

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 44 December 2014 No. 12



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalms 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or
items.

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Vol. 44 December 2014 No. 12

Guest Editorial

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times
some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing
spirits, and doctrines of devils . . . Forbidding to marry, and
commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created
to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and
know the truth."

1 Timothy 4:1,3

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,
deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13

Watch for Seducers

In our Scripture text the
Apostle Paul warned young Timotheus of the perilous conditions they
were facing during that era of
time. False teachers were enticing
Christians with erroneous doctrines and ideas that would lead
them away from the Truth. A
seducer is one who "leads astray,
lures away, or persuades to
disobedience."

Among the teachings propagated then were the restriction of
marriage and the forbidding of
eating meat. Hebrews 13:4 tells
us that "Marriage is honorable
in all," and 1 Timothy 4:3 states
that meat is "to be received
with thanksgiving." Christ came
to set mankind free from
legalistic bondage imposed on
them.

Through the years times have
not changed, although Satan
uses different means today than
he did during the early church
age. His prime purpose is still
to divert saints from the
highway of holiness by whatever
means he can. However, God's
people must be alert to those
who would seduce them with
false ideas. We who are
Christians can overcome if we
will diligently draw close to
God. It is only through Him
that we can have victory over
the subtle tricks of the enemy.

Sin and wickedness is being
turned loose in our world as
never before, and Satan is out
to overrule and conquer us
all. Who would have ever
thought that we would see
the things that we see today
being allowed in our society?
Unregenerate men are
endeavoring to convince
people by telling them that
God does not feel about sin
as He once did. They try to
convince people that these
issues are not really as bad
as they appear to be. In
Isaiah 5:20 the Prophet
Isaiah prophesied that men
would call "evil good, and
good evil." They work to
force their rebellious acts
against the Word of God on
the hearts of people. It
behooves us all to be
prayerful and watchful of
these seducing schemes that
are designed to destroy
Christian principles.

Satan will use one of his
deceivers in a congregation
to lead souls away from the
Truth. Ungodly men
possessing devilish spirits
operate in most deceitful
ways. They are disgruntled
that balk and find fault with
God's Word, His way, and
His minister. Jude, verse 4,
says, "For there are certain
men crept in unawares . . .
ungodly men, turning

[continued on page 7]

2 Timothy 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2 Preach the word; be instant in

season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to

themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Is It Possible to Live Sinless?



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Law Made Nothing Perfect

As we look at this very touchy subject, I want to present the message as fair as I possibly can. I know the arguments presented, and I know how convincing some of those arguments are. First, we want to look at some objections to the fact that one can live a sinless life. Some people are very skeptical when someone talks about living a holy and sinless life. Many times it is due to the way they have been brought up or due to conversations they have overheard. Others are church members who have been mistaught since they began attending as little children. Sometimes some of God's people seem to get moved by the cries of false religion stating that no

one can live holy. To be fair, we first want to look at some Scriptures that those in false religion use to object to living a holy life. We want to look at that in the light of their context.

We read in 1 Kings 8:44-46: "If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near." This is speaking of Israel of

old, but you have to keep in mind that they were under a different dispensation than we are; they were under a different covenant.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 reads, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." These words were uttered before there was a perfect atonement for sin. These words pertain to the human family who lived under the law. There was the law of conscience, the Law of Moses, and the words of the prophets, all under the old dispensation. A way had not yet been opened whereby a man could live holy.

The sacrifices under the law could never take away sin. Hebrews 10:1-4 states: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and

not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

"But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." An atonement for sin was made yearly. The high priest went in and offered up blood for himself and for the people. There was remembrance of sin made every year. The Hebrew writer said "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Hebrews 7:19 says, "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

Hebrews 9:7-14 reads: "But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the

eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

"Be Ye Holy"

Today we are a long way from Solomon's day. Since that day, Christ has come, and He came to put an end to sin and to fully save man from it. Matthew 1:21 is just a simple verse; there is nothing hard to understand about this Scripture. It reads, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from [not *in* but *from*] their sins." We read in John 1:29, "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." When something is taken away, it is no longer there. Hebrews 9:26 tells us, "For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Now let us look at some more Scriptures that are used to object to holiness. I want you to understand this subject. Proverbs 20:9 states, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" No man can say that he made his heart clean; it takes the blood of Jesus Christ. We are not saved by works.

Titus 3:5-6 states: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Only Jesus Christ can purify our hearts.

Acts 15:8-9 says: "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." How did He purify their hearts? He did it by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. In this day and

age, men are commanded to live holy. Thank God, we are now able to live holy by the grace of God. It is not within ourselves, it is not because of who we are, it is not because of how intelligent or how tough we are, but it is by the grace of the Living God.

God would not command someone to do something if he were unable to do it. That would be unfair for God to command someone to do something that he was unable to do. In 1 Peter 1:15-16 Peter wrote: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Who is holy? God is holy; Jesus Christ is holy. We are to be like Him in all manner of conduct. How is it possible to be holy as God is holy? That almost sounds like an impossibility, yet the Word of God commands: "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

Your soul has to be clean if you want to make Heaven your home. There can be no defilement in the soul when that soul comes before God. Ones are unclean if they have a wrong attitude against anyone. If you have a wrong attitude, you may work over it, preach over it, sing over it, or testify over it; but you are unclean if you have an attitude against someone. Some people are carrying wrong attitudes, yet they are preaching in pulpits, testifying, and witnessing. They have been hurt, yet they still nurse that hurt and carry it around.

If someone is unwilling to forgive, there is no way that he can receive forgiveness from God. You have to forgive others to receive forgiveness from God. Others are unholy because they are unwilling to repent when they have a need.

Life Under the Old Law

Many years ago I heard a minister preach a very good message, but as he brought the message to a close, he commented on Romans, Chapter 7. That is always a bad place for someone to go if he

does not understand it. He said even the Apostle Paul struggled and could not do as he ought. We read in Romans 7:14-19: "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do."

The minister made reference to the fact that this was the Apostle Paul's condition; however, he failed to mention that this was Paul's condition *before* his conversion, not after. How would you like to listen to a man get up on Sunday morning and preach to you that had these conditions in his life? If you read the first verse in Chapter 7, you will see that Paul was speaking to those who knew the Law. This was his experience when he was under the Law, when he was a Pharisee, a Hebrew.

Before Paul's conversion, he wanted to do that which was good and he had a desire to do that which was good, but he found that sin was stronger than his desires. Sin was stronger than his will. When you read Chapter 8, you find that Paul said in verse 1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Chapter 7 describes the time when he walked after the flesh.

Romans 7:1 reads, "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" Again, I want to repeat, in Romans, Chapter 7, Paul was relating his experience while under the Mosaic Law. He was taught the Law when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. He was well versed in the Law. He was a Pharisee,

which was the strictest sect of the Law.

Someone may say: "Do you not know there is none righteous, no, not one? Do you know that is in the Bible?" It is in the Bible. Romans 3:10-11 reads: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."

You may ask, "How do you interpret that Scripture?" The first four words of that verse read, "As it is written. . . ." What does that tell you? The New Testament was not even written yet, so he had to be talking about the old Law. The verse continues, ". . . There is none righteous, no, not one." The New Testament was not written yet; that was not spoken to people under the new covenant. The righteousness of the old Law was self-righteousness. You can read it in Philippians 3:9, where Paul wrote, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

False Teachings

I want you to read a Scripture that is probably used more than any other Scripture to say that you cannot live holy. It is found in 1 John 1:8-10, which states: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

What had John been dealing with in this chapter? He had been speaking of darkness and fellowship. If you back up to verses 6 and 7, you will find that you cannot mix light and darkness together. If an individual is in darkness, there is no fellowship with him. Fellowship comes when we walk in the light as He is in the light; then we have fellowship one with another. It makes

no difference how much knowledge you have, how intelligent you are, or how long you have been saved, you must walk in the light to have fellowship. If you have been saved for only five minutes, you can have fellowship with someone who has been saved for five years, as long as you walk in the light. Light is the basis for fellowship.

We do not go around and say that we have *never* sinned; a child of God never says that. We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. What does it mean to come short of the glory of God? You come short of the glory of God when you commit sin. All of us sinned and came short of the glory of God before we were saved. However, some claim to have fellowship and still walk in darkness, as if to say they have not sinned and they do not need to be cleansed. John said there was need of confession and also need of a cleansing to take place.

Let us look at some Scriptures that speak against the teaching of sinning more or less. We read in 1 John 3:8-9: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. [You cannot go back any farther than the beginning. When the devil comes on the scene, he comes as one missing the mark and as a murderer, a destroyer of souls.] For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. [What are the works of the devil? Sin represents the works of the devil.] Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

What are these verses of Scripture saying? If a person commits sin, he is of the devil. Verse 8 from another translation says this: "When people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning from the beginning; but the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil."

Along with the teaching of "sin more or less" comes the teaching of "once in grace, always in grace."

They teach that once you have been saved, you are always saved. Dear one, evidently you do not read the Bible much if you believe that. It is a terrible teaching. It causes people to become careless in their living. It is as though they believe that professing to know Jesus Christ is a license to commit sin.

Falling From Grace

Let us look at some Scriptures that refute this false teaching of "once saved, always saved." We read in Acts 1:25, "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." Some have said that Judas was never saved. If that were true, when Jesus used him as an Apostle, he was a sinner when Jesus sent him to cast out devils and heal the sick. If he was never saved, then how did he fall? The Scripture says he fell by transgression. What is transgression? It is sin. We know he did not have salvation as we know it today, because that was before the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was not given until the Day of Pentecost. How were the Apostles clean? John 15:3 says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

Matthew 10:1-4 reads: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him." Judas was one of the twelve disciples. He was called of Jesus Christ, and they were sent out two by two. He was sent out like the rest of the

Apostles.

Revelation 3:4-5 reads: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

What is an individual overcoming who is professing to be saved and yet sins every day? What are you overcoming if you sin every day? The largest percentage of the Bible is written to God's people. Why is that? Why did He not just write to the sinner? As long as the Christian is secure, why not forget about him? Christians need warnings. Why is that? The Christian is subject to falling, and he needs to be warned of snares. If he gives allegiance to those snares, they will take him down.

It has been said that all we need to do is pay attention to the first four books of the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Some believe that the Gospels are all that we need to preach. If that were true, then God inspired people to write those other books in the Bible for no reason. On the contrary, those other books of the Bible are connected right to the four Gospels. You would not know how the church overcame if it was not for the Acts of the Apostles. You would not know who the devil was if not for the Acts of the Apostles. You would not know the difference in those Apostles before Pentecost and after Pentecost if not for the Book of Acts.

Galatians 5:4 says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." What does it mean to fall from grace? You do not have the grace of God in your life. If you do not have the grace of God in your life, there is no way that you can live right. Again, Revelation 3:5 reads, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white rai-

ment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." That statement lets you know that your name could get blotted out of the Book of Life. There are things that you have to do to keep it there. Your name is entered into the Book of Life when you get saved, or when you are born again. Your name has to be in the Book of Life to enter God's Heaven. If your name is blotted out, that means you are not going to God's Heaven. You do not have light any longer, you are overcome by spiritual death.

"The Way of Holiness"

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." In general, the real problem in false religion is that many people do not really want to sell out to God. They do not want to live holy, and they do not want too much church. They do not want to attend services every night during revivals. Many people want just a little church, just a little worship, just a little attending church, just a little confession; but they do not really want to give their whole heart to Jesus Christ. Some people do not want to truly sell out to God. If you do not want to truly sell out to God, God will let you go right on. He is not going to dispatch an angel to wrestle with you and make you repent. If you do not believe the Gospel, then you can go your own way. The preaching in false religion is shallow, and it matches the living.

I am not just running down false religion. False religion has sent more people to hell than all the barrooms and brothels together. To get into God's Heaven, you need to be free from *all* sin, not all but your bad temper, not all but your cigarettes, not all but your alcohol, not all but your drugs. *All* sin has to be removed. You may say, "That is impossible." It is impossible in your own strength, but it is possible through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

To live right, you are going to have to desire it. I do not quite understand some people who claim to be Christians today. When I got saved, I had the desire to be in every service. Today it is almost like pulling teeth to get some people to come to the house of God. You need to get in the house of God. You need to go someplace where you can get your soul fed. I was always taught to be in the services Wednesday evening and twice on Sunday, unless there is revival, and then it is every evening. You are not going to make it to Heaven if you do not sell out to God completely. How are you going to

enjoy Heaven if you do not enjoy going to the house of God? In Heaven you would be around the righteous all the time, but you cannot stand to be around the righteous once a week.

Is it possible to live sinless? I can give you a lot of Scriptures that say you can. We know the Word of God does not cross itself up. Of course, every one of us had sin in our lives before we were saved. Jesus Christ made a way so that you can be saved, and you can come to the knowledge of truth and live holy, righteously, and godly in this

present world. Is it possible to live sinless? Yes, if you want to, if you desire to, God has made a way, but it is up to you. Isaiah 35:8 reads, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." There is a highway there, according to Isaiah, even the simple can get on that highway.

(Compact Disc TR-1340M)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2] the grace of our God into lasciviousness [loose living], and denying the only Lord God."

These are individuals who may look like and talk like saints; however, behind their false faces and conversations, they harbor things that are not Christlike. They are discontented individuals who sneak around, working undercover to pull the unsuspecting soul away from what is right. From all appearance, these have much in common with Balaam, who refused to obey God's command. They could also be likened to Diotrephes, who loved and desired to have the preeminence over others.

Saint, you need to watch out for anyone who tries to impose some new idea or thought that is con-

trary to sound Bible Truth. There can be things that may look and sound good at the first but will later lead to shame, disgrace, defeat, and loss of your soul. Beware of anyone who begins in some subtle way to discredit or degrade a proven man of God. There have been some who have entered a congregation and began divisive works. Their seductive schemes have lead or swayed many into error and brought destruction to themselves. God is not pleased with those who think they know more about how to direct the affairs of a congregation than anyone else does.

What about you, dear reader? Have you been keeping company with someone whom God would rather you not be associating with? Is an individual who is discontent

with God's way or God's leaders influencing your life? Are there things in God's Word that you question? Do you feel that your spirituality is strong enough that you can handle life's situations on your own? If this is your case, then you need to realize that you are getting close to a place of being overtaken by a seducing spirit. If you fall under a seducing spirit, the devil will deceive you into thinking and believing that all is well and right between you and the Lord. You need to watch out for these seducing spirits. The best way to overcome seducing spirits is to continue in those things that you have learned and been assured of.

Selected

What you possess in this world will go to someone else when you die, but what you are will be yours forever.

Colossians 2:1 For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;

2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ;

3 In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

4 And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.

5 For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after

Christ.

9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

12 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

16 Let no man therefore judge you

in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.



The Danger of Being Spoiled

Brother E. David Stegmeier

Yielding Yourself to God

The Apostle Paul was never in Colosse. However, he heard about a problem there, so he felt extremely

burdened to write to those people to help them and to establish them in the faith. Paul said in verses 2-3 of our Scripture lesson: "That their hearts might be comforted, being

knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In

whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." That is the kind of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that I want.

We can have secular, worldly knowledge, and it can benefit us and help us, but Paul spoke of the kind of knowledge that we, as saints of God, should want and aspire to have. Above everything else, we should want to know God better each day. Some people have much knowledge, but they are very unwise in how they use it. We need both wisdom and knowledge. I heard someone say once, "Zeal and wisdom are both important, but I want more zeal than wisdom." Although both are important, I believe wisdom is on the top. We need wisdom to be all that God would have us to be. Proverbs 11:30 says, "He that winneth souls is wise."

Our Scripture text says in verse 4, "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." We need to always be alert and wary. We do not want to become deceived. I thank God for the Truth and for all that He has revealed to me. I am not in confusion, and I am thankful for the light and for the privilege of walking in the light as He is in the light.

Verses 5-9 of our Scripture text read: "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him [we need to have some roots deep in God's Eternal Word], and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

When you have Christ, you have the Godhead. As you live for Christ and get to know Him, you ought to yield yourself to Him in a greater

way. Philippians 2:12 says you are to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." You have to do some cleansing. There may be some separating that you have to do. You might have to separate yourself from some worldly companions or some worldly things. You have a work to do. As long as you are in this world, you must work out your salvation with fear and with trembling. I want to be clear with God. I do not want anything to stand between God and me. I must have His approval upon my life.

"Old Things Are Passed Away"

Paul said not to let any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men and the rudiments of the world. Verses 10-11 of our Scripture text read: "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." That takes place when you are saved. The body of sin, or "the old man," is gone when you get saved.

The Church of God is pure, clean, and holy, without a blemish; she has no sin. Speaking of the church, Song of Solomon 4:7 states, "There is no spot in thee." When you are saved, the "old man" is gone, and you become a new creature in Jesus Christ. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Verses 12-13 of our text of Scripture read: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." God has made us alive. The saints are lively stones. Church of God services are alive.

We do not have to drum up life. We do not have to get out flags and march around and beat drums and carry on. Church of God services are unique and beautifully designed because God is the program director, and He does a good job.

Our Scripture text says in verses 13-16: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat. . . ." If you want to eat a dead possum, that is all right. The chicken you ate, it was dead, was it not? Paul said to let no man judge you in meat.

Verses 16-17 of our Scripture lesson continue: ". . . or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." I thank God for freedom—freedom from the old Law and freedom not to give an occasion to the flesh. I have freedom to do what is right and freedom to live a godly, wholesome life. I am free to be a good husband, free to be a good father, and free to be a godly example to my children. Many people are bound. They would like to do better and to be a better example, but it takes Christ to liberate them.

Verses 18-20 of our Scripture text read: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments [or principles] of

the world. . . ."

God's people are a different people. We live by the principles of the Word of God. I do not want to violate a God-given principle. We need to know these principles, not the principles by which the world lives, but the principles by which God governs His people.

Our Scripture text states in verses 20-23: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh."

Men's Philosophy and Vain Deceit

I want you to focus your attention on verse 8 of my Scripture text, which reads, "Beware lest any man. . . ." You need to be careful of the person or individuals to whom you lend your ear. You must be very careful of what you listen to. Jesus said in Revelation 3:11, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." I have lived too long for God to listen to things that would spoil my walk with God. You may say, "I have had to separate from a lot of friends in standing for Truth." Many of us have. God means more to me than family or friends.

In the story of *Pilgrim's Progress*, I read in the preface that people have criticized that story. They said if Pilgrim were a real Christian, he would not have left his family in the city of Destruction to fend for themselves while he went on by himself. They are missing the principle of the Gospel. Every one of us has to put God first. It does not mean that we are to leave our families physically, but we must put God *first* in everything we do.

Again, verse 8 of our Scripture text reads, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy. . . ." There are lots of ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and ways of thinking that bombard every one of us every day. We are going to consider some of these. We need to be wise to that which is good and ignorant of that which is evil. I do not want my children to hear about everything that goes on in the world. I tell people once they are saved that they need to forget some of the evil things they did back in the old life. You should not rehearse those or tell your children. You need to keep them innocent of the evil and to be very careful of how you live.

Many philosophies permeate the world today, and they bombard you and me. Paul went on to say in verse 8, ". . . and vain deceit, after the tradition of men. . . ." We need to be careful of traditions. A lot of traditions in which people are involved in this day, especially in this period of time, do not do one thing for us spiritually. My concern is that we spend our time in doing that which will make us more spiritual. You may inquire, "How many games do you play on the computer, Brother Stegmeier?" Zero. You may ask, "Do you spend much time reading secular, worldly magazines?" I almost never read them.

We are living in a day when we need to be spiritual, because your spiritual eyesight is dependent on how spiritual you are. The more spiritual you are, the better your eyesight will be, spiritually speaking. In the latter part of verse 8 of my Scripture text Paul said, ". . . after the rudiments of the world [the principles or the fundamentals, the things the world does], and not after Christ."

The Living New Testament says in Colossians 2:8, "Don't let others spoil your faith and joy with their philosophies. [I want to have all the joy I can possibly have. I love to live for God. I do not like to lend my ear to people who want to tell me how the world came into existence by the big

bang theory. I do not like to hear any of that garbage. I do not want to listen to these philosophies.] They are wrong and shallow answers built on men's thoughts and ideas, instead of on what Christ has said."

The word *spoil* means "to impair the value or quality of." There are many things in the world today that would try to impair the value and quality of your faith. We need to have a strong faith in God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). There are so many things today that could impair, hinder, thwart, and destroy our faith in God and in that which we can appropriate from God. I believe God saves to the uttermost. I believe God keeps. I believe God can heal. Anything He did in the Word of God, He can do today. Praise God! We need to keep our faith in God strong and unimpaired. The word *spoil* also means "to impair the completeness or perfection." God wants us to be a perfect people.

Perfection Is God's Will

One philosophy that we hear today is, "Nobody's perfect." That is a philosophy of the world. Everybody seems to believe it, except the Church of God. No doubt, you have heard this statement: "Christians are not perfect; they are just forgiven." There are many Scriptures in the Word of God that tell us God's will. God is looking for a perfect people. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Christ never commanded anything that we would be unable to do. He told the woman caught in adultery in John 8:11, "Go, and sin no more." When He gave a command, He also supplied the grace. If God commands you to do something, He will give you the grace. You should never operate in a position where you do not have grace. God gives pastors great grace because many things go against them.

Matthew 19:21 says, "Jesus said

unto him [the rich young ruler], If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." In 1 Corinthians 2:6 Paul, writing to the Church of God at Corinth, said, "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect." God is a God of perfection. Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "His work is perfect." The universe is perfect. We can do nothing to add to God's plan; His plan is perfect. God has a perfect plan for the church, a perfect plan for marriage, and a perfect plan for you. Perfection is God's will for His people.

Philippians 3:15 reads, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." There is a perfection that we possess when we do everything we know to do, everything that God has shown us to do. However, in the future God might have something else for us to do, and we will have to do that also. As we do those things, we stay perfect in His sight.

The word *spoil* means "to damage the unity of." Many people are working to spoil the unity of the church. The Church of God has wonderful unity. We have beautiful unity with one another's congregations and saints of God in foreign countries. The devil would like to spoil that. Let us stand against him. Also, the word *spoil* means "to disrupt; to disturb." The devil is out to disrupt the fellowship of the people of God and to disturb the oneness of God's people.

As I said earlier, all of us, and particularly our children and our young people, are being bombarded by a barrage of all kinds of philosophies. Worldly ideas are out to destroy our faith. That is the reason we need strong congregations and strong homes, to fortify them against these false ideas and philosophies of men. You may say, "Oh, they don't affect the church." We need to consider some of these things.

I believe in the Word of God as an answer to all of life's questions. If

we really want to know and if we will seek, there is an answer in God's Word for all our questions. My intent is to help you to stand against and thwart the devil's efforts in spoiling your faith and to help you to be established in the faith of Jesus Christ. Paul let us know that the winds of doctrine can affect us. Therefore, we need to be strong, not tossed to and fro, and established in the Truth. I thank God for the Truth that the Church of God has.

Christ Must Be Preeminent

In our Scripture reading the Apostle Paul was warning those people in Colosse of the danger of their faith being spoiled. I believe Epaphras was a convert of the Apostle Paul, and he was the one who started the congregation at Colosse. Paul called him his "dear fellow-servant," a servant of Christ, and a "fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus." Paul knew Epaphras very well. He had been told of what was going on in that congregation, and his desire was to strengthen them. Some very precious people who are saved need to have their faith strengthened. Christian friend, you should not want to go back, and you do not have to go back. Also, you do not have to fall. God is able to keep you from falling.

In the Book of Colossians the central theme is this: *Christ must have preeminence in all things*. We do not need the old Law. We do not need any worldly philosophies. We do not need anything from Babylon. The Church of God is complete in Christ. Jesus is the Creator, He is our Savior, and He is our Lord. Paul was telling those dear saints that nothing should come between them and Christ. Dear one, you, too, must guard that relationship. Ephesians and Colossians were written about the same time. Ephesians deals with the church as the body of Christ. Colossians dwells on the Head, which is Jesus Christ. I thank God that the Head is still in Heaven, and that is where I go for my direction.

God is not dead, nor does He sleep; He is always available.

Religious systems of this world can be very convincing. The best thing to do when Jehovah's Witnesses come around is to lock your doors. I do. I have tried to talk with them. Ungodly leaders can be very persuasive. False teachers and defectors from the Truth are everywhere. They have one purpose, and that is to spoil your faith in God, to spoil your confidence in God, and to spoil your confidence and faith in the church. They are out to rob you of what you have received from God.

What was happening in Colosse happens today. Once a young man called me and wanted to know about the church. We had a long and very good discussion. One of his questions was this: "You say Babylon is all false religion. Can people be saved in Babylon?"

I said, "Yes, there are people who are saved."

He said, "Well, can they go to Heaven?"

I said, "If they are going to remain alive, spiritually speaking, they are going to have to come out of there, because they will be looking for more spiritual food." That is the reason the Book of Revelation says, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Revelation 18:4).

There is a danger of people looking at Babylon and becoming impressed. Babylon does not impress me. What really impresses me is the Church of God. She is beautiful! We need to test all religious philosophies and religious activities by the Word of God. Paul said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). You need to be like the Bereans and check things out to see if you really have Bible for those things.

Adhere to the Gospel of Christ

Paul was telling the church at Galatia in Galatians 1:6-8: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from

him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another [or different] gospel [there is not any other; what you are being taught in the Church of God is the real thing]: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert [or change] the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

I believe this phrase was included for the millions of Mormons. That is an ungodly religion. One time my wife and I were out to breakfast, and she was reading a little card there with little facts, so she quizzed me. She said, "What religious leader died leaving seventeen wives, fifty-five children, and 5.2 million dollars?"

I said, "Brigham Young."

She said, "You got it."

I wonder sometimes how intelligent people can accept such falsity. It is not according to the Word of God. The Bible says a bishop should be the husband of *one* wife, and he should be faithful to her in every way.

Galatians 1:9-13 continues: "As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. [A Church of God minister is not to preach to please the people. By the help of the Lord, down through the years that I have been pastoring, I have preached to everyone the same. I have to be true to souls. Having respect of persons is sin. If I yet please men, I would not be the servant of Christ.] But I certify [or assure] you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it."

Another philosophy permeating Christendom (I use *Christendom* loosely) is, "Go to the church of your choice." We need to go to the church of God's choice, and it bears the name of God. Paul said he was absolutely dumbfounded at the instability of the Galatians. The apostasy was growing so rapidly because they were listening to false teachers. Corrupt teaching leads to corrupt living. I want people to live right. All that we hear and teach and embrace should be according to Titus 2:11-12, where Paul said: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

I am interested in seeing people live wholesome, godly lives in this world. John 1:4 says, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Sometimes you cannot say much, but you can certainly live the life. Paul said in *The Living New Testament* in 2 Corinthians 11:4, "You seem so gullible. You believe whatever anyone tells you, even if he is preaching another Jesus to the One we preach, or a different spirit than the Holy Spirit you received. Or shows you a different way to be saved, you swallow it all." You must be very careful of what you accept. Many have twisted the Word of God.

The Philosophies of Secular Humanists

Now I want to speak briefly about some of the philosophies that people are propagating today, some of the worldly concepts and religious concepts that are attacking God's people. They would like to undermine our faith. First of all, some of these moves are going on among secular humanists to the degree that in most schools prayer and Bible reading can no longer be done. We used to have what we called "Baccalaureate." Some schools have not taken it away. Baccalaure-

ate was a big part of graduation. When I was a young person graduating from high school, it was as important to us as graduation.

Many years ago at a Baccalaureate at a high school, the students of the senior class got together and voted that they wanted me to speak. The ministerial association said, "No, because he is not a member of the ministerial association, we are going to block that move. He will not speak." The senior class said, "He *will* speak." So I had a chance to speak. Now it is a little different. More and more, because of secular humanists, they no longer pray and the Bible is no longer read. In its place they have ungodly magazines and all kinds of garbage.

A while back I taught for an English teacher, and I was supposed to show a film that day. After I started the film, I turned it off and said, "Our lesson plan will be changed today." Then I marched the film down to the office and said, "You need to look at this film. I will not allow it in this class." The English teacher has never asked me to come back and teach for her anymore. God help us to take a stand for what is right. We still pay taxes for our schools, and we still should have a voice.

Homosexual rights movements are gaining momentum. A woman's right to abortion is being forced upon us, as well as euthanasia and suicide. Secular humanists are out to destroy our fear of God and the fear of God in our society. By your life and by my life, we should instill the fear of God in people. Without the fear of God the devil has a heyday.

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 36:1, "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." People would not do the ungodly things they do if they knew they have to give an account to God for it.

According to the philosophies of secular humanists, the universe is self-existent and has not been created by an intelligent God. That

is ludicrous! All of the species that God created are perfectly formed.

Some species are more faithful to their companions than human beings. I have read that if a goose's mate is wounded, the male goose will fly down and take care of her until she is able to go on; he stays right with her. God created this universe. It is not self-existing; an intelligent God put all of this together. Paul spoke of that in Colossians 1:16-18: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Christ is our only Savior. Humanists say that man has to save himself. I never could do it. I could not get out of sin on my own. I did stupid things when I was a boy. We need God. We cannot save ourselves. They have made a god out of humanity. Romans 1:25 says, "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator." That is truly what is going on today. They worship the creature. People have things all out of whack. The most important people in society, whether you will agree or not, are the men that tell you the truth.

Some people actually say that Christianity is harmful to society. Often the media does its best to erode people's confidence in Christianity. What you hear about in the news is not true Christianity.

"Hold Fast That Which Is Good"

What other philosophies are permeating Christendom today? One of them is sinning religion. Sinning religion is popular today. If you tell people that you live without sin, they say, "Who do you think

you are, Jesus?" I say, "We are sons of God." John said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 John 3:2). Sinning religion is a philosophy. It is a doctrine that is permeating approximately 90 percent or more of religion today. Christ is not a part of sinning religion. The angel said to Joseph in Matthew 1:21, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

I could bring you many Scriptures that validate the doctrine that you must be holy to walk with God. Paul said in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid [such a thought, such a doctrine, such a teaching]. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" In 1 John 2:1-2 John said: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not [that is the rule; the exception is this]. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

I thank God that we are able to live sinless lives. In 1 John 3:8b John said, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Allowing for sin makes people comfortable in sin. Most, if not all, Baptist teachers teach a sinning religion.

How about the philosophy "Once saved, always saved"? What does the Scripture say? We read in Matthew 10:22, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body [your greatest enemy is yourself], and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The center reference says, "be rejected."

In Revelation 3:5 John wrote, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I

will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Along that same line of thought, we read in Revelation 20:14-15: "And death and hell [speaking of the final Judgment before the great white throne] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." According to this Scripture, it is possible to have your name removed. If you do not overcome, it will be removed; and if it is removed, the lake of fire is your ultimate end.

There are all kinds of other philosophies, such as, "There is none righteous, no, not one," purgatory, the millennium, a future kingdom; all of these are false doctrines. We want to be established in the Truth. Paul said in our Scripture text in Colossians 2:8, "Beware. . . ." I often say that the most dangerous people to be around are those who once stood for the Truth. I am more convinced today of the Truth that we have than I have ever been. It is wonderful!

Again, our Scripture text states in verse 8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." What we teach, embrace, and accept should be after Christ. Paul said, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

I would like you to read an old song that is one of my favorites. This song was written by a young man who was injured when he was erecting an evangelistic tent in the state of Florida. One of the tent pins fell on him and broke his back, confining him to bed for the rest of his life. After that happened, he struggled with depression and bitterness because he was a very strong, promising young man, confined to the bed of an invalid. He finally gained the victory, and God wonderfully used C. W. Naylor.

God has a perfect plan for the church, and He has a perfect plan for marriage. I like God's plan and God's family plan. I thank God for God's plan.

*God's way is best; if human wisdom
A fairer way may seem to show,
'Tis only that our earth-dimmed
vision
The truth can never clearly know.*

*Had I the choosing of my pathway,
In blindness I should go astray,
And wander far away in darkness,
Nor reach that land of endless day.*

*He leadeth true; I will not question,
Tho' thro' the valley I shall go,
Tho' I should pass thro' clouds of trial,
And drink the cup of human woe.*

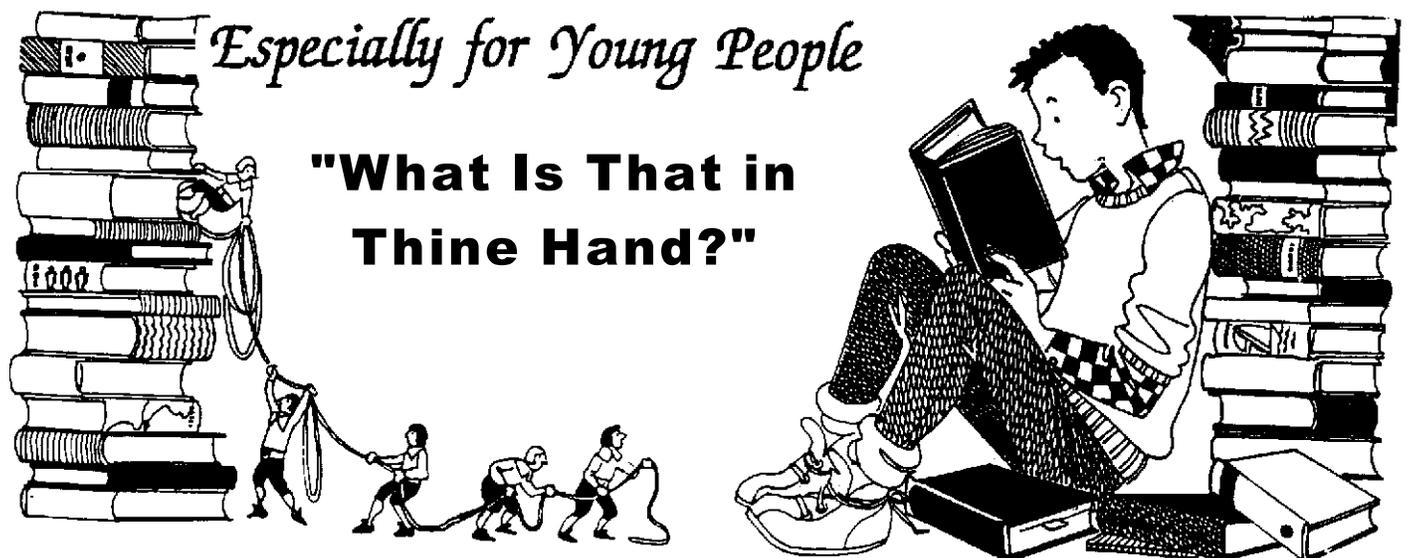
*God's way is best; heart, cease thy
struggling
To see and know and understand;
Forsake thy fears and doubts, but
trusting,
Submit thyself into his hand.*

*Thy way is best, so lead me onward,
My all I give to thy control;
Thy loving hand will truly guide me,
And safe to glory bring my soul.*

*God's way is best, I will not murmur,
Although the end I may not see;
Where'er he leads I'll meekly follow –
God's way is best, is best for me.*

Soon we will be entering into a new year. Let us forsake any fears and any doubts. Let us trust God for this new year. I see God doing some exciting things for us. Do not listen to anything that would spoil your faith and confidence in God, the church, or your godly pastor.

(No recording is available for this message.)



Picture the Lord and Moses talking together. Moses was a meek man, and he felt his inadequacy for the task God had assigned him—that of leading the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt where they were under sore bondage. It seems that God called Moses in for a conference. Moses, in effect, said to Him, "Lord, I can't do any good at that kind of job. If I go to those in authority to plead for the release of my people, they will pay no attention to me, but rather they will say, "The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

It is a good thing for young folk to feel their insufficiency for the

work to which God has called them. It is also a good thing to remember that God does not expect us to go in our own strength, or according to our own wisdom. However, if we let Him, He will furnish the wisdom and the equipment with which to do the job He has called us to do.

Did God ever call you into a little conference like that? Did you make excuse and say: "Lord, I can't! I have nothing to work with. People won't believe me if I go, and I hate to make a flop of it." My dear young person, God will never call you to do something for Him but what He will make it possible for you to perform it.

Upon Moses having presented the excuse, the Lord asked him a question, "What is that in thine hand?" The Lord can ask quite pointed and unusual questions when we try to beg off doing what He has asked us to do. In essence, Moses replied, "Oh, it's just a rod—I can't deliver my people with just a rod, can I?" You need to go on and read the rest of the account right from the Bible; it will do you good.

The "rod" in Moses' hand may well represent the abilities and natural talents with which God has endowed us and those we have acquired by study, by preparation, and by application. God has left no

rational person without some sort of talent, and some people have many talents. A talent is not only a privilege and an asset but also a responsibility, because it is in our hand—and God expects us to use it. Did you know that the world's work, both secular and religious, has been in ages past and is being done today largely by youth? Often the planning and direction of such work is done by those older and more experienced, but youth is the time of work and the execution of great things in this life. Youth has strength, energy, vision, and ambition, but no matter how well we may be equipped, if we do not use that which God has placed in our hands, it will lie impotent and ineffective before us.

Like Moses, you may say, "Lord, I just can't do anything." Do you think God would be so unfair as to give you no "rod" or talent with which to engage in the good fight of the Christian faith? No.

The story is told by Mr. Homer Rodeheaver (world-famous singer, song leader, song writer, and song publisher) of a boy who once sang in his choir. This boy was not quite

"bright" mentally, but he loved music, always sang in the great choir, and would never leave the tabernacle without shaking Mr. Rodeheaver's hand. He would stand right next to him until the last man was gone, in order to say goodbye.

It was quite embarrassing at times, but one evening a man came forward from the crowd to speak to the great song leader, and said, "I want to thank you for being so kind to Joey. He isn't quite bright and has never had anything he enjoyed so much as coming here and singing in the choir. He has worked hard during the day in order to be ready to come here at night. He has coaxed us to come too, and it is through him that my wife and our five children have been led to the Lord. His grandfather, seventy-five years old and an infidel all his life, and his grandmother have come tonight and have gotten saved, and now the whole family is converted."

Now what do you think about Joey's "rod," or talent? Surely you have one as good as his. If you don't do as well as he, you put yourself pretty far down the scale—especially if you refuse or are afraid

to use what God has put into your hand to lead others to Him and promote His cause.

Jesus said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," which is a command. If you can't preach, you can pray. If you can't sing, you can pray. If you were born speechless and dumb, you can pray. If you are crippled and must spend your life in a wheelchair, you can pray. If you are confined to an unknown, local community where there is little opportunity for public service, you can pray. In this praying and living a devoted Christian life, you can be, as Joey was, a faithful witness.

Young person, "What is that in thine hand? God is asking the question. In answering, let your answer be,

"I'll go where you want me to go,
dear Lord

Over mountain or plain or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say,
dear Lord,

I'll be what you want me to be."

"What is that in thine hand?"

Selected

Trials and Temptations

Do you have trials and temptations? Do they sometimes get so heavy that it seems you won't be able to handle them?

Stop and think for just a moment about Christ. Did He have temptations? Oh, yes. Did He have trials? Oh, yes, the religious leaders were always trying to destroy Him. Did He have heartaches? Yes. He spent many nights praying over Jerusalem. His family and friends did not understand Him. In the garden He prayed for the sins of the whole world, including yours and mine.

Did He suffer? Oh, yes. The most cruel death of that time was the cross. Have you ever stepped on a nail? Was there pain involved? Have you ever tried to imagine the pain involved in having a nail driven through your foot? Have you paused lately for a few moments and pictured your Savior hanging on the Cross? Did He complain? No! He loved you and me. So when you have trials and temptations, think of Jesus and what He went through.

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

16 And if the ear shall say, Because

I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?

20 But now are they many members, yet but one body.

21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more

feeble, are necessary:

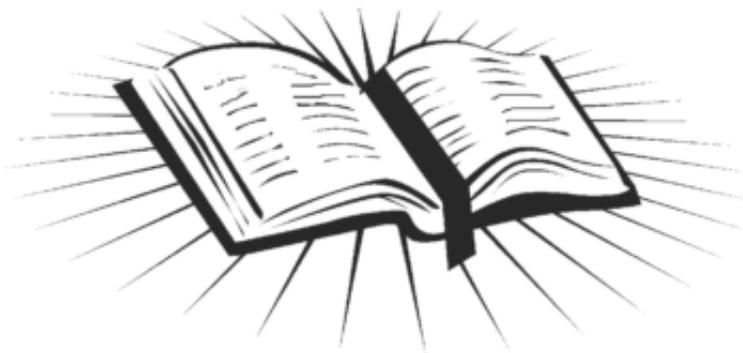
23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Iron Sharpeneth Iron



Brother Calvin Foster

Encourage and Strengthen Others

We need one another, and we need to complement one another. We can strengthen one another and be a blessing to one another as Christian brothers and sisters. We are in the last days of time, and if there was ever a time when we needed God and one another, it is now. Paul counseled young Timothy and encouraged him to sharpen others. We need to have a spirit

about us that is uplifting and encouraging.

In 1 Timothy 1:1-4 Paul said: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge

some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."

In 2 Timothy 2:1-3 read what Paul told Timothy as he instructed him in these two letters: "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same

commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Paul was teaching the young man Timothy to sharpen others, or to strengthen others, and to commit these things to faithful men, who would be able to teach others. He told him to encourage and to strengthen them.

In the Old Testament we can read in the Book of Deuteronomy that Moses encouraged the parents to teach their children. If there was ever a time when we needed to sharpen our children (as the Scripture says, "Iron sharpeneth iron"), it is now. Some young people may not think their fathers and mothers have their best interest in mind. Young person, your parents want to help you to be saved and to grow in the things of God. They want to help you to grow up and become a good father or a good mother. Godly parents are sharpening you.

Moses told the people in Deuteronomy 6:7, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children [he was instructing the parents to teach their children the words of the Lord that Moses commanded them], and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

One of my older brothers told me that sometimes he would talk badly to our mother and be impatient with her, and he would not stay around the house to help her. He said that he would walk out the door and not answer her or not treat her well. She would quote a Scripture to him and say, "The Bible says, 'Honor thy father and mother . . . That . . . thou mayest live long on the earth.'" He said that would stop him in his tracks. Then he would go back and say, "Okay, Mama, what do you want me to do?" Parent, you need to quote Scriptures to your children and show them all the love you can. The seed that you are planting will bring forth fruit some

day. You can rejoice in that.

Deuteronomy 6:8-9 reads: "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." I can remember my children walking in the doorway of my home, and they would see a tract rack in the entry of the home and Scriptures on the wall. Thank God, I have seen two of them saved.

Learning From a Man of God

Iron sharpens iron. Joshua was like an apprentice to Moses. When Moses died, God told Joshua in Joshua 1:5, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." An apprentice is one who is learning. We need some people around us who are willing to learn, willing to be taught, and willing to be led. An apprentice realizes: "I lack experience. I want to be with the journeyman and learn." The good apprentice does not argue with the journeyman.

Joshua served as Moses' assistant; Exodus 24:13 lets us know that. The Bible tells us that Joshua was sent as a spy for Moses. He was a warrior for Moses, according to Exodus 17:10. Moses was sharpening Joshua. Joshua learned to be humble by being around Moses. Numbers 12:3 says, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Moses was a meek man. That is a wonderful testimony! Moses was a very humble man above all the men on the earth. Moses was also a submissive man. As a Christian, you cannot be an apprentice to a humble and meek man or woman without catching that spirit. You should want to be like that.

Joshua learned how to take instructions from Moses. Exodus 17:8-13 reads: "Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua,

Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, [He followed Moses' instruction. Many times people would not get themselves in as much trouble if they would only follow the pastor's instructions when he has given them the Word of God.] and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." A pastor needs people who are willing to get behind the work of God and hold up his hands and pray for him, not beat him down. As long as Moses' hands were held up, Israel was winning the battle.

Joshua even learned from Moses' temper. Moses had a little temper in him. In Numbers 20:8 God told Moses, "Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water." I want you to notice that God told Moses to speak to the rock. Verses 9-11 read: "And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice."

Joshua was standing there looking at that. He was learning what not to do. There are two ways to learn: you can learn what to do and what not to do. Many times people do not learn their lesson. Are

you learning your lesson?

Some old-time preachers that grew up around farms and knew about horses told us about them. One pastor used to preach that if a group of horses were walking together and one of them fell into a hole, the one behind it would not fall into that same hole. It would go around the hole. Lots of people are making the same mistakes that they see others make. They think it is not going to happen to them. They think they are better and stronger, but they are making the same mistakes. They hear about those mistakes and talk about them, and then they do the same thing.

Joshua learned many things from Moses that could not be learned in a book. If you are a true child of God and sit under a godly pastor, and if you truly follow Holy Ghost leadership, you will learn things from the man of God that you will never learn in a book. You will learn about being submissive. You will learn about wisdom. Wisdom is something that God gives a man. Joshua learned how to be a true servant of God. What is the thought? Iron sharpens iron; we sharpen one another.

Joshua 24:29 tells us, "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old." You do not live long without having good sense and listening to somebody along the way.

Young person, the Bible gives you a promise. Ephesians 6:2-3 states: "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Children, God said to obey your parents and to honor your mother and father, and you will live long, and it will be well with you. That is a promise from God. I could promise you something and break my promise, but God will never break a promise.

You have to be careful, because the old devil does not want you to

be sharp. Beware, saint of God! As the body of Christ, the foot needs the hand and the eye needs the whole body. What would happen to my body if the hand and the mouth went on strike against the stomach? What if the hand said, "I'm not going to give him any more food"? What if the mouth said, "I'm not going to receive any food if you do give it to me"? What would happen to them after a while? The hand would become weak, and the mouth would get dry and thirsty. So it is with the Christian, spiritually speaking.

You might feel very powerful and mighty saved, but if you have been born again and you wake up in the morning and do not feel that you are saved, that does not mean you are not saved. You may say, "I have a headache, and I just don't feel saved." Well, that does not mean that you are not saved. As long as you know that you have not done any wrong, if you have not committed any sin, and if you have not wronged anyone, you are still saved. It is by faith that you are saved.

Beware of Envy

We need to beware of envy. We cannot let envy get into the body of Christ. Moses faced envy. You cannot sharpen iron with envy. In Numbers, Chapter 16, you can read about Korah and others who rebelled against Moses. Psalm 106 tells about how they envied Moses and Aaron. Do you know what happened? God let the earth open up on them and they fell down into fire.

Let us beware of envy. What is envy? Envy is a resentful desire for another person's possessions or advantages. In other words, you resent the fact that someone has something that you do not have. You are offended that someone did not choose you to lead the song in the choir. You may think, "I can do that better than he can." The word *envy* signifies jealousy. Read what the Bible says about envy. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness

of the bones." Envy will work on you like a cancer; wrong will do you wrong. It will destroy you, just as hatred will. Joseph faced envy with his brothers in Genesis, Chapter 37. Also, Paul faced envy in Acts, Chapter 13. The devil does not want you to be sharpened so that God can use you.

James 3:14-16 says: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Envy is out there in the sinful world. The sinful people of the world face envy and jealousy. They fight and destroy one another, and they step on one another. This should not happen among the saints of God.

We can see that people in the Bible who were victims of envy suffered trouble and wrong. We can even see that Christ our Savior faced envy. If He faced envy, we are going to face it. Mark 15:9-10 says: "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy." Why? The people stopped listening to the chief priests and started listening to Christ. So they said, in so many words, "We have to get rid of this Man."

I am talking about iron sharpening iron. We can be such a blessing to one another if we will get the flesh out of the way. One song says, "*Let self be slain and Jesus reign within our hearts alway.*" In 1 Corinthians 3:2-3 Paul said: "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Much more could get done if people would not be so concerned about who does it or who gets the credit for it.

Galatians 5:21 says, "Envyings,

murders, drunkenness. . . ." Envy is put right in there as a work of the flesh. You must beware of it! It has caused many people to lose their souls. They fall into the trap of selfishness and think only of personal advancement. They get attitudes and become destructive and divisive, but the Bible teaches us that as the church, we should look out for one another. We are the body of Christ. We should not want to cause division. It will not build unity.

"Love One Another"

Jesus said in John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We need one another. I love those Bible verses that teach us to have love one to another, to do good to one another, to strengthen one another, and to help one another. Iron sharpens iron.

Galatians 6:10 reads, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." You ought to do good to all men. How can a husband help his wife? He can help her by not badgering her and by not finding fault with her. He should not complain, "You burned the biscuits" or "You burned the beans." You need to be careful, brother! How can a woman help her husband? She can help him by not calling him lazy, by having his meals prepared, by looking out for him, and by showing him love. Iron sharpeneth iron. They say that married men live longer than single men. Many married men can thank God for the wife that has helped them become the men they are today. Iron sharpens iron.

How do you help your brother though your brother may not be saved? Your family members may not be saved, but they are still your family members. Have you cut them off? We are living in such a time

when one sister can write a letter to another sister and tell her: "I owe you this. I have cut you out of my life, but I owe you an explanation to tell you why." How can a sister cut another sister out of her life? That is not of God. How can you? Shame on you! How can you cut your brother out of your life?

How can you cut your mother or father out of your life? How can you cut your family out of your life? Maybe there is a way you can help them. Do not find fault with people who do not have the same understanding about the things of God that you have. That is no reason not to invite them to church or not to have anything to do with them. God sees that! In the human race we all walk together. We need one another. Iron sharpens iron.

If you see your brother, as James told us in James, Chapter 2, destitute of daily food, and you say to him, "Depart in peace, be warmed and be filled" what does that profit? How many times have you gone into your pocket and provided a meal for someone? James 2:17-18 reads: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead [faith without 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." Iron sharpens iron.

We need one another. The devil does not want us to sharpen one another. He says: "Oh, no. Hold back!" As a preacher, you need to preach the whole counsel of God. Do not hold back. Iron sharpens iron.

Paul said in Philippians 2:1-8: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of

others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Proverbs 17:17 tells us, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." A brother is born to share troubles. In other words, he is born so you can help one another. In Genesis, Chapter 4, God asked Cain, in so many words, "Cain, where is your brother Abel?"

Cain answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" How sad it was that he killed his own brother and then said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The truth is, we are our brother's keeper. We are to strengthen and help one another.

Be a Godly Example

The next generation of saints is looking right at us, saints. Young men and young women are looking at us. They are looking right at you and me. They see how we act and hear how we talk. Do not close your eyes and think they are not looking and listening; they are looking and listening.

As I was growing up, I had not been saved very long, and a brother was teaching me how to work. I was painting with him, and there was a point in the building that I could not reach. I said, "I can't reach that."

He looked at me and said, "You can't reach it, huh?" Then he somehow hooked himself to the banister, and when he got where he could reach it, he started naming his children. He said, "Calvin Junior needs a pair of shoes, Johnnie needs some, my little girl needs some," and he just kept painting. While naming his children, he made it reach. I have never forgotten that. Young boys and girls around us learn work habits from us.

I heard somebody say, "You Church of God people are always preaching against things." What are we preaching? We have been preaching the Word of God. It is good for America. Some men run off and leave their children because they do not want to work. Then the children have to live on the welfare system. I have never seen so many men with back problems as we see these days, and we do not even work as hard as men did years ago.

Young woman, iron sharpens iron. When an older woman tries to tell you something, she is trying to help you. The Bible says that the older women should teach the younger women. They are trying to save you from trouble. They are not trying to make your life miserable; they are trying to help you. Iron sharpens iron.

You will remember the words that your mother said when trouble comes upon you. You will remember what the pastor said. You will remember what your daddy said. You will remember what the Sunday school teacher said. Do not let the bad come upon you. Listen while you are being blessed, so that you can keep being blessed. Do not let anybody pull you down. That is the kind of stuff people do in sin. Titus 3:3 tells us, "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

I am trying to help you. When I show you that the Bible says not to smoke, drink, lie, or steal, I am trying to help you. I am helping you to be healthy. Iron sharpens iron. I am not trying to beat you down.

Some people have low self-esteem. The word *esteem* means "to have regard and respect." It is not pride or having too high an opinion of yourself. God does not want you to have poor self-esteem. In other words, you are not supposed to be walking around saying, "There is something wrong with me." You are not supposed to walk around say-

ing, "I don't like myself." Why are you saying that to yourself? Why are you saying, "I don't have what it takes"? If others can do it, what makes you think that you do not have what it takes?

You should not say, "I don't compare well with other people." Why are you comparing yourself with other people? You need to be what God wants you to be and do what God tells you to do; be yourself. If you get under a spirit of, "I don't want to go out; I just want to go hide," the devil will take advantage of your mind. What do you think caused that young man to walk into a movie theater and start shooting a couple of years ago? It was nothing but the devil.

Hold Fast the Faith

I want you to know that you have a place in the body of Christ. Your life has a purpose. You can love people, and you will be loved. We need one another. You can forgive people for what they have done to you, and they can turn around and forgive you for your trespasses, by the grace of God.

If you walk around and say to yourself, "I don't have anything to offer," you will act as though you do not have anything to offer. You can sharpen your friend. You can tell your friend: "I'm not going to laugh at you. I'm not going to make you feel ashamed. I'm not going to make you feel bad because you can't read as well as I can. I'm going to help you to read and to learn." Do you laugh at the boys and girls in school? You do not want anybody to laugh at you.

A boy who was dirty used to come to my class all the time when I was growing up. He was not getting help at home. He wore dirty clothes, and he was hungry, but it was not his fault. He would come that way from home. If you have been blessed, iron sharpens iron. You can help your friends. You can help a boy like that. Sister, you can help a girl like that. You can help

the one who is less fortunate than you are. Iron sharpens iron. The ministry does not know how well they have sharpened me down through the years.

If you walk around saying, "I'm going to fail," you are probably going to fail. We need one another. Hebrews 10:23-25 says: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Others need to learn. You need to get before God and pray to God. Maybe God wants you to be a Sunday school teacher or to lead devotions. Maybe God will call you to preach. Whatever part of the body God wants you to be in, you need to pray to God that you will be in your place.

Look at how we are to sharpen one another. Galatians 6:1-3 reads: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

Church of God, the world needs to see the unity that the church has. The world does not have this love where it says, "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Sin will take you further than you want to go, it will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cause you to destroy your soul. At the same time, you are helping a brother or a sister in need, you need to consider yourself, because the same thing could happen to you. May God bless you is my prayer.

(Compact Disc TR-1030E)

Matthew 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

24 And again I say unto you, It is

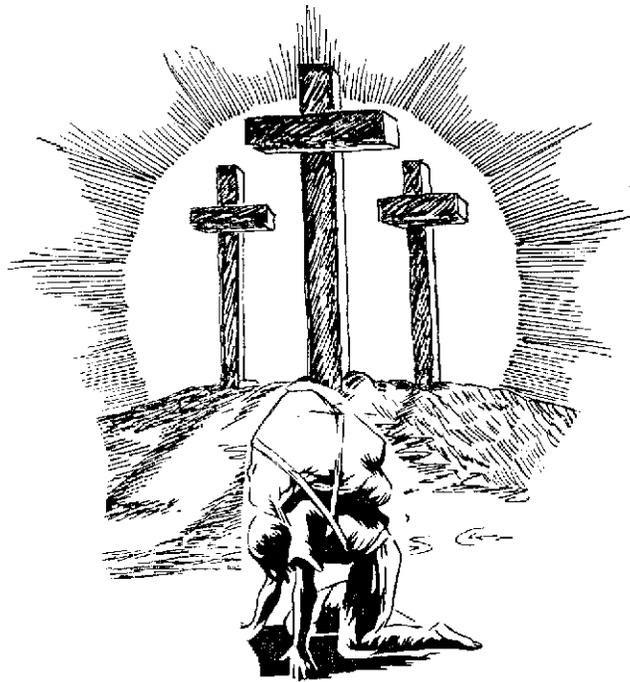
easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

25 When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who

then can be saved?

26 But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Can Something Be Done With My Burden?



Brother Tim Wilson

All Things Are Possible With God

I want you to focus on the verses in our Scripture text. We live in a day and time when impossibilities seem to be on every hand. We see the impossibility of people being able to save themselves, but many are trying. However, it is possible for all people to be saved if they will just let God have His way.

Jesus did not say that if you have money you cannot go to

Heaven. He was saying if you put your trust and confidence in money, it is going to get you in trouble, and not just money but anything that you allow the enemy of your soul to bring between you and God. You must realize that Jesus was saying you have to be careful of anything that will keep you out of Heaven and anything that will stop you from being what God wants you to be. Jesus said it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for one who trusts in riches to

get into Heaven. He was portraying the pitiful condition that men and women have gotten themselves into.

We are living in a day when men and women are trusting in everything except God. They are looking everywhere but to God. While they are trusting in this or that, they are leaving God out of the picture. The Scripture lets us know that without God, being saved is impossible. We must realize that God can still do anything. God can still take nothing and make some-

thing out of it. He can still do whatever He wants to do because He is still on the throne. He is still able to do exactly what we need. The enemy of souls is working as never before. Instead of being able to see God and the possibility of all things through Him, the enemy would like to get our eyes on a lot of other things. The Bible lets us know that with God all things are possible.

I want you to look at the condition that the Prophet Ezekiel depicted in Ezekiel 37:1-11: "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

"Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me,

Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts."

No record in history can present a more impossible picture than this valley of dry bones. This shows just how helpless men and women can become without God. What a sad condition they can get into when they will not allow God to lead them and guide them as they need to be! The Prophet Ezekiel pictured a dry, dead, divided condition. I want you to look a little deeper at your life. Why? The enemy would like this condition to come over all of God's people. He would like these things to start working in your life. Let us be honest, Christianity as a whole has gotten into a dry, dead, divided condition. Much of our religious world today is in a dry, dead condition.

A Dry Condition

You cannot go to many places today and find the Truth of God's Word preached. Why? People are dried up to the bone; they are very dry down to their roots. The Scripture says Israel failed to obey. They failed to follow God's plan, and that is how we find conditions today. The prophet said the hand of the Lord carried him out in the spirit and placed him down in a valley of dry bones. God will stop at nothing to teach a lesson. God will do what He has to do to get us to see and understand. He placed the Prophet Ezekiel down in a valley full of dry bones.

Why did the Prophet Ezekiel call them dry bones? He wanted you to get the picture. He was symbolically expressing how sin can work on people. What does sin do? It disjoints, or it gets people out of joint, and out of function. It puts them in a position where they cannot live for God. People cannot be a help to God or to others with sin in their lives. That is the reason he said they were dry. Much of the religious world has

fallen into this condition.

Much of religion today is only whitewashing people on the outside. It is not getting to the heart, where the root of the problem lies. It is not getting to where the real problem needs to be dealt with. They are not getting to the heart. The Bible says the heart is the seat of your affections. The issues of life flow out of the heart. Again, much of the religious world does not want to take the time to get to the heart of the problem. That is the reason they are only whitewashing the outside.

We are living in a time when we hear that the world needs this or that to happen. What our world needs is not a new definition of the Gospel. It needs a new demonstration of the power of the Gospel. The Gospel can take hold of people and the Truth can lead and guide them and show them how to live holy in this present world. Too many people want to come up with another plan. However, the Bible says it is time to get back to the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein.

As saints of God, we all have burdens. Every one of us has needs, and we need God to help us with our burdens. Can something be done for my need? Can something be done with your burden? We are living in a time when the enemy of souls would like to overwhelm us. If he can get us overwhelmed, he can discourage us. He can pull us down spiritually. I am going to tell you on the authority of God's Word that God can do something about your burden.

God has the answer for every need in life. He is still the lifter of every burden if we will just look to Him as never before. Ezekiel had a burden. His burden was in wanting to see those bones live. In essence, he said: "God, You brought me out here and told me to prophesy. Can these bones really live? Are they going to return to life?"

If Ezekiel were living in our day, he would probably say: "Can God do what I need done? Can God answer what I am asking for?" The

enemy would have liked to make him feel that it was impossible and there was no way to get help. Today the enemy would like to make us feel that way.

The One Answer in Times Like These

If you have unsaved children, the enemy will try to cause you to doubt. As things get worse in their lives, he will march those things right by you. He will not show you the times when God is dealing with their hearts. He will not show you when God is being faithful to their souls. No, he will demonstrate to you that they are getting worse and going deeper in sin. What is he doing? He is trying to make you wonder: "Can God answer my prayer? Can God supply this need? Can God do what I am asking Him to do?"

Life's burdens are too big for you. They are too much for you to carry alone. The woman who had an issue of blood had tried everything else, and then she went to the problem solver — Jesus, the only One who can make a difference. The enemy would like to try to get you to the place where you do not feel that God is able. You must come to the place where you realize that God can do anything. The Prophet Ezekiel came to that place. In essence, he said: "O Lord, Thou knowest. I do not have the answer to all these things, but You do."

You may say: "Lord, I have prayed. I have called upon You, and I have pled with You. I have fasted, and I have done everything that Your Word has told me to do. Only You know."

The Prophet Ezekiel was in a situation where he did not have the answer. The Bible says all these bones came together. There were no missing parts. After they all came together, they had flesh. Then the Lord said, "Prophecy unto the wind. . . . breathe upon these slain," and they got some life about them.

Life has missing parts outside of

God. Much of our world has missing parts because people do not want to submit to God's authority. They do not want His plan or His way, but they need to come to the place where they say, "God, Thou knowest." In times like these, the only answer is to cast yourself on the wisdom and the power of God. The Prophet Ezekiel said, "Thou knowest." God is the only answer. He is the only way out.

If you do not take a firm stand for God, the enemy will beat you down. The enemy will cause unanswered prayers to defeat you. At such a grim hour as we are in today, our world is going deeper and deeper in sin. Our world is getting further and further from the things of God. Our world is doing more and more things that the Word of God says not to do.

Not only is our world going that way but also we have friends and loved ones who are going that way. The world is working on them, and that is sad; but do you know what is even sadder? Much of the church is asleep. We know what God can do. We know how He can help, but we must be awakened to the fact that it is going to take God to do it. It is going to take God to bring it to pass. Christ is being wounded in the homes of those who claim to be His friends. People who say they are His children and are supposed to be living for Him are wounding Him by the way they live and act.

You can do only one thing. You must come to the place, just as the prophet did, where you are willing to do whatever God says. The prophet was out there in that valley, and the only things there were dry bones. You may say, "I would not have wasted my time." Well, you would not have gotten the results that Ezekiel got either. You must come to the place where you are willing to do what God says.

God Is Able

God told Ezekiel to prophesy to those bones; He told him to preach

to them. It is still through the foolishness of preaching that things start happening. If you will do just what God tells you to do, He will make things happen. Ezekiel said, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." It will take the Word to see a change today. It will take that to prevent the enemy of souls from getting the best of us. It is going to take hearing the Word of the Lord.

If change is going to happen, we are going to have to hear what the Lord has to say. All that we need to see and all that we need to have happen can and will be done by God if we will look to Him. The Scriptures let us know that God can do anything. There is no one that He cannot reach.

We must be willing to look to Him as never before. We sing the song, "God is able," but I wonder how many today really see Him as an able God. How many really see Him as being able to do what they are asking Him to do? How many times do you ask for things but you do not know whether He can do them? What happens? You do not get them. When you say, "My God is able," you need to realize that you are saying that God is your personal friend. He is not only a personal friend but also One who is able.

Have you ever passed through a hard place and your friends said, "I wish I could do something to help you?" Well, there is One who can help you. He can do whatever you need done. God is looking for those who will do what He asks them to do.

Ezekiel 37:7 reads, "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone." Every bone went together just as it was supposed to. Right in the middle of many dry bones, God did a marvelous work.

The Scripture lets us know there was no life in them. There was no breath in them. They were just a bunch of dry bones. When the

prophet was obedient to God, God started to work, and He brought a miracle. He brought something out of nothing, and today God can still do this. We live in a day and time when we need God to take nothing and make something out of it. No doubt, you have many needs and many burdens, things that you want to see God work out. If you are not willing to obey, how are you going to get God to work in your life? All that God is asking is for you to do what you are told.

If what happened in Ezekiel's day had happened today, instead of seeking God's face, the first thing some people would want to do is have a meeting. They would want to count the bones and then see how old they are. They would make some record of what is going on and try to find out how long they have been dead and how dry they are. On and on they would go, when God has no need for all of that. All God needs is obedience. Just do what He asks you to do, and He will work in a great way.

Keeping Your Faith and Hope in God

Look at Ezekiel's faith. He said, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD." You may ask: "Where were their ears? They were just a bunch of bones." God made them hear. He is still in control of all things. He can do what others cannot do. When Ezekiel was willing to do what God had told him and he obeyed, then God operated. This is what we need today. We need to see God operate.

God moved on those bones. The Scripture says when God moved, the bones came together. Circumstances may look as though they are impossible and look as if nothing good could ever come of them, but when God speaks, things start to happen. The bones came together, and soon after the bones came together, they got flesh. Then God said, in essence, to the prophet, "Now that I have brought them to-

gether, let us put some life in them." God breathed on them the breath of life, and life came into them.

How many people are dry bones spiritually? The world has destroyed them. The world has taken life from them, little by little. Sin has done many bad things to them. How many have looked upon them and said: "I wonder if they will ever get help. I wonder if anything good will ever happen to them."

When the Prophet Ezekiel prophesied, he knew that God could do what He said He would do. Church, we need to take hope. Satan wants to destroy our hope and leave us hopeless. We have children, family members, and friends whom we want to see come into the family of God. We pray for them, and it seems that nothing is happening. The enemy wants to make us feel there is no hope. Our world is bad now, but if we lose hope, it will be much worse. The hope of God's people is what is holding things as steady as they are.

The enemy would like to cause us to think there is no use to keep calling on God. If the enemy could cause the church to lose hope, do you know what would happen? We would become a bunch of dry bones. That is the reason the Lord said to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 37:11, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts." If the devil has his way or if we are not careful, this is the category you and I could fall into.

Have You Lost Your Hope?

Israel said, "Our bones are dried." What does this mean? They were lacking water; they were thirsty because there was no moisture. That is the reason, as saints of God, we must be careful. The enemy would like us to become dry.

We live in the south, and sometimes when dry weather comes around July and August, we do not get much rain. The streams and little

creeks that flow start drying up. As you walk through them, there is nothing but dry sand and gravel and old branches and sticks because the water has dried up. You may find a little patch of water here or there, but the creek is no longer flowing. It may look as though the creek will never flow again, but all it takes is for God to send a good rain to change that. All those things that looked like hindrances just get washed right out of the way and that creek flows as it did before.

The enemy wants that to happen to us. He wants us to dry up. The Bible says we are to have a river of water springing up within us unto everlasting life. We ought to have an artesian well inside us, springing up to give this old thirsty world a drink. Many who ought to be passing out drinks need a drink themselves. They have become like the woman at the well, to whom Jesus said, in essence, "If you had asked of Me, I would have given you a drink of water, and you would never thirst again."

You can drink from a literal well, but you will have to go back to it quite often, but the water Jesus gives will be a well of water inside you, springing up into everlasting life. If you have everlasting life, you will want to share it with others, so they can enjoy it.

Psalms 126:4 says, "Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south." The Psalmist asked the Lord to turn it again like He does when those rains allow the streams to flow again in our lives, making us to flow for Him as we need to.

The enemy of souls is working as never before to dry up every one of us. He would like to stop us from flowing. He would like the burdens and the needs in our lives to become so great that they stop the flow of God's grace and mercy in our lives. All it takes is one good rain and that dry, barren creek will start to flow. What once could not flow can flow again. That is the reason David asked the Lord to do again as He

did to the streams in the south. He let us see that not only do we need the flow but also we need to stop and check and make sure that we have not allowed the enemy of souls to cause us to lose hope.

When I talk about hope, I am talking about something much deeper than just hoping to see this or that happen. If your hope is lost, then the desire for fulfillment as the people of God will be lost. Without a real desire you cannot fulfill what God wants you to do. You cannot live the way God wants you to live and do what God wants you to do. If your hope is gone, you will not be able to find the help that you need, and then you cannot help others. If you have hope, it causes others to be hopeful, but when you lose hope, it leaves others hopeless.

You need to understand that the enemy of souls would like to destroy you. He would like to get the best of you and cause you to lose hope. Your hope is in the fact that God's Word said it and you must believe it. Without hope you are hopeless. This is the reason you must watch and be careful that the enemy does not dry you up.

You can sit right by the fountain of life and still be dried up. You can lose hope that God can do what you need done. If you lose hope, you will become like the many who have already gotten discouraged and have fallen by the wayside. Have you become dry in your spiritual life? There are situations that ought to drive you to tears. The Psalmist taught that it is through tears, through calling out to God, that burdens are lifted. Psalm 126:5 says, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." If you become dry, you will lose your joy and your ability to rejoice. You must stop and ask yourself if you have allowed your spiritual life to become dry. Have you lost your hope?

Obedience to God

The Prophet Ezekiel was obedient to God, and he saw what

seemed to be an impossible situation become an army for the Lord. If God did this in Ezekiel's day, do you not think He can do miracles for us through obedience? The enemy of souls would like to cause every one of us to dry up and to lose hope, and then we would become just like the rest of the world, miserable and edgy. God let us know that He is willing to help us. He wants to be to us whatever He needs to be. You may say: "You do not know the burdens that I have carried and the heavy things on my heart. You do not know the hard things in my life." I may not, but I know that if you will ask the Holy Spirit, He can send a real gully washer in your life and wash all those burdens away.

God can give you a greater outlook and a more meaningful life. When hardships start to work, the first thing that happens is, you feel cut off from the saints. You feel that you are not a part of God's family. God's people have not changed, but the enemy will work to make you feel that way to lead you away from God and His people. The enemy will do a work on you personally. That is the reason you must come to God for help.

I am glad there is a remedy. You must humble yourself before God.

He knows your burdens and your needs. The Scripture says that before you ever ask, He already knows what you are going to ask. You must open your heart to God and allow Him to wash away all these things that you do not need in your life and get you refocused on Him. If you will allow the Lord to work, He will wash away the hindrances that keep you down. Then you can go forth as God wants you to.

The enemy would like to work as never before. He would like to make obstacles seem bigger than what they really are. God is still greater. God is still ready and able if you will come to Him. If the burdens, the trials, and the situations of life have gotten the best of you, let God lighten your load. You need to cast your care upon Him, because He cares for you. He wants you to finish this race with victory. He does not want you to come up short. If the enemy has worked on you, if he has gotten you to have feelings that are not right, I beg of you to humble yourself at an altar of prayer and ask God through the Holy Spirit to send a real gully washer into your life and wash those things away so you can be what God wants you to be.

(Compact Disc TR-1194)

Watch Your Words

What you say reveals what kind of thoughts you are thinking. Matthew 12:34 reads, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

God gave you one mouth and two ears. People are inclined to use their mouth more than their ears. In church services if you will listen, you will hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. James 1:19 says, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

The Word of God lets you know that the tongue needs to be kept under control. If you truly love Jesus, you will want your conversation to be pleasing to Him. Some day you will stand before God to answer for what you have spoken.

Hooked Lives

Do you have a drug addiction? Are you hooked by the habit? No. Yet "hooked lives" is indeed the subject of this article—lives, as one man wrote, "hooked to eternity." He was writing of his father, telling of how his father's religion and prayers were real. "I shall never forget the mornings when I would awake at 5:30 and see my father kneeling beside the gas stove that served both to prepare food and to heat our little rented room. 'God, bless my boy today!' he would pray. 'Keep him from sin, and lead him in the way everlasting.' You never get away from prayers like that. He hooked my life to eternity. Blessed is that youngster who sees the imprint of God on his father's life."

Oh, that there were more parents today whose children could re-echo those words! All too often they leave them to choose for themselves. They awaken too late to find that they have failed, and their young lives are already bending toward evil, hooked to wrong rather than to right.

The following parable under the title "Prodigal Fathers" was gleaned from a publication. May its message serve as a warning, making us see our present responsibilities and possibilities.

A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of your time, attention, companionship, counsel, and guidance that falls to me."

He divided to him his living, in that he paid his boy's bills and sent him to a select preparatory school and to college, and he tried to believe he was doing his full duty to his son.

Not many days after, the father

gathered all his interest and aspirations and ambitions and took his journey into a far country, into a land of stocks and bonds and securities and all other things which do not interest a boy, and there he wasted his precious opportunity of being a father to his boy.

When he had spent the very best of his life and had gained money but had failed to find any satisfaction, there arose a mighty famine in his heart, and he began to be in want of sympathy and real companionship. He joined himself to one of the clubs of that country, and they elected him to be the chairman of the house committee and president of the club and sent him to the legislature. He fain would have satisfied himself with the husks that other men did eat, and no man gave him any real friendship.

When he came to himself, he said: "How many men of my acquaintance have boys whom they understand and who understand them, who talk about their boys and associate with their boys and seem happy in the comradeship of their sons, and I perish here with heart hunger? I will arise and go to my son and will say to him: 'Son, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight and am no more worthy to be called your father. Make me as one of your acquaintances.'"

He went to his son, but while he was yet afar off, his son saw him and was moved with astonishment. Instead of running and falling on his neck, he drew back and was ill at ease.

His father said to him: "Son, I have sinned against Heaven and in your sight. I have not been a father to you, and I am no more worthy to be called your father. Forgive me

now, and let me be your chum."

The son said: "Not so, for it is too late. There was a time when I wanted your companionship and advice and counsel, but you were too busy. I got the information and companionship, but I got the wrong kind. Now, alas, I am wrecked in soul and body. It is too late—too late—too late!"

These are the words which God gave to fathers concerning His law and words:

"Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

Dear parents, the opportunity is yours. In your care are young lives whose feet you can direct into the paths of truth and nobility, purity, and uprightness. What a wonderful heritage you can bestow on your children in linking them to the Infinite God, "hooking" them, and we say it reverently, to the dear Savior, who said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me" (Matthew 19:14). What an inheritance of gratitude you will reap when in later years they rise up and call you blessed!

What could warm the heart of any parent more than the tribute that Thomas Champness wrote of his dear father? He said, "If I must own any one man as my spiritual father, it is my natural father, whose blameless life and attractive piety were such a charm to his son." Or that which Oliver G. Wilson wrote about his mother, saying, "I had nothing to do with her being my mother, but I choose my friends, and she is at the top of the list—loyal, cheerful, understanding, unselfish, and devout. She challenges me to do my best."

By prayer, by example, and by precept, hook your children's lives to God. You can do it. Hook them while the opportunity is yours, to the loving heart of God.

Selected

Announcements

New Castle, IN
December 5-7

REVIVAL & DEDICATION SERVICE FOR NEW CHURCH BUILDING: Church of God, 125 South 9th St., New Castle, IN 47362.. Service times: Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 10:30 a.m., Sunday Morning 10:30 a.m. & Sunday Evening 5:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Allen Polston, 2020 Ralph St, New Castle, Indiana 47362
Telephone: 765-524-1776

Newark, OH
December 28-31

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

Cayman Islands
January 11-18

REVIVAL: Church of God, Cayman Islands
Evangelist: Brother Roger L. Decker, Newark, Ohio.
For further information contact: Pastor Garrett Haylock
Telephone: (345) 916-6367



2014 Winter Bible School

Please Join Us

games

Date: December 29 - 31, 2014

singing

Time: 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Grades: K - 6 (including 12 year olds)

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