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SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

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Vol. 44 May 2014 No. 5



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

*Psalm 122:1*

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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**CONTENTS**

Lest We Forget ..... 3  
A Call to Examine Yourself ..... 8  
Especially for Young People ..... 14  
The Church of God ..... 15  
When God Does Not Deliver ..... 20  
Meeting Announcements ..... 26  
June Camp Meeting Information ..... 27

Vol. 44 May 2014 No. 5

# Guest Editorial

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your  
own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus  
Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

2 Corinthians 13:5

## TIME TO EXAMINE

In this Scripture, Paul was admonishing the professed Christians in Corinth to take a close look at their lives. He encouraged and strongly challenged them to know for sure that all was well between them and the Savior. The Apostle Paul knew that some of their conduct was not good. Certain ones committed sin and others were questioning Paul's position as a leader. As he closed his letter to them, he let them know that if he came to them, he was not going to spare but would take sharp action. As he finalized his letter, he told them to be perfect, to be of one mind and to live in peace.

If there was ever a time when people needed to really examine themselves, it is today. Allow this writer to remind you that we are living in a perilous time. It is a time when many people claim they are doing well spiritually; however, they do not realize their relationship with God and one another has faltered. The closeness that they once had with Him and one another has somewhat cooled. The things of God just do not hold as important a place as they did at one time.

It is important to examine yourself so that you can know if your experience is up to date. You must diligently search for anything that would be displeasing to God or to the cause. You must be sure that all is well between you and your brothers and sisters in Christ. Satan is always prepared

to drive in some little wedge that would separate the saints. Do not allow a single sin, or a wrong attitude to retard your spiritual progress. Unforgiveness or ill-will can clog your well of blessing from God's storehouse. Listening to rubbish that is issued by a whisperer will defame another's reputation and be damaging to your soul.

In Psalm 26:2 we read these words of admonition: "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart." Why is it necessary for a person to ask the Lord to examine him?" Sometimes an individual may be prone to be too easy on himself. He may be somewhat partial or excuse something that needs to be dealt with in a serious way. It is possible that a person could overlook something that God considers to be quite crucial. God will always be honest with people by showing them things that they need to take care of.

David wrote in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." David opened his heart to God's great search light for a scrutinizing examination. He did not want to have anything covered in his life that did not pass God's approval.

Will you open your heart and allow God to search and see if there is some form of wickedness

[continued on page 7]

*Deuteronomy 6:1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:*

*2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.*

*3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.*

*4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:*

*5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

*6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*

*7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

*8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

*9 And thou shalt write them upon*

*the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

*10 And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,*

*11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;*

*12 Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*



# Lest We Forget

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **A Solemn Warning**

God's people sometimes have a tendency to forget what they came out of, how they got out, and Who brought them out to the place where they are today. God does such a great work on each individual that many times it is hard to imagine that we all were once steeped in sin without hope.

In our Scripture text God issued a solemn warning to His people. In

verse 12 he said, "Then beware lest thou forget the LORD." Throughout the Old Testament, God sent warning after warning, admonishing His people not to forget His law, His mercy, His goodness, where they were, and so on. Then in the New Testament there is warning after warning not to forget the Lord. Jesus and the Apostle John mentioned repeatedly in their writings about remembering the Lord. Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Comforter,

which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

The Apostle Paul, as great a man as he was, never forgot what he was and what the Lord did for him. At one time, the Apostle Paul was one of the worse enemies to the Church of God. In fact, you will find the Scripture says he was born out of season. What does it mean to be

born out of season? The church was not praying for him to be saved; they were praying against him. He was unmerciful to the Christian church, and he desired to see the church completely destroyed.

### Religion Without Salvation

I want you to read some Scriptures that describe Paul's life before his conversion. Paul had religion, just as people do today, but he did not have New Testament salvation. His religion was comprised mostly of works. In Romans, Chapter 7, he explained the pitiful condition that he was in before he met Christ. Romans 7:7-9 says: "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

Paul brought to light that he was bound with covetousness. Whatever that covetousness was, material gain or finances, the law brought this to light through his conscience. Sin is sin, but when you sin against light, it brings a greater condemnation to your conscience than when you do not know.

Paul said the commandment stirred up sin. It made sin come alive, and it made sin troubling. It made sin active and irritable to his conscience, and the more sin stirred up, the more violent and the more fierce he became. He told what took place in Romans 7:15 and 19. He spoke of what a terrible condition he was in! He said in verse 15, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I."

Another translation of the same verse says, "In fact, I do not understand why I act the way I do. I do not do what I know is right; I do the

things I hate." A third translation says, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." Now, that does not describe someone with real New Testament salvation. That is how you were before you were saved.

In verse 19 Paul said, "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." People in false religion will use this verse of Scripture to say that he was saved at this time, but how could an unrighteous man instruct others in righteousness? How could he teach sinners the way of the Lord when he himself was a sinner at that time?

Even the Psalmist David knew better than to believe this. He said in Psalm 51:11-13: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; [How? When he himself got straightened out, then he could teach others.] and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Second Timothy 2:6 reads, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits."

People in false religion search and search for Scriptures that will justify their sinful condition; however, to have sin charged to your account, or to be guilty of sin, there must be a knowledge and there must be a will. The Scripture says in James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Going back in the Bible to the first sin ever committed, you will find that is exactly how a person gets into sin today. It is not through carnal nature or inherited sin, but it is the strength of the flesh. Without the Spirit of God the flesh will take you into sin daily. The first sin the Bible mentions is recorded in Genesis 2:15-17: "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it [in other words, to take care of it]. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the

garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

God put Adam in the best environment that one could live in. He was to work by taking care of the trees and whatever else was needed. He was given a law. As simple as the law was, he had to have a law. The law was that he could eat of every tree freely, but he could not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He was told that in the day he did, he would surely die. Adam lived to be nine hundred thirty years old physically. That is quite a long life, isn't it? People do not live that long any more. A death took place on the day he sinned, and that death was a spiritual death.

Eve presents an old story, but it is a great lesson to all of us. You cannot carry on a conversation with the devil without paying a price. Some people carry on conversations with the devil, and they know it is the devil talking with them. God does not depress or discourage His people. He does not try to get a person to fall. God is there to help. He is called a helper in the Scriptures. He is there to help you to make it.

The lie that the devil told is still floating around today in religion, and that is, you can disobey the Word of God without any consequences or reaping; that is a lie. It is told in the realms of religion that you can commit sin without dying spiritually.

God has worked many miracles and corrected many problems in life, individually, collectively, and universally. He has done many wonderful things for you and me. I have been a pastor for twenty-six years, and there were a few times when I did not think I could make it through. However, when you get your faith and confidence in God, that is what makes the difference. God has brought me through thus far, and I believe it is getting more glorious as the days go by.

## The Life of the Apostle Paul

I want you to consider the life of the Apostle Paul to see how a man used by God so much stayed thankful, humble, and faithful; he did not get puffed up. First of all, we need to look at the credentials he acquired while he was under the Law. He had quite a resumé. Acts 22:3 says, "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."

Paul was raised at the feet of Gamaliel, after the strict interpretation of the law. Who was Gamaliel? The Scripture tells us in Acts 5:34, "Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space." The Hebrew name for Gamaliel means "reward of God." He was a highly respected Pharisee, a knowledgeable teacher of the Jewish law. The body of civil, ceremonial law known as the Talmud says, "Since Gamaliel died, the glory of the law has ceased." Gamaliel was a doctor and a Pharisee of good reputation. To sit at his feet meant to be educated by him.

If you will notice, many of the Scriptures hint that Paul was a debater. Have you ever noticed in reading the Scriptures that when they went in the synagogue that Paul was the one who did the debating? He was the one who talked about the law and bringing in Christ. There was a reason behind it. In Acts 11:20 we read that the Grecians received the Word of God. When the church at Jerusalem heard it, they sent Barnabas to check it out to see if it was so. When he arrived, the Bible says he saw the grace of God; then he went to Tarsus. Why did he go to Tarsus? There was a man whom he needed to see. He went to Tarsus to see Paul. When Barnabas found him, he brought

him to Antioch, and they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people.

Acts 9:20-23 reads: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him." The Apostle Paul could take the Mosaic Law, and through that Law, teach Jesus Christ. Now, the Jews appreciated the Law, but they certainly did not appreciate his bringing in Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:1-7 states: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the circumcision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: [In other words, he was saying, 'I have more credentials than anybody else, so I could trust in the flesh more than anybody else. I could trust in my attainments more than anybody else.'] Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee [which was the strictest of all the sects]; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

This is quite a list of attainments that Paul gained while he was a Pharisee, but these things never

worked to the place where he forgot where he came from and to where he was brought. First Timothy 1:12-14 states: "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

## The Apostle Paul Never Forgot

The Apostle Paul never forgot what he was when he was on the Damascus Road. Paul started out by giving God thanks for choosing him. Paul never felt that he chose Jesus, but rather that Jesus chose him. It was as if he was throwing his life away, and Jesus suddenly brought him to his senses. He thanked Jesus because Jesus trusted him, because Jesus appointed him to serve, and because Jesus empowered him, knowing that Jesus never gives a person a task without giving him the power to do it.

God did such a work on me that it is hard to even imagine what I was before God saved me. I certainly was hell bound, and if I had kept going in that direction, I doubt that I would have lived to be very old.

I want you to notice what Paul said about himself to show you the awfulness of what he had done to Christ and the church. First of all, he said he was a blasphemer, which means he was an insulter. The word insulter means that Paul (who was then called Saul) flung hot and angry words at the Christians, accusing them of crimes against God.

Next, he said he was a persecutor, using every means available under the authority of the Jewish law to annihilate the Christian church. He had all the power presented to him from the Sanhedrin and the law to annihilate the church. He had their backing.

Then he said he was injurious,

and one commentator said that is a terrible word, which means "despiteful." It indicates a man of insolent and brutal violence and someone who is out to inflict pain for the sheer joy of inflicting it. Also, it means to hurt and degrade people. It describes one who finds delight in his own cruelty and the suffering of others. That is what Paul was. Why would someone keep reminding others of how bad he was when Jesus found him? The memory of his sins was the surest way to keep him from pride. If any man could have been tempted with pride and exalted with pride, it would have been the Apostle Paul. He was used more than any of the other Apostles. He taught more, and even Peter said he taught of things hard to understand. Paul had a great education and great knowledge, but he never wanted to forget where he came from. We all are nothing but hunks of dirt, and one of these days, this flesh will return to the dirt.

Acts 9:1-2 reads: "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogue, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women [Paul was just as cruel to the women as he was to the men], he might bring them [How?] bound unto Jerusalem."

### **Deliverance From Bondage**

In essence, God told those people in the Old Testament: "I am going to bring you into a land where you will not even have to dig any wells, plant the crops, or build the houses. The only thing you are going to have to do is possess it. Do not forget Me, because all the good things that I bestow can have a tendency to cause you to swell up with pride, thinking that you attained those things, when in reality, it was My hand."

Someone may say: "I went through college. I have an outstanding job, and I make good money."

You need to praise God for that. Who gave you the knowledge to get through college? Who gave you the ability to attend to those studies all the time? Who gives you the breath to get you out of bed every morning to go to work? All of us deserved hell, but God, Who is faithful, loved us and sent His Son to die in our stead.

It is good every once in a while to remember what God delivered us out of and where He has placed us today. The Psalmist said in Psalm 40:1-3: "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." This is how the Psalmist saw it, and this is what God does for us.

The Psalmist said the Lord brought him out of a horrible pit. I was a man who was bound by every device there was going at the time. I am very ashamed of it, but I frequented most of the bars in town. Many times I lost money gambling. I was so bound. Many nights I would get off work with a desire to go home, but I would end up giving in and saying, "I'll only be gone for a little while." That was bondage.

When I knelt at an altar of prayer, I told God that I did not really know much about how to pray. The only praying I would hear being done was attending the Church of God and hearing the saints pray. I remember telling God, "I don't know what I need, but whatever it is, please give it to me, and I will live for You for the rest of my life." I still did not know what it was I needed, but I know whatever it was, I got it. When I got up from that altar and walked up the aisle, I was a new creature. I never want to forget that. I never want to get swelled up with pride. One of these days, I am going to be leaving this world, just as you are. I never want

to forget what God did for me. He did not have to do that. Most of my children do not remember me in that sinful condition, and I am so thankful for that. God is so good, so caring, and so concerned for us that if we will turn to Him wholeheartedly, He will get us through into glory unscathed from this old world.

### **The Blessedness of Serving God**

Deuteronomy 6:20-25 says: "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us."

We were not in the land of Egypt, literally speaking, but we know Egypt is a type of bondage, which we all were in. When your children get old enough and ask, "Why do you go to church? Why do you read the Bible all the time? Why do you pray? Why do you dress a certain way?" then you can tell them what God brought you out of and what God brought you to. What will happen? They can pass it right on down to their children. That is how God wants it to pass down. He has given us a church home where He can care for us, and God warns us of impending dangers. Let us not forget, church, but let us pass it on to our sons and daughters so that they can enjoy the blessedness of serving

God.

You may not have been out in vile sin, but I was. I have been on both sides of the fence, so to speak. Sin does not improve itself. If sin was bad when I was out there, it has to be doubly bad today, because it cannot improve. Sin does not get better; it gets worse, but one thing sin always has: it has always had a price tag, and that is bondage.

God told the Israelites, in so

many words: "Don't forget Me! I'm going to bring you into a new land, and I'm going to give you homes to live in. You will not have to dig a well or plant the vineyards. Somebody else is going to plant them, but you will reap the harvest. I will run the people out of that land, and you can have it, but don't forget Me!" Dear one, let us not forget the Lord.

Someone may say, "Don't you know the Scripture says, 'Forgetting

those things which are behind?'" Yes, you are to forget those things that you relied on in place of God. Paul said that he forgot all the attainments that he achieved while he was a Pharisee, but he never forgot what God did for him. We should not forget either.

*(Compact Disc TR-1231E)*

[Guest Editorial—contin. from p. 2]

at work in you? Never forget that Proverbs 15:3 lets us know that His eyes are everywhere seeing. Also, His ears hear all things. If He uncovers something that you have neglected, He will be faithful to point it out so that you can correct it and be victorious. Jesus' purpose for searching the heart is not to hurt or destroy, but to help and heal. Upon finding an act of displeasure, He will be honest and faithful to point it out to you. He does not want men and women to think they are clear when He sees there are things that need attention.

After the Lord has been faithful to expose wrong, He then demands that the offender speedily make moves to correct the deficiency. He always prefers to work the kindness of His Word and Spirit to direct. There are times when God will send a hard trial or misfortune to enlighten a person of his need to rectify the discrepancy. However, if

matters are not corrected, He will take more serious steps to awaken the offender. It is always best not to allow wrong to reach this point.

God works individually with His people through His Spirit, and He also speaks through the preaching of the Gospel. This is the reason it is so important for souls to faithfully attend the house of worship where they can hear the Word. Remember, it is God who has given pastors, evangelists, and teachers. They are given to perfect and to bring the saints into a true state of holiness.

It is disastrous to think or to claim there is nothing wrong when God knows there is. To disregard His faithful correction can lead one into a state of being deceived. Second Thessalonians 2:10-12 clearly lets us see that the individual who loves unrighteousness instead of the Truth is often led into believing a strong delusion. The final outcome of one who disbelieves God's

Word, His Spirit, and His way will end up being damned.

Finally, are you seriously and faithfully searching your heart for anything that may be displeasing to God? Have you purposed to become a more pure individual before God? Have you allowed the Lord to search and dig around your heart? Can He see that you have overlooked or possibly neglected something? Friend, it is your responsibility to take heed to an examination. Obedience and adherence to God's way will bring spiritual growth, maturity, and stability.

Do not be like people who go to a medical doctor to be examined to see how well their physical health is doing, and then when the doctor informs them of some problem and what is needed to correct it, they disregard the diagnosis.

Selected

## Comforting Promises

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

John 14:21

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

Isaiah 66:13

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Psalm 46:1

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

# A CALL TO EXAMINE YOURSELF



*Brother Larry Dishman*

## **Does Your Possession Match Your Profession?**

Many people take for granted that their possession is equal to their profession. It is time to push for a real heart-probing search on the part of every professing Christian. It is a command in the Word of God to examine yourself. This is not something that you can just take or leave. You must examine yourself.

There are people who do not want to hear the Truth because it will shake up the false hope that they have, that they are going to Heaven when they are not. We might as well face the fact that a lot of people who think they are going to Heaven are not really going. If the folks who are on their way to hell, who think they are on their way to Heaven, would closely examine

themselves, God would reveal that to them.

While Christ's Spirit is present, while the Word of God is being revealed to you, you need to examine yourself. It is a deadly thing not to examine yourself. Sin is waiting outside the door; it is crouching in, and its desire is to have you. This kind of preaching is reasonable and logical when you consider what is at stake. Much is at stake if you do not examine yourself. Christ taught that a man's soul is worth more than the whole world. He said in Mark 8:36, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

One of the great mistakes that many professing Christians make today is applying or appropriating a promise from the Word of God that is not theirs. This is one of the major

reasons that people are religious but lost. They take promises in the Word of God and say, "This is my promise; I am appropriating this promise to myself." Because they are not truly saved, the promise is not theirs. There are many promises in the Word of God that are not for the sinner; they are only for the Christian.

I thank God for the promises in the Bible for the sinner. There are promises in the Word of God for the sinner, and if the sinner will meet the conditions, God will save him. Nonetheless, many of the promises in the Word of God are for the children of God. What I am trying to say is that, when people get concerned about their souls and their relationship with God and where they will spend eternity, they start thinking about the Judgment and what comes

after the Judgment. Quite frequently, they apply and appropriate some promise in the Bible to themselves. They think that through this act, they become saved. However, Paul said that Christ must be *in* you. Also, you must know for yourself that Christ is in you. This goes way beyond appropriating a promise. Christ must be in you. Our Scripture text says to examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith.

### **Determining Whether You Are in the Faith**

As Jeremiah lamented over the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, he called for the people to examine themselves and to turn back to the Lord. Lamentations 3:40-41 reads: "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."

In teaching the proper observation of the Lord's Supper, Paul wrote that it was a time for us to examine ourselves. In 1 Corinthians 11:27 he said, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Also, in our Scripture text, he employed the present tense for the verbs "examine" and "prove."

All Christians should often be induced to examine the foundation of their hope. Although God searches you, and thank God He does, you are to do some searching as well. You are to search yourself, not your brother or your sister. The unexamined life is not worth living. Before a jet takes off, the ground crew inspects it to make sure that it is safe to fly. Likewise, you need to examine yourself to make sure that you will reach the destination of Heaven. You want to end up at the right place, because when you leave here, there are only two places to go. You are going one way or the other. You can know now where you are heading. You do not have to wait until you get to the Judgment to find out how you stand with God. You

can examine yourself now.

The words *examine* and *prove* indicate that such an examination is to be an ongoing activity. This should naturally raise some important questions. First, why should you examine yourself? Second, by what standard should you examine yourself? What sort of questions should you be asking yourself? In this lesson I would like for you to focus your attention on this thought: why should I, as a child of God, examine myself? Paul said to determine whether or not you are in the faith. Am I really in the faith or could it be that if I continue in the way I am traveling, I will be like some people whom the Bible speaks of in Matthew 7:22-23? It reads: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." It sounds as if those people really thought they were going to Heaven. They thought they were on their way, so may we each examine ourselves.

The expression "in the faith" refers to being a faithful Christian. It is possible to drift away if you neglect your salvation. Hebrews 2:1-3 states: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation." It is possible after you are saved to develop an evil heart of unbelief.

### **Having a Know-So Salvation**

The Bible talks about the possibility of having an evil heart of unbelief in Hebrews 3:12-14, which says: "Take heed, brethren [He was not talking to sinners, to hypocrites, or to people who had never been saved], lest there be in any of you an

evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end."

What this Scripture implies is that it is possible to know God and to know your standing before God. In fact, the Bible was written for the purpose that people might know. One Book in particular, I believe, had this in mind, so that we could have a know-so salvation. You do not have to go through life just hoping everything is going to be okay, but you can know. That Book is 1 John. I believe thirty-eight times he used the word "know." According to the Apostle John, you can know for sure that you are saved.

In 1 John 5:13, after mentioning many things, he said, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." I will not take time to reference all thirty-eight of those places in 1 John, but we will look at a few of them. One of them is in 1 John 2:3, where he said, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Friend, I do not have any assurance of my salvation if I am not keeping the commandments found in the Word of God. If I am refusing to obey the Word of God, if I am ignoring the Word of God, then I do not have the assurance, according to the Bible, that I have eternal life.

In 1 John 3:14 we read, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." Again, in 1 John 3:24 we read, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." You can know that you are saved if you are keeping the commandments. You can know that you

are saved because of the love that you have for the brethren. You can know that you are saved because of the Spirit which He has given to you. You can know that you are saved.

### **Are You Remaining Faithful?**

Paul said to examine yourself, whether you are in the faith. Are you being faithful? There are folks who were faithful at one time in their lives, but they are no longer faithful. You know that is true. So, friend, you cannot appropriate the promises in the Word of God if you are no longer being faithful to God. The Bible lets you know in Revelation 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." How long must you be faithful? Again, Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death."

Friend, the Bible lets you know that one of these days, God is going to say either "Depart from me, I never knew you" or "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord, thou good and faithful servant." Can you imagine God saying, "Thou good and faithful servant," when you have not been faithful at all? Friend, according to the Word of God, if you are going to hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," you must be faithful in this life. You have to determine by the Word of God if Jesus is really in you.

Paul challenged the Corinthians to consider whether Christ Jesus was really in them. Christ dwelling in a Christian is a wonderful thought. Certainly it is promised by Jesus Himself. In John 14:21-23 we read: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words. . . ."

Here is the test: "Examine your-

selves, whether ye be in the faith." You may say, "I don't know whether I am or not." Are you keeping His Word? That is how you know whether you are in the faith. Verse 23 continues, ". . . and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

You may wonder, "How does Christ dwell in us?" Friend, to know that He does is the all-important fact to realize. There are ways that you can know whether or not He does, which is why you need to examine yourself periodically.

I like to read in John, Chapter 9, about the man who was born blind. The Pharisees asked his parents how it all came to pass, and they said, "He is of age; ask him." He had already told them that Jesus of Nazareth opened his eyes, and they did not like that at all. They went to him again and wanted to know exactly what happened when he got his eyes opened. He told them that it was Jesus of Nazareth who opened his eyes, and then they still were not satisfied. They said that they knew that Jesus was a sinner, so they wanted him to give God the praise. He said in verse 25, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

You can know if you were once lost in sin and on your way to hell. You might not understand much doctrine, but you can know that God has saved you. You can point back to the time when your life was changed. The problem with lots of folks is that they cannot show you a time in their lives when they were changed.

### **Abiding in Christ**

Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." I still remember the night that God changed me and made me a different person, and I have not gotten tired of it yet. I love

this way of living more all the time. It gets sweeter and sweeter as the days go by. I love God's way of living!

You have to determine if you are disqualified. It is a given that Christ is in the Christian, unless he has become disqualified. Some folks believe that one cannot be disqualified once he has been saved, but Paul did not believe that. He said in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Becoming a castaway means to be disqualified. Literally, it means not standing the test. You must examine yourself. I want everybody to pass the test. I am not trying to talk anybody out of his salvation. If you are truly saved, you will still be saved at the end of the message. However, if I could talk you out of your experience, you should not try to go to the Judgment on it. You have to be faithful and be in Christ.

Paul warned about falling from grace. Galatians 5:4 says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whatsoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." That is something many folks believe you cannot do, but you can do it. Peter likewise warned of falling from one's own steadfastness. In 2 Peter 3:17 he said, "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

Jesus described what would happen to those who did not bear fruit in John 15:1-2, 6 which says: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the

fire, and they are burned." It is all about abiding in Christ. Again, through self-examination, one can know what the true condition of his heart is. To determine if you really know yourself, Paul calls you to do this examination in our Scripture text. You can easily fall into the trap of self-deception.

James 1:22-26 reads: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." That means the person's religion is useless.

### **By What Standard Should You Examine Yourself?**

You have to examine yourself. By what standard should you examine yourself? You should not do so by the estimate of self, because you cannot trust solely what you think about yourself. You can only be proven if the Lord commends you. Second Corinthians 10:18 states, "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." Therefore, even though you might think you are all right, you are not the final arbitrator.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:4, "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." You can be wrong in your basic assumptions, which can lead you to wrong conclusions about yourself. Paul had thought that persecuting Christians was pleasing to God. He thought he was doing God's service. Paul thought he was right when he was

wrong. He was being zealous of the fathers' traditions. He had much zeal, but it was not according to knowledge.

In Acts 26:9-11 Paul stated: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." The reason I am preaching this way is, there are going to be many people at the Judgment who thought they were pleasing God in their lifetimes, but they were not pleasing Him. This is the reason you must examine yourself. You must make sure with an open, honest mind. Are you truly in the faith?

You must, therefore, look for a standard outside of yourself by which to examine yourself. The Bible speaks of people who are past feelings. You cannot go by your feelings. You cannot go by the estimation of men. You cannot compare yourself with others or trust their approval. To compare yourself with others is unwise. Friend, you should never say, "Well, it can't be wrong because look how many people are doing it; a lot of good people do it." You must not do that.

Second Corinthians 10:12 tells us, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." The approval of others is a small thing. Thank God if everybody thinks you are saved, but that does not make you saved.

Again, 1 Corinthians 4:4 says, "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that

judgeth me is the Lord." People are often wrong in their thoughts and their evaluations. The majority will find themselves lost on Judgment morning. That is a sad thought, but it is true. I do not want you to be in that crowd of those who went to the Judgment thinking they were all right when they were not all right.

### **Marks of Discipleship**

In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." So many people profess Christianity, but He said few there be that find it. You must try yourself by the standard of God's Word.

Again, it is the commendation of the Lord that makes one approved. Is God commending you? The Lord is the ultimate Judge. Second Corinthians 5:10 states, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." As the Lord Himself said, you will be judged by His words. John 12:48 says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

The only appropriate standard to use when you examine yourself is the Word of God. You cannot trust your feelings or what others might say. You must go by the Word of God. Is Christ in you? Have you put on Christ? Galatians 3:27 reads, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." You have to ask yourself some of the following questions: Are there commandments in the Word of God that I am no longer keeping? Am I truly keeping God's commandments?

John 14:21 states, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth

them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." As you examine yourself, you need to ask yourself these questions: Are the marks of discipleship present in my life? Am I truly abiding in the Word of God? John 8:31 says, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Have you continued in His Word? He said then and only then are you His disciple. John 13:34-35 reads: "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."

### **What Kind of Fruit Are You Bearing?**

Are you bearing the fruit of a Christian? John 15:8 says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Are you bearing the fruit of the Spirit as in Galatians 5:22-23? It reads: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Is the fruit of your lips praising God? Hebrews 13:15 tells us, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Are you bearing the fruit of good works? Is the fruit of good works apparent in your life? Titus 2:14 says, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Titus 3:8 says, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."

As you examine yourself, do you have the attitude of those who

were the true disciples of Christ? Second Corinthians 13:6 states, "But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates." Other questions might be appropriate to ask ourselves. Consider the sad plight of those who fail to pass the test, who are disqualified, or as our Scripture text says, "... except ye be reprobates."

Paul said in Philippians 3:18-19: "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" Because they set their minds on earthly things, their end is destruction.

There are those who are easy on themselves but hard on everyone else. There are those who have two standards. They have one standard for themselves and another standard for others. There is a cover up for anything if you want it that way. Anything you want to do or any way you want to live, there is a cover up if that is the way you want it.

To ensure that you will pass the test, you must examine yourself in the light of God's Word. True believers never resent being put to the test. A good student does not mind a test; only those who have not done their homework and paid attention in class react negatively when the teacher says, "All right, we are going to take a test." I normally reacted in a negative way, about 90 percent of the time. Do you know why? I was not ready for it. I had not studied. That is the way it is with many people today.

### **Is Your Faith Genuine?**

When was the last time you obeyed this command to examine yourself? You need to make sure that you are a genuine Christian, especially if you have not done so recently. I am encouraging you to be sure that you examine *yourself* and

not someone else. Paul said to examine yourself; you need to search your own heart. Some people are quick to examine and criticize other people, but many times they fail to allow the search light of God's Word to probe their own hearts. When you honestly put yourself to the test with the aid of the Word and the Spirit of God, will your profession of faith in Christ be found ungentle? You see, that is not a pleasant discovery. Who wants to find out, "I failed the test." Nobody wants to find that out, but it is far better to find out now through self-examination than to find out at the final Judgment that your faith was ungentle.

I would rather know right now if my faith is not genuine. If you realize that your faith is ungentle, that your repentance was ungentle, you still have the opportunity to be saved. However, if you wait until the final Judgment to discover: "I really didn't have what it took. I have gone to church all my life, but I have been weighed in the balance and found wanting," then it will be too late to do anything about it. In Matthew, Chapter 7, Jesus described many saying, in so many words, "Oh, we prophesied; we thought everything was okay," but those people will depart with no opportunity for salvation. They will be separated from God and Heaven forever.

Someone may say, "Well, how unfair this must be that a person could go through life thinking he was saved and then get to the Judgment and find that he is lost." It is not unfair on God's part, because if we each will examine ourselves honestly, God will show us now.

I want you to think about this. Imagine yourself in the presence of Jesus. His eyes are like a flame of fire, examining your life. Would you pass the test of having a genuine experience? Do you have true faith? Are you free from the bondage of sin? You need to examine yourself honestly. You must look inside and make a judgment call on your spiritual life to see if you are truly in the

faith. Have you given your whole life over to Him? Have you given your life over to Him who has the power both to save and to destroy? In your faith, have you accepted His grace by truly repenting? It is not just worldly sorrow that you need, but you must have godly sorrow that works to real salvation.

I hope you can say, "Thank God, I passed the test!" However, if you honestly admit that you have failed the test, that is the first step in becoming a true believer in Jesus

Christ. The first step is admitting that you really do not have the goods. What you need to do is set aside your pride and truly repent of your sins. Then you must place your faith in Jesus Christ, Who died to save you. There is a reason that the Bible says in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

If you have a doubt about your experience, you need to remove the reason for the doubt. If you have

doubts, they will hinder your experience in so many ways. When you start to pray, the doubts will be there. During judgment preaching, doubts will be there. There is a reason for the doubts, and the reason can be removed. You can be like the boy who said, "There are a lot of things that I don't understand, but I know I am saved."

*(Compact Disc TR-1175)*

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# Character



There is a structure which everybody is building, each for himself. It is called character. Reputation is what people say about us, but character is what we are as God sees us. If day by day we are careful to build our lives with pure, noble, upright deeds, at the end will stand a fair temple, honored by man and God. However, as one leak will sink a ship and one flaw break a strong chain, so one mean, dishonest, untruthful act or word will forever leave its impress and work its influence on our character. Then, let the several deeds unite to form a day and one by one the days grow into noble years, and the years as they slowly pass will rise at last a beautiful edifice enduring forever to our praise.

Here is a great structure going up, piece by piece, story by story, although you are not conscious of it. It is a building of character, and the word of inspiration warns you to take heed in building it to see that you have a foundation that shall endure, to make sure that you are building on it, not for the hour in which you live, but for that hour of revelation when you shall be seen just as you are.

Our minds are given us, but our characters we make. Our mental powers must be cultivated. God gives the mind, but by words, acts, thoughts, and deeds, we make our character. The mind is the garden; character is the fruit. The mind is a white page; character is the writing we put on it. The mind is the metallic plate; character is our engraving.

A good character is a precious thing, above rubies, gold crowns, or kingdoms, and the work of making it is the noblest labor on earth. If aught on earth is

despicable, it is those porous masses of conglomerated filth and scum that float on the surface of society, driven or attracted by every speck of circumstances about them. They are purposeless, powerless, enervated automatons playing second fiddle to second chance. One brave will to resist evil and hold fast to good is worth a million of them. One stout soul with a resolute determination to make its own character after the pattern of its own high-wrought ideal is of more real significance than an army of them.

Character is like stock in trade. The more of it a man possesses, the greater his facilities for adding to it. Character is power and influence.

It makes friends, creates funds, draws patronage and support, and opens a sure and easy way to honor and happiness.

Truthfulness is a cornerstone in character, and if it is not firmly laid in youth, there will be ever after a weak spot in the foundation. Under no circumstances should anyone tell a lie.

The value of character is the standard of human progress. The individuals, communities, nations tell their standing, their advancement, their worth, their true wealth and glory in the eye of God by their estimation of character.

As I have already said, our character is formed by words, thought, deeds and actions. Let us all be careful of what we say, how we act, and what we think. Remember, our character is what God sees of us.

Selected



Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." We need to take pleasure in the things of God.

Luke 6:46-49 reads: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

In verse 46 Jesus asked the man why he called Him "Lord," yet he did not do what He said to do. In building a strong foundation, the first thing you need to do is get saved and walk in all the knowledge you know. You cannot live a good life without salvation.

James 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." You are not deceiving God if you are not doing what He says. He knows your heart, and you are going to lose at the final Judgment. It does not pay to live a hypocritical life; it is not worth it. The only way to go is to

give God your all. It will be worth it in the end. Whatever you have to give up, it will be worth it.

In verse 48 Jesus began to tell about the wise man who built his house on a rock. It says he digged deep. If you are going to build a strong foundation, you must dig deep, and it is going to take work. Your foundation will have to hit the Rock, and that Rock is spoken of in Isaiah 28:16, which reads, "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." That rock is Jesus, and anything else you build on will not hold. You may make it through this life, and you may think you are doing fine, but when you get to the final judgment, you are going to go to hell. You have to build on Jesus to go to Heaven.

We read in verse 48 that when the storm hit, it could not move the house, because it was founded on the Rock. What does this tell you? You can stand if you build on the Rock. You do not have to worry if you go with Jesus. He will not let you down. The verse says that the stream beat vehemently upon that house." The word vehemently means with fierceness or extreme intensity. Through the rough times, you can have Jesus to help you through.

Verse 49 speaks of the foolish man who built his house on the earth. If you are not building on the Rock, you are building on the earth. There are only two choices. Matthew

6:24b says, Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

If you are building on the earth, what could you be building on? Could you be building on money, pride, a moment of pleasure, worldly friendships, or parties? Sinful things that you enjoy for a season will not stand at the Judgment? You may think they are okay, but they will not stand at the final Judgment.

Proverb 14:12 says, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." If you continue to build on the wrong things, they will not hold you, and you will end up in hell. You may make it through the youth group with a weak foundation and think you are doing all right, but when the storm really hits, you will fall, and you may take others with you. It is important to build strong while you are still young. Eternity is what really matters, so do not let the things of this life get in your way. You need to go with God so you can make it to Heaven. Do not ruin your reputation by falling. Do not be as the foolish man.

When you are building a strong foundation, certain ingredients must go into it, just as when one builds a foundation for a house. Builders put a certain mix together to make the concrete strong. The first ingredient for building a strong foundation spiritually is prayer. Luke 18:1 reads, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." First Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing." You need to have

[continued on page 25]

*Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

*14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*

*15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*

*16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

*17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

*18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will*

*build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

# The Church of God



*Brother Allen Polston*

## The Importance of Knowing Who Jesus Is

In this Scripture lesson we find there was much confusion in the day that Jesus was living. Men and women had lots of different ideas and opinions, just as people do in this day and time. There are many religious factions in our world. There are even many who have the name "Church of God" over the door. This lesson is one that is up to date.

Jesus posed the question to His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" They re-

sponded to Him, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." This lets us see the many different opinions present in the minds of the people. Today we see this is still much the same in our world. People have many different ideas about religion. They have lots of different ideas about doctrines, about Jesus Christ, and about the way we should live. After the disciples had spoken regarding the opinions of men and women around them, Jesus asked them in verse 15 of our Scripture text, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon spoke up and

said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter was accurate in his response to the question that Jesus posed. I realize that we are living in an ecumenical time, but friend, there is still only one right way. Although there are many different ideas about who Jesus is, there is only one correct answer.

The devil is very busy trying to keep people confused and in disarray about knowing the truth. I want you to know that God is interested in your soul, and He wants you to have an accurate biblical understanding of Truth. God loves you.

The devil will try to get you to feel bitterness, jealousy, envy, or anything else that he can work in your life; but God would like to help you to get beyond those things if they are knocking at your heart's door. I know that I will not be a popular individual in the midst of this ecumenical age when I tell people there is just one church, but that is Bible. Jesus revealed that there was only one right answer to His question; only one response was accurate and on target.

After Peter's accurate reply, Jesus said in verse 17 of our Scripture lesson, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." If you merely look to flesh and blood, it is very unlikely that you are ever going to get this straightened out in your mind, because it does not come from flesh and blood. Jesus told Peter that "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee."

Friend, God has a true way. He has a church; He has a people. He has a salvation that is available to all, and God can reveal it to you and convince you of this. He is the One who must do the work. The Holy Spirit is very necessary for a revelation such as this to be given. You need the Holy Spirit, and you need the Word of God.

### **A Divine Revelation**

You are not going to be able to grow spiritually and advance in the things of God through flesh and blood. If you are not a part of God's church or if you do not know the truth about these things, it will not come about through flesh and blood. Certainly God uses human instrumentality; however, it takes a revelation from God to understand these truths. If you are in an atmosphere where there is fighting, bickering, complaining, and arguing taking place, you are not going to get very far. Those things grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Too many people have grieved God's Spirit.

When the flesh is on display, God's Spirit will depart. When there is no peace between individuals, God's Spirit is not going to linger. Why? There would be no reason for Him to stay if that is going on. God's people have a sweet spirit, a spirit of love, and a spirit of goodness.

I want to stress that we need God's Word. Many places are tossing out God's Word or changing it and replacing it with modern up-to-date versions of the Bible that leave out parts and add to it. The Bible warns against adding to or taking away from the Word of God. Many places have forgotten about having anything but a Sunday morning gathering. The rest of the time, they play ball, play cards, or have other events going on. We need God's Spirit and God's Word so that we might reveal truths to others that will save their souls and keep the victory in our hearts and lives. We need the Spirit and the Word.

Jesus, being present with Peter, made such an atmosphere that through Him the Father could reveal this wonderful truth to Peter. Peter did not go around and take inventory of what everybody else said and use that to come to a conclusion. You can get your life out of line if you run around trying to find out what everybody has to say about something.

What if Peter had based his answer on what others were saying? He would have been as confused as they were, but he did not do that. His position was based on something different. It was not flesh and blood, but it was by a revelation from Heaven. It is a revelation from Heaven that causes men and women to be able to get hold of this beautiful truth about God's church. That is the reason you need to pray and ask God to give you a song to sing or a testimony.

Before you enter the church door, you need to take time to seek God's face so that the Spirit of God will be in the service. It takes God's Spirit to have Truth revealed and reaffirmed to the hearts and minds

of people. If men of God stop preaching the Truth, it will be a lost message before long. People's minds will begin to let go of it, and their hearts will begin to slip. We have to stand on the Word and declare the Truth that is found therein. We have to stir up people's pure minds or the devil will find a way to work and get it out of their minds. This is important and necessary, and it is something that you can have a part in. You may not be a minister, but you have the ability to use what God has given you to pray, to labor before God, to work with precious souls and invite them to the services, and to really put your all in the service of the Lord. You have that ability no matter what your calling is.

Peter gave the correct answer, and Jesus told him that he was a blessed man because he had not just taken what others had to say. He got in touch with God and received a revelation. If you look to what everyone else is doing, you can easily be led astray. Friend, if you look at numbers, lots of organizations in this world far outnumber our congregations or the congregations of the people that we know about. There are a lot of institutions that have thousands of members. If you were just to look to flesh and blood, you could very easily be led astray. Peter took a stand. He took a position not based on what others thought. He took his position because God directed him.

### **Are You Living By God's Word?**

I am glad that it is not outdated to stand and say: "I've got a vision of God's church. God has given me a vision of the one true church." It may not be popular, but it is still in order to shout and praise God and thank Him for the one, true, living, sin-free Church of God. God still has a church, and just because others are coming together and dropping their standards does not mean that God's church has changed. God has not changed His mind about the church.

Even though lots of people have rejected the thought of one church, God still has a church.

Saint, you need to get more excited about this truth that we are considering. You need to let God use you as He would like to use you. The days of praising God should not be over as the light of this seventh seal is shining. It ought to be shining in a greater way. God is still good. He has blessed His people. We have the Truth, and we have salvation. As a child of God, you are on your way to Heaven. That ought to cause you to shout and praise God and rejoice. I am excited about the church. God gave me a vision of the church, and it is still wonderful. She is still the apple of God's eye.

In so many words, Jesus said to Peter, "I am going to build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." God backs up His Word. Are you living by the Bible? If your determination is to live by God's Word, then I believe you are going to see that the Church of God is biblical.

Paul was getting ready to depart from some people he had been working with. Acts 20:26-28 reads: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

These verses of Scripture make it clear to us what Jesus purchased on Calvary's Cross: with His blood He purchased the Church of God. Paul instructed the people to take heed to themselves, to make sure they were what God wanted them to be. He went on and instructed the ministry to feed the Church of God. Paul was not going to be back this way, and his instruction was to be concerned about the Church of God. Why? Because this is the church that Jesus purchased. This is what Jesus went to Calvary for.

Again, Paul said in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, [That sounds like nice, gentle-spirited sheep. It does not sound like people who get up a miff tree over every little thing. It does not sound like someone who talks down to his pastor. That sounds like sheep that have a gentle, natural way about them. Sheep do not see how quickly they can gossip or get on the phone and tear somebody down.] over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

First Timothy 3:14-15 reads: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." God's church is not just any church; it is not whatever people want it to be. God's church is the pillar and ground of the Truth. When you find a people who are the pillar and ground of the Truth, or who preach the Word of God, you have found the Church of God. You have found the people with whom God is pleased. They uphold the Truth. They are the ones who shine the light of God's Word; they shine forth the blessed Truth and doctrines and teachings of His Word. They are the ones who illustrate it to the world and hold it up for others to see so that people can be saved.

There is a way that people in the Church of God behave themselves. They do not behave just any old way they choose, or any old way they please. There is a way that God would have us to behave ourselves in the Church of God. It is in holiness, righteousness, and purity. God wants us to behave ourselves in a particular way.

### **Walking in His Paths**

Many Scriptures deal with the thought of God's church. Let us con-

sider a few from the Old Testament. Isaiah, Chapter 2, mentions something that we know to be a picture of God's church. Verses 1-3 read: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house [we found in Timothy's record that the Lord's house is the Church of the Living God] shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Here is an Old Testament illustration of the Church of God. This message once again reaffirms to us that God has a church. He said in these last days of time, this Gospel day in which we are living, "the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains." God's church is a high and exalted place. It is not that we think highly of ourselves or that we are exalted in our flesh. This is a way that lifts a man out of the miry clay of sin. This is something that does not leave us down in the gutter. Thank God, God's church and the salvation that Jesus purchased for every man, woman, boy, and girl who will yield their lives to Him will still change individuals and lift them up out of that old life they used to live.

The Corinthian writer said that they would become new creatures. He did not stop there. He said old things would pass away. Thank God for faithful men of God who preach the Truth. "Old things" will hinder you from walking with God; they will pass away if you will walk in the light. Friend, God's church is a divine, wonderful organization. It is a blessed thing. It is something that we ought to be thankful for. It is something that is not going to pass

away.

The Bible lets us know that there are those people in this world, even religiously inclined people, who are merely looking to see what everybody else is doing. Why is it that people allow themselves to be controlled by others? Why is it that people are forfeiting a good home in God's church, a good place? In John 14:2b Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He has a place for each one of us. God has a place for every individual in the body of Christ. Just as our bodies are composed of many different cells and parts and organs that make it functional, so it is with the church. The body of Christ is comprised of saved individuals walking in the light.

### **The Body of Christ**

There is a place for every individual who is saved in the church. If you are saved, God counts you important. His church is not just a few select people. Every person who is saved has an important place in the Church of God. There is an important place for *you* in God's church. He has a work and a purpose for you in the body. I would not even want to think about cutting off my little finger. I could probably get along okay. There are people who have had accidents who do not have that finger, yet they can still function. However, we do not want to be without any of our body parts, do we? We would not just willingly give up some part of the body. Every body part is important; we value each member. We do not want to trade one part for something else. We do not want to sell it or pawn it. So it is with the Church of God.

Every individual is an important part of God's church, the body of Christ. Someone may inquire, "Where do you get this reference to the body of Christ?" We read of it in the Scriptures. Ephesians 5:25-27 states: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with

the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, [There is one description of the church. She is 'a glorious church.' In other words, she is not a defeated church, a backslidden church, a compromising church, or a dark and dreary church. When people of this world think things are glorious, they go all out to let you know about it. The church is a glorious church.] not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

God wants us to gather together regularly. This is the reason Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." We are living in a busy time, and if we allow them, things could crowd their way into our lives and cause us to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. If we are not careful, every time we turn around, we will encounter some other obligation. God wants us to assemble together in revivals, camp meetings, and regular weekly services because His church is a church without wrinkle, without spot, and without blemish. It is holy. When something begins to work on you, when the devil begins to attack you, or if you get a wrinkle, a blemish, or some unholy thing in your life, you need the preaching of the Gospel. God's church is wonderful! Being a part of the Church of God is not only biblical but also blessed.

Jesus told Peter, in essence, "You are a blessed man because you are a part of God's church." What a blessing! Anybody who truly understands the value of this blessing realizes it is not something that he wants to surrender. It is something to give your life for, and it is something that you will be rewarded for. Praise God! It is something to fight the devil for and war against the things he is trying to do to hinder you.

We gather together so that by the preaching of the Gospel we can be washed, spiritually speaking, or

we can see where the enemy is trying to come in, because he does try to come in. He tries to come in on preachers, teachers, singers, and everyone else. He tries to begin to creep in, so it takes the Gospel being declared so that we can see how he is working. We can come boldly to the throne of grace and get our needs taken care of.

We read in Ephesians 5:28-30: "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." The same relationship, the same oneness, the same closeness that a man and a woman share when they truly give their hearts to one another in marriage is the same relationship the church has with Jesus Christ. It is a close communion.

Paul went on to say in verses 31-32: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The Church of God is the body of Christ. We are of His flesh and His bones. We are His body. We are His bride. What a special privilege and important position that is!

### **How the Body Operates**

We read in Colossians 1:17-18: "And he is before all things [talking about Jesus], 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." Verse 24 reads, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Again, the body of Christ is the church. The church that he was talking about is listed throughout the Bible as the Church of God.

Now, I am not saying there cannot be saved people in other places. Certainly, there can be, but God has a message for saved people in other places. God's message for people who are saved and want to live their lives for the Lord is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins" (Revelation 18:4). If you stay around those places where people are not really determined to serve the Lord or not really consecrated, it is very likely that the devil will get that to rub off on you sooner or later. God has a message for individuals who have honest hearts and want to live for Him. Come out and be a part of the visible, working body of Christ; that is the Church of God. We should not be bashful or ashamed about the church. We ought to be thankful for God's church and thankful that we can be a part of it. God has a church; He has a body, and it is a wonderful thing.

The church is not functioning by the unions and agreements of men. God's church is operated by the Head. The Head is in control. The Head of God's church is not a geographical location on earth. We do not have a place that we call and ask what message we are allowed to preach. The way I understand it, there are some places where the pastors have to get the message from their earthly headquarters, but we look to God; He is the Head of the Church of God.

Jesus Christ is the Head of His church, and the body is the church. He is the One in control. The church is not operated by the round tables of men and women on this earth. It is not functioning by their votes or by their opinions. In Mark 8:27 you can read that in Peter's day Jesus posed the question, "Whom do men say that I am?"

Friend, some people in our religious world feel that God is no longer capable of taking care of His church, and they are looking to flesh and blood for leadership and direction. I want to send out a warning that we never follow suit with that

which is taking place, but that we continue to live according to the biblical guidelines.

### **Living in Righteousness and Holiness**

Paul wrote to Timothy, and in his letter he described some men who got off track. One of the things that he said about those individuals was that they supposed that gain was godliness. They supposed that increase of some sort or another makes it right. They based their opinions on that, but gain is not godliness. Some churches might have millions of members, but does that make them right in their darkness?

I have been reading a book in my spare time about some of the persecutions and sufferings that the Catholic Church put God's church through. There is no way some of the teachings they still hold today can be of God. There is no way God can be associated with that. Does their large membership make them right? Absolutely not!

God has a church, and it is not something that follows whatever men and women on earth are doing. Men and women are changing constantly. They have to because sin gets boring and loses its pleasure. I thought of how, in the last few years, we have seen such an increase in tattoos and body piercings. God can deliver those people. They can become faithful members of the church. I thought about how sin causes people to have to go from one thing to another. The saints of God are the same down through the years. They look the same way they always have. Friend, God's church is still the same. It is still people who are living in righteousness and holiness. There is a biblical understanding of the Church of God. It is not just anybody that has a church sign on the door, but it is those people who have the right spirit and the right attitude. They are living according to what God has revealed through the Word and the Spirit.

I wonder what is keeping some people from making moves that they really ought to make? What is holding people back from really being a part of what they should be? The Bible says that some seek after a sign. They want to see some big moving before they will be willing to do anything. That takes us right back to Peter's day. If we are just waiting for what flesh and blood will do, they may get on fire for God or they may not. Matthew 16:4 says, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." Friend, do not be found delaying or holding off in your efforts for God, waiting for some kind of sign. You need to get hold of what God has for you now. Won't you receive it by faith and yield your life to Him?

The message of the Church of God and those who will really live it as it ought to be lived is one that this world needs to hear. Sharing the Truth needs to be our focus. This needs to be what we concentrate on. This light is still glorious. It is precious! I am not going to let the devil take it, by the grace of God. It is wonderful to know about God's church and to live and walk in this light.

Friend, if you do not watch, the old enemy is going to work around and try to take that light away. He is going to try to slip in and get it. The Bible definitely declares there is a church, the Church of God. It is the one true way, and I want to be a part of it. If you study the Scriptures, you will find that we see what is going on in the world. The Bible teaches about the one true church, the one body, the one faith. Are you a part of God's church? If you are not, do not wait for a sign. Do not wait for some banner to come across in the sky and say it is time for you. Won't you mind God? Let us put effort into sharing this wonderful truth. It is still glorious.

*(Cassette C-4990E)*

# When God Does Not Deliver



*Brother E. David Stegmeier*

## **Faith Anchored in the Power of God**

Sometimes we take it for granted that God always delivers, He always heals, and He always meets our needs; but that is not always so. In Daniel, Chapter 3, let me give you a background of what was going on there. On the plains of Dura, in the province of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar set up an image of gold, which stood ninety feet high. It was built to bring honor to him. For its dedication, he gave the command that everyone in his domain must bow down to that idol and worship it when they heard the sound of the many musical instruments. Those who refused to bow down to the image were to be cast into a furnace of fire.

The king's herald had said in Daniel 3:6, "And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." The three

Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused the edict, or the decree, and were reported to the king by certain Chaldeans who said in verse 12, "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." That is still applicable to us today.

The three Hebrew boys remembered the words that God had given Moses in Exodus 20:3-5. God had given Moses this command: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. . . ." In the king's rage he gave the three Hebrew children a chance to change their minds. The devil is not through with you when he comes the first time. He will keep coming. He wants you to change your mind

about your stand for God. However, you must keep standing.

Did the Hebrew children change their minds? They said in Daniel 3:16-18: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so [in other words, if it be God's will], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." They did not know what the outcome would be; they did not know what would happen. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made this bold statement before they knew what the outcome would be.

Their faith was anchored in the power of God, and He is just the same today. What great confidence they had in their God. You and I need to place that same explicit trust and complete confidence in Al-

mighty God. He never changes! The three Hebrew children were not sure what the Lord would do; however, they resolved to trust in God no matter what might happen. They were determined to rely upon the assistance of their God. They were steadfast and unmovable. The three Hebrew children refused to turn their backs on God. Since God has been so very good to every one of us, we should never turn our backs on Him.

### Courage and Determination

Today we need Christian men and women with the kind of courage and determination that the three Hebrew children had. We must determine that no matter what happens in the future, by the grace of God, we will stand for the Truth. This is a day of much compromise, and once compromise sets in, there is no stopping it. Some years ago, Brother Emerson Wilson told us that his father went to a camp meeting where a pastor, who had the largest Church of God congregation in the world, said, "When I let compromise come in, I could not stop it." He told Brother Wilson, "I wish I would have stood as you have stood." This is the story repeated over and over in our world. Once compromise starts, there is no stopping it.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." God never fails His precious people. However, He may not deliver in the way that we think He should. There is a chorus that says, "*Jesus never fails, Jesus never fails, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Jesus never fails.*"

Daniel 3:19-30 says: "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And

he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

"Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto this counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither, Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

"Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the

God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon."

### Being Yielded to God

Again, verse 28 says, "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." Your soul, mind, body, and spirit should belong to God. Our junior choir sings a song entitled "How Do I Look to God?" People take a long time getting the outward man or woman to look just right. How much time do they spend getting the inward man as he ought to be? The three Hebrew children yielded their bodies to God.

An old song came to me as I was studying. It says, "*Yielded to thee, yielded to thee Holy Spirit divine. Henceforth thy will shall forever be mine, Since I surrendered completely to thee, Thou art abiding forever with me, Yielded to thee, fully yielded to thee, Nothing withheld art reigning in me. All on the altar my faith shall not falter.*"

Being yielded to God means to surrender. When you are yielded to God as the Hebrew children were, you are going to have that kind of implicit faith in God. *On the altar my faith should not alter, I have yielded to thee Lord, yielded to thee. Yielded to thee thou didst cleanse me from sin, making me pure and holy within. Yielded to thee thou dost purge me from dross, now with rejoicing I carry my cross. Yielded to thee all my selfish desires, perished one day mid the Pentecost fires. Yielded to thee now thy image shall be, stamped and engraven forever on me.*

God did not deliver the three Hebrew children from the fiery

furnace; however, He delivered them from any harm that could happen to them while they were *in* the fiery furnace. Sometimes you might have to go into the fiery furnace. The fiery furnace, which was designed to destroy Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, actually set them free from the cords that bound them.

If you allow God to take you through the fiery furnace, you will have greater freedom and liberty in serving God. Maybe there are some cords, a bondage that needs to be severed. God will protect you from any harm in your trials, even though He may not deliver you from them. Trials have a way of loosening you from what often restricts and binds you. You must learn to depend more upon Him. Sometimes when trials or afflictions come upon you, it is just your turn. In your trials you can draw closer to Him and realize how dependent you are upon Him. Often we are brought to a place where we have to depend upon Him in a greater way.

### Power to Deliver

Again, Daniel 3:24-25 reads: "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Verse 27 says, "And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

Nebuchadnezzar had to admit that no other God could deliver after that sort. When people see you going through trials, you can show them something different, some-

thing that the world does not have. They will have to concur and say, "There is no other God like that which the Church of God serves." People say you cannot live without sin, but it is possible through Him.

God still has the power to deliver. He still has the power to heal, but sometimes He may not choose to heal. He has a reason for what He does and does not do. He may not choose to deliver you because He has a purpose in your going through the trial. Sometimes He chooses not to deliver. Isaiah 41:10 says, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Isaiah 43:2 records the following: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

The Bible says the furnace was so hot that the men who threw the three Hebrew children into the furnace were annihilated. Daniel 3:22 says, "Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flames of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego." Our God does answer prayer. However, there may be times when God does not answer immediately. We like to say, "God, please answer immediately if not sooner." There may be times when God does not answer immediately or in the way that we think He should. Sometimes your request could be denied altogether. We must leave the results up to our omniscient God.

### The Will of God

God may not always deliver in the way we think He should, but He is always true. There are four reasons I would like to mention as to why I think God sometimes does not deliver immediately. First, perhaps

you need to develop patience. Perhaps you need to be more patient and long-suffering. Second, God might want you to do some soul searching. Perhaps you need to deal with something in your life. He may want you to slow down. Third, maybe this is a time when you can draw nearer to God, and there is always a need for that. Fourth, maybe you need to allow God some time for His perfect will to be done in your life. When I was a boy, we used to sing a song in the Evening Light Songs. It is entitled "The Bondage of Love." It says:

*O sweet will of God! Thou hast girded  
me 'round,  
Like the deep moving currents that  
girdle the sea;  
With omnipotent love is my poor  
nature bound,  
And this bondage to love sets me  
perfectly free.*

*For years my soul wrestled with  
vague discontent,  
That like a sad angel o'ershadowed  
my way;  
God's light in my soul with the  
darkness was bent,  
And my heart ever longed for an  
unclouded day.*

*And now I have flung myself  
recklessly out,  
Like a ship on the stream of the  
Infinite will;  
I pass the rough rocks with a smile  
and a shout,  
And I just let my God His dear  
purpose fulfill.*

*Forever I choose the good will of  
my God,  
Its holy, deep riches to love and to  
know;  
The serfdom of love to so sweeten  
the rod,  
That its touch maketh rivers of  
honey to flow.*

*Hallelujah! Hallelujah! My soul  
is now free!  
For the precious blood of Jesus  
cleanseth even me.*

When the child of God goes through things, God's love says, "My son, my daughter, I love you." I thought of the story of Charles Weigle, an evangelist who wrote the song, "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus." When preaching the Gospel, he came home one day and the house was dark. He went through the house calling for his wife, but she was not there. He sat down at the kitchen table and there was a note that said, "Honey, I do not want to be married to a minister anymore." It broke his heart. For one solid year, he was in very heavy depression. One morning God came and said, "I really love you." That was just what he needed, and he penned the song, "No One Ever Cared For Me Like Jesus."

No one will ever care for you like Jesus. In the history of the New Testament church, James was beheaded by King Herod. Although Peter was miraculously delivered from prison through the answered prayers of the saints, James was beheaded. What was the difference? It was probably the will of God.

### **Strength Made Perfect in Weakness**

Acts 12:1-3 says: "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)" Verse 5 says, "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Soon God heard the prayers of the saints, and Peter was set free.

Down through the annals of history, some of God's people have been delivered from tragic ends while others were not. Countless numbers of Christians gave their lives for the cause of Christ. God heals in answer to prayer; however, there are those who are not healed. I have always been intrigued by the

life of Fanny Crosby. She was afflicted when she was a child, and she became blind; she was never healed. She wrote more than eight thousand hymns. Possibly had she been able to see, she might not have written so many hymns. She was probably the most prolific Christian hymn writer that the world has ever known.

Next, I thought of Charles W. Naylor. I have books that were written by Charles W. Naylor, and our hymnals are full of his songs. Charles W. Naylor was afflicted as a young man. His back was broken when he was a young man helping the old Church of God ministers erect a tent in the state of Florida. When he was first hurt, he struggled a little with bitterness. We all probably would. He was a young man in his early twenties. He got the victory over bitterness, and he did a great work for God by writing books and hymns. His works continue to be a blessing.

God heals some, and others He does not. The Apostle Paul gave some insight into his sufferings. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 he wrote: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: [Sometimes when you are suffering, if you are not careful, you can get short, irritable, and hard to live with. By the grace of God, I never want to do that. God's grace is sufficient.] for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Someone said that a piece of pottery which has endured the high-

est heat in the furnace is the most valuable. Likewise, lives that are most tried are the most useful in God's service.

There is a song that B. E. Warren wrote entitled "Fiery Darts":

*In the hour of sore temptation I  
may be,  
Yet, amid the trials, Jesus' face I see;  
In His word my anchor holdeth to  
the last,  
While the fiery darts are flying thick  
and fast.*

*We shall not be wounded in the  
hottest fight,  
If we raise the shield of faith in Jesus'  
might;  
Through the grace of God we'll  
conquer to the last,  
While the fiery darts are flying thick  
and fast.*

*In the greatest suffering man may  
undergo,  
He shall have the victory if he'll  
count it so;  
Conquering in the conflict, soon  
'twill all be past,  
Though the fiery darts are flying  
thick and fast.*

*Should I walk in trouble, pressed on  
every side,  
He who knows my weakness will  
with me abide;  
I will ever trust Him in the hottest  
blast,  
While the fiery darts are flying thick  
and fast.*

*In the heated furnace, Father, let  
me stay,  
Precious gold refining, purge the  
dross away,  
Till Thy glorious image is reflected  
there,  
Till the costly jewels of thy grace  
I wear.*

### **Stand Fast in the Faith**

Isaac Watts, a famous man of God and hymn writer, wrote a hymn following a sermon based on 1 Corinthians 16:13, which reads,

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men [in other words, act like men], be strong." The stanzas of Isaac Watts' hymn entitled "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" are these:

*Am I a soldier of the cross  
A follower of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause,  
Or blush to speak His name*

*Must I be carried to the skies  
On flowery beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?*

*Are there no foes for me to face?  
Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace,  
To help me on to God?*

*Sure I must fight if I would reign;  
Increase my courage, Lord;  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain  
Supported by Thy Word.*

*Thy saints in all this glorious war,  
Shall conquer, though they die;  
They see the triumph from afar,  
By faith's discerning eye.*

*When that lustrous day shall rise,  
And all Thy armies shine  
In robes of victory through the skies  
The glory shall be Thine.*

In the midst of a great trial, Martin Luther's faith was tried to the limit. Someone asked him, "When the church and the clergy and your friends turn against you, Luther, where will you be then?" Luther thought for a moment, and then he replied, "Then, as now, I will be in the hands of Almighty God." Habakkuk wrote in Habakkuk 3:17-18: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." There is something that no one can take, and that is your

salvation. I thank God for that!

### God's Way Is Best

Paul wrote in Hebrews 13:5-6: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." That is a good Scripture. God has promised never to leave us. He will be with us in all our fiery furnaces and all our trials. He will either save us from the furnace of fire or be with us in the furnace of fire. Someday He will take us to Glory, so leave it in the hands of God.

God works beautifully! This only happened once in our lives, but in this particular situation, we were scheduled to go to a revival meeting. My wife and I did not feel that we were to go, but we had our plane tickets. As we were sitting around the table with our children talking about some concerns that we had and feeling that we needed to stay home, the phone rang. Someone called and said something had happened to a brother. He was taken by ambulance to the hospital. Then we knew why God had told us to stay home. We went to the hospital to see the brother, and he was hooked up to machines and thrashing in the bed with pain. I walked over, put my hand on his shoulder, and said, "This is Brother Stegmeier."

He said, "Oh, praise God!" Then he just lay there as quiet as could be. The doctor said, "Did you see what came over him?" It was God.

In the course of that afternoon and evening, we were standing by, and his wife was sitting at the end of his bed. The doctor walked up to her and asked, "How are you doing?" I remember vividly, she said, "This is all in the hands of God." It looked like he was going to get better, so I went home late that night. Early the next morning I received a call, saying, "He is with the Lord." If we could just sink more into the will of God, we would be a happier people. We are part of the Church of God, and God wants us to be all that He

wants us to be.

God has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. I repeat, He will be with us in all our fiery furnaces and our trials. He will either save us from the furnace of fire or be there with us in the fiery furnace. He will never leave us alone. What would you do if God did not deliver you? What would your actions or reactions be? What would you do if God did not heal you? We know that God can meet our every need, whether it is healing, financial help, or to mend your broken home. However, if God does not, will you continue to trust Him, love Him, and serve Him? You must.

Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, [Sometimes we have to be quiet. I often tell the Lord, 'God, help me to learn this lesson because it is a grievous one, and I do not want to repeat it.'] to them who are the called according to his purpose." Everything that happens to us is working for our good, and we should make the best of it.

In closing, I thought of Joseph. What an example! He said in Genesis 50:20 as he looked in the faces of his eleven brothers, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Saint of God, remember, God has a definite plan for your life. He does not always work with you in the way you think He should, but His way is the best way.

We sing an old Church of God song entitled "God's Way Is Best." We are so privileged in the Church of God to have what we have. God has given us the ultimate Truth. Let us give ourselves to that Truth in a greater way.

(Compact Disc TR-1023)

**Plan Ahead for Eternity**  
*Remember . . .  
it wasn't raining when  
Noah built the ark!*

*[Esp. for Young People—continued from p. 14]*  
daily communication with God. You do not always have to be by yourself in your closet with your door closed. You can pray wherever you are throughout the day, whether you are riding in a car, washing dishes, or laboring at work. You can talk to God anywhere, but you need to do it daily. Sometimes it is necessary to find a spot alone so that you can concentrate more. If you are working or people are talking to you all the time, it is hard to really think about what you are praying for, and you get distracted. It is good to get alone and pray. The more you separate yourself to pray, the closer you will grow to God. James 5:16b reads, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

The second ingredient necessary for building a good, solid foundation is Bible study. Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This is another way of communicating with God. Bible study strengthens your connection with Him. The flesh is going to battle you to stay out of the Word of God, but you cannot let it win. If you went days or weeks without talking to your best friend, your relationship might grow weak. You need to communicate with God through prayer and Bible study, and let Him guide you.

Through studying the Bible, God shows you the direction that He wants you to go. Proverbs 3:5-6 reads: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." God's Word is His way of speaking to you. You speak to Him through prayer, and He speaks to you through His Word to give you direction or to show you areas where you need to move up in your life. The Bible gives us greater understanding of the love, wrath, and the nature of God, so you need to read it so that you can learn about Him. John 20:31 says, "But these are

written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

The third ingredient for building a good foundation is daily meditation. Every day you need to meditate on the things of God. You can sit and ask God what He would have you to think on today. Maybe it will be on what you read in the Bible; just sit and think about it. Also, you can think while you are driving a car, mowing the lawn, fishing, washing the dishes, or whatever you are doing. Just think on the good things of God. Philippians 4:8 tells you what you should think on: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

The fourth ingredient necessary for building a strong foundation is attending church regularly, attending youth functions, and attending prayer services. Growing in Christ comes from attending church. You need to hear the Word so that you know what you should do to live for God. As we read about Jesus, we find that it was His custom to go to the temple. Luke 4:16 tells us that. There is more than just attending the church services. You need to get involved. You do not always have to sing a song or have a testimony, but you can raise your hand and amen the preacher. It helps the man of God when he hears the amens. You can sing the congregational songs. You should not just sit in the church services with your arms crossed and look at the song director as he sings. Also, you need to pay attention as the preacher is bringing the message so that you can hear how you should live. It is good to take notes and follow along in your Bible. You should not just sit there to take up a seat.

The fifth ingredient that helps to

build a solid foundation is staying true in the test or the trial. Even though you do not like going through trials, they are necessary for growth. Acts 14:22 says, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." You are going to face hard times, but they will strengthen your foundation and give you a better relationship with God.

The sixth and last ingredient that I want to talk about is doing extra things, such as canvassing with the young people or just going out and inviting people to church. It is a good thing that strengthens your relationship with God. It is like adding salt to roast beef. Also, you can volunteer to work on the church building or the grounds. These things help strengthen your relationship with God.

Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." You need to flee from youthful lust and follow righteousness.

What happens if you do not have a strong foundation? What are the consequences of having a weak foundation? Matthew 13:1-9 reads: "The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But

other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Verses 18-23 read: "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Here we read what happens if you do not get yourself rooted in the Word of God. Verse 20 tells us that

he received the word "anon with joy." The word *anon* means "for a short time or presently." In other words, he received the word gladly for a short time. You need to receive the word gladly, but not for just a short time. You need to keep being glad at the things that you hear and continue with God.

In verse 21 we read that the word did not take root in him, and when tribulation or persecution came, he was offended. Could this possibly be speaking of you? Are you not letting the Word take root, not living all that you hear? Are you determined that once you are out of your parent's house, you are going to start hanging out with your friends and quit coming to church? That is not the way it should be.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." These are more than words on a page; this is God's Word, and these words are true. Young person, if you do not get established now, you will probably fall away. You need to let the Word take root in your heart while you are young so that you do not ruin your reputation

or end up spending eternity in hell.

I plead with you to build strong, to get established in the things of God now, and to get really close to Him so that when persecution or tribulation arises, you will not fall away. Again, Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

Again, Luke 6:46-49 reads: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great."

Brother T. J. Foster

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## Meeting Announcements

### **Newton, KS**

May 12-18

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 400 N. Meridian, Newton, KS 67114

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, Ohio

Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7:00 p.m.; Sat. 10:00 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.; Sun. 10:45 a.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Sandy Killfoil @ 316-842-5127

### **Minerva, OH**

May 14-18

**REVIVAL:** Mt. Zion Church of God, 13353 Lincoln St. SE, Minerva, OH 44657

Evangelist: Brother Roger Decker, Newark, Ohio

Service times: Wed.-Sat. 7:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:00 a.m. & 5:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Leamon Whitehead, 402 Chestnut St., Minerva, OH 44657. Telephone: 330-868-1016

### **KENSETT, AR**

May 23-25

**FELLOWSHIP MEETING:** Kensett Church of God, 409 Southeast 2<sup>nd</sup> St., Kensett, AR 72082

Service times: Fri. 7:00 p.m., Sat. (Dinner @ 3:00 p.m.) 7:00 p.m.;

Sun. 11:00 a.m. (Dinner after morning service) & 6:00 p.m.

For further information contact: Pastor Calvin L. Foster

Telephone: 501-742-3006 or 501-742-3961

# Spring Camp Meeting June 15-22

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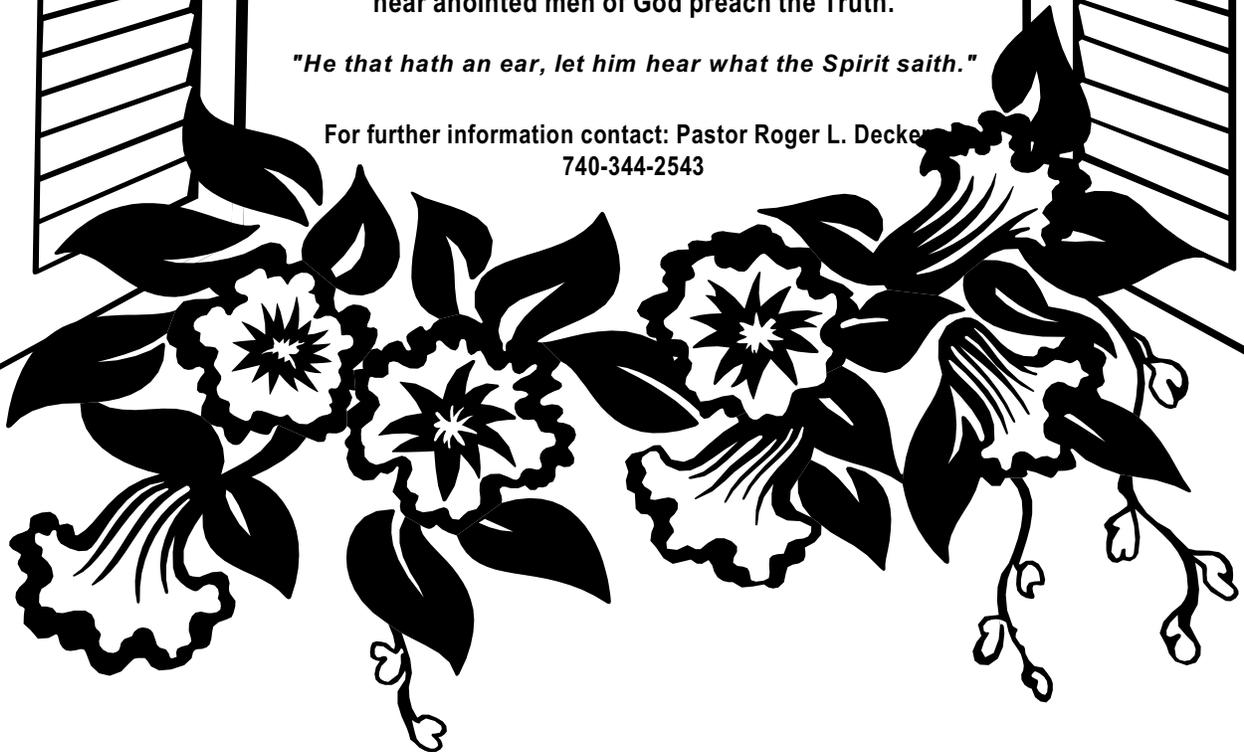
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For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker  
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