesus Christ.

*(Compact Disc TR-731E)*

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*[Guest Editorial—contin. from p. 2]*

vital part, and it certainly helps to set the tone for the services. The congregational singing allows each one to take part and brings an uplift and a blessing. It is always a delight hear The Newark Choir and the Young People's Choir sing the beau-

tiful selections. Special groups presented sweet, touching lyrics and melodious arrangements that stirred a deeper desire to press the battle on.

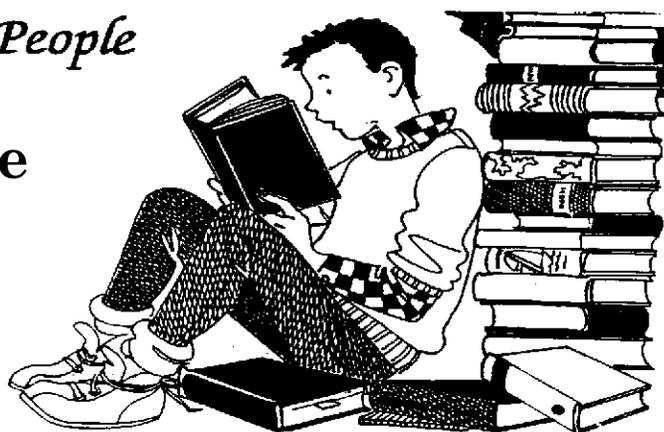
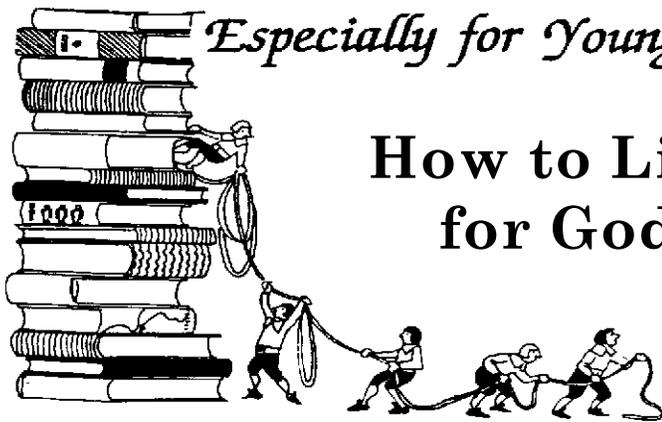
Yes, the Winter Camp Meeting was short and somewhat hindered, but it proved to be meaningful to

each one who was able to attend. By all means, if you were unable to be here, we would encourage you to order the CD's. Of course, if the Lord tarries, it will not be long until the Spring Camp Meeting will be here. We certainly trust that you will plan to be with us then, if possible.

**Four things a man must learn to do  
If he would make the record true:  
To THINK without confusion clearly;  
To LOVE his fellow men sincerely;  
To ACT from honest motives purely;  
To TRUST in God and Heaven securely.**

*Especially for Young People*

## How to Live for God



Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior? Are your sins forgiven? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you have passed from death unto life? Romans 8:16 states, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Have you been born again and do you really want to live for God? If so, there are five things I would ask you to do:

**First—Be sure of your salvation.** How can you know you are saved? By God's Word. The blood makes you safe and the Word makes you sure. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). This does not say "that ye may hope or guess or think," but "that ye may know."

It does not say, "These happy feelings have I given you," but rather, "These things have I written." Now, what is written? This is written: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Have you come to Him? Then where are you, in or out? He says He will not cast you out. Has He taken you in? Again, it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Did you receive Him? If you receive Him, what are you? You are His child.

You see, it depends on your response to God's Word, not your feelings. You may "feel" saved now,

but you may not feel saved tomorrow. Do not go by your feelings; you must go by your obedience to the Word of God. Believe what God says. Believe what is written. God's Word never changes. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). It is when you dare to believe that the Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are God's child. Thus, you are assured of your salvation.

**Second—Take a public stand for Christ.** You should not try to be a secret believer, because it will not work. Unfurl your flag and come out into the open. You should confess Christ at every opportunity. He wants you to tell others about Him. Do not hide your light. Jesus said in Mark 8:38, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." If you want Him to acknowledge you, then you must acknowledge Him. If you want to grow rapidly, confess Him openly. Do not wait; start now.

**Third—Turn from all you know to be wrong.** "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). He gives you a new nature, a nature that loves righteousness and hates iniquity. The Holy Ghost is His enablement. He sets you free so that you can now overcome. "For sin shall not have

dominion over you" (Romans 6:14).

You must choose righteousness and forsake sin, or turn your back on it. Romans 12:9b says, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." You should have no dealings with sin. That besetting sin of yours—run from it! Psalm 66:18 reads, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." When you mean business, God will deliver you. All you have to do is plead the merits of the blood and the power of the name of Jesus. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12). You must come clean and be through with sin. Do not yield to temptation. "Cease to do evil; Learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16-17).

**Fourth—Spend much time in Bible study and prayer.** The more you read the Bible, the more you will want to read it. If you want to grow in grace, meet God every day. Have a place and time for prayer and Bible study. Never let a day pass without spending time alone with God. First Peter 2:2 admonishes, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Psalm 119:9 reads, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." If you neglect the Word, you will backslide. If you learn how to pray, you will make rapid strides in the Christian life.

**Fifth—Keep busy in the service of God.** Satan always finds mischief

for idle hands to do. Therefore, pray and God will help you to find something to do for Him. You could give out Gospel tracts. You could sing in the choir. Perhaps the Lord would call you to teach a Sunday school class or to be a helper. You could visit the sick, the poor, or the imprisoned. You could give your testimony to others. Whatever you do, you must put first things first.

You should avoid cold, formal, modernistic churches. If you do not

know where to go to find the Truth, pray and God will lead you to where the true Gospel is preached. You should keep away from ministers who never invite sinners to come down the aisles to an altar of prayer.

Have nothing to do with worldly churches that have no standard of holiness and whose people dress immodestly. Go where people are being converted and where the message is, "Ye must be born again."

If you are sure of your salvation, if you take a public stand for Christ, if you turn from all you know to be wrong, if you spend much time in prayer and Bible study, and if you keep busy in the service of God, you will do well. You will be a bright and happy Christian, and you will be a blessing wherever you go.

Selected

## ***Doing the Best I Can***

*Suppose a man standing at New York harbor suddenly cries, "I'm going to swim to London," and then he plunges into the ocean and heads for the open sea.*

*You would probably shout: "Hey! You can't get to London that way!"*

*"Oh, yes, I can! I'm sure that I will make it."*

*"What makes you so certain?"*

*"I'm doing the best I can!"*

*The swimmer would be doing his best! However, three thousand miles of chilling waters, deep rolling seas, fierce winds, angry storms, and thousands of sharks would make it impossible for him to reach England by swimming.*

*Can you honestly say, "I'm doing the best I can to get to Heaven?" Let us say you are doing your best. That is not enough! God's Word says, "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" (Titus 3:5). God does the saving, not we ourselves. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).*

*Here is a better way to get to London: A wealthy man gives the swimmer a ticket to London. Now he can board a plane and relax and enjoy the trip. There would be no need for him to strive to reach London by his own vain efforts.*

*Friend, there is just ONE way to Heaven, and that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus died for sinners at Calvary, rose again, and is now alive in a real glorified body, exalted at God's right hand. Your part is to receive Him as your Lord and Savior.*

*Could the swimmer make it to London by doing the best he could? No, he might just as well stop trying. And your best is not good enough to gain entrance into Heaven.*

*What must you do? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).*

Selected

1 Kings 19:1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

3 And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah,

and left his servant there.

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

5 And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.

6 And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.

7 And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.

8 And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.



*Brother Mike Hufford*

### **Misrepresenting the Things of God**

We want to consider verse 7, which reads, "The angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." As Christians, we are pilgrims on this earth. We are citizens of another country. Those who have found the Lord have embarked upon an incredible journey, one that began at the foot of the Cross and someday will land us on Heaven's

bright shore. We each will face times of exhilaration as well as times of setback and defeat. We will have sunny days that warm the spirit and dark days that chill the soul. We will be blessed from time to time by the view from the mountain, and we will be challenged by the depth of the valley. The good news concerning the great journey is that we have a faithful and an able Guide who will care for our every need, One who will direct, enable, comfort, uplift, and see us through to the very end.

As we look into the Scripture lesson, we see Elijah the great prophet on the back side of the spiritual mountain, having defeated four hundred fifty prophets of Baal. After such a public manifestation of the power of God and experiencing such a clear and decisive victory, including praying down fire from heaven and praying down rain from heaven, one might have thought that the people would have rushed to embrace both Elijah and the God whom he served. Reason would have dictated that after such a

crushing defeat of the powers of darkness and idolatry, at last the enemy might have been beaten down into submission.

Elijah was established as the spiritual authority of that time. One could have reasonably expected that Elijah, whose prayers, not once but twice, moved the heavens, would also move the king and the people of that day. However, the reality was quite the opposite. He whom God honored was rejected of men. He who might have been so great a blessing was cursed. He who was used at the hand of God was of no use whatsoever to his countrymen. We think of the description of our Lord, that He was despised and rejected of men. This was much the case with Elijah.

In verse 1 of our Scripture text, Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. Notice that Ahab did not tell Jezebel what God had done through Elijah. He failed to tell Jezebel how the power of God had worked. Ahab did not lift his hand against Elijah, but he incensed Jezebel to do so. He did not tell her how God had heard Elijah's prayer. He did not inform her of the fact that he had prayed down fire from heaven. Also, he did not emphasize that God had heard Elijah's prayer. All he told her was that Elijah had slain the prophets of Baal. That was the message that came into the ears of Jezebel.

Ahab presented a miracle of God as a crime against the throne. The old devil has a way of misrepresenting things. Sometimes when God is doing His greatest work, when God is highly anointing His people or His prophet, the old devil twists and distorts that which God meant for good. Such was the case with Elijah.

My opinion is that Ahab appears to have been a spineless king. He did not have the courage to personally and openly oppose the work of God, but he was able to manipulate Jezebel to accomplish his purposes in a somewhat backhanded way. Through time, some things never seem to change. The devil

works in any way he can work. Sometimes the old devil works openly, and sometimes he works covertly behind the scenes. Nevertheless, he always has the same plan, and that is to discredit and tear down the work of God and to discredit the Word of God or whatever God is trying to do.

Sad to say, we have Ahabs of today, and they are no less guilty before Almighty God. They oppose the work of God, the Word of God, and the saints of God covertly. Jezebel was enraged against Elijah because he had thrown down her idolatry. Today we see folks angered and incensed against God by the very message that is sent to deliver them. The devil rises up when God's Word goes forth. When the saints of God take their stand for what is right, the devil wants to tear down souls. Friend, if you do not know God, do not let the devil pervert and distort the Word of God in your mind. Do not let the old devil twist around that which is meant for your spiritual good into something that brings a spiritual hurt to your soul.

### **A State of Discouragement**

The life of Elijah could have done much good, yet it was distorted at the hand of the devil. It is not our person that angers the devil and his agents but rather the message. Saint of God, it is not who you are that the devil is upset with. If the devil is upset with you, he is upset with you because of the God that you serve, because of the Truth that you live, and because of the work of God that you support.

The devil was incensed against Elijah, not because of Elijah personally, but because of the message that he carried. Let us be clear on this point: it is not that the devil hates the saints as much as the fact that he hates the works of God through the saints. Elijah was targeted by Jezebel because God was working in his life.

In our Scripture lesson we find that Elijah was running for his life. In verse 4 we find the Prophet Elijah

in a very sad, heartbreaking condition indeed. Verse 4 reads, "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." It is curious that Elijah had fled so hastily and traveled so far to avoid death by the sword of Jezebel, and then having fled to safety, he requested of the Lord that he might die.

Although you might have read this many times, you need to pause and consider the magnitude of the situation. Here was a prophet of God, a man who had power with God, who could pray and have the heavens sealed so it would not rain, who could pray again and have the heavens open up. He was a man who could pray down fire from heaven, yet he found himself on the run, out in the wilderness a day's journey.

How self-pity speaks and acts sometimes in a very irrational way! Elijah ran for his life and had his life spared. When he sat down and thought about it, in essence, he said, "Lord, just take away my life." Friend, have you been tempted to get under that old spirit of self-pity? Perhaps you think: "I don't deserve this. I have done my best to live right and obey the Lord. I have served God for many years, and I have done my best to raise my children right. Now look what has come over my life."

Friend, I pray that you are not under the spirit of self-pity, because it speaks and acts in an irrational sense. Nobody is immune to it. I have been tempted with that before. I have spent some time under that old juniper tree myself, and probably most saints of God have at some point.

A mighty prophet of God ran for his life, and having obtained safety, he asked the Lord to take away his life because he did not wish to live any longer. It is sad to see anyone in

such a state, but it is especially heartrending to see such a powerful prophet wishing for death to relieve his broken spirit. Dear one, are you laboring under a broken spirit? Maybe your heart is broken because things have not turned out the way that you expected them to. Maybe your life has taken a turn that you do not understand. Perhaps you have lived for God and have been true to God, but outwardly all the circumstances do not seem to make sense any longer. Maybe it looks like you do not deserve what has come into your life. Do you have a broken spirit, as was the case with Elijah? Perhaps you have a death wish, as Elijah had.

When I was a young convert, having been saved for only a year or two, it seemed that an avalanche of things came upon my soul. My feet got a little unsteady, my legs got a little wobbly, spiritually speaking, and I did not know if I was going to make it through that period of my life. I called my pastor and explained the situation, and he gave me some good advice that I have not forgotten thirty years later. He simply said, "Brother Mike, discouragement is a luxury the saints cannot afford." That is good advice yet today. I believe it was true in the case of Elijah, and I believe it is true today. No matter what circumstances you face, discouragement is not a luxury that you can afford. You cannot afford to let the old devil heap self-pity upon you to the point that you just sit down and die spiritually. You have to get up, by the grace of God, and go on and do the work that God has called you to do.

### **God's Compassionate Renewal**

The lesson in our Scripture text is obvious. Stature itself can never insulate you from the heartaches of life no matter how long you have lived for God, no matter what your position in the body of Christ might be, no matter how many spiritual victories you have attained, and no matter how high of a mountain you

have ascended by the grace of God. There is no place that you can find to shield yourself from difficulty, from spiritual trials, or from the very onslaught of the devil himself. Hunger can affect the rich as well as the poor, and disease knows no economic boundaries; therefore, all the saints of God are subjected to the same spiritual difficulties from time to time.

In the spiritual sense, life's great journey will be a challenge to all. It is a challenge to the young, to the middle-aged, and to the old. It is a challenge to the weak and to the strong. It is a challenge to the minister and to the new convert. You may ask, "Why is that?" We all are a target of the devil. We all have a target directly to the heart of the soul. The more we attempt to do for Almighty God, the more the devil will rise up to oppose us. A good beginning is not enough to absolutely assure a home in Heaven. A great spiritual victory yesterday will not immunize the saint of God against possible defeat today or tomorrow. Position or stature only intensifies the onslaught of the devil.

We read in the writing of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Saint of God, no matter what you might have achieved spiritually and no matter how many victories you have attained, you have not yet obtained the prize. You might have won some victories, and thank God for each of them, but you have not yet won that eternal prize. Paul said he had to forget about what was behind him, the victories and the difficulties as well, and reach for the prize that was out in front of him.

### **A God of Restoration**

As we go on in the lesson, thank God we find a very good illustration

of God's compassionate renewal. Verses 5-6 of our Scripture text state: "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again." As saints, we are forever indebted for the fact that we serve a God who is the God of spiritual renewal. I thank God for spiritual renewal. In Psalm 23:1-3 David put it this way: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul."

We are serving a God who still knows when we need help. Thank God, He is still a God of restoration! David said, "He restoreth my soul." The word *restore* means "to turn back; to renew." I thank God that He renews my soul! He recompenses my soul. Thank God, from time to time, He recovers my soul, He refreshes my soul, and He relieves my soul. I thank God for the times when He has rescued my soul.

We serve a God of restoration. Elijah, fresh off a great victory, suddenly needed restoration. That is kind of embarrassing. If you have lived for God for any length of time, no doubt God has blessed you almost beyond your ability to contain it. Then it is not long after that when it seems that you are wrestling to keep your very spiritual existence. These kinds of things happen from time to time. It happened to Elijah, and it happens from time to time to the best saints of God. You might feel like shouting one day and the next day wonder if you are even saved. The old devil will come along and tell you that you are not even saved.

Elijah was fresh off an incredible victory, but a few days later he was desperately in need of restoration. God did it in high style. I think this is the first example, scripturally speaking, of "room service." There was Elijah out there under that

juniper tree, sitting there saying: "Lord, just let me die. I can see that I am not going to make it. I have fought the good fight, Lord, but I can see that it is not going to work." Next, he laid down and went to sleep. The Bible says that the Lord sent an angel down there and touched him to wake him up. There beside him was a cake baking on the coals and a pitcher of water. I can picture the Lord saying, "Gabriel, one of My servants down there is in need. Send him some cakes and a pitcher of water." This happened out there in the middle of the wilderness. Sometimes we give the old devil more credit than he deserves. You see, God has options that we have never thought of. Here was Elijah lying under that tree. He never thought that God would dispatch an angel from Heaven for "room service."

I thought about Philip and the time when Christ fed the multitude. In John 6:5-6 we read: "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself [Jesus] knew what he would do." You might get down in the very core of a trial and not see an answer or a solution or an equitable way out, but thank God as you are there, Jesus looks down and knows what to do. Thank God, He knew then, and He knows today. In the case of Elijah, He knew what He was going to do. He is a God of renewal. He still knows how to make a "cake" on the fire, thank God. He is still in the cake-making business for the weary soul.

### **Providential Empowerment**

God knows there is a time when a weary saint must rest. Saint of God, I ask you to pause and consider this point. We read in Matthew 11:28-29: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

If you need rest, I encourage you

to nestle up really close to God and find the rest that is to be found in the heart, under the wings of the good Lord. If you snuggle up closer to the Lord, you will find the rest that you need in your soul. It is not a time to run from the Lord. It is not a time to shy away from prayer or the Holy Scriptures when you are spiritually beaten and worn. It is a time to nestle up close to the heart of God.

We find written in the Scriptures God's holy divine providential empowerment. First Kings 19:7 says, "And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee." We note here again the tender, patient, compassion of the Master. The angel came to him again, the second time, and touched him and told him to arise and eat. Friend, we serve a God of amazing compassion. God does not want to beat anybody down. God does not want to see a wounded soul lay down and die. We read in Isaiah 42:3 where the prophet wrote, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." Our Lord is a God of mercy, thank God. He is a God who is touched with the feelings of our infirmity.

I thank God for His compassionate renewal and His providential empowerment. You see, God yet had a work for Elijah to do. Have you ever had the experience of feeling down in your heart: "I am all washed up. I am never going to get out of this. I am never going to get past this trial. I am never going to see my way through to the other side of this situation. There is no way out of this situation that I am in." Many times you will find encouragement in the Scriptures. I believe that many times in a situation like that, Almighty God is looking down and sees there is yet a work for you to do. Elijah thought he had come to the end of the line, but the angel came and touched him, encouraged him, and strength-

ened him. There was more work for Elijah to do. Saint of God, there is work to be done, and we each have a part yet in front of us. How faithful is the great heart of the Master! He visits and ministers. The angel came again the second time with further strength. The first touch was for renewal, and the second touch was for empowerment to serve.

### **The Need to Prepare to Finish the Journey**

One of the first steps of progress and for a period of renewal falls squarely upon us as individuals. Notice the very gentle admonition of the Lord when the angel said to Elijah, "Arise and eat." This emphasizes the need to prepare to finish the journey. God will bring about an opportunity for you to get the spiritual rest that you need in your soul. If you have been beaten up and bloodied and bruised, you need to get close to the heart of God and get the rest that you need spiritually. However, after having a time of rest, you cannot afford to stay there indefinitely.

There comes a time when you need to hear the voice of God saying, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great." Thank God for the time to rest and, by the grace of God, the time to arise. The responsibility falls on you to arise and eat and to prepare to finish the journey. You must prepare the will, first of all. You must arise and prepare for the nutrition. Sadly, some will never finish the race because they will fail to prepare to finish. Yes, they made a start and prepared to get a certain distance down the road; but when faced with a real trial, they fail to make adequate preparation to finish.

Why should you prepare? Verse 7 of our Scripture text tells us that "the journey is too great." Saint, you need strength for the journey. I do not know what you are about to face, but I have lived for God long enough to know that the saints are rarely without burdens, opposition,

or conflict. We all are in a spiritual battle, and the journey alone is too great for us. We need strength for the journey, so we hear the Word of the Lord saying, "Arise and eat." The journey was too great for Elijah, but scarcely too great for the God that he served. Saint, if you walk in your own strength, your journey will be too great for you. Heaven's shores are too far away to walk alone. There are too many steps between here and Heaven's doors to walk alone. Since the journey is great, you need to take on strength. You need to prepare for the journey that awaits you.

From time to time, some are going about in their own strength, by their own will, and through their own means, and they are growing weary. The journey is too great for them. It is easy to learn how to live for God to where you do what you do almost mechanically. It is easy to go through the motions of prayer, but you need to pray fervently. We assemble together because we need to do so, and the Holy Scriptures instruct us to do so. We learn how to be Christians, how to witness, and how to pray. If we are not careful, we will become mechanical in what we do, going along in our own strength.

We need God's power and the grace of God. I do not want to scare anybody, but God knows that we are going to face things. Some of us are going to face the trial of our lives out here in the future. We are going to face some times that are going to try our souls. The journey is great. We are admonished by the Holy Scriptures to arise and eat because the journey is too great for us. It is greater than we can handle. The steps are greater than we can do humanly. We need help from Almighty God. Heaven is too far, and Satan is too deceptive. Our flesh is too weak to travel alone. We need help from God.

I appreciate the fact that we are accompanied and sheltered by One who knows where the journey leads, and He knows what is required to

complete it. He who leads on the great journey will supply great strength, great grace, great renewal, great help in the time of need, and great empowerment. We are on a great journey, but we are serving a great God.

### **Rising in the Strength of the Lord**

We read in verse 8 of our Scripture text about the completion of Elijah's great journey: "And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." Elijah received strength from none other than the hand of God. He had looked to others for strength (the king and the people), but found none. When we do something in the will of God, it is natural to expect people to recognize it. It is natural to think that people will be influenced for the good. When good is done, we expect good to be acknowledged. We all are human. Elijah looked to himself and found failure. He had looked to the people and had been let down. Finally, he arose in the strength of the Lord's meat. Praise God!

We find here a miraculous renewal in the cake baked by the angel. The Bible says that he went in the strength of that meat for forty days and forty nights. In his own strength, he could not go another mile, he could not last another day, he could not take another step; but by the grace of God, he rose up and went in the strength of that meat for forty days and forty nights. We do not know what is possible when God empowers us. When God comes knocking on your door and says, "It is time to get up and eat," you had better not pass up that meal. I would like to have a couple of plates of that meal from time to time, wouldn't you?

As I thought about this, I thought of the beautiful song entitled "God's Way Is Best." It reads: "*Had I the choosing of my pathway, In blindness I should go astray. And wander far away in darkness, Nor*

*reach that land of endless day. God's way is best, I will not murmur. Although the end I may not see; Where'er He leads I'll meekly follow, God's way is best, is best for me.*" Christian friend, I pray that you can see the providential hand of God yet guiding, yet preserving, yet lifting, yet feeding, and yet leading you along on your heavenly journey.

We read in the Scriptures of many others who have made this journey. We can read about Ruth, whose journey led through providential times. Ruth learned the power of providence through her lifetime and through her journey. Paul's journey led him through shipwreck, abandonment, prison, and martyrdom.

We read in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Paul had a long journey. He went through much suffering, much difficulty, and much adversity.

We can read about Peter's journey. His journey led him through the humiliation of denying Christ. What a time that must have been! In essence, he said, "Lord, I will never deny You," and when the rooster crowed, he had already denied the Lord three times. Christ walked by, and the Scripture says He just looked back at Peter. Christ

did not say a word to Peter, but His heart was broken. If you have disappointed the great heart of God, if you have been disobedient to Him, all it takes is a look from the Lord. Peter's heart melted. The Bible says he went out and wept bitterly. That was part of his journey.

After Pentecost, thank God the boldness came back into Peter to stand up for the right. In his journey he went on to preach the Gospel and see thousands saved. When Peter came to the end of his life, he was martyred. He said that he was not worthy to be hung on a cross like his Lord. He said, "Hang me upside down." So we find Peter's journey going from defeat and humiliation to great victory for God, doing great things for the Lord.

Steven's journey led him to humbly wash tables and wait tables. He was a minister of the Word of God, and he stood up boldly and spoke the Word of God. Finally, he was stoned at the defense of the Gospel.

### **Are You in Need of Strength?**

We read in Hebrews 11:32-39: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

"Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."

We are on a great journey, and we do not know entirely what path that journey might take. Some were delivered from the sword, and some died by the sword. I do not know where my journey is leading, and you do not know where your journey is leading; but when the Lord comes to you and says, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great," you need to arise and eat and prepare yourself for that journey.

Each of these has some common threads woven through their life's experiences. They each had times of rejoicing and times of pain. Each one had periods where they were divinely strengthened and renewed by the hand of God. They maintained their focus upon that one eternal goal, and thank God, each one landed on the shores of glory victoriously.

In closing, I ask you these questions: How is the battle going for you? Do you have the spiritual sufficiency that you need to run the race that God set before you and to finish the race? The Bible says to run the race that is set before you, not the race that is in front of your brother or your sister, not the race that you would wish for. Do you have the grace of God? Do you have the strength? Do you have the spiritual sufficiency to run the race and win the crown? Are you perhaps in

need of spiritual renewal?

There have been times when I have come down the mountain and come to that juniper tree and tried to sit down underneath it, but there was not any room underneath it because too many saints were already there. Sometimes you have to wait your turn to sit down under that juniper tree. We all have had that experience. Discouragement is a luxury the saints cannot afford. Perhaps you have found yourself discouraged. The devil would like to tell you to give up hope, but the Lord is saying, "Arise and eat," because you still have a great journey before you.

Perhaps you have completely gotten off the course. Maybe you have gone out completely into open sin. If so, you need to come back to the Lord in repentance and ask for God's forgiveness. You need to ask for His help, His empowerment, and His renewal. Thank God, He can restore you.

We need strength for the journey, and we can only find it at the hand of our Lord. He is a God of renewal. If you need help in your soul, I pray that you will seek Him. There is nothing that I could give you except that which God gives to you. If God has spoken to your heart, if you are in need of renewal, or if you are in need of strengthening, won't you seek help from the Lord?

*(Compact Disc TR-1022E)*

### **Who Can Answer This Question?**

Many years ago a man of God, beginning his sermon, leaned over the pulpit and said with a solemn air: "Friends, I have a question to ask. I cannot answer it. You cannot answer it. If an angel from Heaven were here, he could not answer it. If a devil from hell were here, he could not answer it." Every eye was fixed on the speaker. He proceeded, "The question is this: How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"



# Spiritual Maintenance

*Brother Fred Barrows*

## "Make Your Calling and Election Sure"

God wants us to remember some things. It is so easy to forget. It seems that the enemy has many tricks to play on the children of God. The longer you have been serving the Lord, the more "ease" the devil wants to put on you. There is no place to take a nap in this Christian race, and it is an uphill battle.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Sometimes you may get a little discouraged, but you have to continue to press on.

Consider the faith of Abraham, who was given the promise of being the father of a great nation. When

God promises that He will do something, He will do it. You need to stand still and not try to work it out yourself. Too many times people have made shipwreck by trying to do things on their own. Abraham and Sarah decided to get Hagar to have a child for them. That child was not the son of promise. The son of promise had not yet come. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, God told him again that he was going to have a son, and it came to pass that Isaac was born.

Many times God may not act as fast as we would like. Therefore, some people have a tendency to try to work things out on their own. Paul, when writing to Titus, said in Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." There is some maintaining to do in this Christian life, but some-

times one has a tendency to ease up in praying. We should not pray through a form or out of a mere habit, but prayer is a good habit to get into.

There are some things that we must be faithful to do on a daily basis. God has some requirements that He has put in His Word that He wants us to do on a daily basis. It does not make any difference how long you have been saved, whether it has been a few days, a few months, a few years, or many years. The same requirements are laid out for each of us.

Our arch enemy, the devil, is always attacking the saints to get us to pray less. Many times we have prayed for loved ones to be saved, for situations to be moved, and for other things to come to pass. In the very beginning of time, God took nothing and made the world and everything that we see. He is the great Creator. If you think for one minute that God has forgotten you

or that He is unable to take care of your situations, you need to scratch that idea out of your book, so to speak. God is still the Creator, and He is still able to bring about the very thing that you need. However, these things are only going to come about through prayer. Sometimes it is going to take fervent prayer.

Second Peter 1:10 says, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." One thing we each need to be sure of is our salvation. It is a good thing to ask, "Lord, are You satisfied with me?" I think about the song that says, "Is my Lord satisfied with me?" There is nothing wrong with asking: "Lord, are You satisfied with the way I'm doing things? Do You get pleasure from my life? Am I following Your Spirit in a way that pleases You? Does something about me grieve You?" Dear one, it is important that you make sure of your salvation.

### **Being a Good Example**

First Timothy 4:12 states, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." God wants you to be a godly example, regardless of what kind of heavy trials you may be going through. Sometimes you must go through hard places. Maybe at work things seem as though they have turned upside down. What is the enemy ready to do? He wants to get you to act wrong. Dear one, you have to continue to be the example that God wants you to be. Romans 5:20b states, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." If persecution is coming at you in a strong way, God's grace is sufficient.

God will make a way for you. First Corinthians 10:13 reads, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able;

but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Dear one, it is important to maintain a good example in your home, on the job, at the marketplace, or wherever you go. Sometimes people may think that on vacation nobody they know is going to see what they do. Maybe others will not see what you do, but God sees.

God is counting on you to stay true even though the enemy is striving to the best of his ability to knock you off the solid place on which Christ has put you. Satan is doing his best to work through unbelief or through getting you to act wrong. You have to be careful, because there are eyes watching you. If you act wrong yet you claim to be a Christian, sinners will say, "That's the way all Christians act." That is not the way true Christians act. People know there is a straight way to live, and they know whether or not you are living crooked.

Let us be godly examples in conduct becoming to righteousness. You need to refuse to be entangled with the rudiments of this world and rule your spirit when touchy situations arise. That will not always be easy. When your boss or people in your workplace upset you, you have to learn, through the grace and the power of God, how to rule your own spirit.

Proverbs 16:32 says, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." Alexander the Great conquered the whole then-known world, but he could not conquer himself. He could not control his own spirit, and in time, that defeated him. It will defeat you as well if you fail to rule your spirit.

You need to be faithful in trusting God to direct your every decision. God has a way of showing what is right and leading you in the right way. When you are praying and seeking God's face and God leads you in the right direction, people are watching that. As a Christian, you are a gazing stock.

Speaking of Christ, 1 Peter 2:22 tells us, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Jesus left an example so that we could follow in His footsteps, and because He was victorious, we, too, can be overcomers. Dear one, you need to prove yourself to be stable in faith and in the service of the Lord.

### **Private Devotions**

We read in Matthew 6:6, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." The Jewish people often stood on the street corners and spoke long, eloquent prayers to be seen of men. Jesus said in doing so, they would receive their reward. If you will spend time in secret prayer, in time God will reward you openly. Other people will see that what He is working through you is working good, and it will help them.

I want to talk to you regarding private devotions. Dear one, it is important for each of us to spend time with the Lord every day. God wants people to get back to the basics of Christianity. When you are first saved, you want to spend as much time with God as you can. It is the same way when a couple gets married. They want to spend as much time together as possible. It is the same way with the Christian and the Lord. Each child of God needs to take time to be with the Lord, sitting at His feet in secret devotion, expressing love to God.

How many times have you told the Lord that you love Him? Just because you cannot see Him does not mean that He does not like to hear you say it. The same is true with your wife or your husband. You need him or her to give you that reassurance. Being alone with Christ enriches and strengthens the soul. Sweet communion with Him lifts the heart and brings courage. The time that you spend in secret devotion will be rewarded openly in

time. When you spend time with the Lord, you will not go away empty.

Another thing that goes along with serving God is being obedient to the compelling force within that calls you to prayer. How many times have you been ready to do something else and God said, "Child, I would like to have you come and spend some time with Me?" Do you say, "But, Lord, I have this to do and that to do; I'm too busy"? Dear one, you may be cheating yourself out of a real blessing. He may be ready to give you a greater revelation of some things, but by your neglecting to go to Him, He is not going to reveal them to you.

Suppose you are ready to go fishing and God says, "I'd like you to spend some time with Me in prayer." He is not going to do that every time you go fishing or hunting or whatever you want to do, but some times He is going to check you out to see how your love is for Him. Therefore, you need to be obedient to that compelling force within you that calls you to prayer. You can commune with Him as friend with Friend. However, you must be quiet and listen to His still, small voice.

Prayer is not just telling God what you want. There needs to be some quiet time after you have expressed yourself to the Lord. You need to be quiet for a little while and let God bring some impressing thoughts to your mind. You will find that it will be really beneficial to you. Blessings come while in the secret closet with the Master. He is that satisfying portion to every true seeker, and He is ready to give guidance and direction to the trusting soul.

In Mark 1:35 we read, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." If Jesus felt the need to pray, surely we should feel the need to pray. If you are living close to the Lord, you are going to feel some "tugs" from Him once in a while to spend time with Him. Even

the disciples felt the need to pull away and seek God's face. They needed greater strength. Dear one, when you are warring in this battle, the secret is asking God to help you, guide you, strengthen you, and equip you to be able to serve Him. He wants you to do your part, but the greater part is on Him. If Jesus felt the need to get away and pray and renew His spirit, then you need to do likewise.

### **Neglect Not Your Soul**

I think one of the greatest problems that people face is, they work so hard to help others that they neglect their own souls. You must not do that. In Luke, Chapter 10, you can read of Mary finding that good place sitting at the feet of Jesus, but her sister Martha was cumbered about with much serving. Martha went to Jesus and asked Him to tell Mary to help her. Jesus said that Mary had chosen that good part. Dear one, you can get so busy with the cares of life and the burdens of life that you rob your own soul.

Psalm 119:105 states, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Having family worship in the home and reading the Scriptures is very important. First Timothy 4:13 tells us, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Sometimes people read the Bible and say, "I didn't get anything out of it." You must constantly seek the Lord and say: "Lord, I'd like to have greater understanding. I'd like to be able to understand some of the prophecies and see some miracles."

When you get saved, you cannot expect to sit down and read the Bible and understand it all. It is not going to happen that way. I have been saved for approximately forty-seven years, and I still do not know

it all. It requires constant digging and praying. It requires constantly seeking God's face and spending time reading His Word.

I like to encourage young people and others as well to memorize Scriptures. One of the best ways that I have found to memorize verses of Scripture in my early Christian life was when I was reading the Bible. As I found a Scripture that stood out to me, I wrote that Scripture down and memorized it, maybe one phrase at a time. You need to tuck those Scriptures away in your heart.

Psalm 119:9 and 11 read: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. . . . Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." When you memorize Scriptures, as you go along in life and problems arise, a Scripture may come to your mind that will bring courage and strength to you. This is one reason that you need to know the Word of God. Sometimes God has placed Scriptures in my mind that I did not even remember reading, but when I went to the concordance to check it out, there it was. God is faithful to help me.

### **Training Your Children**

Psalm 119:15 says, "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways." Sometimes people think they have to read several chapters at one time. If you want to do that, that is fine. However, sometimes I have found great value in reading one verse of Scripture and then meditating on it. It is good to meditate when you can get in your secret closet, or when nobody else is around. It may be two or three o'clock in the morning when everybody else is asleep that God will begin to open up a thought to you and give you a little more understanding. What a blessing it is to have Him open His Word to you and show you things! Daily Bible reading and meditation bring enlightenment to the soul, provide

direction, and give the guidance needed to cope with the many affairs that you face. Studying the Word of God can perfect an individual.

Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." You need to maintain family devotions. I am fearful that some people are getting away from having family devotions. You must not fail to train your children. As a parent, you need to read the Bible to them and pray with them. They should never walk out of the house in the morning to go to school without your having prayer with them. You should pray and acknowledge God and say: "Lord, they need You today. Please help them. They want to be Your servants." Your prayer need not be a long, drawn-out prayer, but it should be an awareness of wanting God to direct.

The Bible instructs you to pray without ceasing. This does not mean that you must spend twenty-four hours a day on your knees. Praying without ceasing is being in a constant attitude of prayer. As others come to your mind who are sick or who need to be saved, you can offer up a prayer for them. You can ask the Lord to bring someone to a place of realizing his need, to bring another dear one to a place of being able to have faith to trust that God will heal him, or that He will deliver a person from the dilemma that he is in. We are to bear one another's burdens.

Children face many problems today in the schools and in some neighborhoods. From time to time, they may get hurt because of something that has happened. They need Mom and Dad there to encourage them, pray for them, and talk to them. During family devotions, you should take time to let them talk and air their burdens. Do not think that their problems are so minimal com-

pared to yours. You need to listen to them. You might have some failures along that line, but I want to encourage you, even as a grandparent, every time you get a chance to say a little something for the Lord, you should do it. When you sit down with them, talk about the things of God. When you go to the store with them, you should use that opportunity to talk about the things of God. When you go down the street to the neighbor's house, ask the Lord to help you to talk about the things of God. Wherever you are, you should try to direct the conversation to godliness. I firmly believe that each of us can move up a little more in the things of Christianity.

### **Maintaining Your Salvation**

Dear one, you need to make sure of your salvation and be sure that to the best of your God-given ability, you are maintaining the requirements in God's Word. You had better make sure, because when your final call comes, it will be over. You cannot go back and redo this or that. You had better do it now if you are going to get it done. No one knows when the end is coming, but it is coming, and those who are not ready will not be in the ark of safety.

Again, family worship is very important. Praying, reading the Bible, and teaching establish strong spirituality in young children. We only go this way one time, so by the help of God, let us crouch up closer to the Lord, listen to His voice in a greater way, and do the things that please Him.

Husbands and wives need to pray together after their children are grown and gone from the home. Do not forget about keeping a family altar in the home. I fear that because of the evil times in which we live, the devil will so work on the saints of God and cause the love of many to wax cold.

Do you know why some people do not pray anymore? They do not have a desire to pray, and without a desire you cannot really pray. It

takes a heartfelt desire to pray. You may not always feel like praying, but you should do it anyway. I have told some people: "You may not always feel that you love your spouse, but you are still married. Likewise, you may not always feel like praying, but you still need to pray and read the Scriptures. You still need to spend some time with the Lord."

### **Public Worship**

Let me give you some Scriptures concerning public worship. Psalm 22:22 says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." Psalm 29:2 tells us, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." Psalm 65:4 reads, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."

Many times people go to church on Sunday morning and feel they have fulfilled their obligation to the Lord for the week. Every time you walk through the church doors, there is something in the message for you. It is like a big Thanksgiving feast. You see a big spread of good food and think, "That is all for me." No, you could not eat all of that, but you get a portion of it. It is the same when you go to the house of God. When you sit down at God's table, He has something for you each time. I hope to stir your mind to get back to that place of prayer. You cannot pray too much or read the Bible too much. You cannot know too much about the Scriptures.

Public worship is a time to gather collectively to worship God. We should lift up our hearts in true thanksgiving and praise to God. We ought to bless Him for salvation and His many benefits that He bestows upon us. It is also a time to hear and to heed the Word of God as it is proclaimed. We enter the service to worship; we depart to serve. You

should give honor and obedience to God and His under shepherd, the pastor. You ought to show reverence and respect for the house of worship. It has been dedicated to the propagation of the Truth.

God has so freely given us all good things to enjoy. His redeeming us from sin is the greatest of all blessings. We need to magnify Him in our daily living. Regardless of how long you have been saved, you should never come to the place

where you think, "I can handle things by myself." You cannot. One danger that longevity gives people is that they try to finish in the flesh what they began in the Spirit. What is hindering you? What is standing in your way to keep you from being more of what God wants you to be? What do you suppose you could become if you spent more time in God's Word, sitting at Jesus' feet, praying, seeking His face, praising Him, and honoring Him? God

honors us when we honor Him.

Dear one, how is your worship and devotion to the Lord? Are you really serving Him in the way that He desires you to? Are the motives of your heart truly pleasing Him? It is important that you pray and read the Word of God and apply it to your heart.

*(Compact Disc TR-964E)*

The best way to know God's estimate of sin is to realize the tremendous price it took to atone for sin, the death of God's Son.

## WHEN CHRIST COMES

When Christ comes, He will not be searching for fine architecture. He will not be looking for elaborate air conditioned buildings, but He will be looking for humble, devout men and women, boys and girls of prayer and faith. In Luke 18:7 Jesus said, "And shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?" Then He declared that God will answer their prayers and "that he will avenge them speedily."

Then in the latter clause of this same verse, Christ asked the question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" There is between the lines of this latter clause two statements: First, a prophecy of the scarcity of faith in these latter days, and truly there is a great lack of faith even now among professed Christians. The other implication is that when Christ comes, He will be looking for faith. He will search in the small groups and the large ones. He will search among those who are poor and those who

are not poor. For Christ it will be a time of gleaning, a searching of individuals who have a personal active love for Christ. He will be looking for those who have faith, active faith, a faith that enables them to sacrifice for the extension of the Kingdom of God, for the salvation of lost souls, a faith that assures them that if they do Christ's bidding, the Lord will take care of them and give them day by day their daily bread.

If we want a picture of the Judgment, all we need to do is to turn to Matthew, Chapter 25. There we have a revealing picture and words of warning that should awaken every selfish, faithless, professor of Christianity. Here Christ said: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but

the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (verses 31-34).

This is a wonderful promise, indeed, or invitation. The profession of these whom the Lord speaks of as His sheep, was backed up by lives of service to others. Christ stated concerning them, "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (verses 35-36). Later He explained that in rendering this service to others in need, they had rendered service to Him. Their reward is an inheritance in the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world for the faithful.

Selected

# Winter 2012 Camp Meeting Recordings

CD NO.	DATE	MESSAGE TITLE	MINISTER
TR-1098	12-27-2012	The Strength, Fortitude, and Endurance of God's Love Toward Us	Brother Richard Talbot
TR-1099	12-28-2012	There Is No Comfort Like the Comfort of the Lord	Brother James Presley
TR-1100		The Different Phases of the Church: The Bride	Brother E. David Stegmeier
TR-1101		To Pray	Brother Richard Talbot
TR-1102	12-29-2012	Grace That Can Be Seen	Brother Garrett Haylock
TR-1103		The Different Phases of the Church: Maternal	Brother E. David Stegmeier
TR-1104		The False Hope of the New Year	Brother Richard Talbot
TR-1105	12-30-2012	Is It Evident That You Have Been With Jesus?	Brother Reggie Stegmeier
TR-1106		The Different Phases of the Church: Militant	Brother E. David Stegmeier
TR-1107		The Danger of Procrastination	Brother Garrett Haylock
TM-295	2012	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #1	
TM-296	2012	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #2	
TM-297	2012	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #3	
	2012	Winter Camp Meeting Choir Songs	
	2012	All Songs for the Winter Camp Meeting on MP3	

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## Meeting Announcements

### Phoenix, AZ

February 7-10

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 3450 West Grover Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85053  
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, Ohio  
Service times: Thursday-Saturday 7:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:15 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.  
For further information contact: Pastor C. H. Ferguson, 19237 N. 21<sup>st</sup> Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85027  
Telephone: 623-516-0836 (Home) or 623-640-7679 (Cell)

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2013 Camp Meeting Dates at God's Acres, Newark, Ohio

June 16-23    August 4-11    December 26-29

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Camp Meeting Date for Canby, Oregon is July 8-14, 2013

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