

"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

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SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

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Vol. 43 November 2013 No. 11



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

*Psalm 122:1*

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Vol. 43 November 2013 No. 11

# Guest Editorial

*"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"*

Job 23:3

## DISCOURAGED

Trials, sicknesses, afflictions, misfortune, and hard places sometimes seem to get the best of us. The death of a loved one comes and we find it is so difficult to endure, and we wonder why it has fallen on our pathway. In the above Scripture, we see that Job was burdened with deep heartache. He had suddenly lost all his cattle and property, and even his children were removed from him. Next, we find that he was sorely afflicted in his body. Remember that in God's sight, Job was a righteous man. He walked pleasing before God day after day. In his hour of great desperation, his trial had become very heavy and burdensome. From a human standpoint, it looked as though God had forsaken him. He felt so alone, and it seemed that he was unable to gain God's attention. Job cried out from the depths of his soul, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

Job went on to say what he would do when he found God. He said: "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me" (Job 23:4-7).

Although he was sorely oppressed and knew not which way to turn, he had faith and knew that God could not only help him but also come to his

rescue. Job was unable to feel God's presence. Still Job kept his confidence fixed in God's ability to deliver. In addition to losing his family, his possessions, and his health, he also had to contend with some so-called friends who accused him of being unrighteous. It seemed that trouble was coming from every side. The pressure and the burden that had fallen on him appeared more than he could bear, yet Job refused to abandon his integrity. Job's steadfast life and faithfulness has brought comfort and encouragement to millions throughout the ages as they have faced trials.

When we think of the many people who are cumbered down with adversity and trials of various types, we understand their feeling of discouragement. Discouragement can come to anyone; however, it is something that each individual must overcome. If not dealt with quickly and properly, this "tyrant" can lead one into murmuring and complaining, and finally into sin. Trials are never designed to turn anyone away from God. Their purpose is to strengthen their faith and build spiritual maturity. During times of trials and afflictions, individuals may become weary because of the lingering circumstances that have befallen them. However, if one is not careful, discouragement can cause an individual to give up in the battle.

[continued on page 26]

*Matthew 19:3 The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?*

*4 And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,*

*5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall*

*cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?*

*6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

*7 They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?*

*8 He saith unto them, Moses*

*because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

*9 And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*

# The Commitment of Marriage



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **The Sanctity of Marriage**

The enemy is working to destroy the sanctity of marriage. He would like to eliminate every fiber of goodness from the marriage vows. Married life is a good life, but it is one that a couple must work to maintain. As the years slip by, the husband and the wife need to work harder than ever before. Just because you are up in years does not mean that the enemy is going to back off. Whether you are thirty years of age or eighty years of age,

the enemy is still going to work on you; that is his job. The one thing about the enemy is that he is faithful.

Many marriages start right, and then for whatever reasons, they fall apart; that is a shame. God is displeased when those who profess Christianity fail to live up to their marriage vows. Of all people that should have a good marriage, it should be people who claim to be Christians. Sometimes people start right, but somebody gets out of the will of God and turns the marriage

into shambles.

During the excitement of a marriage ceremony, a couple is ready to say, "I do" without any serious thoughts of the future. Often they have no thought of what those words actually mean. Those marriage vows are more serious than just saying some words. In the vows the couple repeats the words, ". . . for better, for worse, . . . In sickness and in health, till death do us part." Many couples just want to get the ceremony over and spend money on an expensive honeymoon that they

cannot afford, but that starts a marriage off wrong.

In Matthew, Chapter 19, Jesus dealt with marriage and divorce. First of all, you need to understand to whom Jesus was speaking. He was not talking to the world. Verse 3 reads, "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"

The Pharisees came to Jesus to tempt Him. They were trying to drag Jesus into a controversy. If you read through the Gospels, you will find that the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the elders were continually trying to trip Him up in conversation. That was the question that prompted the answer by Jesus.

In verse 8 Jesus said, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts [Notice that He did not say, 'because of the hardness of *their* hearts.' Their hearts had not changed from their fathers'. Their hearts were just as hard that day as they were in the days of Moses.] suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

You cannot go back in time any further than the beginning. There was no provision made for divorce in the beginning. God brought the first man and the first woman together. He performed the first marriage ceremony, if you want to call it that.

We read in Genesis 2:20-22: "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." The first man and the first woman were holy; they had no sin. Both the man and the woman were innocent in the sight of God.

### Burning in Their Lusts

God puts within His creation for one sex to desire another sex, not for one sex to desire the same sex. God never ordained a male to desire another male or a female to desire another female. I have read that when homosexual couples join in a civil union that they think it is love, but I want you to read what the Bible calls it. I would rather believe what the Word of God says, and the Word of God lets us know that it is lust.

Romans 1:22-27 states: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves [through the lust of their own hearts]: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust [not love] one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."

Verses 26-27 from the Amplified version read: "For this reason God gave them over *and* abandoned them to vile affections *and* degrading passions. For their women exchanged their natural function for an unnatural *and* abnormal one, And the men also turned from natural relations with women and were set ablaze (burning out, consumed) with lust for one another — men committing shameful acts with men and suffering in their own bodies *and* personalities the inevitable con-

sequences *and* penalty of their wrongdoing *and* going astray, which was [their] fitting retribution." The writer said they "burned in their lust," not in their love.

Young person, this spirit is prevalent in the hallways of the schools, in parked cars, at parties, and in other public places. You probably cannot help but see it, but you need to guard against getting caught up with that spirit. You may say, "Well, I would never go that far." You do not know how far you might go.

The word *lust* means "strong desire." The word *desire* can also be used in a good sense. Jesus said in Luke 22:15, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Philippians 1:23 reads, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." First Thessalonians 2:17 says, "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire [this means 'strong desire']."

God never sanctions a marriage between two people of the same sex. It does not happen in the animal kingdom. It has always been a male and a female. Woe to the minister who performs the ceremony to unite two people of the same sex! The one to whom he must answer is God. Verse 7 of our Scripture text says, "They say unto him [Jesus], Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?"

In verse 8 Jesus answered, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning [back to Adam and Eve] it was not so." Their hearts had never changed.

Sin was a force in the world then, and their hearts were getting harder, and men's hearts are getting harder yet today. In our country today government officials speak on the air and promote same-sex mar-

riage and promote abortion. People march in the streets in support of these sins. The newspapers are full of their ungodly agendas. Homosexuals proclaim what they call "gay rights." Well, the gays might have rights with the United States government, but they do not have any more rights with God than any other sinner.

### Old Testament Laws

We find in the Scriptures that God allowed the innocent party to be free, to remarry, and to have a good home. There was a double standard under the Law. The man could divorce his wife for practically any cause; however, there were some wives under the old Law that men could not divorce. We read in Deuteronomy 22:28-29: "If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days."

A woman falsely accused and chaste could never be divorced. Deuteronomy 22:13-19 says this: "If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her, And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid: Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate: And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her; And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

"And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him; And

they shall amerce him [charge him or give him a penalty] in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days." This was written of a wife who was falsely accused. The man accused his wife of unchastity before marriage. If it had been true, she would have been stoned to death.

Verses 20-21 read: "But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel: Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you."

Then there was a wife who was guilty of being unchaste after marriage, and she was not divorced. Instead she and the man involved were stoned to death. Leviticus 20:10 says, "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." You can thank God that we are in the New Testament dispensation today, or under the New Covenant, otherwise there would be dead bodies lying all over the place.

Who can be divorced? It is not the unfaithful wife. It is not the one who committed adultery. The one who committed adultery was killed. Who got divorced in the Old Testament? Faithful wives who were not guilty of adultery or fornication. Verses 7-8 of our Scripture text state: "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so." The wives you just read about were unfaithful wives. They were

stoned, and they could not be divorced.

Deuteronomy, Chapter 24, changes the picture just a little. Verse 1 reads, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." I want you to notice that he did not have her killed. She was not brought before the elders. She was getting a bill of divorcement. Verse 2 tells us, "And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife."

Verse 1 tells us if a man did not like something about his wife, he wrote her a letter stating that he was divorcing her, gave her the letter, and sent her on her way. The uncleanness had nothing to do with being immoral, because that was not just cause for divorce. It could not have been because she committed adultery or because of fornication or she would have been stoned. It had to be something that did not satisfy the husband. For example, maybe she snored, maybe she never washed her feet, maybe she could not keep a clean house, maybe she was lazy and slept all day. If that husband took issue with any such things, he could have given her a writing of divorcement and sent her on her way; then she was free to remarry. That is what the Scripture says.

### New Testament Teachings

Jesus said in Matthew 19:9, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." He said, "I say unto you." Again, to whom was He talking? He was talking to those who tried to trip Him up, the Pharisees, those who claimed to be God's people. You

cannot bind the Gospel, the Law, or the Commandments on the world. He was not talking to sinners.

Again, He was talking to people who professed to be God's people. Why can't you bind this on sinners? Romans 8:7 tells us, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." God's principles appear to all men. God puts them in their consciences, but He does not give them power to keep them unless they accept Him and have a change of heart. In other words, people in the world know it is wrong to commit adultery, to steal, and to lie, but they do not have the power to keep God's law until they have a change of heart. God does not bind this on worldly people; He binds it on people who profess to be His people.

First Corinthians 2:14 reads, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Some teach divorce as though it is a sin that is different from any other sin. They set it out in a category all by itself. They try to reconcile a married couple, even if it has been of the worst degree between a couple. When the husband and the wife both are professing to be Christians, they both should work to reconcile themselves. If you are a Christian, God will lead you that way. Malachi 2:16 says, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously."

Church, we have to remember that we do not live in a perfect world. We have wars, rumors of wars, and many other things going on. Society is not perfect. There are worldly people. People can go out and get tangled up, and in their marriage end up in divorce, and then they come to Christ and get saved. In many incidents, it is impossible for them to go back and

straighten out the past. Either the wife or the husband has married somebody else. You cannot bind that on the one who married the divorced one. You cannot call that person an adulterer or an adulteress. That law is for God's people. That sin is no different than any other sin. God can straighten it out, and they can go on and still live for God. God will have something good for the individual who wants to serve Him.

Some preachers teach that if a man had a wife who was unfaithful got a divorce from him, he could never marry. Some people cut it that close, but that is not right. God has something good for the innocent party.

### **Working Through Problems**

There is more to marriage than saying marriage vows and taking off on a honeymoon. Things start to change after the couple says, "I do." In courtship he or she could act just about anyway, but when the honeymoon is over and their feet come back to the ground, so to speak, things begin to change. That is when the grace of God needs to come in. You see, we each have different personalities. For example, I am more of an extrovert, but my wife is more of an introvert, yet we get along even though we have different personalities. The Spirit of God can help couples to get along.

After you say the marriage vows and the honeymoon is over, you are starting your family life, and you begin to see each other when you are not at your best. Husband, you see that little lady when her hair is not fixed nice. You see her in the morning when she might not be in a good mood and things begin to change. You see one another when you are tired, when you are worried, and when you have worked hard all day. The wife is in the home, and perhaps the husband is laboring in a factory. When he comes home, he wants a meal on the table, but she is too tired to put one there. When you were courting her,

you would take her out to dinner. You should not wait until you are married to see whether or not she can cook.

After marriage, you see each other when one of you is not having a good day, when things do not go well at work. Perhaps you almost got fired. Perhaps the boss worked you over all day long. The woman might be working in the home, and things did not go well. Maybe the curtains fell down. Maybe she dropped some dishes and broke them. Maybe something happened to the favorite dish she cooked for you. Then you have an altogether different atmosphere for both of you than being ready at seven o'clock to go out somewhere. That is the reason the marriage vows are serious. You should not jump into marriage.

After the honeymoon, you will start noticing faults that did not appear when you were dating. You may say, "I didn't know she was like that" or "I didn't know he acted like that" or "I didn't know that he had a bad temper." You see, he probably did all he could do to hold it under while you were dating. Nevertheless, marriage is still the best life.

Sometimes you may see a temper that you never noticed before. So you may say: "She's just growing up. She's only eighteen. She'll get over that." When you were dating, you were quick to overlook things, but now you are not quite so apt to overlook them as you did before; so you try to correct these things. After all, as the husband, you are the head. You may say, "I'm going to bring this thing in line," and then the trouble starts. That is where the grace of God needs to come in. That is where two Christian people have to get hold of God.

If you both profess to have God in your life, what would be wrong with getting down on your knees together and talking to God about the struggle you are having in the home? If you would do that, you might be surprised how well things would work out. You might be surprised that her faults do not look so

big after all. You might be surprised how that temper you have should not even have been there after all. Two different personalities that truly love each other need to continue to work at their marriage, and there is never a time when you can relax your efforts. You cannot take a day off. You have to continually work at your marriage, because the moment you start to relax, the enemy will come again.

### **What Can You Do When Love Begins to Fail?**

If love begins to fail, that is something different. The marriage will begin to crumble. Then the marriage, which gives an appearance of being trouble free, begins to suffer inside the walls of the home, and the same is true with a congregation. If love begins to dwindle between the members, then separation becomes normal. The words of Jesus were given to *Christians*, not to the world.

In Matthew 19:10-11 we read: "His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given." To whom did He give this command? He said it to God's people. What about those who have been divorced and remarried and then have gotten saved? God forgives all manner of sin. What about those who feel they were not in God's will when they got married? It is a bad time to bring it up after you have gotten married. You should not use that as an excuse to get divorced. God has forgiveness, and He has help. If you are having struggles in your marriage, you need to bring your marriage to God and dedicate it to His will.

When separations come, often the children suffer. You see, they want to go with Dad, and they want to go with Mom. What happens? Mom and Dad are in a battle, so the children hear things about Mom from Dad and they hear things about Dad from Mom. Why? Mom

and Dad are at odds against each other. Dad wants favor with the children, and Mom wants favor with the children, but they cannot get along. Children are torn. Naturally, a child loves both of his parents.

So much has been added to the Scriptures that it is almost impossible for ones who have been married and divorced to get on with their lives without people trying to put some kind of bondage on them. The marriage and divorce that Jesus was talking about pertained to those who professed to be God's people. The marriage vows that ones make should be taken with more seriousness.

I start out a wedding ceremony with these words: "Unite your right hands, please. In the presence of God and these witnesses, are you ready to take each other as man and wife, agreeing to love each other devotedly, promoting each other's happiness until this union you are entering into is dissolved by death? Do you both agree?" After they both agree, I begin to recite the vows, which they each repeat.

I begin with the man first. He says, "I \_\_\_\_\_ take thee, Such-and-Such, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward. For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer. In sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part." Then the wife goes through the same vows, but she has a couple of words in the vows that the man does not have. The woman says, ". . . to love, cherish, and obey." How long does she have to obey her husband? Until they part in death.

Next, the minister pronounces them man and wife in accordance

with the law of God and man. This is the easy part, and they are on their happy way. When the honeymoon is over and things begin to show up, there is where the grace of God is needed. If God brought you together, He can keep you together. Verse 6b of our Scripture text reads, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Who does man put asunder? Those whom man put together. The first ten years of marriage, my wife and I did not have a happy home. I was out of order, and she was out of order. Now, do not get me wrong. She was very submissive as a wife. When I say that we were out of order, I mean we were out of the order of God. Even when we got saved, God had to work with us as individuals to mold us and make us so we could even stand each other, and you can do it by the grace of God.

Some people have it in their minds that God cannot work this out or work that out. In order to get things worked out, you have to work hard at it. You have to put some time and some prayer into it. In some cases, you will have to fast, but it will work if you want it to work.

If you are separated from your husband or wife, are you satisfied that way? If you are not satisfied that way, then you need to get things worked out. You need to work them out with God first, because somebody is out of order. When you get it worked out with God, it will be so much easier to work it out with each other.

*(Compact Disc TR-1091)*

***"Remove not the ancient landmark,  
which thy fathers have set."***

***Proverbs 22:28***

1 Corinthians 16:5 Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may

bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

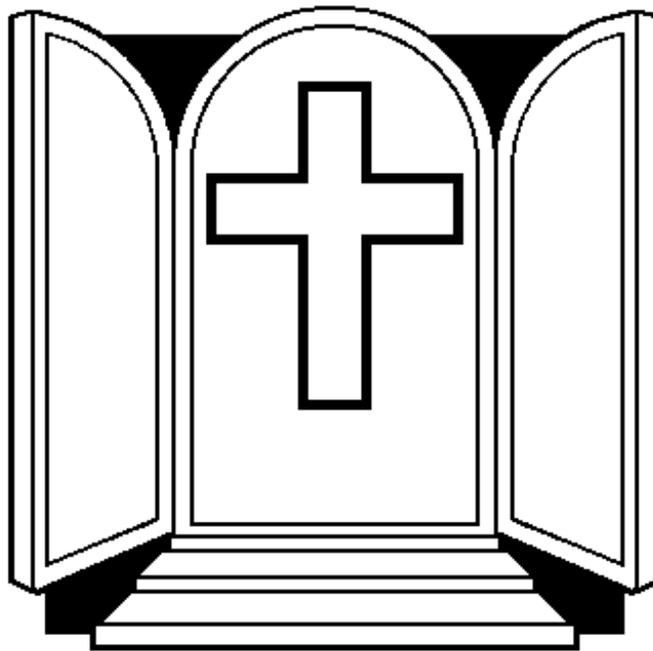
7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until

Pentecost.

9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

## THE GREAT OPEN DOOR



*Brother Mike Hufford*

### "A Door Was Opened in Heaven"

Our Scripture text contains the account of the ministerial travels of the Apostle Paul. The Scripture text finds Paul as he began his work in Ephesus. History records the fact that Paul labored there for three years and enjoyed a period of great success in winning souls in his Christian labor. While making travel plans to Macedonia, Paul felt compelled by the Spirit of God to tarry at Ephesus for an extended period of time. The reason for his change of plans is recorded in verse 9 of our Scripture text, which says, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many

adversaries."

Many people had received the Gospel at Ephesus, and many more were poised toward the reception of it. Paul saw the opportunity to maximize his gain there for the Kingdom of God. Prior to and up to the time of Paul's arrival in Ephesus, the doors of wickedness were wide open in that great city. Ephesus had many doors, according to the Scriptures and according to history, that were open to evil. The door to the temple of their goddess Diana was certainly open and thronged by many idolatrous worshipers.

The doors to the theater of the day were open to all types of fleshly passions. The doors of various idola-

trous craftsmen were open to a very brisk business of making graven images of many false gods. The doors of the temple were open to the scribes and the Pharisees, yet the great city of Ephesus was an important city. It was teeming with population and overflowing with energy, and sad to say, it had its door closed to the Gospel.

One can only imagine the great mischief of any great city whose doors were open to the disciples of Satan, and at the same time, were closed to the ambassadors of Almighty God. It makes me wonder how many great cities in our wonderful nation are presently open to all manners of business by Satan but

are effectively sealed off from the service of Christ. Finding such a great city as this open to the business of the devil and closed to Christ is a great pity.

How often do we find the door to the broad way which leads to eternal destruction wide open while the door to the narrow way that leads to eternal life is barely ajar? This condition exists all over our great country and all around the world. However, a great door was opened in Ephesus, thank God. In verse 9 Paul said, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me."

In the Scripture we read about how John had a great door opened to him. He saw a spiritual door open in Heaven. It was a door of spiritual understanding and of divine revelation. Revelation 4:1 reads, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."

I thank God there is a door open in Heaven. Earthly doors may be closed from time to time to the saints of God; but if we look up, we will find a door open in Heaven. I cannot tell you how many times I have faced doors that were closed to me, closed to the Gospel work, and closed to everything around me. However, in a time of prayer as I looked up to Almighty God, "a door was opened in heaven."

### **The Harvest Season**

John's door was primarily, though not entirely, a door of spiritual understanding and revelation. Paul, on the other hand, was presented with a door more practical in nature and more effectual in results. I want you to pause for a moment and ponder this thought: If given the choice, would you choose the door of increased knowledge of all things spiritual or the opportunity to apply the spiritual trade on the field of labor? This is a difficult decision to

make, and thank God, you do not have to make it. It is not an either/or proposition, but it is a curious thing to ponder. Would you choose a door to increased knowledge or a door of practical service to God in the field of labor? Both are necessary.

James 2:14-18 states: "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works."

Paul had a yearning down in the very core of his being, a yearning to roll up his sleeves and plunge headlong into the field of Gospel labor. Paul was much like a painter set before a window through which a beautiful landscape could be viewed. His mind swooned with anticipation and his fingers tingled to reach forth with the brush and begin to paint. Along with Paul's desire to plunge headlong into the Gospel work, he felt an anxiety, a pressure, and a suffocating urge to tell the Gospel story. He wanted to tell it to the young, to the old, to the rich, and to the poor. Paul desired that the Gospel story be told also at Ephesus.

I believe there are certain periods in life, certain distinct periods, wherein a soul may be harvested for the Gospel work. We need to be careful to maximize these periods and these opportunities for Christ. We need to be aware of them and do what we can to take advantage of these opportunities.

In John 4:35 we read, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white

already to harvest." A process takes place in this harvest season. However, it is not something that just comes automatically. Scripturally speaking, there is a process wherein souls may be harvested in the Kingdom of God. I believe there must be a door of understanding open in the Gospel work.

### **Spiritual Understanding**

Acts 19:1-2 reads: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

Saint, you need understanding. Also, sinners need understanding as they are exposed to the Gospel work, as they are exposed to the preaching of the Gospel, and as they are exposed to a Christian witness. It is something that is very vital. Spiritual understanding must first be imparted to a sinner before a lasting conversion can occur. Now, that is not to say that a sinner has to know the Bible front to back before getting saved. I am not saying that a sinner must understand all doctrinal issues or the fine points of the Gospel. We recognize there is a very basic understanding that must be imparted into the heart and the mind of every sinner before he can properly make a decision to turn his life over to Almighty God. Spiritual understanding must first be imparted before a lasting conversion can truly occur.

We sometimes assume that those around us possess this understanding when, in fact, very little of God's Word has actually penetrated their hearts. It is possible for someone to live around a Christian witness for a good while, to spend a fair amount of time in the assembly of the saints, and to raise children with the assumption that they have more understanding spiritually than what

has actually been imparted into their hearts. It is possible to assume that our children know and understand more spiritually than what they do. It is possible to believe that our friends and neighbors understand more than what they do. We need to pray that Almighty God will open their hearts to real spiritual understanding. It is not until the Word of God is made personal to them that they really receive the Truth, which is effectual to their hearts and lives.

Hardheartedness is not always the reason that some delay accepting Christ. Many people need understanding. It is true that some people stiffen against the Gospel. Some have heard the Gospel many times in their lives, but it is not always absolutely hardheartedness that is the reason for some people who delay accepting Christ. Many people need understanding. Some people go through a period when they begin to sort things out in their minds.

I have been around the Church of God since I was five years of age, but it was not until I was about sixteen years of age that the Word of God really began to penetrate my heart. I understood a certain amount of Truth. When I was not saved, I understood that I was not right with God. I understood that Christ loved me, but it was a number of years later until the Word of God was really able to penetrate my heart. There was something that witnessed to my soul: "This is for you. God is speaking to you, and He wants to save you. You are going to be lost unless you give your heart to God." I was confused about many things that I did not understand. I fought the devil on many basic points, even though I spent my childhood in a Church of God congregation.

New converts need understanding to be imparted to them. As we pray for the lost around us and pray for our loved ones to be saved, we also need to pray that God will open a door of spiritual understanding to them so they can understand how

the Gospel message applies to them. Sinner friend, God loves you, and what God has done for others, He can do for you. God has saved others, and you, too, can have the joy of Heaven down in your soul. You can live for God, if you so desire. Sometimes folks go through a period when they begin to sort things out in their minds, and I believe this is healthy and needful. It is a hopeful sign that we must never ignore.

### **The Door of Confession and Repentance**

Next, we often find the door of confession and repentance is opened afterward. Acts 19:18 says, "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds." When spiritual understanding is made personal to the heart, then confession and repentance follow. It is not until God really puts His finger upon the heart and the sinner realizes: "Christ died for me. My sins are what nailed Him to the Cross. The Word of God is for me. Christ came into this world and shed His blood for *me*."

When the Gospel message becomes personal, then confession and repentance soon follow. Personal confessions occur only after a personal understanding is given. Sinners need to have time to see themselves as part of the Gospel story, to see that Christ died for them, and to see that the power of God can reach down into their hearts and lives and change them. They need to see that the plan of salvation includes them.

We find that a door of spiritual growth is opened. Acts 19:19-20 reads: "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Spiritual success will do much to energize the fires of Christian service. There is nothing like seeing a convert won to God. There

is nothing like seeing someone in the very depth of sin be raised up and made a new person. Something about that stirs the Gospel fires in the church, brings new energy, and brings new vitality in the work of God.

Spiritual success and the prospect for more individual growth energize the fires of Christian service. Every time a soul is saved, the Gospel message is vindicated one more time. It still works. I have been saved for thirty-four years now, and every time I see somebody get saved and stand up and testify about being delivered from the habits of life, the thought comes to my mind time after time: "Thank God, the Gospel message still works. Thank God, the Gospel is still true." When a sinner kneels at an altar of prayer, the Gospel message is vindicated afresh. One real conversion can stoke the fires of revival in a congregation, a city, and sometimes a whole nation, because one person gave his heart to the Lord.

### **Spiritual Success**

Paul saw the need of the sinner at Ephesus and realized the scope of the spiritual opportunity that was before him. Paul was much like an athlete who won for the first time. He was like a trolling fisherman who suddenly felt his line go taut. He was like a business person who experienced success in a startup venture. He found that spiritual success will energize the soul and empower the Christian worker to do greater work in the Kingdom of God.

Saint of God, on the authority of God's Word, as we look around us, we will find a great door opened before us. Paul found a great door open, and by the grace of God, he determined to go through it.

Have you noticed that when you pray well that you wish to pray more? Have you noticed when you pray well, you tend to study more? Have you noticed that when you study more, you tend to minister

well? When you minister well, you tend to praise more. It is curious how spiritual achievements compound. It is curious how, when God reaches down into the soul or into the lives of laborers in the Gospel work (I am not speaking of preachers here, because we all are ministers of the Gospel in one way or another), how God blesses the labor. It fuels the fire, energizes the soul, gives new courage, gives new passion, and gives joy. It puts a spring in your step, a smile on your face, and a confidence down in your soul.

Spiritual achievement on any level tends to heighten the will to serve. It raises the expectation of victory and the very action that brings it to pass. When God blesses you, you have a heightened sense of expectation of God's future blessings. When God looks down from Heaven and answers prayer and meets your need, it encourages and strengthens your faith for more prayers to be answered. This encourages the saint of God to do the very things and to bring about the very actions that cause these blessings to take place. We can also note that the reverse is true as well.

### **Spiritual Reverses**

Spiritual defeat on any level will dampen, if not kill, the will to serve and to achieve spiritually. We need to pause a moment and recognize this fact. I do not want to quickly pass over this point. Just as a victory will heighten the will to serve, the expectation of another victory that does not soon follow will dampen the spiritual will, if not kill it entirely. One defeat, if not confronted, can cause a downward spiritual spiral from which there may be no recovery.

Anyone who has lived for God very long has been knocked down a few times by our adversary. I know I have, and I had to spend some time on my knees to recover. Young convert, there will be times when you get knocked to your knees spiritually. There will be times of disap-

pointment in your life. At those times, you must take care that you find a place of prayer and look to Almighty God for that problem. You need to get the spiritual help that you stand in need of, because if you let a spiritual defeat linger, it can lead to a downward spiral spiritually, from which you may never recover. It does not have to be that way, but it has the potential.

The point I am trying to make is that you need to take your spirituality very seriously. Do not be afraid to admit where you are spiritually. You need help from God. As a young convert, I was at the altar nearly every service. God saved me on a Sunday morning on Mother's Day. By Sunday night, the devil was after me. I had a time of prayer again. By Monday morning, he was after me again. When I came home from school, my mom looked at me coming up the stairs and said, "You need to go to your room and pray." She did not say: "Hello. How was your day?" She had been praying for me all day, and when she saw me, she said, "You need to go pray."

As a young convert, I remember going down to the altar praying, with my heart broken. Some little something was on my heart that I did not understand, some little failure, or some imposition of the devil. I cried my eyes out, and saints would gather around, wanting to help me. I would say, "Here is my problem." Often they would say, "Is that all that's bothering you?"

"Yes, that's it." They would pray, and I would get strength for another day.

You cannot afford to let spiritual reverses go unchallenged. New converts can ill afford to let spiritual reverses go without a spiritual answer. If the devil knocks you down, you need to get back up, by the grace of God, and spend some time in prayer and in the Scriptures. You need to spend time with a saint of God and get what you need from God, and then get up and go on your way by the grace of God. You should not take lightly the spiritual

momentum with which God has blessed you. May it inspire you to deeper consecration and stir a hunger in your heart for a greater manifestation of the power of God.

### **Spiritual Success Breeds Spiritual Enemies**

Paul said in the Scripture lesson in verse 9, "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries." Spiritual success breeds spiritual enemies. As a young convert, I was made to realize that suddenly. The devil does not like it when a person is doing well spiritually. The devil was not happy with me. Spiritual success breeds spiritual enemies, which is a sobering thought.

In seeking salvation, you are admonished in the Scriptures to count the cost before you give your heart to God. You ought to count the cost, according to the Bible. You would do well to consider the adversary. Saint of God, you must face Satan himself. As a Christian, you face the self-righteous of this day, you face counterfeit religion, and you face the outright opponents of Jesus Christ. You will face many spiritual foes. The Bible brings it down to this fine point in Matthew 10:36, which says, "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Great camp meetings, revivals, and conversions are often followed by a period of great revolt by Satan. Periods of great revival when souls are reaped for Christ, when needs are met, when saints sanctify and consecrate themselves afresh, are met with a fresh revolt from Satan. You can count on it.

Great doors of opportunity are opposed by great spiritual opponents. You will do well to identify them. I am talking primarily about spirits and whatever is animating evil things. You need to recognize them and, by the grace of God, defeat them. Matthew 11:12 states, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the vio-

lent take it by force." They take it by force.

Child of God, there are victories to be won. If they are going to be won, they have to be won on the battlefield by spiritual force. I am not talking about fighting in the flesh or about fighting a carnal warfare. I am talking about spiritual warfare. If some battles are ever going to be won, they must be won by force in a spiritual sense. From the days of John the Baptist, it has been this way. We are in a battle. The Bible refers to the church in a militant sense. As the church, we must be strong, determined, and spiritually armed for the battle, not with a fleeting, passive wish or an impulsive, warm feeling, but by spiritual militancy where we rely on the power of God alone to fight the battle and to gain the victory.

Paul realized that he was entering a battle at Ephesus, and he met it squarely and confidently. In 1 Corinthians 15:32 we find the words of Paul: "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus." Paul looked at this great city whose doors were opened to all kinds of corruption, and he felt that Almighty God opened a great door to him, but he recognized there were many adversaries there. He looked them squarely in the eye and, by the grace of God, defeated them.

### **Progress During Intense Opposition**

Ministers and their companions should not be discouraged because there is opposition to the great Gospel work. Neither should Gospel workers be discouraged, no matter what they do in the work of God. As I have mentioned already, we all are ministers in one form or another. Christ says we all are ambassadors for Christ. We all are duty bound to tell the Gospel story in some way. Spiritual workers and their companions should not be discouraged because there is opposition to the Gospel work.

When God stirs your heart and

opens a door for you to do something for Him, do not be surprised if the devil opposes it. I can guarantee you, if you are being effective for Almighty God, the devil is going to oppose whatever you are doing. Ministers and their companions should not be discouraged because there is opposition to the work of God. Paul was energized with opposition. He was animated the more to fight the good fight of faith. I am speaking of the spiritual sense. Paul was animated in a spiritual sense. The devil stood up to oppose him, but Paul did not shrink back. He faced the enemy squarely, looked him in the eye, and went on to accomplish what God gave him to do. In life we find that open doors and hindrances go hand in hand as it relates to the Gospel work. A great door is open to us, and there are many adversaries.

Biblical history is replete with examples of progress during times of intense opposition to the work of God. We read in Nehemiah 4:17-18a: "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded." I do not know what you would have done if you were a bricklayer or a carpenter. I have spent some time around the construction trade, and I generally felt as though I needed both hands, but they worked with one hand and kept a sword in the other. This is a spiritual analogy for us.

You must fight the devil while assisting others who are taken in his snare. You must have your sword ready to defend yourself and to defend the work of God while working at the same time to help honest-hearted souls. Sometimes you might have thought, "I'd sure like to be able to get this done, but I keep getting hindered." You have to minister with one hand, so to speak, and defend your spirituality with the other. To defend the work of God

while you are helping others at the same time is the nature of the Gospel work.

Spiritual adversity is the currency with which victories are purchased. Obstacles test the mettle or the worthiness of the laborers. Adversity brings courage and resolution in the hearts of soldiers. As Christian soldiers labor in the field of duty, the very nature of the efforts serve to purify the soul and strengthen the spiritual character. If you fought in a foreign war, you know personally that soldiers on the battlefield distinguish themselves many times in battle as they would never be able to do in training. Valiant acts of courage and honor on the battlefield come from a soldier who, up to that time, did not realize that he had the courage to do that. However, when called upon, his training kicked in, his courage and love of country kicked in, and he did courageous acts of valor.

### **The Christian Battlefield**

On the Christian battlefield, we must gain understanding and get a foundation in the work of God. We may understand the Scriptures and know the value of prayer, but it is not until we go out on the battlefield that it is really tested. The grace of God begins to flow and the courage of God begins to be manifested, but many times it is not until we are in battle. It is one thing to know about God in a theoretical sense, and it is another thing to understand in a practical sense that this really works. God really does what He says in His Word. Thank God, He can really be counted on.

We first learn the power of God, and then we develop through life experiences a spiritual character that enables us to put it to use on the battlefield. Adversity to service purifies the resolution of the convert. I do not tell the lost, "You must come and give your life to the Lord, and all your problems will be solved." He is not going to carry you to Heaven on a pillow of ease. I do not

preach that if you give your heart to God, you are going to become wealthy and that you are going to live happily ever after. However, if you do not forsake all and follow Christ, you cannot be His disciple. Christ narrowed down the ranks. It is good to give full disclosure to the sinner, and that is this: If you intend to live for God, it is going to cost you everything. It is going to try you to the very core of your soul, but by the grace of God, He will give you power to be victorious.

Years ago, the Marines had an advertising slogan that they used for recruiting that said: "You can be one of us—The Few. The Proud. The Marines." When one was in basic training, they said, "The pain that you are feeling is just weakness leaving your body." There is a courage that comes from that experience. There is an inner strength that comes from knowing that you are prepared. Spiritually, there is an inner strength that comes from knowing that you are victorious. You have the tools that you need to succeed. I believe Paul was squarely in the middle of that concept.

Often I have heard sinners boast of their sinful exploits. One may say: "I was the toughest drunk in the bar" or "I was the most courageous of sinners. I was undaunted by fear. I was not intimidated by anybody." No doubt, you have heard sinners talk about how mean they were in the bar, talk about all the fights they were in, and talk about how courageous they were and what kind of life they lived. Yet, when called upon by Almighty God to look themselves in the mirror and say no to the flesh and yes to God, they shrink down and crawl between the cracks. When called upon to show true courage in eternal conflicts, sinners often will have indecisiveness and recoil in fear.

Friend, if you want to be a real man or a real woman, then stand up for Christ and do what is right. If you want to show yourself to be a real man or a real woman, you should give your life to Almighty

God and serve your Creator. Why not take up His Cross and follow Him? Do not tell me about being a real man if you are living every day in selfishness and gratifying the flesh. That does not impress the Lord any.

### **How Is Your Spiritual Progress?**

There are times in life when the seasons are rich with spiritual possibilities and opportunities. You must recognize these in order to maximize your efforts for the Kingdom of God. Spiritually speaking, there are times of what I call low hanging fruit. These are times when possible converts seem to be there in clusters waiting for harvest. There are times when converts can be reaped in quantity.

I have been to Alaska a few times, and during the Salmon run, they have fishermen on the river banks standing shoulder to shoulder. Every cast seemingly yields a strike. They say, "Let's walk across the river on the backs of the salmon." For a certain period of time every year, the salmon migrate. This is the time they fish. Spiritually speaking, this is the time when a great and an effectual door is open.

Sometimes there are periods when everything you do for God yields a reward. Thank God for the times when every time you pray, the answer comes. There are times in life and times in a congregation when souls can be reaped in quantity for the Lord. Paul spoke of such a time. A great and an effectual door was opened to him. One soul coming to Christ may open the door and bring in an avalanche of converts to Christ. You might be the one who can cause a virtual avalanche of souls to come into the Kingdom of God if you will just repent and give your heart to God. I have lived long enough to see this happen. I have seen times when the altars were filled and the first row of seats was filled with honest-hearted seekers. I praise God for periods of effectual labor. Thank God for times when

you can pray and the heavens open.

A great and an effectual door is opened to you. Saint, let us not view open doors as doors that are going to lead to a brick wall. Scripturally speaking, there are doors that open that are effectual. Prayers are answered and souls that were labored over are salvaged and saved.

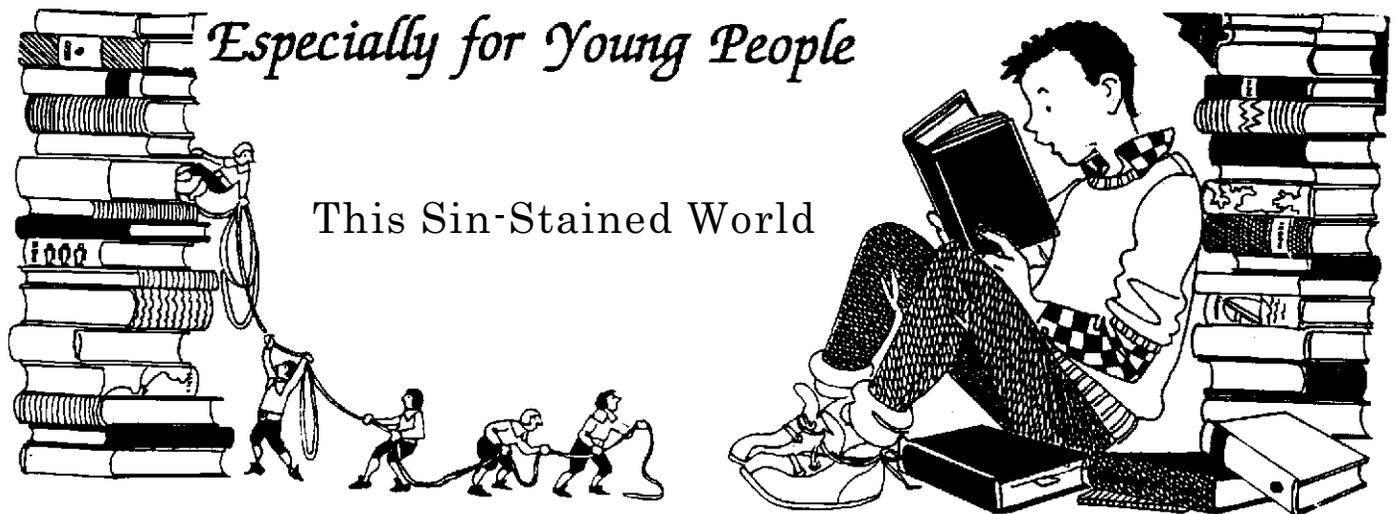
As was the case with Paul at Ephesus, the door may open in a very unlikely place. It may occur at an unexpected time. God may use unconventional means to open the door; but whatever the case, I pray that God will help you to recognize the opportunity and to maximize the gain for the Kingdom of God. Child of God, what door is open to you? Are you praying for an open door? Are you seeking an open door? Are you asking God so that a door will be opened? Are you willing to change your plans, reshuffle your schedule, reorganize your life to focus entirely on the spiritual open door before you?

Paul said, in so many words: "I can't come to you right now. I'm going to have to change my plans because I'm here at Ephesus, and an effectual door is open to me, but there are many adversaries."

Are you willing to yield your life to Christ to such an extent that when a door is open, you can change your plans, change your schedule, and change your desires to accommodate and maximize that gain for the Lord? Is adversity hindering you from true effectual labor? Is a door open but you are hindered? Are one of these adversaries delaying your progress for God? If so, you need to pray earnestly for God to help you.

We appreciate the great movements of God that we have been privileged to witness in our lifetime. We are praying for more of them. When the opportunities present themselves, we want to be prepared and ready to take full advantage. I pray that you will be determined to do the same. God bless you.

*(Compact Disc TR-1021)*



God is cruelly blasphemed, man exalted, and the false religions of demon worship, and demon possession abound. Christ said in Matthew 4:10, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Literature, radio, and evil television programs are crawling with sex, abortion, and dripping with murder, causing people to flirt with sin and then weep when it embraces them with its filthy corruption. God says, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).

Today holiness of character is called abnormality, but God said in Isaiah 5:20, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil." Lust is often called love. Some men propose to women, saying, "My heart is filled with love for you," when they really mean, "My heart is filled with lust for you." Galatians 6:8 says, "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Many coarse women tempt men by shameless exposure of their form and nakedness and then wonder why men insult them. Illegitimacy abounds, even though God's Holy Word says, "Now the works of the flesh are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, . . . they which do such things shall

not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19, 21).

Many people self-righteously say they are good enough or say they have reformed, meriting salvation. God's Word says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Men may change their actions, but they cannot cleanse their nature. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse you from sin.

Some people descend right to the bottom of the mire of sin before they begin to despise their evil condition. Then, when the quagmire of filth is drawing them under, some will heed Christ's loving warning, and cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

Even the worst sinner will say that he wants to go to Heaven when he dies, but that is where he would be most bitterly unhappy, because a holy Heaven is not a sinner's paradise. Only those who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ can enter Heaven.

Many people will harmfully waste many precious hours absorbing cheap, vulgar television shows but will not use even a few minutes of their time to study their future destiny, as revealed in God's Holy Word, which says, "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). God holds each person responsible to search the Scriptures, for this same Word shall judge you.

Many boast of their great

strength, but they are so weak that most of them are addicted to nicotine, living in sensual lust. A doctor has said, "A cigarette is a little tube filled with a deadly, harmful poison, and it has a fool sucking on one end and a fire at the other."

Many people drug their bodies to fulfill their sensual lusts, and try to drown their conscience by taking intoxicating liquor, but when they recover from this mental impairment, their conscience, unless too badly seared, hurts worse than ever. God says to "make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14).

Anything that is not modern is labeled old-fashioned and is mocked and rejected by many people. Even the one and only true Gospel of salvation is called old-fashioned, because God has never revised it since it was written. It proclaims the same remedy for the same ills, caused by the same old problem: sin. Truth is absolute, and denying it will not change it. God's laws are perfect and, therefore, immutable. There is no salvation apart from repentance, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Christ loved us so much that He suffered agony to save us from sin.

Selected

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

# God So Loved the World



*Brother Richard Talbot*

## A Divine Proclamation

John 3:16 is a very simple Scripture, yet it is the verse upon which the whole Gospel hangs. It is the verse that stirred the morning church. It is the verse that many Jews heard and took notice of. It is a verse that broke through the darkness of the night of Old Testament ceremonialism, revealing that something new had come into the world,

something unheard of before, except in prophesy, in projection, and in thoughts coming from the Old Testament Scriptures. All of a sudden, this proclamation was made: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The love of God is available to every soul. God's love is not limited to a few special individuals. The

love of God is an extension of Himself to every person in the world. "God so loved the world," not just you or the people in certain areas of our country. God loves the people of the *entire* world. That means He loves the wicked, the ungodly, the sinner, the drug addict, the drunkard, and the most hateful, spiteful individual you could ever imagine. The same love that God has for you, He has for the sinner. God is no

respector of persons when it comes to His love.

John 3:16 removes the struggle from getting saved. It is the power of God's love, in a sense, that is practically unknown to mankind, and no one is able to adequately explain it. How can you explain the love of God? We are thankful for it, and it is something that everyone needed, and every one of us still needs the love of God. Never has so much meaning been expressed in one single verse.

Again, John 3:16 reads, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is the word in that verse that should have the strongest emphasis? The little word *so* makes all the difference in the world in this verse. God did not just love the world, but He "so loved the world," and that means He "so" loves you. You are in the world. It is not this earth, the moon, the sun, or the stars that God is in love with. It is not the animal creatures that God is in love with. All of that is going to be destroyed one day. It is the world, or humanity, that God is in love with—it is you and me. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever [that includes you] believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

If you knew the creature that I was before Christ saved me, you would probably write me off as a lost cause, but God so loved me that He was extremely patient with me in every way. His love was not just love, but He *so* loved me.

The only other place in the Scriptures that I have been able to find those two words together is in Ephesians 5:33, when Paul was writing to the husband, admonishing him that he should "so love" his wife, not just love her. That little word has tremendous, weighty meaning. Never has so much meaning been compressed into such a small space as in the little word *so*.

### "God Commendeth His Love Toward Us"

Paul wrote about the love of God in Romans 5:6-8: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is amazing!

No amount of a mother's love could ever reach the height and the depth of the love of God, Who so loved the world. When we think about love and a loving relationship, often we think about a mother and her child. One of the most powerful forces of love in the world is that of a mother and her child. She loves that child when others have disdained him, when he falls into sin and brings shame on the family. Who is the one who weeps during the night hours? Who is the one crying her heart out over a child's condition? It is not the old, cold-hearted dad; it is the soft, tender mom who cannot sleep, praying, "My son, God help him, deal with him, and bring him back to us." There is something that pulls at the heart strings of a mother that a dad does not really know much about.

I have looked at my wife sometimes when my son was out in sin. It was a terrible time. I said, "Honey, why don't you just leave him alone and let him learn his lesson?" She said, "I'm his mother." Had it been up to me, he would have had it much rougher, but a mother has a powerful love. Even so, a mother's love cannot even begin to scratch the surface of God's love, because He "so loved the world."

Even when a Christian backslides, snubs the love of God, walks away from God, turns away from all that God has done for him, and goes far astray, do you know what God says to that person? "Come back to Me! I'm still married to you.

I haven't broken My vow with you. If you'll come back, I will be right here waiting on you." Aren't you glad that it is God and not a human council that has the jurisdiction over your soul? If it was a human council, many of us would have been written off a long time ago. A human council might not have seen much hope in us, but God did. He *so* loved me, and He *so* loved you.

Sometimes things are all in how people look at them. A little boy went to his daddy one time and said, "Daddy, from where did I get my intelligence?" He said to the boy, "It must have been your mother, son, because I still have mine." He was saying that he was *so* loved that she did not have much intelligence left.

God has all knowledge of everything about you. He knows your secret failures, your battles, your weaknesses, and your personal struggles. He probably knows more about you than you know about yourself. In spite of all that He knows, He still loves you so much. He loves you *so* much that, should you ever displease the Lord, He would just tap you on the shoulder and say, "Son, you've grieved Me." Sometimes He brings out the punishing rod and says, "I am doing this because I love you, son." My mother used to say, "Son, I love you, but I've got to give you this whipping." God chastens those whom He loves because He does not want them to be lost. Friend, He does not want you to throw away all that He has done for your salvation.

### The Long-Suffering of God

The word *so* is one of the most powerful words used in the Scriptures to emphasize the amount, the continuance, and the long-suffering of God's love toward the most ungrateful nation of Israel. God told them that He *so* loved them. Isaiah 49:15 reads, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet

will I not forget thee."

God did not put any stipulations on that Scripture. He said He would not forget you, no matter how deep in sin you go, no matter how wrong you are, no matter how you have treated God or the church or the saints. You may run down the Church of God all over the country, but God still loves you. Even if some saints have a little trouble with you, God loves you.

Do you know why we cannot love that way? We are not God, but God *so* loved. We love people, but sometimes we might have to struggle with our love. Sometimes we have to bring the old flesh into subjection. Showing forth the love of God is not always easy. You can love some people easily, and other people may irritate you, or get under your skin, so to speak. People on the job can make life miserable for you. Siblings and unsaved loved ones can make life miserable for you, and you might have to pray fervently about it.

God does not put any stipulations on His love, and a lot of people have taken advantage of God's love. They trample over top of the love of God. They have despised the love of God, but God *so* loves them. The Lord said in Jeremiah 8:6, "I hearkened." What does God do when a person has backslidden? What does God do when a person is running down the church? What does God do when people turn their backs on Him and go out into sin? He is listening. He has His ear tuned in. If you are in a lost condition, God has His ear tuned toward you. Do you know what God is waiting to hear? He is waiting to hear a little cry or a little sound coming from you, saying that you are tired of the way you are living and saying that you want help. God does not need a hearing aid. He is sensitive to hear your voice and to hear your heart cry out. As soon as He hears what He needs to hear, He hearkens.

Jeremiah 8:6, "I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright." They were still griping and com-

plaining, blaming everybody else for their situation. They were finding fault with everything under the sun. Sometimes backsliders find more things wrong with the church than anybody else could ever find. They look for things to justify their own failures, but even in all of that, God's ear is still tuned toward them. God is still listening and still saying, "I love that soul." What He wants to hear is their cry for help. When God hears that, His ears will perk up, and He will say, "That's what I've been waiting to hear," and He sends His angels down to minister to them. Then when people whom they once despised come across their pathway and send them a smile and a good greeting, and say, "We'd love to have you come back to church," down inside, they are speaking to a cry that God heard.

Many a backslider has said, "When I had backslidden and the saints talked to me, it tore me up inside, but I wouldn't let them see it." You never know what the cry of the heart is. When God gives you an opportunity to do good to someone, you need to do what is right. You had better not fail to do that, even if nobody else has anything to do with that individual. If God gives you an opportunity to speak to him, you had better not let the influence of other people keep you from doing it, because God loves that person. I am not talking about rushing out to track down someone, but there are occasions when God might allow your paths to cross.

### **The Immense Love of God to a Perishing World**

Do you know what the Scripture says about the Good Samaritan? That man journeyed with a purpose. Those other fellows just wandered around, but as the Good Samaritan journeyed, he came across a need. God's love opens a fountain, whose flow of grace comes from an unending and ever persevering flow. The word *persevering* means "to persist or to remain constant to a purpose;

an idea or a task in the face of obstacles or discouragement." If you persevere, God's love will open a fountainhead whose flow of grace comes from an unending and ever persevering source. The God whom you shamed, the God whom you cursed, the God whose name you used in vain, the God against whom you struggled in your mind and conscience—His grace continues to flow freely. You cannot stop God's grace.

When the stormy night begins to close in all around and hope seems almost gone, this is the same God to whom people pray for help. They cursed Him in the daylight. When the sun was shining, they swore, cursed, rebelled, despised the church, and turned a cold shoulder to Him, despised Him, despised the ministry, and stiffened their necks against every invitation to come and receive the love of God, until the storm hit. At that time, all you could say was, "Yes, I'll surely pray for you." They know where their help comes from, and they know where their hope is. Even though they treat the church, the ministry, and God as they do, God still loves them. Jesus died for them. He loves them as much as He ever loved any one of us; He loves them the same.

Do you know who is giving the breath of life to the man or the woman who curses, swears, uses God's name in vain, and lives ungodly? Do you know who is giving that person good health? Do you know who is keeping that person in a right state of mind? It is God! God is giving that individual the very breath that he uses to curse Him. He throws his life away in sin, yet God gives him perfect health. God loves people. God continually pours out favor upon the lost. He loves those who deserve no such love. He loves those who could do nothing to purchase or procure His love. He loves those who do not ask for His love. We have not solicited God's love, yet God expresses His love every day, even when people are yet sinners. This immense love

of God to a perishing world is inconceivable. The gift which it drew forth from Him is that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

### **God's Divine Plan**

Oh, what a plan God has! Before the world was ever created, before the heavens were ever spanned across the skies, God had a plan in mind for the salvation of the world. It was not Plan B, Plan C, or Plan D; it was Plan A all the way through. God's plan did not fail. He knew what was going to happen. That is the reason the Trinity sat down and talked together. God said, "I'm going to set aside My Son in due time." You know, with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day. So to God it has been as only a few days since His Son, Jesus Christ, died on the Cross. God has not forgotten that. It is fresh in His memory.

In God's mind, it was just a short time ago that He created the heavens and the earth. We look at seventy years as a long time until we reach seventy, and then it is a short time. As time goes by, in God's mind, it has been just like yesterday. God created all of this, set it into motion, and in due course of time, the appropriate time came for this to be fulfilled. I can only try to imagine what the Heavenly Father must have been going through to give up His Son and give Him as a gift to a sin-benighted world because He loved people, knowing that He was going to be utterly despised and rejected and hated.

Jesus had no form or comeliness that anybody should feel attracted to His physical body. The pictures that you might have seen of Christ hanging on walls show almost a feminine Christ. People get so attached to those portraits. Those pictures are no likeness of Christ. The Scripture lets us know He had no comeliness about Him. He had nothing of personal appeal. He was not a handsome fellow. His appeal was

through the words that He spoke. They were words spoken with authority, words that sank into the heart and gripped the soul.

When Jesus went by the ships of Peter and Andrew and they were out casting their nets into the sea, He spoke to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," but they had never seen Him before. Yet the Bible says, "And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him" (Matthew 4:20). They followed Jesus because of the authority and power of His Word.

The Scripture says, "God so loved the world, that he gave. . . ." I want you to know that He gave something very special and very dear to Him. God addressed this thought when Abraham was ready to offer Isaac on the altar. The Lord spoke of Abraham not withholding his son, his only son, from Him. That is the way our Heavenly Father gave His Son.

Consider these statements: First of all, before Christ came, the population of the world was in a ruinous, condemned state, about to perish everlastingly, utterly without power to rescue itself from destruction. Secondly, God, through the impulse of His eternal love, provided for the world's rescue and salvation by giving His Son to die for it. Thirdly, the sacrifice of Jesus was, and is yet today, the only means by which the redemption of man can be effected, and that is absolutely sufficient to accomplish this gracious plan, for it would have been inconsistent with the wisdom of God to have appointed a sacrifice that would have been unable to accomplish its intended purpose. That would have been foolhardy.

### **Crossing the Line From Temptation to Sin**

Sin is an indescribable evil to the mind of God. Picture the beautiful scene in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve committed the first sin. Oh, how grieved God became! It despaired Him that sin would mess

up that beautiful picture. If you are unsaved, God is disturbed that you are allowing sin to ruin what could be a beautiful life in your body. Sin must be an indescribable evil to have required no less a sacrifice than God being manifested in the flesh. God the Son came from Heaven to be born of His own creation, to be born of the virgin Mary, to be raised as a baby in arms, to grow up in life, and then to follow the plan of God the Father all the way through to its fulfillment.

The mass shootings in our country have stirred tremendous controversy across the land about where God was. "What kind of God do we have?" people are asking. "How could He let something like that happen? Why did God not stop those individuals?" The answer is, for the same reason God does not stop natural disasters, hurricanes, tsunamis, tornados, and earthquakes. When you are driving home from church, a serious accident could happen anywhere at anytime. That would not lessen God's love. God's love is still there. God's love is still in force.

What I am telling you is nothing new. God did not create a world with death and evil in it. God did not make this world full of death and evil. God is not responsible for the death, the wickedness, the sin, and the evil that grips people's lives, but it is the result of humankind turning away from Him. We were created in the image and likeness of God and put in this world to live holy lives for Him. However, when we began to live for ourselves, everything in our created reality began to fall apart physically, socially, and spiritually. There is nothing good outside of Christ.

Sin is usually concerned with the actions by which we humans rebel against God. It causes us to miss His purpose for our lives and to surrender our lives to the power of evil rather than to the power of God. How much sin does it take to be lost forever? Can you sin just a little and get by? The human mind

tends to think: "Surely God in His mercy would never condemn someone to hell for just a slight indiscretion." This humanism, or human reasoning against the wisdom of God, is causing a lot of people to stumble in their Christian experience.

Sin is the problem. Now, sin cannot just jump on you unbeknownst to you. Sin does not work that way, but it comes into the picture by one's choice, by what a person decides to do or not to do. Have you ever been involved in something along a certain way, and suddenly the voice of your conscience speaks in a still small voice? It gets your attention, saying: "Don't take another step! Stop!" You have not sinned yet. No sin is in the picture. It is when you cross that line knowingly, when you know you were told, "Don't!" yet you go ahead and do it that sin enters the picture.

Romans, Chapter 6, deals with sin quite clearly. When you are tempted, do not yield the members of your body to evil temptation. You cross the line from temptation to sin when you know that something inside you is telling you: "Don't look at that!" or "Don't read that!" or "Don't watch that!" or "Get away from that!" or "Don't wear that!" yet you go ahead and do it. The more you cross that line, the harder your conscience becomes until you sear it and then you can do things, and it does not bother you.

### Are You Missing the Mark?

I am not talking about personal convictions. Many people have things they cannot do, but I am talking about what God has told you for your life. When you cross that line, your life begins to miss the mark of holiness and righteousness. Psalm 7:11 reads, "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." God judges the righteous and does him justice, but He is angry with the wicked every day. The words, "God is angry"

must be, of course, understood in a manner and in accordance with His divine nature. We are not supposed to precisely consider the same passions or feelings as are referred to when this language is used of God, but it means God's nature, His laws, His government, His feelings are all lined up against the wicked.

God cannot regard the conduct of the wicked with favor, and He will punish them. While His judgment in regard to the righteous must be in their favor, it must certainly be against the wicked. While He vindicates the one, He will cut off and finish the other. The truth of this is in respect to divine character. Salvation is as common as sunshine, yet if a man closes his eyes, the sun is of no use to him. So while salvation is for everyone, many close their eyes to it.

Are you enjoying the love of God? Has God been able to reach your soul? Have you felt a tug from God upon your life lately? Have you felt God nudging you, tugging at you, wooing you, "Come home, dear sinner" or "Come home, backslider" or "Come home, lukewarm professor, come home"?

I used the illustration of an old-fashioned blacksmith shop and a man in there working with a heavy piece of iron. Suppose he has it heated red hot. He can bend it and form it into anything he wants it to

be, but if he takes that red hot iron and lays it outside his shop on a snow-covered stump with bitter cold temperatures, that iron will sizzle as it goes down into the snow. The heat transfers itself out, and in just a short while, that red hot piece of iron absorbs the atmosphere around it and becomes as cold as the outdoor temperature.

When we are around God's influence, we can feel the warmth of the love of God, but you need to let that warmth draw you back to Christ. If you get out in the world, it is a cold place out there, and you will absorb—both spiritually and mentally—the coldness of the world if you are out there without the fire of God in your soul. You will absorb the atmosphere around you, and it will cool you down and make you cold. God wants to light a fire in your soul. He wants to ignite a burning flame in your soul once again.

Friend, have you backslidden? Are you in trouble or struggling? God loves you, and He is calling for you. There is no fault in the love of God. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let God meet your need.

(Compact Disc TR-1028E)

### THE FOLLY OF PROCRASTINATION

*"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

*2 Corinthians 6:2*

Repentance ought not to be delayed, when you consider the nature of repentance and the command of God concerning it.

2 Corinthians 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

3 But I fear, lest by any means, as

the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall

be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

# The Danger of Deception



Brother Tim Wilson

## The Deceitfulness of Sin

The truths of these two Scripture texts cover from the Garden of Eden to the end of time. God let us see something that every one of us must guard against. Paul said, in essence, "I fear lest the same thing that beguiled Eve will work on some of you." If you study the history of this old world, you will find that it has been a history of deception. Today the enemy is working as never before to deceive people.

Many people have studied the Word of God and feel they know the Truth, but this does not completely free them from deception. In fact, many people do not seem to know what deception is. In Genesis, Chapter 3, we find that Eve was deceived.

Our Scripture text in 2 Corinthians used the word *beguiled*, which means "to be deceived." As saints, we must listen and be careful, because we live in a day when many people are being deceived.

It is very easy for people to become deceived. People are prone to say: "Oh, don't worry about me. I know the Truth, and I read the Bible." I am going to show you that Eve knew the truth regarding what God had said. She got the message straight from the man, and she still became deceived. That is the reason you must be careful. She told the old serpent what God said, yet she became deceived. If you are not careful in this deceptive day in which we live, the same thing can happen to you. You can know the truth, you

can have the truth preached to you, you can have Sunday school teachers that teach you the truth, but if you are not careful, you can become deceived.

I want to ask you a question, and I want you to think about it as you read this message: How was Eve deceived if she knowingly disobeyed God? How do people who know the Truth get deceived today when they knowingly disobey God? The answer is, as soon as Eve ceased to be regulated by the Word of God, her imaginations became filled with false impressions.

The serpent worked through a false impression, and her mind became darkened. Why? She knew what God said, but she allowed the enemy to work on her, and her mind

became affected. Next, unholy desires were born in her, and she desired what God said she did not need. Through unholy desires, her appetite overrode her better judgment. When she overrode her better judgment, she was persuaded to disbelieve what was true and believe what was false. That is the reason you must be careful, because sin is very deceitful.

Hebrews 3:13 reads, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin [the original translation says, 'the deceptiveness of sin']." Many people say they know the truth, they can quote Scriptures, and they can say they have lived for God for many years; but those are not barriers that keep them from deception. It takes God to keep people from deception. Many deceitful works are being done today, and the enemy is using many devices.

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

Paul said in Romans 7:13 ". . . that sin . . . might become exceeding sinful." We are living in a day and time when sin does not appear as dark as it really is. Sin is not appearing as evil as it needs to appear to people. Our world is working to take the "sin" out of sin. In other words, our world is trying to remove the wrong out of sin. If sin could be seen as it really is and in its real setting, people would not be so taken up by it. They would not look at it the way they do. For example, the Bible calls having an extramarital relationship adultery, but the world calls it "having an affair." The Bible calls alcoholism wrong, but the world says it is just a sickness. They want to take the wrong out of it and make people feel that it is all right.

Our nation must get back to the place where it realizes that sin is deceptive. It does a deceiving work, and if you do not stay close to God, it is going to have an adverse effect on you. Our nation plasters bill-

boards with ungodly advertisements, yet nobody does anything about it. They advertise alcoholic beverages. Do you know what they do? They put pleasant-looking scenery up and a picture of a healthy person advertising alcohol or cigarettes. They make it look attractive. They do not want to show you a hospital bed with someone who is dying from drinking too much alcohol or who has been eaten up with cancer from smoking. Then how many people would want to "come to where the flavor is"?

The world does not show you the truth. If people could look beyond the picture, they would see people dying in hospital beds, eaten up from these vices that they advertise to be so pleasant and satisfying. They should see those who are dying from using the vices they are pushing. If they could see the children who are going hungry because their moms and dads have wasted their money somewhere else, they would leave that stuff alone. If they could see the families suffering from the lack of money that was wasted on drugs and alcohol and tobacco because sin had been falsely pictured, they would stay away from those things. The Word of God teaches that multitudes have been deceived by sin. They have been deceived by the works of the enemy.

Matthew 24:35-39 tells us: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

Verse 39 reads, "And knew not. . . ." If you go back in the Old Testament and study, you will see that it was not that Noah did not

preach. For more than one hundred years, Noah told the people of the day that a flood was coming. He told them that unless they prepared, they were going to be destroyed, yet they paid no attention to his words. The Scripture says they "knew not." Why did they not know? They allowed a deception to work on them.

When the warnings came, the people did not take heed. They did not listen to what God was saying through Noah. Even though Noah warned them time and time again, they paid no attention to him. How did they not know it when Noah preached to them? The enemy worked a deception upon them. Friend, I want you to realize that the same thing can happen to you. You can sit under the truth of God's Word for years, but if you are not careful, you can be deceived.

### **The Seeds of Deception**

Revelation 3:17 says, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." These people were deceived. This was written to the church at Laodicea. The Bible lets us see that the enemy had worked such a deception that the people thought that everything was all right when it was not. He caused them to think everything was clear with God when it was not. If all those people could end up getting deceived, what about us today?

Genesis 3:1-6 reads: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not

surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

The Bible lets us know that Eve went into an area where she should not have been. She started conversing with someone that she should have known, from the very first words he spoke, was not her friend but an adversary. Through that conversation, he planted seeds of deception, but he started it through the spirit of discontentment. They had all the other trees, but the enemy wanted to make a big issue out of this one tree. He was working to bring a spirit of discontentment. He wanted to create dissatisfaction.

Bible scholars say Eve was alone when she started conversing with this serpent in the tree. This is where the problem started. Had she stayed close to the side from which she was taken, she would not have been exposed to that condition. (The first thing you have to see is that you must stay close to the One who gave His life for you.) She should have kept away from that which threatened certain death, and she would have been on much safer ground. It was not like she did not have anything else to eat. The enemy drew her over there through deception. She knew what God had said. She allowed the enemy to so work.

You must realize that Satan cannot hurt you while you are trodding the path of righteousness and walking with God. Isaiah 35:8-9 tells you that no lion or ravenous beast is on the highway of holiness. God will protect you there and see you through. You have to trespass on the devil's territory in order for him to get an advantage over you.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:3 that "the serpent beguiled Eve." Why? She entered his territory. As a

saint of God, you must be careful, and you must watch, because the enemy is always working. He wants to get you to become dissatisfied with the things of God. He wants to get you to look at things that God says you do not need. He wants to get you into areas that God said you need to stay out of. Why? He wants to deceive you.

Proverbs 4:14-15 states: "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." The Bible lets you know that you have to stay out of the path of the evil one. You must pass by it. You need to walk on by some things.

### **Heed the First Signs of Warning**

Eve was not guilty of any sin in the initial stages. You see, that is how the devil ensnares people. In the Old Testament you can read about how Lot ended up in Sodom. The Bible says he pitched his tent toward Sodom. He started looking that way, and then it was not long until Lot got into Sodom, and Sodom got into Lot. How did it happen? Lot became deceived. He started looking at things that God showed him were wrong and that he ought to stay out of. Child of God, you must be careful. The enemy wants to pull the same thing on you.

Maybe in the initial stages Eve did not do anything sinful, but she exposed herself to the devil by approaching ground that was prohibited. She exposed herself to wrong when she went there. She allowed the devil to get the upper hand. She found that the forbidden tree was already occupied by the devil when she got there. Saint, that ought to have been her first sign of warning that it was something that she did not want. If you look at something when the devil has already got his occupancy set up there, that ought to let you know that you do not want it.

This account in Genesis was

recorded for your learning, and it is a warning, so that you do not get caught in the same traps. Instead of fleeing from the serpent, Eve carried on a conversation with him, and that conversation proved to be foolish and fatal.

We are living in a day and time when many conversations are proving to be foolish and fatal. They are having an adverse effect on people's spiritual lives and affecting them in a wrong way. As a saint of God, you must realize that you live in a day of deception and that you are in the middle of the garden at the end of time. This is a time of deception; therefore, you must watch.

Concerning Eve, you would have thought that every suspicion ought to have been aroused when the devil introduced the conversation. Sometimes when a topic comes out, I have learned that it is something that I do not need. The devil uses "seed" words to get your attention, to draw you away, and to confuse your thinking. How did the serpent draw Eve away? He did not come out and say: "Now, look Eve, I'm going to corrupt you. I'm going to get you in trouble. You're going to have to suffer for the rest of your life for this conversation with me." No, he got her to question what God said to her.

In Genesis 3:1 the serpent said to her, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Bringing this to our day and time, sometimes when the Word goes forth, the devil will say to people, "That's just what he thinks." If the Word of God is being preached to you, it is not what the preacher thinks; it is what God is telling you. What does the enemy do? He is forever working to undermine and to pull your heart away from the things of God. As a saint of God, you ought to discern those things that are not conducive to Christian living.

Proverbs 14:7 says, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge." Everything the devil

has to say is foolish, and there is no knowledge in him. The sad part about it is, he can use good people. That is the reason you must guard yourself and be careful.

### **A Spirit of Discontentment**

Proverbs 19:27 reads, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." You have to cease the things that adversely affect you as a Christian and cause you to come down in your Christian experience instead of going up. You have to cease to listen to those things that affect you the wrong way. The serpent's opening words to Eve were designed to produce in her a spirit of discontentment. He said, "Yea, hath God said. . . ?" Eve knew what God said. This is the same way the enemy works yet today.

The devil wants to bring discontentment and uneasiness to your mind. He wants to cause the things you once had settled to become unsettled. He wants the things of God that are beyond question brought into question. Why does he do it? He wants to get deception working in your life to deceive you. This is the reason you must put behind you evil lusts and disobedience. You must stop and realize that the enemy wants you to lose out with God. He wants you to crave something that God said you do not need. If he can get you to become dissatisfied with what you have, then he can get you to start craving something else.

Is God satisfied with you? He has done everything that He has promised, but the songwriter asked, "Is my Lord satisfied with me?" Satan is ever seeking whom he may devour. He is ever trying to inject poison into your heart. This is the reason you must guard your thoughts, guard against wrong ideas that would work on you, and guard against the things the enemy is saying. He says, "Everybody's doing it." Even if everybody else does it, if God has condemned you about it, you had better not do it.

You must reject any suggestion that the enemy wants to bring to you that God has been unfair with you. He wants to make you think: "Well, God really hasn't been fair. He let you suffer, and He let this come your way. He let that happen to you." Why does God allow some things? He wants to show you that He is God.

You must reject the thought, "If God really loved me, He wouldn't put me through this." His love allows you to suffer so that you can draw closer to Him. It is His love that created Satan so that you have an adversary. Why? Without him you would not have anyone to say no to. God made the enemy, and you can tell him no all the time. The devil is working to deceive you through your thought process. You must reject those thoughts. God is doing everything He can for you. He is trying harder than He ever has.

Some thoughts that come along will cause you to doubt God's loving-kindness to you. How much kinder could He get than to take a dirty sinner and give him something clean, pure, and wholesome? There is no greater kindness. The enemy wants to work to undermine your experience with God and cause you to become deceived. When the enemy comes along with temptations, you had better be careful. You must keep your guard up.

### **Applying Godly Principles to Your Life**

In Genesis 3:3 Eve said, "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." In Genesis 2:17 God said, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

If you look at what God spoke and what Eve told the serpent, you will find that Eve added some words. Why did she add some words? The enemy was working on

her. The words of God were not good enough. A deception started working on her. The principle was applied when God spoke. She could not eat of it without touching it. If she never touched it, she would never have eaten it. That was the principle that God applied, but look what Eve said. She tried to do a little changing. When the enemy comes around, he wants to change the facts a little to deceive you.

When God forbids any act in the Word of God, He forbids anything that encourages that act. If you study the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments, you will see that God was against anything that encouraged an evil act. "Thou shalt not kill" was one of the Ten Commandments. God was speaking against the act of murder, and He was speaking against anything that encourages that act. He prohibited all the evil exercises of the mind and the heart preceding the act. In other words, He is against hatred, ill-will, and malice. All those things can stir up a person to the place where he kills another person. That is the reason you must guard yourself against anything that can lead to murder.

God said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Does He mean only the sexual act? No, He means anything that could cause it to come about. He included more than just the act. He included impure imaginations and desires and all those things that are grounded in that. I want you to understand how the enemy works. He says, "Well, God said this," but when God made the statement, there was much more in it than what had been written.

Often this command is broken, not by the act, but by unholy lusting and even unholy looking. That is the reason He told us in the Word of God, in so many words, "Don't touch! If it's not yours, don't touch!" Why? If you do, it will get you in trouble.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:25-26: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean

the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

God wants you to know that He demands more than just keeping the outside clean. You may say, "I dress right, and I look right," but God wants more than that. He demands that, but He wants the inside clean also. He wants you to keep both the inside and the outside clean. That is the reason you must stay close to the washing of the water by the Word. It has the strength and the ability to cleanse the inside and the outside. If you get the inside clean, the outside will come clean. It will become visible of what is in there.

Sometimes people say, "You can't see my heart." No, but people can see your body and see how you dress. You cannot hide the outside; you have to keep the inside clean because that is where the enemy starts his work. That is where the devil undermines people's living. You must guard yourself if you are going to be safe in this day and time. You must make sure that you stay close to God and make sure that you keep a right attitude toward God.

### **Hiding God's Word in Your Heart**

Your only hope of being true to God and withstanding the deception working today is to be as the psalmist in Psalm 119:11 when he said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." First of all, you must hide the Word of God in your heart. The Word of God will be a help and a strength to you, and it will give you understanding.

The Word of God will reveal to you when the enemy is working. It will set off a warning, "You don't need to be around that" or "You don't need to listen to that." You must get the Word of God into your heart. You must be willing to take it into your life and allow it to affect you. You need to live by it and be

true to it or the enemy will come along with some deceptive idea and you will not have anything to fight it with.

The Psalmist said, in essence, "I have hidden Your Word in my heart so that I might not sin against You." If you are going to get through the deception of this day and if you are going to make Heaven your home and not become deceived, first, it must start with getting the Word in your heart as never before and allowing it to affect you so that you can be what God wants you to be in these closing days of time.

Second, if you are going to keep from deception, the Word of God must mean something to you. You should respectfully fear the Word of God. Now, God does not want you to be like a whipped pup every time the Word of God goes forth, but you ought to have a respectful fear for it. You must realize that it is God speaking to you. Also, you must respect Him as God. If you are going to respect God, you have to respect His Word. You cannot pass it off as some man's idea. No, it is the divine, anointed Word of God that will be to you what you need.

Every time you open the pages of God's Word, you ought to be looking for something to happen. Every time I open the Bible and feast my eyes on it, I look for Him to prick me in the heart. I look for Him to touch my mind. I look for Him to raise me above all the things that are working adversity. I want Him to touch me. How is He going to do it? I am going to have to search and say, "Father, what are You going to do for me today in the reading of your Word?" Sometimes people pick up the Bible and read it as they would read a newspaper, and then they put it down and walk away. If they do not get the wonder back, the enemy is going to get an advantage over them.

Every time the church doors open, you ought to go to church with wonder. Is it going to be the service that the one you have been praying for gets saved? Is that afflic-

tion going to be healed? Will that problem get worked out? If you do not go wondering what good things God will do, you will leave the same way you came. You need to go to the church wondering, "God, what are You going to do for us?" We are living in a corrupt world, a time of great adversity, so when you go to the worship services, you should pray: "Father, here we are coming together. We need something from You. I wonder what You are going to do for us." If you can get to the place where you are like that, you will enjoy the services and not merely endure them.

Third, you must put the Word of God into practice. If God said it, you ought to believe it. How do you put it into practice? You must live by it. When God shows you something, when God allows you to enjoy the truth of His Word, you need to put it in your heart.

Jesus' mother Mary watched all the things the people did to Jesus, and do you know what she did? She hid them in her heart and pondered them. Why? When the enemy wanted to come around and say, "Mary, your Son is being destroyed," she pondered all the things that God did. If you are going to have victory and be what God wants you to be, you must hear the Word and hide it in your heart. Then when the enemy wants to come in like a flood, you will have something to lift up against him. You do not have to become discouraged, because God will never let you down.

You must have the Word of God hidden in your heart so that you can live by it. Why must you live by the Word of God? When you live by it, you are doing what God asks you to do. Do you know why some people disagree with the Bible standard concerning dressing modestly? They had never taken it into their hearts. It is hard for somebody to want to dress the way God wants them to dress when it is not in their hearts. It is hard for somebody to want to act the way a child of God is supposed to act when it is not in their hearts.

You have to get the Word of God in your heart first. That is the reason the Bible lets you know that if you are going to keep yourself from deception, you are going to have to get the Word into your heart and let the Word affect you.

### Who Did Hinder You?

Eve was deceived because she consented to listen to another voice rather than God's voice. She disregarded her allegiance to her husband, so problems came, and heartaches and suffering were the result. Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." The church is the bride of Christ, and Christ is coming back after His bride. That is the reason you must be true until He comes. You must stay faithful until He comes.

The prelude of every fall from grace is an alienation of the heart from Christ's Word and Christ's will. If you talk to someone who has backslidden, you will find that it started because he allowed an alienation to come in his heart that separated him from Christ, the Word of God, and the will of God. The outcome was only seen after those effects.

In this day of deception, the enemy wants to get your heart drawn away from Christ's love, from Christ's will, and from Christ's way. How do you know when it starts working? If you allow the enemy to separate you from Christ, the consequence is, you become cloudy in your judgment. Sometimes people say, "I don't know how people can do that after being around the church for so long." I will tell you how they can do it. They allow their hearts to get separated from Christ, and then their judgment gets cloudy. They do not see things as they used to see them. You must be certain not to err in your judgment. You need to make sure that you do not allow the enemy to

cause you to err.

Galatians 6:7 states: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Do not allow deception to work on you to the place where you mock God. How can you mock God? Well, you understand what God's Word says to you, yet you live any way you want to. God looks on you as mocking Him, and the Bible says God is not mocked. Whatever you sow, that is what you are going to reap.

The Bible lets you see, through Paul, that you have to watch what you think about and watch what your affections and appetites are drawing you to. If you do not, these things can overcome you. Then you will believe things that are not true and disbelieve things that are true. You will not accept the truth as truth, but you will accept what is false as truth.

You must stop and realize that you are not exempt from this happening to you. Only as you stay close to God, hide His Word in your heart, keep a respectful fear, and a wonder, and then live it, can God protect you. There have been times when I could have been misled, but the Spirit of God came to me and said, "Son, do you remember what this says?" If the Lord brings something to you and you understand the right way to go, if you do not hide it in your heart, you will not have it

when you need it.

Do you understand the awfulness and the seriousness of this hour? Our world is ever ready to issue a state of emergency if this or that happens; but I believe it is time for the church to issue a state of emergency, because we are living in a day and time of emergency. If certain things do not happen, many people are going to be lost forever. We who have spiritual eyesight and spiritual understanding must call on God to bring help. Saint of God, you need to call on God in a greater way. Only He can protect you from the elements that are working so that you do not become deceived.

After you have run well, do not allow something to hinder you. Paul told the church at Galatia, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" In other words, Paul was saying, "You were living well for God, but something has hindered you from being all that God wants you to be." Dear one, if the enemy is working, if the enemy is planting things in your mind, trying to bring a deception, won't you come to God and ask Him to help you to hide these things in your heart? They will become a protection to you and a strength and a help right in the heat of the battle. If you need to talk to God, won't you seek Him earnestly?

(Compact Disc TR-1066)

The image shows two forms from the United States Postal Service. The left form is a 'Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation' for the 'Gospel Trumpeter' (ISSN 1041-4810). It is dated 10/1/13 and lists Jeff Carr as the publisher. The right form is a 'Publication of Statement of Ownership' for the same publication, dated 10-1-13, with a circulation of 14,124.

[Guest Editorial—contin. from p. 2]

Discouragement is neither uncommon nor abnormal. It is not a sign of failure. Many people have fallen captive to discouragement through no fault of their own. Sometimes circumstances arise and there appears to be no way out, but you must remember that God is the way maker. When there is no visible way out, if you will only trust God, He will create a way. The children of Israel stood helplessly at the Red Sea with nowhere to turn. Their defeat and doom appeared to be sealed. In that hour of desperation, God told them to "stand still and see the salvation of the LORD" (Exodus 14:13). By faith they obeyed, and God made a way just in time. He will do the same for you! Your part is to simply stand still and keep

your faith fixed in Him. God will not fail a trusting soul!

Surely many things look discouraging and hopeless in this day in which we live. It appears that sin and ungodliness is prevailing on every side and that we have no way out. Dear friend, the great God of Heaven has everything under His control, although we may not see it. Remember, God has never forsaken His people, and He is not about to now. When the time is right, God will step in and make a way for His people to overcome and to be victorious. It is your responsibility to trust and obey His never-failing Word.

Dear one, if you are going through a deep trial of adversity or an affliction, we encourage you to take a moment, lift up your head,

and look to God. You need to endeavor to look beyond the discouraging circumstance that faces you and realize that Jesus is there, and He is ready, willing, and able to help. There is no situation known to man that is too great for God to handle. We challenge you to put your faith and hope in the One who can bring you through with overcoming victory. There is no reason for a saint of God to remain in a discouraged condition indefinitely. I ask you to ponder the words of the Psalmist as he spoke so profoundly in Psalm 42:5: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

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## Don't miss these . . .

# Upcoming Meetings

### **Kensett, AR**

November 8-10

**WEEKEND FELLOWSHIP MEETING:** Kensett Church of God, 409 Southeast 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Kensett, AR 72082. Dinner will be served after the Sunday morning service. Evangelist: Brother Karl Wilson, Bessemer, Alabama  
Service times: Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday 6:00 p.m.; Sunday 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.  
For further information contact: Pastor Calvin Foster, Kensett, Arkansas  
Telephone: (Church) 501-742-3006 or (Home) 501-742-3961

### **Summersville, WV**

December 6-8

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

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## 2014 Camp Meeting Dates

*June 15-22 August 3-10*

*December 28-31*



# Winter 2013

## Camp Meeting

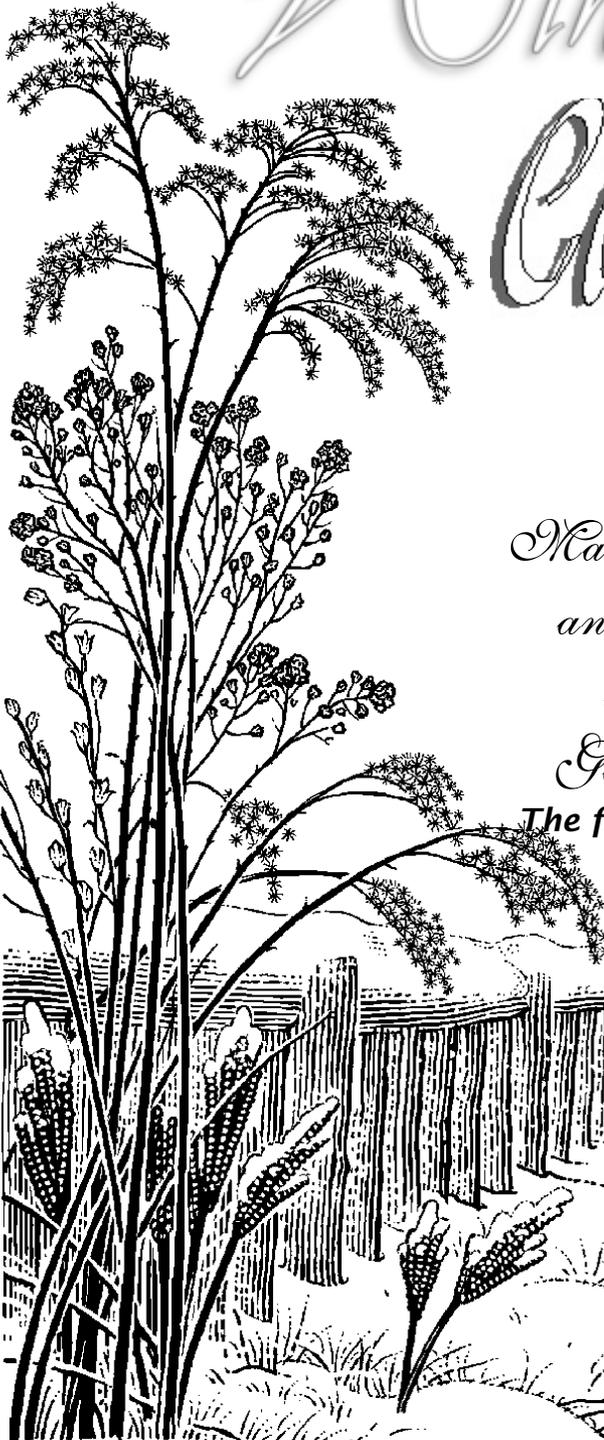
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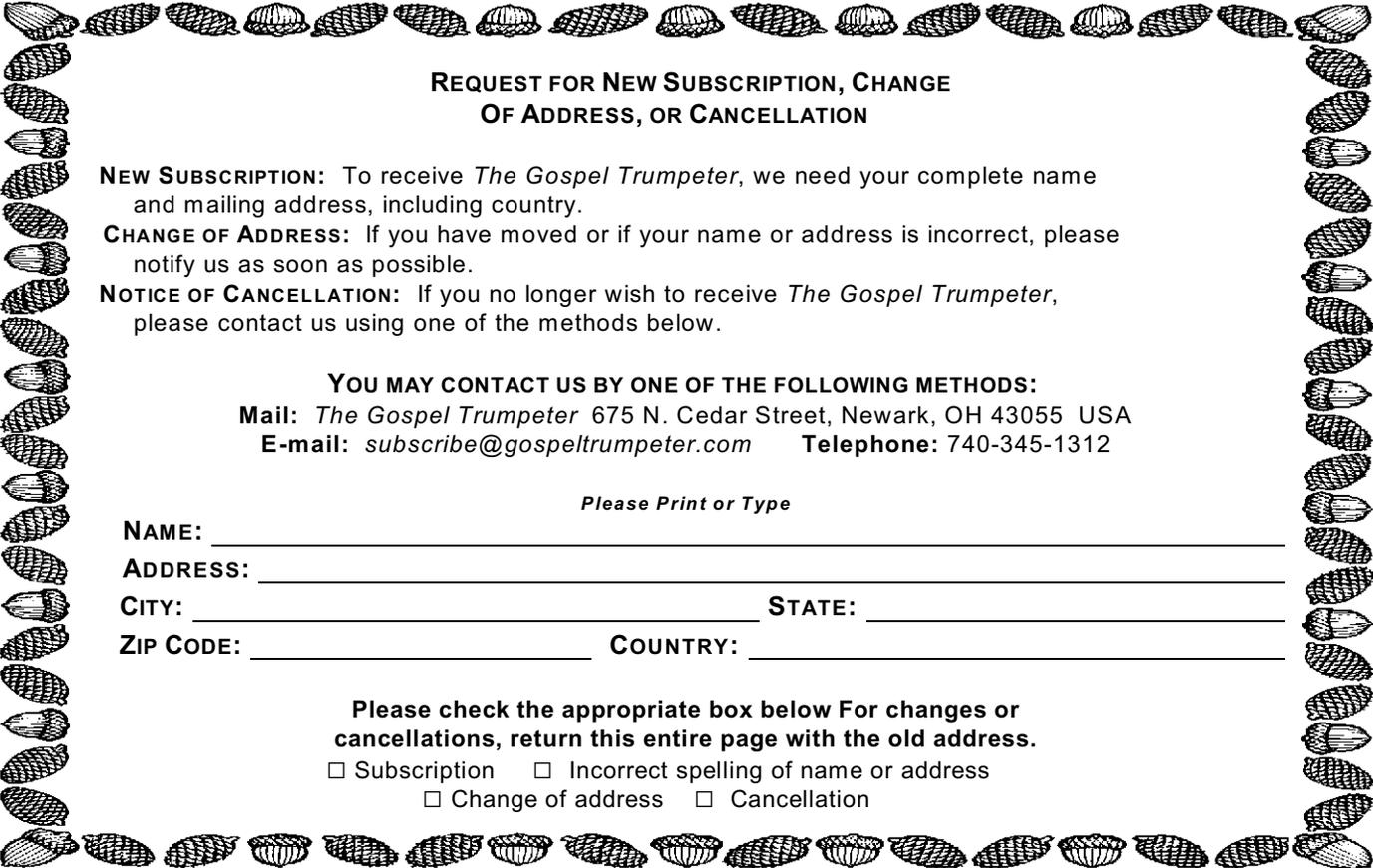


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