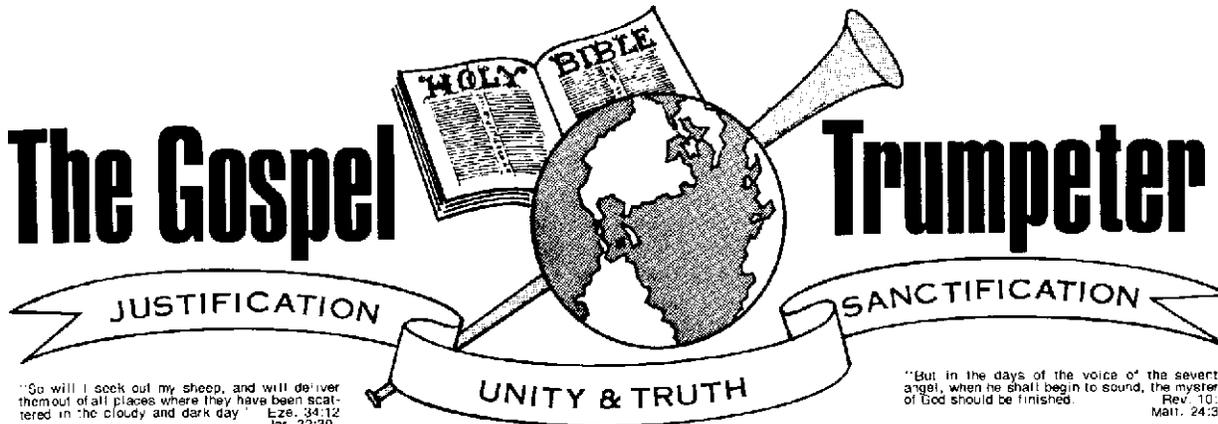


# The Gospel Trumpeter



JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 45 April 2015 No. 4



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?"

# Guest Editorial

## THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER USPS #871620

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

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

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

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

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

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Vol. 45 April 2015 No. 4

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Philippines 4:11

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. . . . And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

1 Timothy 6:6,8

## Being Content

Being truly content is one of the greatest treasures a person can possess in this life. Almost everywhere you look, people are discontented. They are unhappy with life in general, because nothing ever seems to go right for them. They have one trial or hard place after another, and they think their situations will never get better.

As children of God, we must not allow the problems and the misfortunes that come our way to take away our contentment. Disappointment, distress, persecution, and trial can come to everyone. These reverses are not designed to rob a person of peace and contentment. Instead, reverses can help one to grow spiritually. Jesus said in John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace [this peace brings contentment and quietness]. In the world ye shall have tribulation [trouble]: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Because Christ overcame, we, too, can overcome.

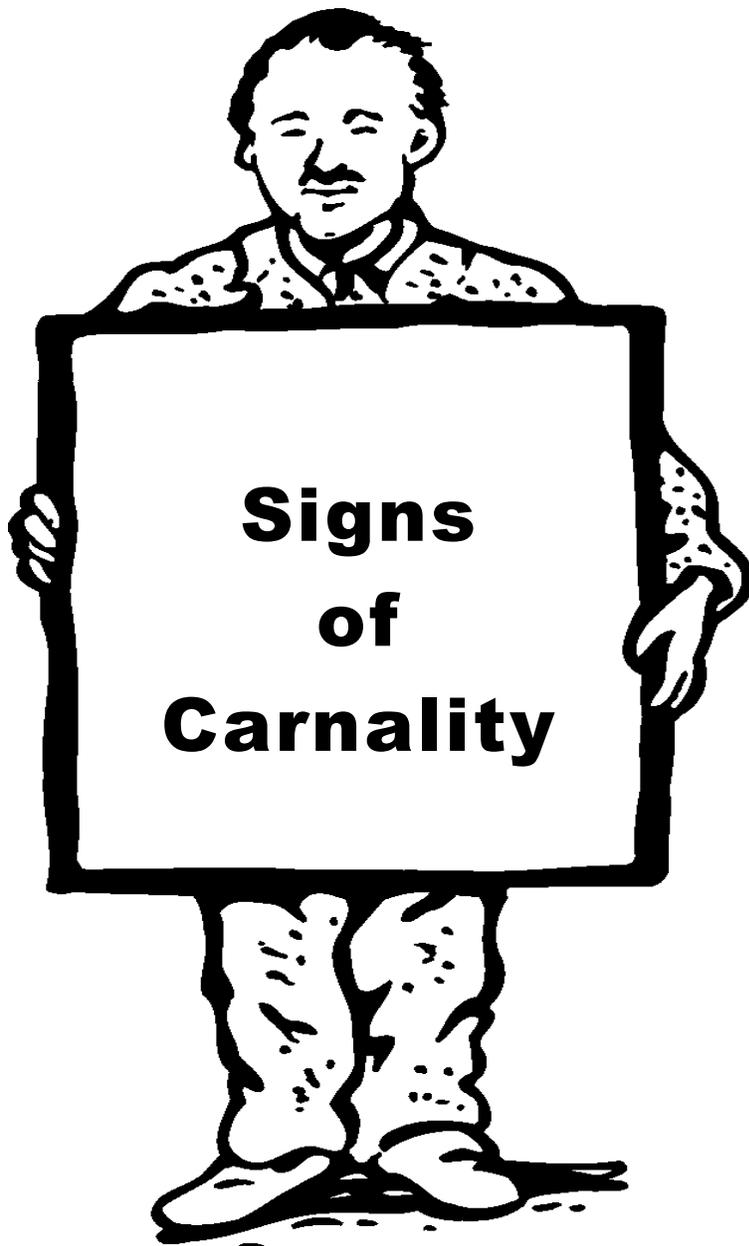
Becoming discontented over situations will breed unbelief and, therefore, will lead one to sin. You may recall how God so miraculously delivered the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. God performed many wonderful miracles for them. The Lord kept every promise that He

made to them. When He led the people through the wilderness to prove them, they became discouraged with the way. Soon they began to murmur and complain against God and Moses. Their discontentment and murmuring stirred the Lord's anger to the place where one time He sent fiery serpents among them; thus, many were destroyed.

We may not always understand why these undesirable conditions must come our way. However, we would be wise to keep our trust in His never-failing love and grace. It is well to remember that our Heavenly Father will never allow anything to come upon us beyond what we can bear. He has a plan and a purpose in each hard place that you go through. Romans 8:28 brings encouragement to us as the Apostle Paul wrote, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Also, in Hebrews 13:5 we read this beautiful promise: ". . . for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Contentment is not something sent down from Heaven as a special gift, nor is it laziness where one does not care what happens. Contentment is a submitted state of heart and mind, knowing that God is in control of

[continued on page 26]



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

### **Spiritual Hindrances**

The Corinthian church was a diverse congregation. Many different cultures comprised this congregation. There were proselyte Jews, Orthodox Jews, and pagans. Some people were merchants, some were sailors, and some were of various other professions. Many of them brought their past lives with them, such as their ideas and their past dealings.

The Apostle Paul was very instrumental in the building of this congregation. No doubt, he felt the responsibility of writing to them to clear up some misunderstandings that had prevailed. In 1 Corinthians 3:10 Paul wrote, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder [not just a master builder, but a *wise* master builder], I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed

*1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.*

*2 I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.*

*3 For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*

*4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*

*5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?*

*6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.*

*7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*

*8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*

*9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*

how he buildeth thereupon." The congregation in the city of Corinth was very diverse, and many problems were associated with this congregation.

Paul learned about the problems at Corinth through two different sources: by word of mouth and by letter. We read in 1 Corinthians 1:11, "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you." Paul

received this information by word of mouth. He also received letters regarding some problems. First Corinthians 7:1 says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Some problems in the Corinthian congregation were division, immorality, the judging of one another, the lack of discipline, problems with marriage and divorce, the eating of meat, public worship, the Lord's Supper, the use of spiritual gifts, love, the misuse of tongues, and the Resurrection. You can read from one chapter to the next, all the way through that Epistle, and find problem after problem that the Apostle Paul dealt with. It took the wisdom of God bestowed upon Paul to deal with so many problems. It is very evident that God gave him much wisdom.

I want to deal with one of the main contributors to their problems, and that was carnality. This word as it is used in the third chapter came from the word *sarkinos*, which means "to govern by human nature, controlled by animal appetites instead of by the Spirit of God." It also means "fleshly." What was happening at Corinth? Why was Paul so burdened to write to the congregation at Corinth? The church was not mature; it was not progressing spiritually.

First Corinthians 1:6-7 says: "Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The gifts were present, the gifts were available, and the gifts were active; but Corinth was in a carnal atmosphere that was holding them back from progressing.

First Corinthians 1:2 says, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." They were sanctified, according to the writings of the Apostle Paul. First Corinthians 6:11

says, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

### "Be Perfectly Joined Together"

Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:10 that they needed to speak the same thing. Why did he say that? That which they were speaking was causing division. Let us look at a few verses. First Corinthians 1:10-13 states: "Now I beseech you, brethren [notice what he called them], by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you [when he told them to 'all speak the same thing,' he was not saying there are not different callings or different ministries of presenting those callings]; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

Paul admonished the brethren at Corinth to "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." What the Corinthian brethren were speaking was causing division. On what did they need to be in agreement? Why was Paul rebuking them? They needed to preach that Christ is not divided. How do we know? Because what they were preaching was causing division, and he mentioned that some said they were of Cephas, some of Apollos, and some of Paul. One of the first signs of carnality is when people divide over preachers. It is right in the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul said they needed to speak the same thing. What did they need to speak? Christ is not divided. Who were those min-

isters? They were just laborers for God. Paul called them brethren. Paul was trying to tell them that they were of the same household; therefore, they should be perfectly joined together and in the same mind and in the same judgment. This division that Paul dealt with had not broken away from the congregation, but it was gathering strength. It needed to be headed off before it broke out of the congregation.

### Lacking Spiritual Understanding

The Apostle Paul mentioned four factions in the Corinthian congregation: a faction that followed Paul, one that followed Apollos, another that followed Cephas, and one that said they were following Christ. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were leaders in that congregation, but there was no division between the leaders; they were of the same mind. These leaders were not trying to draw people to themselves.

There were some reasons that these men were chosen. One commentator said that Paul was chosen because he preached the Gospel of Christian liberty and the end of the Law. Some chose Apollos because he was a very elegant speaker and well versed in the Scriptures. Others chose Cephas because he was one of the most legalistic. No doubt, there were some in the congregation who still questioned turning from the old Law. Then there were those who said they belonged to Christ. These factions were of great concern, and Paul let them know this by sending them a letter to tell them that they were fleshly, or carnal. They were walking as the natural man walks.

Again, Paul said in our Scripture text: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: [What is carnality?] for whereas there is among you envying, and

strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

The condition that the Corinthians had gotten themselves into troubled the Apostle Paul. It was not the fact that the Corinthians were made of flesh—everybody is, but rather the fact that they were allowing the flesh to guide their actions. Paul called them "babes in Christ" in 1 Corinthians 3:1. Who were those babes? They were those who lacked spiritual understanding and knowledge. If you will look back at your own experience when you were first born into the Kingdom of God, you will see that you lacked knowledge, understanding, and guidance as a young Christian, which you received later through teaching and preaching. You were as a newborn baby.

When a baby is first born, he relies fully on his mother and father and cleaves to his mother, more so than his father. She is the first one whom he sees when he comes into the world. His mother feeds, nourishes, and cares for him.

The congregation at Corinth lacked spiritual understanding and knowledge. The people had been newly born into the Kingdom of God, and as babes, they were unable to understand the profound doctrines of the Christian faith. They were believers in Christ; they were converted persons, yet they were as babes in understanding, knowledge, and experience.

### What Comes Out of Carnality?

Why did the Apostle Paul level such a strong rebuke on the congregation at Corinth? It was their partisan attitude, their strife, and their factions that stirred him. He communicated with the house of Chloe. In the first seven chapters of 1 Corinthians, that is what Paul dealt with. From the seventh chapter on, he dealt with the problems that were revealed to him in a letter. The problems broke out into the congregation, and many people were troubled.

Paul had great confidence in the house of Chloe. He wrote to the congregation from Ephesus. There was division in the congregation, so Paul told the people they were carnal. The congregation had stalemated. They were still in the baby state, spiritually speaking, and the congregation could not go forward or mature as they should have until they allowed human wisdom and carnal guidance to be turned over to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They had to be fed with milk and not with meat.

You know what milk is for; it is for babies. There is a natural desire for a baby that comes into this world to want milk, but there is a time when that baby begins to want wholesome food. A mother knows when that time comes. As the child matures, the mother begins to wean him and introduces wholesome foods into his diet. As the child continues to mature, he begins to walk and starts to say a few words.

It was very evident to those who informed the Apostle Paul of the problems that some things were working among the congregation at Corinth. Again, 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 reads: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." In other words, they were still babes. What comes out of carnality? You will find envy,

strife, and divisions. When divisions break out in a congregation, envy and strife have begun to work.

Three problems are worthy of noting regarding the people at Corinth. They were wrong in their thoughts, in their words, and in their deeds. Envy reveals the state of the soul. They had inward grudges and disaffection toward one another, and they were separating from one another in the congregation. Strife, or contention, refers to their words. What were they doing? They were disputing and contending about whose party was the best. Each party endeavored to prove that its party was right. They were contending for their rights.

Division refers to their conduct. They could not agree, and they contended with one another until they separated. Envy and holding grudges led to strife and evil speakings. This led to divisions and fixed parties. Therefore, the Apostle Paul said, "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" In so many words, Paul was saying, "You act the same way the people of the world act, and you have no more spirit of religion than they do; you act worldly." They were acting worldly, only they were doing it under the guise of, or under the name of, the Church of God.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Let me give you an illustration. Suppose I were to plant a garden. Let us say that I put the seeds in the ground, and one of my sons comes along and waters the seeds that I have planted. Neither of us could take credit for making those seeds grow. Neither of us could take credit for the increase that would come from that garden. God would give the increase.

First Corinthians 3:7-9 reads: "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that water-

eth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour [two or three people may work on one project, but God will reward each one individually]. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."

We cannot take credit for the increase in the garden any more than we can take credit for any increase in a congregation. We might labor, but it is God who gives the increase. We might pray for certain individuals and visit them several times, but God gives the increase. Who are we? We are nothing but servants, or laborers. There is no big I or little you in the Kingdom of God. We are laborers together. We are one, and God will not leave anyone out. Each one receives rewards for his own labor. We are one together with Christ.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then, as workers together with him, [If you start working and you are working without Him, you have a problem. You have received your reward. What is it? The applause of men.] beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Carnality is like walking on thin ice: it is ready to take one into the depths of sin when he gets caught up in it. It is almost like a door that is ready to open. There is carnality in many churches today, not just back at Corinth.

### **Be Filled With the Holy Spirit**

At Corinth, carnality had gained such momentum that the people were ready to break out into division. No doubt, some were becoming jealous over the gifts of others, maybe wishing one would fall or mess up. Others might have been jealous over the abilities of others to testify, to pray, to sing, or to play an instrument. Strife and factions began to surface as a result. This thing was going on in word and thought, but then the deeds of separating arose. That is what can happen in a congregation. Division starts with

words or thoughts, and then as it progresses, it starts breaking out into factions.

What was the answer to the problems at Corinth? Paul, writing to the Ephesians, stated in Ephesians 5:18, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." I read about a certain preacher who preached from this text. As he began to speak, he said you have to fill a man with something. The world fills up on pleasures and the things of this world, and that affects the saints. The Christian wants to fill himself with the Holy Spirit, and that is the only way to keep from coming under the influence of carnality. That is the only way to keep out envy, strife, and division. Where carnality is, envy, strife, and division begin to work.

When a young man gets up and preaches a message, it is not him; it is God who gives the message. I once heard a story about a young man who was at a large gathering back in the sixth-seal age. He was anxious to preach, and many brethren were there, including some well-known brethren. This young man wanted to preach, and he got an opportunity to do so. He could not wait. He wanted to get in there and show the older ministers that God was using him too.

After he stood up and began to preach, things did not go so well. He thrashed this and thrashed that, but he came out of the pulpit with his head down, feeling defeated. He said to an older minister: "I wonder what happened? I was so zealous for the message, but when I got in the pulpit, it was just a big flop." The older minister said to him, "If you had gone in the way you came out, that would have made the difference." You should never feel that you can do a good job. No matter how many hours I have studied through the week or how well prepared I may feel, I still feel that I cannot do it.

The singers should feel the same way. If any glory is given, it has to

be God who receives the glory. We are not in competition with one another. The singers are not in a singing contest to see who can sing the best or to see who has the best voice. The ministers are not in a contest to see who can preach the best. The players on the instruments do not try to see who can play the instruments the best. Each one does his or her best and leaves the results with God.

Carnality works in many ways to try to destroy congregations. There are ones who are carnal, and they are often irritable, grumpy, or curt. That is not pleasing to God. If that is your condition, do you know what you need? You need more of the Holy Spirit so you can crowd carnal things out of your life.

The congregation at Corinth had stalemated, and it troubled the Apostle Paul. They were walking as men, showing carnality, and allowing separations and divisions to take place. You can tell that this was a heavy burden on Paul. Today a congregation can get stalemated or you can get stalemated individually if you walk as men do. The answer to this problem is very simple, and that is to do as Paul said: "Be filled with the Spirit."

Let the Spirit be your guide and your Comforter. Let the Spirit give you instruction, knowledge, and understanding. Do not lean to your own understanding. Once you do that, you open the gate to all kinds of things. Everybody has an opinion, but there are those who can become very opinionated. You may have your opinion about how this should be done or how that should be done; but remember this: instead of using your opinion against someone, you ought to pray for that person.

Let us take a lesson from the words of the Apostle Paul. Let us not walk as worldly people walk. Let us not walk as the natural man walks. Let us walk under the supervision and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*(Compact Disc TR-1374)*

Hebrews 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Hebrews 2:1 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.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect

so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

# A Warning Against Drifting Away



*Brother Reggie Stegmeier*

## **The Danger of Indifference and Neglect**

There is always a chance of your drifting away from God. Verse 3 of our Scripture text says, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation. . . ?" The word *neglect* means "to fail to care for properly." What could you fail to care for properly? You could fail to properly care for your great salvation. Again, verse 3 reads, "How shall we escape,

if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?"

Verse 14 of our Scripture text says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Verse 3 of the Living Bible says, "What makes us think that we can escape if we are indifferent to this great salvation. . . ?" The word *indifferent* means "uncaring, casual,

nonchalant, uninvolved, unenthusiastic, lukewarm, bored, unmoved, or unresponsive."

There is always a danger that the service of God can become lackadaisical. Some people go to church because of their status in society. They know it is right, but they do not really get involved in this great salvation that was announced by the Lord Jesus Himself.

There is a danger of drifting away from Jesus. Are you drifting

away from your only source of help? Are you drifting away from love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance? Are you drifting away from the family of God, the closest and best friends you have ever known? Are you drifting away from the place where you first met the Lord, from where you saw the Lord work miracles? Are you drifting away from where you once feasted and tasted of the good things of God?

When a person drifts, he has no end in mind. Oh, he might have aspirations, hopes, and dreams; but while he drifts, none of that is on his mind. He is merely riding the waves of this life. He rides emotional highs and emotional lows. He lets circumstances and situations govern and direct his decisions instead of rising above the situations of life. Friend, you must hold on to God regardless of the size of the wave. Some individuals just ride out the waves and drift. You need to include God in all your thoughts and plans. This means including your pastor. A pastor is to rule God's great people in his local congregation. He is concerned about the welfare of souls and the souls of the children.

### **Trust in the Lord**

Proverbs 3:5-6 says: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. [In other words, do not rely on your own way of thinking. No matter how wise, how knowledgeable, or how well instructed you may think you are, it is never wise to rely on your own understanding. You must look to God.] In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." In every aspect of your life, you must acknowledge, "Lord, I'm going to ask You for direction, and regardless of the response You give me, I will obey." That is what God wants you to do. You should not obey only if it is comfortable or only if it is what you already had in mind, but you should

obey whatever God tells you to do.

The Bible lets us know that God places a man over a congregation to feed and to guide that congregation. Psalm 78:70-72 says this: "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands."

Jeremiah 3:15 reads, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." We have two commands that we are told to follow, and if we follow those, we have a promise that we will prosper in this life. Those two commands are to obey and to submit. Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

Sometimes an individual may think he needs to help the pastor along a certain line and instruct him concerning how to do this or that. No, your command as a lay person, or as a saint, is to obey and to submit; that is very simple. Just as a child is to obey and to submit to his parents, likewise this is your responsibility to the pastor. Ezekiel 3:17 states, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." As denoted in our Scripture reading in Hebrews 2:1, the warning in this message is against drifting.

Ephesians, Chapter 2, tells us about the hopeless condition we were in before we met Christ. Verses 10-12 state: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, [That word in Latin means 'be mindful.' In other words, we are to call to remembrance where God brought

us from.] that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." We need to call to remembrance where God brought us from and what God has done in our lives, lest by any means we drift away from these things.

### **Drifting Away From the Soul's Only Help**

Romans, Chapter 1, tells us what befalls the individual who fails to give the glory to God and does not retain God in his thoughts and forgets all about God. Romans 1:21 says, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Verse 28 says, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge [they did not like to remember those things because doing so brought condemnation and made them feel uncomfortable], God gave them over to a reprobate mind [or a mind void of judgment, without the ability to know what is right and what is wrong], to do those things which are not convenient."

Christian friend, without Christ in your life there is no hope. Without the preached Word as your refiner and purifier, there is no refining and no purifying in this life. Without a pastor as your shepherd, protector, and guide, faithfully cultivating your soul, your life would be heading for recklessness and great destruction. If you do not attend a healthy congregation and go where you have the preached Word, and if you do not keep in subjection to God, His Word, and His Spirit, your life is heading for chaos.

Without the church as your support team, there is no support.

Without the saints of God in your life to exhort and encourage you, your life will become dull and of no use to God. When something drifts on the water, whether it is a vessel, a log, or an animal, it just moves with the current and is subject to its surroundings. It may hit a rock, get snagged, or hit the shore. God seeks to be in complete control of your life. You are sure to progress with Him at the helm.

The message is about drifting away from Jesus. I want you to read a poem entitled "Drifting Away From Jesus." It reads:

*Drifting away from Jesus  
With no end in sight,  
Drifting away from all that is good,  
Far from all that is right.*

*Drifting now, just drifting along,  
Relaxed and at ease from labor;  
Sweetly singing the wonder song,  
Unaware of the looming danger.*

*Drifting away with no future plans,  
Consumed with mortal treasures;  
Drunk on a cup of careless woes,  
The plight of the drifter's pleasures.*

*Drifting away from the soul's only  
hope,  
Drifting from the wellspring of life;  
Drifting away from the cure for all  
sin,  
Danger now lurks in sight.*

D. O. Teasley was an old Church of God songwriter who wrote a song in 1911 entitled "Drifting Away From Jesus." The first verse and the refrain read:

*Drifting away from Jesus,  
Far from His gentle fold,  
Wrecked on the waves of sorrow,  
Out in the night so cold.*

*Oh, am I lost forever?  
Lost amid fiendish din?  
Oh, can there be no lifeboat  
On the dark ocean of sin?*

How frightening it would be to know that you were drifting and

suddenly realize that you are about to go over a tremendous waterfall and have no connection with the lifeboat. Maybe you started to doze off to sleep, and just as you started to doze off, you caught yourself and tried to grab something. That is how it is with a drifter as he is drifting along and gets to the edge. That would be a terrible circumstance to be in, not having a rope to pull yourself back. You would not want to be found in that condition. Oh, how serious the thought of drifting away from Jesus really is!

### **Abide in the Ship of Zion**

On the Apostle Paul's voyage to Rome, when faced with a typhoon or a tempestuous wind, he warned the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 27:31). What followed the Apostle's warning? The soldiers cut off the ropes to the lifeboat (a boat some of them thought would allow them a safe way to escape to land), and let the boat drift away. This is a picture of souls who jump ship. If you leave the ship of Zion, the Church of God, you will drift away. It is God who gives us direction.

You had better not jump ship when the going gets a little tough. You need to stay right in the ship of Zion and be faithful. Right will always prevail. There is salvation in no other name but Jesus. You had better not drift away from your only hope. The word *drift* means "course or current; to be carried slowly." This is the deceptive part about drifting. It is a slow progression by a current of air or water moved passively, inactively without interest, to digress, to deviate, to wander, or to stray. It is a continuous slow movement from one place to another. It is the deviation of a vessel, an aircraft, or a projectile from its intended or expected course, as the results of currents or winds. Difficult times move it off its course, and it drifts. Drifting is a steady movement or development from one

thing toward another, a state of inaction or indecision, deviation, a movement away from a set course, or to be carried by currents.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This is not about a man who was drifting.

In Acts we can read about King Agrippa; he was just the opposite of Paul. Agrippa said to Paul in Acts 26:28, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Paul was fully persuaded, but King Agrippa was merely almost persuaded. The only way you will ever make it to Heaven is to be *fully* persuaded. If you move passively, digress, stray, or move away from God in the toughest times of life, becoming inactive, indecisive, or lethargic, you will not make it in the end. It is a strait road to Heaven, and the most minute deviation from that strait road will prove to be catastrophic in the end. Drifting away from Jesus is a danger.

Are you drifting along through life? Are you aware of a deviation in your life from where you once stood with God? Have you begun to wander with no goal in mind? Have you become a fugitive, leaving the fold of God, a vagabond or a wanderer? Remember that was a title given to Cain, the first murderer in the Bible. He was called a vagabond in Genesis 4:12. Someone once said, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." Do you have a plan in place to make it to Heaven?

## Lacking Spiritual Strength

When I was teaching Science one day, I read an article on plankton. I want to share a few things about that, because the word *plankton* in Greek means "drifter." Proverbs 6:6 says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." I want you to consider the ways of plankton. Plankton refers to an organism that lives in the water, passively floating, drifting along. It is incapable of swimming against the current.

Plankton is a catchall term for any living organism that floats freely in the ocean. Plankton is at the mercy of the currents. These organisms include drifting animals, plants, algae, and many other things in the seas, oceans, and bodies of fresh water. The word *plankton* in Greek also means "errant, or straying from the proper course or standards; wanderer." One source said, "There are more plankton than any other living things in the world."

Spiritually speaking, this is true of many people. Many people are merely holding a profession with no spiritual life. They lack an up-to-date experience with Christ in their lives. Plankton are too weak to swim against the current. So it is with those who drift spiritually. They cease to tap into the spiritual strength of God, His Word, and His Spirit, and they drift along. They spend most of their days drifting with the tide near the surface of the water. Drifters have what we call a superficial experience. They have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of it. They have a name that they are living, but spiritually they are dead. Are you a drifter?

We find an allegory, which is used to reveal some hidden meaning, in Proverbs 24:30-34: "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it

well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

I want you to look at some warning signs of drifting. When the regression is a little at a time, it is hardly noticeable. The devil works in centimeters, not meters. The soul that is slothful, or lukewarm, and drifting is on his way into a deep sleep. He has great difficulty recognizing the devil's sly and deceptive works.

My mind went to Samson in Judges, Chapter 16. Samson flirted with temptation in Delilah's lap. Delilah was after the source of his strength, and Samson camouflaged it for some time, but eventually he revealed it. When Samson revealed his source of strength, the Spirit of God left him. The Bible says when he tried to do the things that he once did and relied on his strength, he knew not that God had departed from him; then it was too late. Why did Samson not know that the Spirit of God had departed from him? He had drifted into that spiritual state by flirting with temptation. How did Delilah win this battle? She wooed him just a little at a time until he finally gave in to her pleading for his secret, and then he fell asleep. Drifters refuse to work out their salvation. They fail to consider their end. Thinking that far down the road is just too much work.

Drifting can work on any one of us. Psalm 107:2 tells us, "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so." If God has done a work in your life, He demands that you let others know. Verse 15 says, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness." The Psalmist was beseeching the brethren to praise God. Where should they praise Him? Verse 32 says, "Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders." Too often what is the move today? People quench the Spirit and say: "Do not get so worked up. Be

quiet." They think it is acceptable to go to a sports event and shout and jump around, but they think church people should be really quiet: "Shh! I'm resting. Don't be so loud!" That is what the devil would like to get us to do.

## Slothfulness

What are the warning signs of drifting? Let us look at these to see where the Word finds you. Some people profess and claim to be very spiritual, but the real testing time is when they sit under the Word of God. That reveals their true nature. When the man of God starts preaching the Word of God, they may start squirming as though they are sitting on a hot pad. Why? They have not measured up to the Word of God. You need to sit under the Word of God to see what you really are.

What is the first sign of drifting? Look again at the allegory in Proverbs 24:30, which begins, "I went by the field of the slothful. . . ." I believe one of the first signs of drifting is slothfulness. What does the word *slothful* mean? It means "to be lazy, idle, inactive, apathetic." One who is slothful in spiritual matters is uninterested in the things of God. When it comes time for visitation, the slothful man says: "Oh, I'm too tired" or "I have too much to do. I have books to read, bills to pay, and other things to take care of."

I am reminded of a story that my grandmother has told us many times. Her father, Brother W. A. Wilson, had an evangelist staying with them in their home. Brother Wilson got a call in the middle of the night to go and pray for someone who was sick. He went in the evangelist's room and said, "Brother, I've got to go out to a sister's home; she's very sick, and I need to pray for her."

The evangelist said, "Oh, Brother Wilson, if you don't mind, I'll stay here in bed and pray for her. I'll agree in prayer. You go on."

Brother Wilson said: "Well, I don't go into a woman's home with-

out someone with me." He said to my grandmother and one of her sisters, "You girls come with me"; so they went with him. All the way to that sister's home, the girls were praying, "God, take the sleep from that brother. Don't let him sleep a bit." When they returned home, that brother said: "Oh, Brother Wilson, I had a terrible time getting back to sleep. I'll never do that again."

We are pulled in so many directions in the day in which we live. So many demands are placed upon us. If you are a father, you probably know what I am talking about. We have so many responsibilities. You have yourself, your wife, your children, and your workload. It would be easy to let the things of God take a backseat, so to speak, but you must labor daily to keep God first in your lives.

You should be in the Bible daily to study God's Word, to meditate on it, and you should pray daily. If you do not, slothfulness will work on you. This does not mean that you are a lazy individual. You may be a very hard worker, but if you are inactive in the things of God, you can become slothful in these areas. Are you inactive in the things of God? A drifter is slothful. Proverbs 21:25 reads, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour."

### **Being Void of Understanding**

What is another warning sign of drifting? Going back to the allegory in Proverbs 24:30, we read, "... and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding." Being void of understanding is another warning sign. Some individuals lack an understanding of God and His Word. Drifters claim to know God and claim to know His Word, but their actions reveal that they are void of His understanding. This is very apparent and easily discerned because their decisions are fleshly instead of spiritually governed. Where do you get your understanding?

What have drifters wandered away from? Psalm 119:104 says, "Through thy precepts [God's Word] I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." First Corinthians 2:10 states, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." God gives you understanding through His Spirit.

According to Jeremiah 3:15, God gives pastors who feed you with knowledge and understanding. Where does understanding come from? It comes from God's Word, from the Holy Spirit, and from God's man. Are those the sources of your spiritual food? God's Word, His Spirit, and His ministry are the three operating agents that must be the source of your spiritual food. If they are, they will lead you in a plain path and in the ways of the Lord. If God's Word, His Spirit, and His ministry are your sole sources of spiritual food, they will not contradict Bible principles. They will lead you in the ways of God.

Hebrews 10:25 says not to forsake assembling together with the saints of God. If you neglect this and attempt to justify your neglect, your justification is not coming from these three sources. It is coming from some other agent. I repeat, your spiritual food must come from God's Word, His Spirit, and His ministry. If you feed on anything else, you will starve your soul, and you will most certainly go astray or drift from the Truth.

Proverbs 21:16 says, "The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead." Proverbs 27:8 reads, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." If you are saved, God has placed you in the body of Christ. He places you not only in the body universally but also in the local body, or the local assembly.

God intends that you be a tree planted by the waters of the Word and the Spirit and that you grow. Even the animal kingdom knows its

place and senses the dangers of leaving that place. Many times animals act smarter than humans because they know their place and stay there. Isaiah 1:3 reads, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

You can read about Balaam and his donkey in Numbers, Chapter 22. God told Balaam not to go and curse Israel, but Balaam persisted and went anyway. God was angry, so He sent an angel of the Lord to stand in the way with his sword drawn. The donkey would not go through a narrow place when she saw the angel with the sword. However, Balaam was hardheaded, so he demanded her to go on and beat that poor donkey.

Finally, the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord and the sword. Saint of God, you cannot force your way. God is in control, and you must acquiesce to His will. You need His knowledge in all your ways. Life is too complicated without Him. You need God to direct you regarding the decisions you need to make for your children. As they get older in life, those decisions become more complicated. You may wonder, "How shall I deal with these things?" You need understanding, and God wants to give it to you.

When a person is drifting, he is usually completely unaware of his condition. The devil has rocked him to sleep. That is one reason that you need the Word and the Spirit. Also, you need a good pastor to help show you your true condition. A drifter does not always realize what his condition is. He is just coasting through life. Where do you stand before God? God's Word will show you.

### **Becoming Overgrown With Thorns**

What is another warning sign of drifting? A person's life becomes overgrown. Proverbs 24:31 says,

"And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof." I want you to notice that the field was unkempt. If you drive out through the country, you can see beautiful fields. Some fields have been cultivated, planted with good seed, watered, and kept free from weeds. The field that has become overgrown with weeds is a field of neglect, one that has been let go. There are all kinds of weeds present in that field. This is the reason our Scripture reading states, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." To neglect something is to recognize a need but to ignore it, to know but to fail to do something, to admit but not to administer. If you neglect God, He will neglect you.

Have you ever ignored a mechanical problem with your car, hoping that it would go away? Many times the problem does not go away; it just gets worse. So it is with your spiritual being. You cannot let something go and hope it will work out. You need to take care of it. You are not going to escape if you neglect to properly care for that need immediately. A neglectful person, or a drifter, will not escape eternal damnation. Paul said you have to work out your own salvation. You must work it out. How? Paul said you must do it "with fear and trembling."

What is another warning sign of a drifter? The Bible says in Proverbs 24:21, "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change." What are the "thorns" that cause an individual to drift far from Jesus? If you study the parable of the sower, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, you will find that Jesus let us know very plainly what these thorns are. One thing He mentioned in Matthew 13:22 was that thorns are "the care of this world." The Greek says "the care of the age."

What is one big care of the age

today? It is electronics. If you look back ten, fifteen, or twenty years, you will realize that cares were a lot less than they are today. I did not have a cell phone until I was out of high school. Now some children have cell phones and ipads in the fifth grade. While these devices have many wonderful uses, you must be very careful that they do not rob you of your time. You can become overoccupied with them. You can sit down and become enveloped in a game for two or three hours and have no thought about time. However, if you sit down and read the Bible for twenty minutes, it may seem to be a real chore. I am not against these devices, but you have to be careful.

The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This is not just for the pastor. Everyone should make a daily habit of studying the Bible. If you will do this, one sure thing is, you will understand your problem if you study the Book.

### **Becoming Unfruitful**

Going back to Matthew 13:22, you will find what else these thorns represent. Jesus also said the thorns are "the deceitfulness of riches." Sometimes people spend so much money that they are under a terrible financial burden. God can help you with your finances. The deceitfulness of riches chokes the Word and actually causes an individual to become unfruitful, or unproductive.

Mark's Gospel gives another aspect of these thorns. Mark talked about lust, or strong desires. Instead of desiring to be with the saints of God, you have a strong desire to be somewhere else. That is a thorn. These thorns enter your life only because you let them. They enter in and "choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19). Thorns are things that steal your time away from seeking first things first and from having a productive spiritual

life. They are worldly cares. These things may not be evil at all. Some are very useful devices, yet they rob you of your time, and they rob your mind. These things will steal time that could be used for God.

In Luke 21:34 Jesus warned, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, [What does that word mean? It is excessiveness, or having too much in this life.] and drunkenness [not just on wine or strong drink, but on the pleasures of this life], and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

Luke lets us know that these thorns are the pleasures of this life. The thorns can also be the lust of other things. The devil sows these thorns, and if they are allowed to enter the body and mind, they will choke out God's Word, and that individual will become unproductive and unfruitful, and he will drift away.

Again, Proverbs 24:31 tells us that "thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." What did the thorns cause? The thorns caused the wall to be covered and broken down. This tells me that the people's vision was obstructed. The cares of this life and the thorns choked the Word, and their vision became obstructed, or unclear.

What does the wall that was broken down represent? It represents the wall of salvation. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish [in other words, when people do not have a vision of God, a vision of His Word, a vision of how they are to live in this life, they run wild, or unrestrained]: but he that keepeth [or obeys] the law, happy is he."

In 1 Samuel 3:1, in Eli's day, when God was calling Samuel, we read, "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious [that word means *rare*] in those days; there was no open vision." If you study the Hebrew there, you

will find that it means there were not many visions. When the Bible is a closed Book, when there is not much reading of God's Word, there are very few visions. Visions come from reading and obeying God's Word. Much evil was present in Eli's generation, and it was because they had a dim and a closed vision. We need God's Word as never before. How much space did you give God's Word today? How about yesterday or the day before?

Proverbs 4:20-21 lets us know that we must not drift from God's Word. As a nation, I do not believe that we give God's Word the rightful place we should in our individual lives. Do you really give God's Word its rightful place in your own life? Do you spend time every day in God's Word? This is where the vision comes from.

Proverbs 4:20-21 says this: "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart." Our wall of defense against the enemy of souls is salvation. Jesus Christ is our Rock of defense. Those gates are opened to let God's blessings in, and they are closed to keep unbelief and discouragement out. What opens these gates? The Bible says that praise opens them. Are your gates open? If they are not open with praise, they are closed, and you are drifting. If thorns are left unattended in your life and you continue to ignore their deceitful beauty, you will drift. Your spiritual life will be choked, and you will ultimately die spiritually.

### Receiving Instruction

Again, Proverbs 24:32-34 reads: "Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man."

The final warning sign of drifting laid out in this allegory is

letting down just a little at a time, having a little less of a tight grip on the things of God, a little less persuasion. For example, you may say: "Well, those things were important, but I don't see them as being so important anymore. The woman having uncut hair, that's for bygone days. I don't really see that any more. I don't see modesty as being important anymore either."

Having a little less of a tight grip, a little less persuasion, a little less conviction, a little less dedication, a little less enthusiasm, and a little less zeal for the things of God is drifting. If you have a little less shouting, testifying, singing, worshiping, and attending church, what happens? You will drift from God. Many people have an attitude of ease, indifference, complacency, lukewarmness, and idleness. The problem for God's people is not so much in what we know, but it is in what we do with what we know.

Have you let down in your experience with God? Have you drifted? It is a very subtle thing, and it is so easy to do. If you do not read or pray for a day, that could turn into three or four days, and then a week. That is how the devil works. Saint of God, do not let down in the least. If you are a songwriter, you

should keep writing songs. Where are the seventh-seal songs? I do not see too many. Why is that? People are not reading the Book. There is no open vision because the Bible is rare in their lives. The messages for our songs, our poems, and our books come from studying the Bible.

What place does the Bible have in your individual life? Have you drifted away from Jesus? This is a serious thing. I cannot put it as serious as it is. I am a young man, and I get concerned when I look at the older generation as it is dying off. Where are the Samuels of today? Where are the Daniels of today? Where are the Timothys of our generation? Where are the Ruths of today? We need them *today*, and it starts by getting a good vision of Jesus Christ. If you have drifted, God wants you to crouch right up to Him and pour out your heart to Him. You need to get your experience attached right back into God; get grafted back into the vine and really get a vision of God. Are you just going through the motions? Do you just go to church out of routine or is it just the thing to do. Do you really have an up-to-date experience with God?

*(Compact Disc TR-1057)*

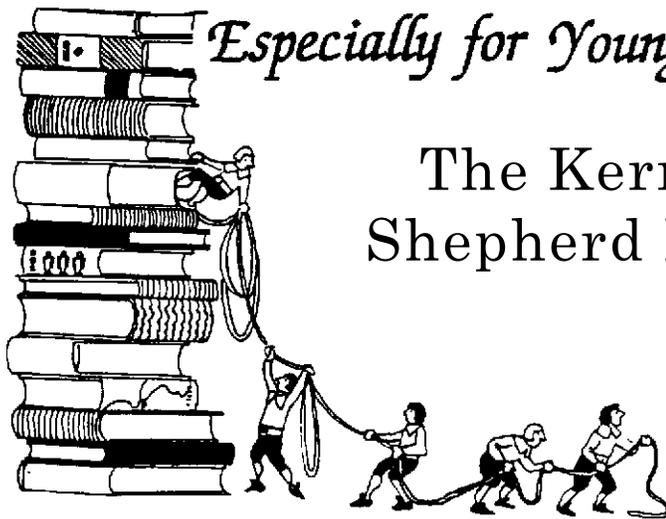
## COMPLETE CONSECRATION

Suppose a mother gives her child a beautiful plant in bloom and tells her to carry it to a sick friend. The child takes the plant away, and when she reaches the friend's door, she plucks off one leaf and gives it to her, keeping the plant itself. Then afterwards, once a week, she plucks off another leaf or a bud or flower and takes it to the friend, still retaining the plant. Has she obeyed? Nothing but the giving of the whole plant would be obedience. Yet God asks for all your life—your heart, soul, mind, and strength. You pluck off a little leaf of love now and then, or a flower of affection, and give these little things to Him, keeping the life itself. Should you not say, "Let Him take all"?

Selected

*Especially for Young People*

## The Kerry Shepherd Boy



Many years ago I was requested to go to see a poor boy who was dying in a lonely and rather inaccessible district in the west of Ireland. After upwards of an hour's toilsome walking (for the roads which in some places led over steep hills were in others scarcely passable on account of the heavy marshes), on entering the little cottage I looked around, and at first found no sign of any inhabitant, except an old woman who sat crouching over the embers of a peat fire. She rose as I entered, and with natural courtesy of the Irish poor, offered me the low chair, or rather stool, on which she had been seated.

I thanked her, and passing on to the object of my visit, discovered in one corner of the hut a heap of straw, on which lay the poor sufferer. Some scanty covering, probably his own wearing apparel, had been thrown over him, but as to bed or bed clothes there were none discernible in this humble dwelling. I approached, and saw a young lad about seventeen or eighteen years of age, evidently in a state of extreme suffering and exhaustion, and it was to be feared, in the last stage of consumption. His eyes were closed, but he opened them on my approach and stared at me with a kind of wild wonder, like a frightened animal. I told him as quietly as possible who I was and for what purpose I had come and

put a few of the simplest questions to him respecting his hope of salvation. He answered nothing; he appeared totally unconscious of my meaning. On pressing him further and speaking to him kindly and affectionately, he looked up, and I ascertained from the few words he uttered that he had heard something of a God and a future judgment, but he had hardly been taught to read. The Holy Scriptures were a sealed Book to him, and he was consequently altogether ignorant of the way of salvation as revealed to us in the Gospel. His mind on this subject was truly an utter blank.

I was struck with dismay and almost with despair. Here was a fellow creature whose immortal soul, apparently on the verge of eternity, must be saved or lost forever. He lay before me now, the hand of death close upon him; not a moment was to be lost. What was I to do? What was I to take to begin to teach him, as it were, at the eleventh hour, the rudiments of Christianity? I had scarcely ever felt such a sinking within me. I could do nothing; that I knew fully well. On the other hand, God could do all. I, therefore, raised my heart and besought my Heavenly Father for Christ's sake to direct me in this most difficult and trying position and to open to me by His Holy Spirit of wisdom a way to set forth the glad tidings of salvation so as to be

understood by this poor benighted wanderer.

"Have you had this cough long?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, a long time; nearly a year now."

"And how did you catch it? A Kerry boy, I should have thought, would have been reared hardily and accustomed to this sharp air!"

"Ah," he answered: "and so I was until that terrible night. It was about this time last year when one of the sheep went astray. My father keeps a few sheep upon the mountains, and this is the way we live. When he reckoned them that night, there was one wanting; and he sent me to look for it."

"No doubt," I replied, "you felt the change from the warmth of the peat fire in this close little hut to the cold mountain blast."

"Oh, that I did. There was snow upon the ground, and the wind pierced me through. But I did not mind it much, as I was so anxious to find father's sheep."

"And did you find it?" I asked, with increased interest.

"Oh, yes, I had a long, weary way to go, but I never stopped until I found it."

"And how did you get it home. You had trouble enough with that too, I dare say. Was it willing to follow back?"

"Well, I did not like to trust it,

*[continued on page 26]*

# Is Your Back to the Wall?



*Brother Larry Dishman*

## **"God Likes to Work When Nothing Else Will"**

The main focus of this message is for both saints and sinners, and it comes in the form of a question: Is your back to the wall? From time to time, most of us get into situations where it seems that our back is to the wall. One song says, "God likes to work when nothing else will." It seems that at times nothing will work, and that is when God likes to work. I believe the real learning comes when we are backed against a wall, so to speak. This is one way that God has of getting a person's attention. When the bottom falls out of our lives and there is nowhere else to turn, we find ourselves

instinctively calling upon God for help.

Friend, something basic to human nature drives a person to God. When a person comes to the end of himself, when he is backed against the wall, many times even an unbeliever will cry out, "God, help me." I do not know of anyone who has lived for God for any amount of time that has not come to a place in life where it seemed that his back was against the wall, facing a crisis. Personally, I know of many Christians who are facing deep troubles that threaten to overwhelm them. The devil often says, "I'm going to ruin you this time!" I am talking about circumstances that are so serious that only miracles can get

them out of the situations because things look so hopeless. I believe most people can say there have been times in their lives so serious that it took a miracle from God to get them out of their situation. Friend, God likes to work when nothing else will.

We have lots of examples in the Bible of situations where people's backs were to the wall. Time and time again, we find that God worked miracles when it seemed there was no way out. God came to their rescue. When the children of Israel fled Egypt, they were in a hopeless predicament, as far as man was concerned. The Red Sea was before them, the mountains were on the left and the right sides,

and Pharaoh and his army were closing in from the rear. What were they to do? God's people seemed helplessly trapped, waiting to be cut down. It was panic time in the camp of Israel. No doubt, men shook with fear and women wept with their children as they huddled around their grandparents and relatives.

Suddenly Moses was surrounded by outraged family leaders who cried, in essence, "Surely this is the end!" They began to murmur and complain. They had gone as far as they could go. No one in Israel could have known what a great deliverance God was getting ready to bring about. God parted the waters, and the children of Israel crossed through on dry ground. He likes to work when nothing else will. There was absolutely nothing else to do. According to the Word of God, that is exactly when God likes to work. When Pharaoh and his powerful army tried to follow, the waters began to rage and close in and drown all of them. What a sight that must have been!

The people of God looked back from the other side and saw their mighty enemy destroyed as though they were tin soldiers; then a song rang out in the camp. Once again, they realized that God had delivered them from an impossible circumstance. God still does that. He has done it in my life, and many other folks can testify that is what God did for them.

God delivered me when all hope was gone and nothing else could be done. Oh, how the devil likes to bombard us when we are in bad situations! I have learned a little secret: every time the devil gets me backed against the wall, I tell him, "God likes to work when nothing else will."

### **Praising God in the Midst of Trials**

The Bible tells us in Exodus 14:31, "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the

LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses." The Bible lets us know that Moses and the children of Israel sang a song. Exodus 15:1-2 says: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him."

Israel's song was not sung in true faith, because they sang it on the other side of the Red Sea. In other words, the people of Israel sang the song on the side of victory and not on the side of testing. There are two sides to every trial and temptation: the testing side and the breakthrough side. One side is darkness and hopelessness, and the other side is victory and deliverance. Any doubter can sing after the testing has passed and the victory has come, but it is on the testing side that the Lord wants us to learn to sing His praises. He deserves our worship in the darkest moments of our lives. When there appears to be no way out of a situation, when it looks absolutely hopeless, God can still deliver. The great need of this hour is for Christians to sing the song of deliverance and the song of victory on the testing side of their troubles.

When Paul and Silas were in prison, they were on the testing side. They did not wait for God to come down and shake the prison until men's bands were loosed. They were not singing the blues or complaining. They were singing praises to God right in the midst of the trial. I believe they were singing a song similar to this:

*I mean to go right on  
Until the crown is won;  
I mean to fight the fight of faith  
Till life on earth is done.  
I'll never-more turn back,  
Defeat I shall not know,*

*For God will give me victory  
If onward I shall go.*

*I'm going on, I'm going on  
Unto the final triumph I'm going on.  
I'm going on, I'm going on,  
Unto the final triumph I'm going on.*

May God help us to learn the sound of victory and to sing the song of victory while we are still on the testing side, while the storm is raging. I am glad that God likes to work when nothing else will, when your back is against the wall.

### **God's Mighty Hand of Deliverance**

One time I met a young man who had suffered a really hard family life. You may think: "Well, my parents were not perfect. My father and mother made mistakes." That may be true, but you ought to thank God for them anyway. This young man had no idea who his father was, and he had met his mother only one time. Sadly, she did not want anything to do with him. He was moved from home to home as he grew up.

As I was talking about the things of God to the young man, he said to me: "I think God ought to do a Red Sea about every two years. If God would do that, more people could have faith and believe."

I said: "God does the Red Sea every time someone gets saved. There is no greater miracle than when He lifts up a lost sinner, someone who is bound by drugs or alcohol, someone who does not love the things of God, and saves him and changes him and causes him to love the things that he once hated and to hate the things that he once loved; that is a Red Sea experience." God does not wait every two years to do it. He is saving souls today. There is no greater miracle than the miracle of salvation and what God does for an individual when He saves his soul.

If anybody's back was ever to the wall, it was the three Hebrew

boys who were getting ready to be thrown into the fiery furnace. All they had to do was bow down and worship the golden image, and they could have saved themselves from that fate. They really did not know what was going to happen, but in so many words, they said: "We know that God is able to deliver us; but whether He delivers us or not, we are not going to bow down. We will not worship the image. We are going to stay true to God." Do you know what they found? They found that God likes to work when nothing else will. Christ came into the fire to rescue them and to deliver them. Their backs were to the wall, but God delivered them.

Daniel's back was to the wall when the king's servants were getting ready to put him in the lions' den. Humanly speaking, that was sure death, and no doubt everybody thought that. Daniel was getting ready to be devoured by hungry lions, but he found that God likes to work when nothing else will.

Job's back was to the wall. He faced a crisis in his life. He lost his children and his possessions. In addition, his body was covered with boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. He came to the place where he felt that he could not take any more suffering.

Job said in Job 6:8-9: "Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!" In essence, Job was saying: "I have only one request: I want to die. I have had it. God, just cut me off. Can't you see that my back is to the wall?"

God allowed Job to go through much despair in his life, and this despair seemed to be unbearable. He cried out in Job 7:3-4: "So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day."

Finally, in Job's total despair, we

read in Job 7:16-17: "I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?" Job was in anguish because it seemed that his problems were unsolvable. Sometimes our problems seem unsolvable. We do not know where to turn, our back is to the wall. Job could not reason his way out of his situation. He was completely at his wit's end.

About this time, three of Job's friends came along. They are often called "Job's comforters." They tried to figure out the reason Job was suffering as he was. They could not figure out why God would allow a righteous man to be as afflicted as Job was; so Job's friends lectured him. In Job 11:14 one friend said, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles." Thank God, God came to Job's rescue. God looked down and said to the devil, "That is enough; that is as far as you can go." God brought Job through that whole ordeal. In the end God gave Job more than he had in the beginning.

### **Rolling the Stone Away**

When Lazarus died, Mary and Martha were at their wit's end. We read in John 11:14-15,21-24,32: "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. . . . Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. . . . Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

Jesus said in verses 25-26: "I am

the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

The old devil likes to jump in and say it is too late and that things are too far out of hand. You need to tell the devil, "God likes to work when nothing else will, and there is still time for a miracle." We read in verse 39 that Martha said, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." The dead body of Lazarus would have been putrid four days later, reserved only by a stone to cover his grave forever. Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone." Here was the body of a man who was not only dead but also foul and loathsome.

In verse 43 we read that Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." There is a reason that Jesus specified Lazarus. Had he not done so, everybody in the whole graveyard would have gotten up and come forth. At this particular time, Jesus was only interested in one man, so he said, "Lazarus, come forth."

Verse 44 tells us, "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." God likes to work when nothing else will. Mary and Martha were weeping, and they felt as though it was too late for Jesus to help Lazarus, but it was not too late for God. God is still in the business of rolling the stones away. There might be a stone before you, and it is too big for you to roll away, but God can roll it away.

### **God Is Still on the Throne**

Acts, Chapter 12, tells about when Peter was in prison. Peter's back was to the wall. Herod, who was seeking favor with the Jews, arrested James (the brother of John) and had him executed. When Herod saw that executing James pleased the Jews, he also had Peter arrested

and planned to kill him.

Peter was scheduled to be tried and executed the next morning, and what was he doing? He was not down on his knees praying for deliverance. He was not writing out his last will and testament. He was not crying and wringing his hands. The night before he was scheduled to die, Peter was asleep in his cell, sleeping like a little baby. He had peace that passed all understanding.

Peter slept through the angel coming in and shining light around him. In fact, the angel had to tap him to awaken him. He was chained between two soldiers, and he was sound asleep without a care in the world. The gates, the walls, the locks, the guards, the bars, and the chains proved to be no barrier to the Lord. God likes to work when nothing else will. Humanly speaking, there was no possible way to get Peter out of that prison.

No matter where the path of life leads you, you will never go there alone, child of God. The Lord will be with you in every trial, every mile of the way. He will not let you down. God said He would never leave you nor forsake you. No matter where you go in life, wherever the path of life leads you, that is a promise in the Word of God. God is not going to fail you, He is not going to forsake you, and He is not going to leave you. He will be with you every step of the way.

We find in Peter's case that God moved in might and supernatural power to deliver His servant from the prison. The chains fell off. Some people have gates at the end of their lanes, and they can push a button and the gates open. The gates in the prison where Peter was opened of their own accord; they had never opened that way before, and they probably never opened that way again. God came to Peter's rescue.

If you find yourself in a prison situation, you need to know that, if necessary, God will move Heaven and earth in order to meet your needs. God can break chains, open doors, and move walls, because God

likes to work when nothing else will. Someone said that was a long time ago, but God in Heaven is still the same today. I do not believe that He has lost any of His power.

God is still on His throne, and He can still move. When your back is against the wall, the devil wants you to slow down and give in; but remember, you can be like those Hebrew boys. I do not know what God is going to do, but I have faith and confidence in God. If something is His will, He can do it. All the devils in hell cannot stop God from doing His will.

The church could have protested Peter's arrest, but they prayed without ceasing. What happened? Peter made his way over to the home of Mary. When he arrived, he knocked on the door. He was probably looking around and wondering if the soldiers were coming after him, so he wanted in that house quickly. A little damsel named Rhoda came to the door, but instead of opening the door, she ran back and told the people that Peter was at the door. The people thought it was too late for Peter. They thought he was dead by then. They thought she had probably seen Peter's ghost. However, Peter kept knocking, and they finally let him in.

Acts 12:5 says, "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Friend, prayer is what moves walls and causes the chains to fall off. Prayer is what causes miracles to take place. God likes to work when nothing else will.

Is your back to the wall? The saints' faith was born out of the knowledge that nothing else was going to work in Peter's behalf. They committed everything to Christ, crying out, "Jesus, you are our only hope." Sometimes we have to call on God and say, "God, if you do not do it, it cannot be done." God likes to work when nothing else will. In the Word of God, you can read that sometimes when Jesus performed a miracle, He told people, "Only be-

lieve." He told the people who had come to the end of all hope, those who had lost faith in everything else, to just believe. You must learn, that God is still on the throne.

### **Trust God's Timing**

Someone once said, "When fear knocked on the door, faith went to the door, and nobody was there." Perhaps, like Paul, you are pressed beyond measure and beyond endurance, and your strength is nearly gone. Possibly you are on the brink of giving up. You may see no way out, so you want to run, but you feel there is no place to go. It is a shame to go from crisis to crisis and learn nothing in the process. The reason God allows you to get your back against the wall is that He is trying to teach you something. However, it carries with it a possibility that you will be given over to a spirit of murmuring. You must learn from the trials that you face.

God's purpose in allowing you to get your back against the wall is that you might have more faith. Do not give up because you are facing a tough time. The crisis that you are in right now could be the most important learning opportunity and growth advantage that you will ever experience in your life. It is when your back is against the wall that these conflicts build patience and develop your spiritual character. God uses difficulties and troubles to reveal how deeply the Word of God has gone into your heart. In the parable of the sower, Jesus talked about seeds falling on rocky soil.

Jesus said in Mark 4:17, "And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended." I want you to notice that Jesus did not say *if* trouble or persecution arises; He said *when* it arises. There are no ifs about it. Trouble is coming to each of us; it is permitted by God. It is part of our discipline, part of our schooling.

When some trials come along, immature reactions will reveal that you are not as well rooted as you thought you were. You will find out what kind of Christian you are when your back is against the wall and everything is going wrong, when it seems that everything is being turned upside down. That is when you will find how deeply you are rooted. Someone may ask, "How can God get any good out of this?" Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

When God comes on the scene, He can take the worst conflicts and produce the best results for His glory and to your benefit. No person or circumstance can thwart the plan of God. When God gets ready to move, the devil cannot stop him. God can overrule the worst problems to produce the best results.

When your back is against the wall, you cannot allow difficult times to hinder your spiritual growth. No matter how bad the crisis appears to be, it is never beyond God's ability to resolve it. When you recognize how big God is, your problems come back into perspective. If you take your eyes off the Lord and fix them on your problems, you will feel overwhelmed. You may worry, but then the tide of bad events will begin to turn. Whatever you may be going through will last only a few moments compared to eternity.

No matter how many times your back has been against the wall, one flash of heavenly glory will cause those times to be worth it all. When you see Jesus, one glimpse of His dear face will erase all sorrow. God knows when you have been exposed to enough harassment from the enemy. When God looks down on you and sees you as His child, He can see that you have been harassed by the devil long enough, and then He will step in.

God will never allow one of His

children to drown in tears. God still specializes in hopeless situations. When you give up and quit trying to work it out yourself, God will see you through. God's clock is not necessarily synchronized with yours; waiting is proof of faith. Do not turn things over to God and then become impatient and take it out of God's hands, trying to work it out yourself. Many times you do not wait patiently, so God has to wait on you. You need to trust God's timing. He seldom gets in a hurry, but He is always on time.

### **God's Power Is Sufficient for Every Need**

Maybe you are in a situation wherein man's resources are inadequate. It seems that nothing can be done. My message so far has been to the saints, but now I want to talk to the sinners. I remember a time in my life as a sinner that my back was to the wall. In the Word of God I want to give you two or three examples of sinners whose backs were to the wall and God came on the scene just in time. The Gadarene's back was to the wall. The Bible tells us in Mark 5:3-5: "Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

What hope was there for this man? Man could not help him. You can read that a group of men got together, caught him, put chains on him, and tied him up; yet he burst the chains asunder. He dwelt among the tombs and cut himself. His back was to the wall, but Jesus came in contact with him. Do you know what Jesus said? He said in verse 8, "Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit." Some men came to Jesus after all of this was said and done to

see the man who had been possessed by the devil. They saw him clothed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, and in his right mind.

That is what God can do. That man's back was to the wall. No one could help him, but God came to his rescue. My friend, are you bound with chains of habit? This man was bound by the devil, but God set him free. Friend, God can set you free. God likes to work for the sinner when nothing else will work. When the world cannot reform you, when you have been to a rehabilitation facility where the doctors have tried to dry you out but could not help you, remember that God likes to work when nothing else will.

In John, Chapter 5, you can read about a man who waited at the pool of Bethesda for the troubling of the water in the pool. Verses 3-9 read: "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

"When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath." That is what God can do! He can make you whole.

God does not do things halfway. I believe all these miracles that we can read about in the Bible. He never said, "Let Me open one of your blind eyes; then if you come back in two or three weeks, I will take care of the other one." He never

said, "Let Me open one of your deaf ears." When He healed the deaf, He opened both ears. When the lame man came to Jesus, He did not say: "Let Me heal one of your legs, and you come back in two or three months so that I can heal the other one." No, Jesus made him whole. He still makes people whole. If you have sin in your life and you are not whole yet, He can make you whole.

### **Bring Your Burden to the Father**

The prodigal son's back was to the wall. The Bible lets us know that he took his journey into a far country and wasted his substance with riotous living. When he had spent all he had, a famine arose in the land, and he began to be in want. He joined himself to a citizen of that country who sent him to his field to feed the swine. He would have gladly filled his belly with the husks that the swine ate, but no man gave him anything. While the prodigal son was thinking along those lines, the Holy Spirit nudged him and said, "Go home." He probably thought: "I don't know where to go. My back is to the wall. I've spent everything I had, and I don't have anyplace to go."

Then the Holy Spirit nudged him and said: "What about your father? Why don't you go home? Your father has bread enough to

spare. Look at all the hired servants he has."

The prodigal son decided to go to his father's house. Praise God forever! His back was to the wall, but he found that his father had outstretched arms for him. The father welcomed his son back home. Your back may be to the wall, and perhaps you have tried sin and found that its prospects all deceive. God likes to work when nothing else will.

Last, but not least, there were two thieves who were crucified with Christ. I want you to think about the seriousness of that hour. Those thieves were minutes away from death. Undoubtedly, the thoughts going through each of their minds were: "I'm getting ready to die, and I'm lost. I'm going to the judgment, but I'm unprepared for death. What am I going to do?" One thief's conscience was troubling him. His past was appearing before him as he thought: "I'm dying without God. What can I do now?" One of them truly feared God, and evidently the other thief did not. The one who feared God and was under condemnation said, in essence, to the other thief: "Do you not fear God? Do you not understand? Can you not see that you are under the same condemnation?"

The Holy Ghost nudged him and said, "Why don't you talk to

Jesus?" His back was to the wall. He thought, "I think that is a very good idea." Then he said, "Lord, will You remember me when you come into Your kingdom? Jesus said, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

God likes to work when nothing else will. I am talking to both saint and sinner. Maybe your need is spiritual, financial, mental, or physical. Perhaps you are having marital difficulties or a problem with your job or your business, and your back is to the wall. Maybe you are lost without God. You ought to come to the Lord and say: "Lord, I have done everything that I know to do. There is nothing else that I can do to fix my problem. I am going to trust You and wait on Your victory." To the Christian, God says to cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. Do not allow the devil to lie to you. God loves you, and He cares for you. Sinner friend, God loves you. He really does care about you. If you are sick of sin, if you are sick of the way the devil has been leading you, why not come to Jesus? His arms are outstretched. He will receive you into His kingdom if you will repent and believe. Will you bring your burdens to the Lord and leave them there?

*(Compact Disc TR-1007E)*

## **The Precious Blood of Jesus**

Are you troubled from within? Are you beset by an inner restlessness, driven by worldliness and fears? Are you still haunted by your past? Do you seek some new outpost from which to view life with inner peace and quiet eyes? God offers you such hope through the blood of Christ.

Do you want to break free from binding habits? Do you long for release from the imprisoning routine of dull, divided living? I call your attention to the power of His precious blood.

Ours is not the way of fear, but faith and power. The precious blood of Christ grants a power that frees us from our personal past and from those resisting patterns of worldliness, superstition, prejudice, and ungodly fear. The Christian trusts not in good luck, nor does he fear bad luck. He trusts in God; he lives by grace. His life is "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

How free are you? If you have not yet believed on Him, then we invite you to do so now.

1 John 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because

the Spirit is truth.

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the

water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

# THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER



*Brother Allen Polston*

## **Keep Your Confidence in God**

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is the embodiment of these three witnesses of whom John was speaking. I want to be just like Paul. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." I want to preach Jesus because He is my "all in all," as the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:28. I want you to understand why the writer was bringing these things

out.

We read in 1 John 5:13-14: "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. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." I would like to begin this message by saying that God wants you to have confidence.

Confidence is very important,

and God wants every child of His to have confidence. I am not talking about being proud, being arrogant, or being lifted up in the flesh. God is not interested in that, but He does want you to have confidence. We have many beautiful Gospel songs in our hymn books. One song says this: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood." God wants you to have that kind of assurance and confidence.

Camp meetings can build confidence by your being in the services and hearing good messages and by your hearing and seeing the rejoicing. You can also build your confidence by experiencing fellowship with God's people and by feeling the sweet Holy Spirit in the midst. God wants you to have confidence as a Christian.

Many things work against your confidence. Sometimes life brings a battle or a setback. Have you ever had one of those? Life can present setbacks or extreme challenges. What does the enemy try to do? He tries to destroy your confidence. When a circumstance or a situation has produced unsuccessful results, often the enemy will try to destroy your confidence. He will try to make you feel that you are not saved. The devil will try to rob you of your victory. He will try to take away the assurance that God is still with you.

We cannot read about how Daniel was feeling when he was being transported from his place of prayer to the lions' den. The devil might have been saying: "If you would have prayed a little more or if you would have done a little better, you probably would not have to face this." No doubt, many men and women in the Bible who faced perilous situations also encountered attacks by the devil to try to destroy their confidence. Again, Satan wants to rob you of your confidence. The Bible lets us know that he has come to kill, to steal, and to destroy. The devil does not care if he kicks you when you are down. I am not preaching a defeated experience, but I want you to know that God's people sometimes experience setbacks in their lives.

### **Experiencing Circumstances Beyond Your Control**

In the Old Testament, in Jeremiah, Chapter 35, you can read about a group of people called the Rechabites. They had made a commitment to their father that they would never drink any wine and

that they would live in tents and travel. They kept their oath to their father. God looked on these people and thought it very commendable that they had made this commitment to their father Jonadab.

In that chapter you can read that God told Jeremiah to go to the Rechabites, to bring them into the temple, and to give them wine to drink. This was a real temptation, and they had been true to their oath for many years. Jeremiah set pots full of wine and cups in front of them and said, "Drink ye wine," but they said "We will drink no wine." They had made a commitment. It was not a matter of whether or not the wine was sinful to drink. That was not the issue. The lesson was that God was showing the house of Israel how those people who had made an oath to their father were standing by it.

This was a part of what they had promised their father. The rest of the oath was that they would live in tents and travel around as nomads. Also, they promised not to plant vineyards or gardens. Do you know what happened? When the armies of Nebuchadnezzar and the king of Syria came against that region, they were afraid and moved to Jerusalem to protect their wives and their children. In other words, there was a breach of what they had committed to their father.

Not every setback or unsuccessful turn of events means that you have been a bad person. I believe in the law of reaping what you sow. I have experienced it myself. However, I know that sometimes things beyond your control will come to you through no fault of your own. Also, you cannot control what others do. The time will come when you do not have control of what your children choose to do, what they say, or where they go. You cannot choose everyone who is in your family, and you cannot choose your co-workers. You may experience many setbacks in life, but those experiences do not mean that you have been a bad person.

The Rechabites were in Jerusalem because they were forced to go there. The army of Nebuchadnezzar and the king of Syria were invading the country, and they feared for their wives and children, so they went to Jerusalem for security. In some people's eyes, that might have looked like a failure. Some people might have been quick to condemn them and say, "You Rechabites are nothing because you have breached what you promised." Although the Rechabites had to make that move, they did not throw away all that they had promised.

When you experience a setback, the devil will tell you that you might as well give up and forget it, because you have failed. Some people have given up on God because they have gone through a difficult time. Maybe it was their own fault or maybe it was someone else's. Either way, it does not matter. What really matters is that you keep your confidence and continue to look to God.

The witness of men is different from the witness of God. I want the witness of God because it is greater than the witness of men. The witness of men would measure where you are in life by the numbers that you have accumulated. For example, some men measure others by how large their bank accounts are. That is the witness of men, not the witness of God. The devil will try to use the witness of men to destroy your confidence. If your confidence is destroyed, then you cannot really call out to God in faith. You see, God has always honored faith down through the ages, and He wants you to have faith and confidence in Him.

Have you ever been in a situation and, under your breath, said, "God, help me here"? I do it often. Thank God, it is my daily routine to ask God for His help. Sometimes I get a phone call, and an individual will say, "Brother, I need to talk to you." Do you know what I am saying on the other end under my breath? "God, help me to give this person the right counsel; I need

Your help." I may not have what that person needs, but God helps me. This is not just for pastors; every Christian needs to call on God regularly. When I pray with somebody in a hospital or in that person's home, I always say, "God, help me." I have confidence that God hears me.

You need to have confidence. The devil will try to destroy your confidence and get you to hang your head low so that you do not feel there is anything ahead for you. Perhaps you have made blunders or mistakes or had failures, and you just do not see anything bright out on the horizon. The devil has done a real work. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 10:35, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." Friend, do not cast away your confidence. I do not know what you have been through, and I do not know what is around the next bend, but do not cast away your confidence. It has great recompense of reward. God wants you to hold your confidence.

You might have physical ailments and wonder why you seem to have more setbacks than others. I do not have the answer, but do not cast away your confidence. You may wonder: "Why am I going through this? I try to do the right thing. I try to make good decisions and do what God wants me to do. Why am I experiencing this?" Dear one, do not cast away your confidence, for it has great recompense of reward. I want to help you to have confidence.

### **Christ Is Your Advocate**

The Bible teaches that you must live free from sin. You do not have to sin, thank God. I am glad for an experience where I do not have to wake up and sin every day. However, if a man does sin, he needs confidence to be able to go to God in prayer and repent. Christ is your advocate.

John said in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto

you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." I have not always made the best decisions in my life. At times, I have had to go to God to ask for help, forgiveness, strength, and grace. Now, that never happened on a daily or a weekly basis. Christian people do not just keep returning to the same mistakes or to what they know to be wrong. However, there will be times in people's lives when they need God's help and strength. God wants you to have confidence. He does not want you to feel that if you slip or make a mistake, it has to be the end of it all. God wants you to have confidence to know that you can come to Him. I am so thankful for that.

John said in 1 John 5:13, "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." Child of God, God wants you to know that you have eternal life. Eternal life means it is ongoing; it does not end.

Romans 8:35 says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Verses 38-39 read: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God does not want to dismiss you. He is not looking for a reason to get rid of you. He wants to help you.

When one of my children makes a mistake, I am not looking for an opportunity to tell that child, "You are out of here." I correct that one and help him to understand what got him there and what he can do about it. Sometimes that takes some chastening of one sort or another. God chastens each of us at times. Thank God, He is not looking for a reason to do away with you. He is looking for ways to help you. He is a wonderful God and a precious

Savior.

You may experience a financial setback, you may come under an attack physically or mentally, or you may be challenged in another way. Relationships may get strained, and you may lose positions in this life, but thank God, you can still have confidence. The witness of God is greater than the witness of men. If you suffer a financial loss and men label you a failure and try to make you feel that you are not even a Christian, that is not the witness of God. You need to remember that the witness of God is greater.

The enemy works to try to destroy your confidence. The confidence that you can have in Him is, if you ask anything according to His will, He will hear you. That is one reason the devil is out to destroy your confidence. He wants you to cast away your confidence. The devil wants you to feel as though you have done something wrong and there is no forgiveness for you. He wants you to feel that you are never going to do any better. God wants you to know that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. If you really call on God, He will save you.

### **The Three Witnesses**

First John 5:7 states, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." By mentioning any one of those, you do not offend one of the others. There is no competition in the Godhead; there is no plotting against one another in the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit all work together as one. I am glad to report to you that these are the three that bare record in Heaven. There have been great men and women of God down through the years, but these three override all of them. Saint of God, we are on our way to Heaven, and thank God, we can access the throne of God.

Verse 8 reads, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the

Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Just as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are inseparable, so it is with the three witnesses in earth. They are together; they come as one package. We do not go and buy one and then buy another, and then buy another. The Scripture says that three bear witness in earth, "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one."

Let us start with the blood. Many songs talk about the blood. I believe the Church of God will always be fond of the things that talk about the blood of Jesus Christ. One song says, "*What can wash away my sins, Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*"

Revelation 1:5 says, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." The blood cleanses us from sin. The blood washes away our sins. Hebrews 9:22 states, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

Hebrews 10:17-18 reads: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." I thank God for the blood of Jesus Christ that washes away our sins. Hebrews 10:4 tells us, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." It was never possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins, and it will never be possible. The only thing that can wash away sins is the blood of Jesus Christ; it washes away *all* sins.

The Hebrew writer said that God forgets your sins; He will remember them no more. Is not that what happens when you really forgive somebody? If someone does something to you that offends or hurts you, you should forgive that person and forget it. Do you do that? You should not hold it against that person. You should not dwell on

those things that offended you. If you are saved, are you thankful that God does not remember your sins anymore? I am so glad that He forgave me and does not remember my sins. If there was no other reason to serve God, that would be a good one. He washed away our sins, no matter how many of them there were and no matter how horrible they might have been. I thank God for the blood of Jesus Christ that can wash away sins, no matter how small or how large they are. It is the only thing that can wash away sin and bring forgiveness.

I like talking about being forgiven because it is a blessing. There have been times when I have had to go to people and ask for their forgiveness. It was not always easy, and it was very humbling on the flesh. If you have something that you are holding against someone, you need to forgive that person and not hold anything against him. If you always have that something in your mind and you are always thinking about it, you are really only hurting yourself. Forgiveness is really liberating when you forgive someone no matter what the person does or says.

### **Cleansed Through the Word**

Jesus taught Nicodemus in John 3:5, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Revelation 19:13 says that "his

name is called The Word of God." The Word of God washes us and cleanses us. Jesus told His disciples in John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." If you will submit yourself to the Word of God, it will cleanse you; it will clean up your life.

Paul said in Ephesians 5:25-26: "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." The water of the Word does a cleansing work. I cannot recount how many times I have sat under a message, and as the Word went forth, it cleansed me.

Paul also talked about cleansing ourselves. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 he wrote, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." How can we do that? We do that by having these promises in the Word of God. By having these promises, we can actually cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh. God washes our sins away in the blood of Jesus Christ. We cannot do anything about things that happened in the past. I cannot go back and straighten everything out; there is no way. He washes those sins away with the blood, but the water of the Word does a cleansing work so that we can change our attitude, our conduct, and our actions. We cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

Many people in religion like the forgiveness part, but they do not like having to live a clean, holy life. In the Church of God we preach living holy, living with victory, and living clean. If God shows you something unclean in your life, then you need to be cleansed from it and cease from doing it. You need to get straightened up, live clean, and talk clean.

Many people in the world do not talk cleanly. Have you ever

heard someone speak of what a foul mouth So-and-So has? You must not keep company with people who do not talk cleanly.

First Corinthians 15:33 says, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Some individuals do not have a clean mouth. We work with them to get them saved. We try to reach out to them. However, when it comes to spending a relaxing time, or just passing the time, you should be careful of listening to things or watching things or hanging around where things are unclean. You should not want to watch or listen to anything unclean. Many songs on the radio are unclean. Some have lyrics about sex, drunkenness, or cheating on your wife or husband.

God cleans us up. I thank God for a clean life. I do not want to go back to living a dirty life. I like clean talking. Sometimes some people seem as though they are in a big competition to see who can have the dirtiest and most foul mouth. They go back and forth, with one person saying this and someone else returning with something more disgusting. You need to choose your friends carefully and choose things that are clean, because if you are around filth, it can begin to wear on you and rub off on you.

The Word cleanses us. I am talking about the witness of God in the earth; it is greater than the witness of men. Men can witness and say, "You are a part of this denomination or part of that group, so you must be all right." The witness of God consists of more than that.

### "These Three Agree in One"

Again, 1 John 5:8 tells us, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." These all agree in one. Now, that does not mean there is not progress for us to make. We must learn and grow, but these all come to one in Jesus.

You cannot come before God

and say, "Lord, I'm really feeling bad about those things, but I don't want to change anything about my life; forgive me for doing those things"; yet in the back of your mind, you are already planning the next occasion when you will do the same things again. You cannot come to God and say: "I want only part of the witness. I just want the forgiveness part, but I'm not ready to give up my sinful activities. I'm not willing to quit doing those things. I just want forgiveness that will make me feel better." In that case, you are not going to receive forgiveness because "these three agree in one." When you ask Jesus into your life, you cannot ask Him to come only in part. Paul asked in 1 Corinthians 1:13a, "Is Christ divided?" Christ cannot come in and put His leg in your life and the rest of Him stay out. Salvation does not work that way. All three agree in one: the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

You may ask, "What is the Spirit?" Well, a lot can be said about the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The Spirit of God brings power into your life so that you can plan differently than you used to plan.

Before God saved me, do you know how I used to plan? I could hardly wait until Friday afternoon because I would get off work, get my paycheck, and I knew where I was heading. It was not good. Sometimes I planned my activities for the weekend on Mondays. Some people start planning things in advance to engage in sin and ungodliness.

The power of God through His Spirit helps you to change how you plan things. You start planning wholesome things. You start planning to attend church meetings and Sunday services. Now if you ask me, "Are you planning to go to church Sunday?" my answer is not, "I don't know; I'll see how I feel." No, I am

already planning to attend the church services Sunday, the Lord willing.

The Spirit of God gives you power in your life so that you can live differently. Your future will be different. The blood makes your past different, the water makes your present different, and the Spirit makes your present and your future different. The witness of God is greater than the witness of men. You might not have a penny to your name. You might have had failures in lots of ways, but if you have the witness of God, it is greater than the witness of men.

You need to have confidence and take courage, because God loves you. He inspired these things to be written to let you know that He has not forgotten you. He has not dismissed you; He loves you and wants to help you. If you feel that you are as low as you can go, God wants to help you. The God of the mountain is still God in the valley, and the witness of God is greater than the witness of men.

If you are laboring in a small congregation and you are doing everything you can, if you have the witness of God, it is greater than having numbers. We want people to get saved, and we want congregations to increase in number. If you have had setbacks, challenges, or struggles, or if you are going through something that you do not understand, the witness of God is greater than the witness of men. Be encouraged, and have confidence. God loves you, and He cares for you.

*(Compact Disc TR-1401)*

Some people are apt to talk about "big" and "little" sins. An Indian proverb says, "There is no distinction between big and little when talking about snakes." They are all alike—snakes.

[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2] every situation. Contentment is not dependent upon situations or circumstances. Being content is a lesson that all must learn. The secret of success is learning to adapt one's self to conditions and being at rest with those conditions. Rather than looking on the dark side of a situation or a problem, one needs to learn to look on the bright side. A person must look for the good that he can attain from these misfortunes.

The Apostle Paul said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul not only enjoyed the good things from the Lord but also patiently accepted and endured the things that came upon him and caused him to suffer. Therefore, whether Paul was rejoicing with the good or suffering with the reverses, he had learned the

wonderful secret of how to apply himself in every situation that came his way. Paul possessed a deep contentment and a calmness within his soul, knowing that his God would lead him through safely and with victory. Paul experienced a sweet peace within that enriched his life while enduring the unpleasant things that befell him.

As a Christian, one must learn this valuable lesson of being content. The command is to "be content with such things as ye have" (Hebrews 13:5). One must stop worrying and fretting about the things he does not have. A person must lay aside the anxiousness over the future and what might happen. One must look up and be thankful for all that he does possess. Peace, happiness and contentment do not come from the abundance of worldly goods that

one may acquire. These things come from knowing Christ and having Him dwell within one's heart.

To be truly happy and to be able to sing the joyful songs of praise, a person must put forth the effort to learn the joy of contentment. He must strive daily to find contentment and war against the things that would destroy it. He must cultivate his spirit, and allow his faith and trust in God to grow. Also, one must adopt the pattern that God has laid out to follow; that will bring contentment in whatever state or situation life finds him in. Then he can sing the glad songs of rejoicing, knowing that his life is resting in God's protective care.

Selected

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[Esp. for Young People—contin. from p. 14] and besides it was dead beat and tired. So I laid it on my shoulders and carried it home that way."

"And were not all they at home rejoiced to see you when you returned with the sheep?"

"Sure enough, and that they were," he replied. "Father and Mother and the people round that heard of our loss all came in the next morning to ask about the sheep, for the neighbors in these matters are mighty kind to one another. Sorry they were, to hear that I was kept out the whole dark night. It was morning before I got home, and the end of it was I caught this cold. Mother says I will never be better now. God knows best. Anyway, I did my best to save the sheep."

Wonderful! I thought. Here is the whole Gospel history. The sheep lost, the father sends his son to seek for and recover it. The son goes willingly, suffers all without complaining, and in the end sacrifices his life to find the sheep, and when recovered he carries it home on his shoulders to the flock and rejoices with his friends and neighbors over the

sheep which was lost but was found again. My prayer was answered; my way was made plain, and by the grace of God I availed myself of the happy opening.

I explained to this poor, dying boy the plan of salvation, making use of his own simple and affecting story. I read to him a few verses in Luke, Chapter 15, where the care of the shepherd for the strayed sheep is so beautifully expressed. "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance" (verses 4-7).

The boy at once perceived the likeness and followed me with deep interest while I explained to him the

full meaning of the parable. My poor sick lad seemed to drink it all in. He understood it all. He survived our first meeting but a few days. I had no time to read or expound to him any other portion of the Scripture. At times we could hear nothing but stifling, rending coughs; at times he slumbered heavily for a little, but whenever he was able to think and listen, these verses in Luke, Chapter 15, satisfied and cheered him. He accepted Christ as his Savior. He died humbly and peacefully with the words "Jesus, my Savior!" and "Jesus, my Shepherd!" as the last words he uttered. As you finish reading these lines, will you also repent and forsake your sins and allow the Lord Jesus Christ to save you? Then you will truly and joyfully exclaim, "The Lord is my Shepherd!"

Selected

The future is that time when you'll wish you had done what you aren't doing now.

# Meeting Announcements

## MT. PLEASANT, PA

April 18

**FELLOWSHIP MEETING:** Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania 15666  
Service time: 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation. Lodging: *Holiday Inn Express*, 724-547-2095 (This is on the same road as the church. Please mention that you are there for the church meeting for a discount.); *Super 8 Motel* in New Stanton, 724-925-8915, on I-70W, (10 miles north of the church); *Melody Motor Lodge*, 724-628-9600 on 119N in Connellsville).  
For more information contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666  
Telephone: 724-547-2151

## MEDINA, OH

April 20-26

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, Ohio 44256  
Evangelist: Brother David Stegmeier, Canby, Oregon  
Service times: Monday - Saturday 7:00 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 4:00 p.m.  
For further information telephone: 330-769-3827

## SUMMERSVILLE, WV

April 27-May 3

**REVIVAL:** Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV  
Evangelist: Brother Allen Polston, New Castle, Indiana  
Service times: Monday-Friday 7:00 p.m.; Saturday 6:00 p.m. & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.  
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders at 304-872-4047  
Visit our website: [www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com](http://www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com)

## *Are You "Shopping" for a Cross?*

Jesus commanded His followers, "Take up the cross, and follow me" (Mark 10:21). But too many people want to go "shopping" for just the right cross rather than take up the cross of self-denial to which He referred.

Some people want a vinyl-padded cross that's not too heavy. Others look for a small, flat cross which they can put out of sight when they don't want to attract attention to the fact that they are Christians. Still others look for a jeweled cross which can make them part of the fashionable "in" crowd.

But the cross of authentic Christian discipleship is a plain, rough, wooden cross which takes a lot of effort to carry. This is the type of cross on which Jesus was crucified. And this is the cross of discipleship which we as His followers must carry. But one important difference is that Jesus Himself has promised to stand with us and help us to bear the load. The same One who directed, "Take up the cross" also declared, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30).

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