

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 45 December 2015 No. 12



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; I Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (I 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)

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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Guest Editorial

TIME FOR CAMP MEETING!

In just a few weeks, December 27-30, 2015, we will gather together for another winter camp meeting at God's Acres. Again, it will be a time to worship the Lord with the precious saints. As always, camp meeting is a special time when we come into a godly atmosphere and have our souls renewed and refreshed. What a wonderful opportunity to feast on heavenly manna and to enjoy the good things God has to share with us! He always prepares a table for His people that encourages and lifts the heart. He enriches each one with greater understanding and challenges His saints to keep pressing toward the goal. The Psalmist said, "I was glad. . . ." He knew the importance of going to the house of the Lord. It was there that he received spiritual instruction for living a godly life.

We live in a time when all the forces of evil have been turned loose against the people of God. These forces are led by Satan, who is determined to destroy our faith and love for God and for one another. His purpose is to divert as many away from the path of holiness and true righteousness as he can. Dear one, we need all the instruction and direction we can receive from the Lord. Learning about the good old paths and understanding those things that please God are more needful today than ever before.

The Hebrew writer instructed each one not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25). It is through hearing the Word of God, and then believing and obeying it that brings victory to the soul. James instructed, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). This is not a time to relax your efforts or to become slack in your living, but rather it is a

time, as Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:12, to "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."

The wise man said, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Proverbs 23:23). You need to get all the truth you can get, and then do not let it slip away from you. Truth brings freedom and spiritual stability.

Camp meeting is held for your spiritual prosperity and blessing. It is our desire to provide a place for each of you to come and learn of His ways. We encourage you to do all you can to be here so your soul may be fed and enlightened. We write these things to stir up your pure mind and to provoke you unto love (Hebrews 10:24).

Remember, dear one, living for God takes real effort. To make Heaven will require a deep determination and consecration on your part. Regardless of the cost to make it through, it will be worth it all. Just one glimpse of His dear face will amply repay whatever the cost you have suffered or the price that you had to endure.

Friend, you owe it to yourself, your family, the church, and the world to be in as many of these services as possible. It will help you to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sound, solid preaching of His Word will uncover the many tricks and snares that Satan uses to deceive and overthrow the Christian. Knowing and understanding the Scriptures will be of little value unless it is put into practice and allowed to become a part of your daily walk.

In addition to hearing the Word preached by various ministers, there are other advantages of going to camp meeting. It is a time to share burdens and problems with other saints of God. Hearing testimonies of praise for victories won through God's grace is

[continued on page 13]

Ephesians 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

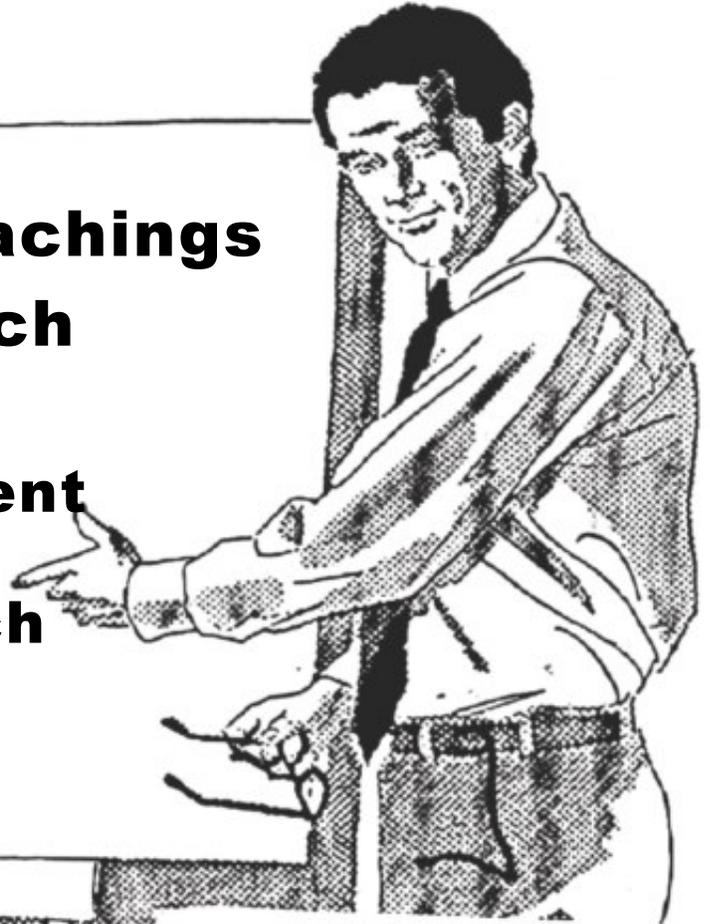
21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

The Cardinal Teachings of the Church

The Government of the Church



Brother Roger L. Decker

Christ Is All Things to the Church

As we continue into the cardinal teachings of the church, you must keep in mind one thing: you must take the Word of God as the final authority in all spiritual matters. You must not deviate from the Word of God. Your own ideas may sound good, but again, the Word of God is the final authority. No organization on the face of the earth can stand on

these teachings except the Church of God.

The Church of God has God-called individuals who make up the government of the church. A government is a system of ruling, controlling, and directing, by which a state, district, country, or organization is governed. The government is a body that has the authority to make laws and the power to enforce laws within the corporate, religious, academic, or other organization or group. The

Church of God is a theocracy; it is not a democracy. The people are not without direction.

In the previous issues, we have Scripturally shown Christ to be all in all to the church. Without Jesus Christ you do not have a church. He is the foundation, the founder, and the secretary; He is everything that you can think of to the church. The Scriptures teach very plainly that Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence [or the authority]." He is the head, and He is to have first place in all things. For the church to be the church, Christ has to be allowed to govern in each individual's life. Wherever Christ is *not* allowed to govern in all things, that organization or church is neither founded by God nor governed by God and, therefore, is not of God.

I want to repeat, the church is a theocracy. What does that mean? One person fills all positions. The executive branch is Christ; He is the head. The legislative branch is Christ. James 4:12 reads, "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?" The judicial branch is Jesus Christ. Acts 17:30-31 states: "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." In the church there is a need for government to regulate ones in their relationships with one another and with the One who rules over all.

When Jesus Christ was here on earth, He was all things to His disciples and His followers. He called them to be His disciples, and He gave them commandments. He settled spiritual issues, and He was the head of all things, spiritually speaking. Now He has ascended back to Heaven, but He still directs the Church of God as the head. He will never relinquish that position. He will not give it to anyone else. The Catholic Church has the pope, but we still have Jesus Christ.

God Sets the Members in Place

How does Jesus Christ function as the head of the church? How does He still rule over the church here on

earth when He is in Heaven? Not one man could possibly do it; it takes a combination. What is the combination? The Holy Spirit works through human instrumentalities. Let us look at this. These are things that you should get grounded and settled in. Again, no other church or organization can stand on these cardinal truths. Ephesians 4:8 says, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

Verses 11-12 read: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, [Now, a saint is already perfect. If a person is not perfect, he or she is not a saint. These gifts were given, not to perfect the world, but to perfect the saints. Even though saints are made perfect in their souls when they are saved, they still have to be perfected, or made more perfect.] for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Who are these men that God uses? They are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers. These gifts are given for the perfecting of the saints, and all these gifts are given by Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost for the perfecting of the saints, or for the perfecting of the church. These gifts could be termed "offices." When I was saved, I felt as though everything was perfect, but I knew I needed to stay in the house of God to be perfected. I did not understand a lot of things. I had things that I needed to lay aside. I had to get the knowledge that I did not need them in my life to live for God.

This Scripture shows that we need to be taught. Does this Scripture not show the need of Sunday school? Who are the teachers to teach? We have teachers; that is one of the callings. Who are they to teach? Those who need to be taught. If you do not have the need to be taught, then you should be the one doing the teaching. If you do not need to be taught, you have already

attained what all the rest of us are seeking to attain.

These offices are not filled by popular vote and ones vying for office or campaigning. They are not put in office due to their popularity, by their personality, or by election, but by the Holy Spirit. He gives gifts unto men. These positions are also offices. Romans 11:13 says, "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." Romans 12:4 tells us, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office." God's choice may be unpopular with some people. Also, we must realize that not all of these offices will be in one local congregation. Some of these offices serve all local congregations, while others serve within a congregation.

Gifts Given by the Holy Spirit

First Corinthians 12:28 states, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Not all gifts are mentioned in this verse. I am not going to delve into every one of them, but I would like you to consider a few. Before we get into these gifts, I want to make this statement: these gifts are only given to those who are already filled with the Spirit of God.

Acts 2:38 says, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 2:4 tells us, "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?" The gifts are given to govern the church. Some who have been used of God have multiple gifts. Most of the apostles had multiple gifts.

Again, 1 Corinthians 12:28

reads, "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles." I want to get into some of the gifts. I want to start with the disciple. Who is the disciple? It is not really an office; it simply means "a pupil, a learner, a student, or a follower." All those who are saved are disciples.

Let us go to the next one: apostles. An apostle is one who is sent to plant the Truth in an unchristian world. He is an ambassador for Christ and the Gospel. Then we are going to speak about a prophet. He is a teller of future events, or a forecaster. Second Peter 1:21 says, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There was a tremendous need for prophets, not only in the early church but also in the Church of God today. The New Testament had not been written, but Christ brought to light the prophesies of the Old Testament.

Then there is the evangelist. An evangelist serves the universal church. He is not confined to one location or to one congregation. He is used mightily to build up the Kingdom of God. An evangelist does not stay and do the teachings. He does not do the elder's work. He comes in to help build up the kingdom, and then he moves on to another congregation. He serves the Church of God universally.

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine [now, they will endure doctrine, but they will not endure *sound* doctrine, or wholesome doctrine]; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto

fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

We read in 1 Timothy 4:14, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The presbytery has the same meaning as an elder. The title of an elder takes in all the ministry, regardless of whether it is an evangelist, a pastor, or a prophet. The title of bishop comes from the Gentiles who called their great magistrates bishops, but it is not a separate class of ministers. They are not ministers that rule over other ministers. Pastors and teachers are identical with bishops and elders.

Acts 20:16-17 reads: "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church." In Acts 20:28 he called the same elders overseers.

In 1 Peter 5:1-4 we read: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The Calling of a Pastor

The primary calling of an elder, a bishop, an overseer, or a pastor is to feed the church. A pastor's many duties include counseling, decision making, giving guidance, preaching the Truth, keeping the congregation out of compromise, lifting up the standard, and being an example to the flock. There are many, many

callings to a minister, especially to an elder or a pastor; but his main calling is to feed the flock, to take the oversight and to feed the Church of God. When a man is called to be a pastor, he is called to feed the Church of God. He is not called to preach down at the Baptist Church or the Pentecostal Church. He is called to feed the Church of God because that is the only church that Jesus Christ purchased with His own blood. That is in the Bible if you want to look it up in Acts 20:28.

Now I want you to read some duties of an overseer, or a pastor. Titus 1:5-9 tells us: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."

These are quite the duties and quite the qualifications for a pastor, or an elder. What is the authority of an elder? For an elder to be able to do those things, he must have some authority. The only authority that a pastor holds over a congregation is the Word of God. First Timothy 5:17 says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

Hebrews 13:17 instructs, "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." Hebrews 13:7 states, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their

conversation."

First Thessalonians 5:12-13 reads: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." Paul said to know those who labor among you. If God is directing you into the ministry, you must be faithful in what you are doing in serving God.

Being Faithful

Years ago, when I felt that God was calling me into the ministry, I talked to Brother Emerson Wilson and asked him this question: "If God is calling me into the ministry, is there some school that I need to attend?" His answer was very gentle. He said: "Yes, there are schools that you can attend. There are Church of God schools that you can attend, but those who attend them lack experience when they get out. They might have some head knowledge of the Word of God, but they lack experience."

His advice to me was to visit the sick, to visit the rest homes, to visit the hospital, to learn to pray with people, to learn to lead people to Christ, and to learn to counsel people. That is what I did. I worked at the altar, prayed with the sick, and visited people. I visited a lot of people in rest homes. You should always keep this in mind: you might have to be in a rest home one day. I am sure you would like to have someone drop in once in a while and say hello. It is a very lonely place, especially for a child of God when you do not have the fellowship of others around you.

Above all, one who is being called into the ministry must be faithful—faithful in the services, faithful in the prayer services, faithful in all things pertaining to the church. One should have a good report within and without. He should not have bad debts. If you were to go into the ministry with bad debts,

somewhere along the line, someone would call your hand, so to speak, and it would be rather embarrassing. One should have a good report within in the local congregation and out in the world where he does business. Not everyone out in sin is going to applaud you, but at least the places of business ought to have a good report regarding your credit and your dealings. You should do your very best to clean all of that up when you get saved.

If you feel that God is directing you to the calling of a pastor or an evangelist, the spiritual people in the congregation will recognize it. Also, the pastor will recognize it. You must have that support in order to accomplish anything in the ministry. Being a pastor is a tremendous calling. Some people think that all a pastor does is preach twice on Sunday and maybe once on Wednesday. That is the easy part of pastoring; that is not difficult at all. There are decisions that he has to make. Some decisions are not always popular with the people; nevertheless, a pastor tries to do his best through prayer and direction from God to do that which will better the congregation. When a man is called to pastor a congregation, he must be able to handle finances. The best way to handle finances is to handle them well in your own life.

The ministry is a high calling, but even though it is a high calling, a pastor is a human being also. He is subject to error, but not willingly. Nevertheless, a godly pastor feels he is giving the best advice that God has directed him to give.

Qualifications for a Deacon

There are also deacons. Philippians 1:1 reads, "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." It is one of the many gifts of helps. It means "one who waits and serves." The Bible has very high qualifications for being a deacon.

First Timothy 3:8-13 states: "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

It is God who gives these gifts, and they will be recognized by the spiritual saints in the congregation. One more thing along the line of the calling of an elder, or a pastor. He has a wife, and if a wife is not ready for that type of work in the ministry, he had better not go there. Why? She is going to feel everything her husband feels. She is going to feel every insult and every heartache. She is going to cry when he cries. She is going to be there when the phone calls come, and she is going to be there when the letters arrive. Unless she is really a help to her companion, it is not going to work.

The Bible calls the wife a helpmeet. My wife has been very strong for me through this ministry. She has been there as an encouragement and to help guide me in some things through the Word of God.

A minister's wife and children are going to live in a glass house, so to speak. They are not going to be loved by everybody in the congregation. The wife of a pastor, or an elder, has to be an example to the flock. She has to be an example in her dress and in how she conducts herself. She has to be an example in many things because she is going to be on display.

It is the Spirit of God that gives these offices in the church. You must be sure if you think that God is calling you to one of these offices. If not, you will be like a hireling and run

when the first problem comes. You need to know that God has put you where you are. You must have something that will hold you steadfast, and the only thing that will hold you steadfast is to know that God has called you there. The Spirit of God has to be the One who calls you to these offices. You should not become a pastor because you feel that you can preach or because you have a good knowledge of the Word of God. You should only fill that office when you know that you are called.

The Key to Spiritual Gifts

You may ask, "How does one know that he is called?" You will know, and the congregation will know. God inspires you and lays it on your heart.

First Corinthians 12:11 reads, "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." What was Paul saying here? He was saying that one Spirit, or the same Spirit, does all these things. The Spirit decides what gifts to give each one. These gifts are given according to the will of the Holy Spirit. You can read in the Bible that many men of God were called. You can read about Gideon and Jeremiah. They did not want to answer that calling. Even King Saul, before he got off track, thought he was the least of the tribes of Benjamin and unworthy to be a king over God's people. A pastor feels unworthy to handle the situation. You are called according to the Father's will.

These gifts are given to build up and to edify the body. Multiple gifts are given. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the body so the church can function effectively here on earth. We are not to have a free-for-all where everybody comes in and does his own thing. We have an order, but we are not to deny the power thereof. We have an order in the services. We do not hand out any program bulletins of what is going to go on in each service, but we do have an order. There is a difference between the

Church of God and other congregations. What is that difference? The order is subject to change anytime God wants to change it. Sometimes we have the invitation before the preaching. Sometimes we have the invitation before and after the preaching. Sometimes we do not even have an invitation. Sometimes it is just praise that goes on within the members. It is the Spirit of God who directs and is given to edify.

The word *edify* means "to build up." Edification shows the fallacy there is in someone speaking in an unknown tongue. If someone says he speaks in tongues, ask him these questions: What did it do to build up the congregation? What did it do to build up the Kingdom of God? The answer is, it does not do one thing. It just builds up self. First Corinthians 12:4-7 reads: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." This profits everybody.

Every man of God ministers his gift differently. I do not preach the same way Brother Emerson Wilson did; I cannot. I would not even try to do so. He had a special gift, and I do not have the ability to preach as he did. I do not want that; I want to be myself. I learned certain things by sitting under his ministry. There are certain Bible truths that I have learned and that I stand for, which I should, under his teachings.

Another translation reads: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but they are all from the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve, but we serve the same Lord. There are different ways that God works in people, but it is the same God who works in all of us to do everything."

Something from the Spirit can be seen in each person. The Spirit gives this to each one to help others. The key to spiritual gifts is edification. If you play an instrument or sing, what does it do? It edifies and builds up the Kingdom of God. It does not build up yourself. If a preacher preaches to build up himself, he is going down the wrong avenue. Preaching is to edify the body, the church.

The Church of God has a government, and it is divine. The government of the church is not voted in or out, but the One who is the Head calls them, corrects them, and disciplines them whenever it is needed. We should not vote a pastor in or vote him out. I believe the same One that put him in can take him out. When it is done that way, it is done through divine direction. The Church of God has a government. Many people do not like that word government anymore. I am not talking about the civil government. I am not talking about the one in Washington, D.C. I am talking about the one with the headquarters in Heaven, and that is an altogether different government.

(Compact Disc TR-1353E)

If you will be all that God wants you to be, then you can do all that God wants you to do.

John 9:1 And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

2 And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

3 Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents:

but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

6 When he had thus spoken, he

spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

A Look at Life From God's Point of View



Brother Esau Brooks

God Gave Man the Ability to Choose

This might sound strange in a world where nearly everyone seems to be going after sin, but God did not make us for sin. The Word of God informs us in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray [man in sin is astray, and the Prophet Isaiah told us how man got in this shape]; we have turned every one to his own way." When God started the human family on this earth, He started it the way He intended it to be.

Some people may say, "Had God not intended us to sin, He would not have made sin." However, He did not make sin. By one man's sin, sin entered the world. If you go back and study the history of the Word of God concerning man, you will find that God gave man the right to exercise the ability to choose. God has angels in Heaven who do His bidding unquestionably, but He chose to make another order of creation, an order that could freely choose to serve Him.

Of all the trees in the garden,

God made one specific tree that He told man not to eat of so that man would have a choice. God could have just as easily said, "Do not touch any of the fruit in this garden," but He did not. God told man that of all the trees in the garden, he could freely eat, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, but that was the very tree from which man ate.

Satan started talking to the woman and caught her interest. She ate of the forbidden fruit, and then she gave it to her husband who

partook of it; that is where sin started. Despite all the warnings recorded in the Word of God, man still seems bent on going his own way. In your own strength, you are going to fail just as others have failed. Sin will finish you, so there is no reason for you to go the way that so many people are going. They are disregarding the Gospel, disregarding God, ignoring their God-given responsibility, and plunging deeper and deeper into sin. In the end those who go the way of sin are going to be the losers.

One songwriter wrote, *"I've tried the road of sin and found, its prospects all deceive."* Sinner friend, you, too, are going to find this to be true. You are letting the devil obsess you with the idea that you are smart enough to be the only one who will slip through. That is spiritual ignorance! You cannot slip through. Romans 6:23 declares that "the wages of sin is death." James 1:15 tells us that "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." This has happened to many people down through the ages of time, and it is about to happen to you.

The songwriter went on to say, *"I've proved the Lord, and joys abound, More than I could believe."* I am persuaded that many people think that serving God is just another facet of life, but it is not. Serving God *is* life; that is the real thing, and the quicker you submit to Him, the better off you will be. You may inquire, "If that is true, why have so many people who started living for God turned back?" They have not gone back as a result of salvation, but rather, they have gone back for the same reason that sin got started in the very beginning; they chose to do so.

God Has But One Way

Hebrews 2:2-4 declares: "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva-

tion; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; 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?" There is no escape for anyone who neglects so great salvation. I am praying that God will speak to your heart as He has never spoken before, that you will stop halting between two opinions, and that you will take your stand on the Lord's side. That would be the greatest thing you could ever do in your life, and it would be the most blessed time of your existence.

In our Scripture text I want you to notice how specific Jesus was. He told the blind man to "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Jesus specified the particular place where he had to go and wash. This principle stands the same today. You cannot be saved just any old way you please. God has but one finely prescribed way by which you can be saved.

You can let the devil deceive you if you want to, as Adam and Eve did in the garden. The devil will promise you everything, but he never delivers. Jesus said in John 8:44 that the devil is a liar. He was a liar from the beginning. Some people listen to the devil's lies and preach that the devil was once in Heaven. They say that he had a prominent position and got jealous and started a rebellion in Heaven. That is not in the Bible. That is the religious trash that false prophets are feeding people, and it will damn people's souls. If you listen to it, it will ruin your chance of making Heaven your home.

Every Scripture that those false prophets have used to support and build up that argument has been misconstrued. Peter said in 2 Peter 3:16 that they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction. The devil never was and never will be in Heaven. Heaven is a devil-proof place. The devil is only in this world doing his work. Had it not been for a devil, we would not know how wicked sin is.

In our Scripture text Jesus told the blind man to go and wash, but He did not promise him that anything was going to happen. In verse 7 you can read that He simply said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The blind man went his way and washed and came seeing. What is standing in the way of your receiving something from God? *You* will not move. You are waiting for it to come to you when all the coming has already been done.

In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life." In verse 9 He said, "I am the door." He has already come, but some are still sitting around and waiting for Him to make a special trip to them. They are going to end up being disappointed. Jesus is not going to do that kind of coming to someone just to build up that person's ego. Religions in the world today can be bent in any direction. They can be reviewed and regarded from any point of view, but I am not concerned about those religions. I am concerned about the true religion. God has only one way to get you to Heaven, and you must take that one way if you want to go.

The Sons of God

False religion presents many arguments in our day. Someone once said to me, "Well, you are conservative, and we are liberal."

I said: "Now, just a minute! Are you talking about salvation? Are you talking about the work of God?"

He said, "Yeah!"

I had not been any more surprised than I was then, to see how people categorize this. There is no such thing as conservatism or liberalism when it comes to the Word of God. There is only one work of God, and that does not make you a conservative or a liberal, but a child of God.

In 1 John 3:1 John said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The Scripture does not say that we should be called conservatives or liberals. Peo-

ple are walking around here with all these foreign names and brands of religion and talking about going to Heaven, but they are going to get turned aside when that time comes.

Those brands and names are unknown and unheard of up in the glory world. Not one person who makes it to Heaven will be there as a result of being a conservative. Any one who makes it will be there as a result of being born again and being a child of God. If you scoop up all the rubbish that is being spread across the world to deceive the minds of the simple, you will end up being deceived, rejected, and turned aside.

God's people are called sons of God, and that is all God has. In verse 2 John said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." You cannot see Him as He is in the mess of sin, so that mess has to be cleaned out of your life.

The very same order that the man in our Scripture text received from the Lord is the same order that the Lord gives everyone who is in the mess of sin: "Go and wash!" However, it will not be in the "pool of Siloam" or any other pool—the Baptist pool, the Methodist pool, the Presbyterian pool, or the Episcopalian pool. If you are going to be washed, you must be washed in the blood of Jesus.

One songwriter penned, "*What can wash away my sins?*" Will going to church wash them away? No! Will signing a card wash them away? No! Will joining a church wash them away? No! Will becoming confirmed to a religion or a religious belief wash them away? No! The songwriter went on to write, "*Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*"

Measuring to the Rule

Jesus specified to the blind man in our Scripture lesson what he had to do in order for his sight to be restored and for the works of God to

be manifested in him. It is very much the same way now. In Acts 17:30 Paul said to the Athenians, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Many people are running around joining the churches of their choice, signing cards, and shaking preachers' hands, and the Word of God has nothing to say about any of those things. Those are men's imposed ideas and devil-inspired ideologies. God's command to the sinner is to repent. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." We must be the sons of God, and we are to be like Him.

Many people are making the same mistake that a little fellow made sometime back. One day after he had been playing, he ran to tell his father, "Daddy, I'm six feet tall."

His daddy said, "You are?"

"Yes!"

His daddy asked: "How did you come by that notion? Who told you so?"

He said, "I measured myself."

"You did?"

"Yeah!"

His daddy asked, "Where did you get the ruler?"

The boy said, "I made it."

If you make up your own rules when it comes to serving God, there is no telling what you will come up with. This is where the trouble lies: people are measuring themselves by their own rules. They make their own rules and measure themselves accordingly, and then they go about proclaiming that they are this and that. However, you do not have to make any rules. The rule has already been made. All you have to do is measure to the rule. In Philippians 3:16 Paul said, "Let us walk by the same rule."

In our Scripture text we are presented with an occurrence that took place in the ministry of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As we read earlier, Jesus met a man who was born blind. His disciples became curious about that development in the man's life, so they queried,

"Master, who did sin?" They felt that his condition must have been a result of the curse of sin, or the works of sin. No doubt, they were shocked when Jesus made plain that there was a purpose for that development, just as there is a purpose for your reading this message.

The Divine Providence of God

God had a purpose, or a plan, in mind when a friend of mine invited me to a prayer meeting one Monday morning many years ago. When he asked me to go with him, I said: "Come on! You don't really mean that!"

He said, "Yes, let's go!"

I said, "No, I'm not going."

He said: "Come on, man. Let's go up there among those Church of God people. You're going to have some fun."

I thought: "Oh! That's different. If he is talking about fun, that is where I want to be." So I said, "Okay." I got ready to go, and we started off. When we arrived in front of the building, they were singing, rejoicing, clapping their hands, and praising the Lord.

I stood there and listened for a while.

My friend said, "Let's go in there."

I said, "Why are we going in there?"

He said, "Let's go in."

I said, "No, I can hear right where I am."

My friend kept trying to persuade me, so finally, just to get him to leave me alone, I said: "Okay. Let's go in, but I'm going to sit on the very first pew I reach." We got inside that building, and I sat on the first bench next to the door. As the saints continued to shout and sing, my friend pointed at this one and that one, and we would laugh. After a while, I was beginning to like it, until someone in the congregation said, "Let us pray." Well, I thought this would soon pass. I did not even bother to kneel, but I stooped between the two benches.

Someone started to pray, and I had never heard prayer like that before! I do not even think I have heard a prayer like that since. Before I knew it, I was shaking all over, like a green leaf over a fire. That was not all that happened to me. Tears began to flow down my face. Now that was something! I reached for my handkerchief and started to wipe away my tears, but they kept coming! I got embarrassed, a big boy out in the public crying like a baby, making a sissy of himself. I could not afford to let my friend see me, so I put my hand over my face. Soon I opened my fingers and looked at him to see what shape he was in, and I saw that he was wiping away tears too. So I moved my hand away from my face, took my handkerchief, and wiped my face; then he took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. I wiped, and he wiped, and we just stood there looking at each other. Neither of us understood what was happening. By that time, someone said "Amen."

The Most Glorious Day of My Life

We stood up, but there was a change in us. We were no longer laughing, giggling, or being funny. No doubt, those brethren saw that change, and they started an altar call. We were the only two sinners in the building, as far as we knew. The moment the altar call started, I said to my friend: "Let's go on down to the altar. I mean, why hold up? It is us they are after. Let's go." From the moment they began to sing, I knew they meant for us to come to the altar.

When I said, "Let's go!" he said, "You go!" We went back and forth like that for a while, and they must have seen that, because a brother walked off the platform and came directly to where we were standing. All I can remember is that he said, "Young men, don't you want to . . ." and I made a break. I was going as fast as I could to get to the altar to pray, but before I knelt, I remem-

bered my friend. After all, he was responsible for all that was happening to me, so I wanted to know where he was. When I looked back, I saw that he was coming faster than I was going, so I moved to one side. He hit the altar, and then I hit it behind him. Praise the Lord! That was the most glorious day of my life!

I got saved the very first time I was convicted of my sins. I do not know anything about sitting through a meeting and resisting conviction. I marvel that people can do that. Many years have passed since that day, and I am still rejoicing in my salvation. I walked away from that place, and I did not really get saved because I did not know what salvation was. They prayed for me, and I could feel a hand on my head. After they prayed, one brother said, "Do you believe that the Lord has saved you?"

I said, "No." Honestly, I did not, and I was not going to get up and tell them that I felt what I knew I did not feel.

He said, "Well, kneel down here, and let us pray for you again." I knelt down, and they prayed for me again. Soon he said: "Do you believe? Are you saved?"

"No."

He said: "We believe that you are saved. Get up and tell it."

I said, "No." I knew what I needed. I knew that I had something that I did not need, and I knew that I needed something that I did not have.

I left that place and went home, I opened the door to my room, and laid prostrate on the floor. I started to pray, and sometime around two o'clock in the morning, Heaven heard my cry, and God came on the scene and saved me. When I stood up and began to walk around, it did not feel as if I was even walking on the floor. I felt as though I was walking on the air. I looked down many times to see if I was really standing on the floor. I do not want you to feel that salvation has to be that way for you, but I do want you to know that salvation is just as real today as it was when God saved me.

What Life Consists Of

Jesus told His disciples that the blind man's condition was not caused by sin. He explained that it had happened expressly for the works of God to be manifested in that man's life. God is waiting to have His work manifested in your life also. Sinner friend, look at what you are depriving yourself of. You may think that it is fun to live in sin, but it is only for a season. I tried it. I did not come into this world as a Christian. I spent a few years in sin, but I thank God that He did not let me stay there long enough to get into such depths as others have gone. I have fewer regrets today as a result of that; nonetheless, I had my bout with sin. I know what it is to be a sinner, and I know what it is to be a Christian. I want to tell you, in the name of the Lord, you are making the mistake of your life if you reject Christ and refuse to let Him into your heart and life.

Jesus made this declaration in verse 4 of our Scripture text: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Jesus was being called on here by His disciples to give a definition of life.

Every one of us has our own personal view concerning life. If you look at life only from your own point of view, you are allowing the enemy to deceive your soul, because he has caused you to look at life from the wrong point of view. You can never see life from the right point of view as long as your spiritual vision is being distorted by sin and the devil. Therefore, I invite you to look at life from God's point of view.

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" they were, in reality, calling upon Jesus to give a definition of life. That was the reason Jesus did not enter into any particulars about that man. He did not tell them that it was caused by a lack of protein or carbohydrates or anything else. He did not explain to them the physiological

side of that man's life at all. He could have given them the minute details of exactly what had transpired in the embryo when, as a baby, he came forth lacking vision. Instead, He went directly to what life consists of. In essence, He said, "This happened so that the works of God might be made manifest in him. I am come, and I must work the works of Him that sent me."

Jesus explained to them that He must work the works of His Father who sent Him while it was day, because the night was coming when no man could work. By Jesus' expression, He presented life from three points of view, or the main stages of life. First, He presented the obligation and the responsibility of life when He said in verse 4 of our Scripture lesson, "I must work the works of him that sent me. . . ." Second, He presented the uncertainty of life when He said, ". . . while it is day. . . ." Third, He presented the solemn ending of life when He said, ". . . the night cometh, when no man can work."

Your Obligation and Your Responsibility

I would like to invite you to consider this, *not* from the standpoint of the theologians or the university graduates, but from the standpoint of the highest authority there is: Jesus Christ. Again, He was declaring that life consists of three parts: first, your obligation and your responsibility; second, the fact that your life is very limited and uncertain; and third, the fact that there is a solemn ending of life sometime out ahead. *The night is coming!*

You are not always going to be in the day. Since the night is coming, it is time to do something about it. Jesus also said that when the night comes, no man can work. At death, what you have left undone will be undone, as far as you are concerned.

You may ask, "You don't believe there is going to be another chance?" How can I believe that and yet believe the Bible? God is not offer-

ing man another chance to receive the gift of salvation after death. Paul, writing to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 6:1, said, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Paul begged them, and they were making the same blunder that many people are making today. Their blunder was in letting the grace freely flow without it affecting them. In so many words, he said, "I beg of you, brethren, as workers together with God, not to receive the grace of God in vain, or without purpose or advantage."

Dear one, look at the mercies that have been poured on you in hearing or reading the Gospel. What advantage has it been to you? Your life is just as unimpressed, unmolested, and unmoved by God as it has ever been. Sadly, you are worse off than you were because you are developing a greater state of hardness in your life by failing to be moved by the Gospel.

I invite you to look at the responsibility and the obligation of life. Jesus made it quite clear that we all have an obligation in this life. I see this in the words, "I *must* work." The word "must" implies an obligation. Therefore, we must conclude that life is more than sitting around and striving to get as much as you can in your possession. Life consists of more than that.

Many people are passing life with time, sitting down on God, and that is bad. Others are spending time grasping all they can in this life, not thinking or realizing that there is a work to be done. You have to work! Salvation does not consist of getting saved and just sailing off to Heaven. We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

Doing the Work of Him Who Sent You

We are not saved by works, but we cannot be saved without works. Therefore, we need to wake up! Many people are waiting until their last breaths are about to go out

of their bodies before they begin to cry, "Our Father which art in heaven . . ." or "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." If you are counting on escaping hell and enjoying the bliss and the happiness of Heaven, God's Word to you is, "You must work the work of Him that sent you here."

You can read in John 17:4 that when Jesus came to the end of His life, He prayed that intercessory prayer, part of which reads, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." In Acts, Chapter 21, what was the Apostle Paul concerned about when the brethren began to cry all around him? He said the things that were awaiting him did not move him. He was concerned about finishing his ministry. When he got to the end, he wrote to Timothy and, in essence, said: "I am now ready, because I have finished my course" (2 Timothy 4:6-7).

Have you started your course yet? If not, what are you waiting for? You may say, "I'm a sinner, and a sinner can't work for God." You are correct! Where your trouble lies is that you have no business being a sinner. You are not a sinner because you *have* to be a sinner. You are a sinner because you have *chosen* to be a sinner. Had you listened to God the first time He spoke to you, you would have been a child of God by now. You are a sinner because you have resisted all the overtures of God's mercy. You have turned away from all of God's pleadings, so you cannot plead that because you are a sinner, you cannot work for God. A work is waiting for you, but you must be saved to do that work. What kind of work is it? The work of Him who sent you into this life.

People like to think that life began in man. Had life begun in man, then when someone comes to the end of life, man would be able to put life back into that person. When you are about to die, Papa cannot come and say, "My child, I can't bear to see you die; get up." God used human instrumentalities to bring each of us into this world, but we

were sent here by our Heavenly Father. That is how we all came about being here. What were we sent here to do? Was it to have a good time and enjoy sin? No! We were sent here to do a work for God. It is time for you to wake up to that realization.

Jesus had His work cut out for Him, and so do we. This life is a more serious time of our existence than to be spent on a playground. This life here on earth is the most solemn part of our existence. It is the period of our existence when we are setting in motion influences that will never die. Therefore, the matter of working for God is *not* an option and it is *not* a choice; it is a *must*. If you want to make sure that you have no regrets when you come to the end of life's journey, you must apply yourself to this responsibility.

The Night Is Coming

I want you to read a Scripture that will give you an idea of what Jesus was talking about. John 6:26-29 states: "Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of

man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

You must labor for the kind of work that you were sent here to do. How much of your time is being spent in this work? How much of your work is for God? You must work, and you must do it while it is day.

Notice that Jesus likened life to just two periods of time: day and night, which is a time of activity and a time for rest. This is very serious. This is comparable to our physical days: there are short days and long nights, or long days and short nights. You do not know which will be yours: a long life or a short life. You may be one whose sun will go down while it is yet noon, which means you will have a short day and a long night. The work that you have to do must be done in that short period of time called day.

Some people have long lives, and others have short lives. A day is only the short period between sunrise and sunset. What you are going to do for God, you must do between life and death. Only God knows how close you are to death. After death, you will not have another chance.

Hebrews 9:27 states, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

The solemn end of life is when the night comes. Jesus likened the end of life to being a time when no man can work. This shows us how urgent it is for us to look after this matter. Death will not bring another chance. It is going to bring us to the Judgment, and this is what makes life so important. Once it is gone, you cannot recall it. At any time you can die, and you will not have another chance to do or undo any of the harms you have done while living in this short period of your existence.

When the rich man in Luke, Chapter 16, cried out to Abraham to send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue, Abraham's reply was, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented" (verse 25). I repeat, this life is the most important part of your existence. God has a work for you to do, and it is time for you to get busy, because your day may be short, and you might have a long night of rest. So, I beg of you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. God bless you.

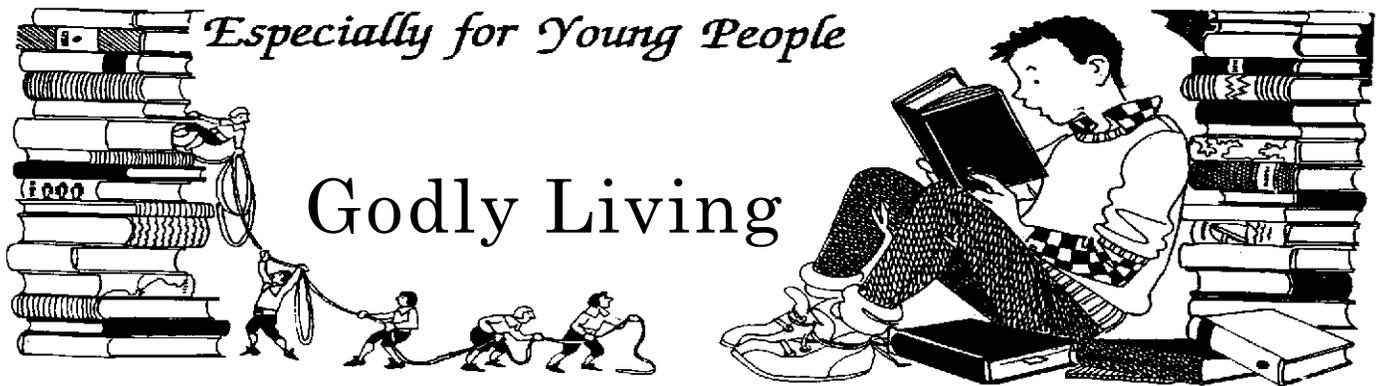
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[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2] always uplifting. One trick Satan uses is to try to convince a person that his situation is unique. He will endeavor to persuade one that he is the only one who ever had a circumstance as bad as his. However, when you are privileged to learn of others' trials and how they have overcome, you will find that this is a common salvation. You are not

alone, and your station in life is not unique. Fellowshiping together with other saints is a time for gaining strength, renewing hope, and increasing one's faith. God will supply grace to all so they can press the battle on.

Pastor Roger Decker extends an invitation for you to join us at this winter camp meeting. It will be worth the effort that you put forth

to attend. Last, but not least, we ask that you earnestly pray for this camp meeting. God's direction and presence is most certainly needed in every service. Having Him in our midst as the Honored Guest is of utmost importance. He is the only hope of redemption for those who are lost.



When someone is spoken of as living a worldly life, it is meant that he lives in a worldly manner, or in a manner like the world. Likewise, when someone is spoken of as living a godly life, it is meant that he lives in a godly manner, or in a manner like God. To many this is a hard saying, but it is possible for man to live just such a life; in fact, it is the only right way of life. A godly life is the only true life. Such a life is demanded by the Scriptures. We are to live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12).

God's dear children are told to be "followers of God" (Ephesians 5:1). In some translations this reads, "Be ye imitators of God," and in some others, "Be ye mimickers of God." From this we understand that to be a follower of God is to live or act in a manner like Him. Again, it is said of those who abide in Christ that they should walk even as He walked. Our manner of life should be as was the life of Jesus. It is said of Christ that "when he was reviled, he reviled not again." Although He was treated most shamefully by His enemies, He did not seek to avenge Himself. When insulting remarks were made to Him, He gave no reply. To live a godly life is to live in the same manner. When Christians are reviled, they bless. When they are persecuted, they suffer meekly and patiently. When Jesus was being put to death by His enemies, He prayed the Father to forgive them. When a man who had come to take Jesus had his ear cut off, Jesus, in His tender compassion, healed this bitter persecutor's wound. This is the true spirit of

godliness.

The full standard of godliness is attained only when the whole tenor of the life is in simplicity and godly sincerity. The Apostle Paul said in testimony that his rejoicing was this: the testimony of his conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, he had had his conduct in the world. A godly life is wholly free from ostentation; every act is done in purest simplicity and truest sincerity. As God scrutinizes every act by His all-seeing eye, He discovers no impure motive, as vain glory or lifting up of self, for all is in godly sincerity.

The grace of godliness in the Christian character is capable of cultivation and increase. There is a law in both the material and spiritual that exercise is conducive to growth. The Spirit-filled Apostle said, "Exercise thyself unto godliness." In the Emphatic this reads, "Train thyself for piety." Here is something for every soul that has any aspiration to be more godly in life. Train yourself for piety. To become of deeper piety and more godly is the joy of the Christian heart. By training we become more pious.

The gardener forms a trellis by intertwining the branches of the vine. He keeps intertwining them as they grow, and by such training forms a lattice-work of shrubbery. The soul intertwined with the meek and lowly life of Jesus will form a character of deep piety and sincere godliness. The daily life should be intertwined with the life of Jesus. Let there be no reaching out for anything outside of Him. For a

proper development of the Christian graces, there must be a constant training or intertwining of the soul with God. This linking more tightly is the result of growth, and growth is produced by exercise, and exercise consists in reading the Scriptures, in prayer, and in deep thought or heart communion with God.

The athlete takes such exercises and eats such foods as will most properly develop and strengthen his muscles. The soul that has any longings for more of God must exercise to have its yearnings gratified. To be conscious of a growing up into Christ, to feel the soul intertwining more and more with the life of God, is fulness of joy and perfect happiness.

Young person, is there an ardent flame of pure love in your heart? Do you walk with Jesus in a devout, trustful, reverential spirit? Do you oftentimes find your mind contemplating the wonders of Creation and the glories of salvation? Is your soul habituated to breathe in the atmosphere of heaven deeply? Is that holy awe filling you? Is that tender sensibility of spiritual things filling your heart? Is that fine, keen edge upon your soul that gives such fervor for holy things? Is becoming more godly a sincere desire of your heart? Then diligently perform all the duties that belong to a godly life. Some give great diligence for a time and make spiritual gain and then lose it all in a day of slackness. Do not slack; be constant, be persevering, be encouraged, reach forth, press forward, and the prize of meekness, peace, and godliness will crown your life.

Charles E. Orr

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The Simplicity of the Gospel



Brother Larry Dishman

Salvation Is Easy to Understand

Many things about Christianity and the Bible are complicated. Some parts of the Bible are hard to understand. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:16, "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." When it comes to the Gospel and how to be saved, thank God it is not complicated. This message is for everyone, but I especially want to talk to the teenagers and the children to assure them that the Gospel is not hard to understand.

I once heard of someone coming

to the altar to be saved, and people gathered around to instruct this individual on how to go about it. Several gathered around, and one person, in describing how to get saved, said, "If you get saved, you have to give up." A person on the other side of him said, "Whatever you do, don't you give up now." Another person said, "Now to be saved, you have to surrender." Then another said, "Whatever you do, don't you surrender." One more person said, "Just hold on, brother; hold on." Next, someone said, "Don't hold on to anything!" Then someone else said to the individual, "Now, do not wait for a feeling because salvation is not in feelings." They prayed for a little while, and another brother said, "Do you

feel saved?"

People can complicate salvation, but it is not complicated in the Word of God. The Gospel is the good news about Jesus Christ, but if you are not careful, you can complicate getting saved to the point that you will wonder if you can ever untangle it. The good news is simply that Jesus Christ died for our sins, but thank God He did not stay dead! He came out of the grave so that we could have life and have it more abundantly!

If you are not careful, friend, you will get so tangled up in looking and holding to this and that religious idea that you will get discouraged with all the rules. You will think this thing is so complicated that you do not know

what to do. The Apostle Paul was concerned that the minds of the Corinthians might have been corrupted or turned away from the purity and the simplicity of being in Christ. Friend, this is a real possibility today. Many minds have been corrupted and turned away from the simplicity in Christ Jesus.

Many people in our religious world think the Gospel is so complicated that one has to be a scholar to understand it. Today some think you need to have a degree in Greek and Hebrew in order to understand it. Sad to say, that is the reason they follow religious leaders without investigation. When you hear a message, I believe it is wise to go home and search the Scriptures to see if the message is according to the Word of God.

If one thinks the Word of God is so complicated that he cannot understand it, it is easy for his mind to become corrupted. I thank God for the simplicity of the Gospel. The word *simplicity* means "easy to understand and be sincere with." Friend, if the Gospel was that difficult to understand, I am so ignorant and unlearned that I could have never gotten saved. On the contrary, the Gospel is so simple that even I could understand when they told me what I needed to do to become a Christian. You can become a Christian if you really want to become one.

The Gospel Is for You

I want you to notice some of the following facts about the simplicity of the Gospel. First of all, it is for every person. The Bible tells us in Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This is not just for a few predestinated ones, but to every creature. John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I am glad to tell you that the Gospel is for the young, the old, the

educated, and the uneducated. No matter where you are, the Gospel is for you. God can save you, change your life, and make you a new person.

God gave us this Gospel, and it is the power of God unto salvation. It is not written in such a mystical form that you cannot understand it. Friend, you are commanded in the Word of God to understand it. Ephesians 5:17 tells us, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." I want you to know that you can understand what the will of the Lord is for your life. If you do not understand what the will of the Lord is, it is neither God's fault nor the Gospel's fault. If you have an honest heart and want to know what the Truth is, God will lead and guide you into all the Truth. Thank God forever!

Perversions of the Gospel are condemned in the Word of God. We read in Galatians 1:6-9: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Now, God would not curse one for perverting the Gospel if it was mystical and complicated to the place that no human being could understand it. However, there are penalties for failing to obey the Gospel. We read about it in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the

glory of his power." Friend, God would not have put these strong penalties on an individual if it was so hard to understand that you would have to have a doctorate degree. The Gospel is simple.

I believe that even little children can understand the Gospel; that is just how simple it is. I believe it is a trick of the devil to make little children feel that they are too young to be saved. Friend, if you keep playing around, it will not be long, as life goes so fast, that the devil will be telling you that you are too old to be saved. Young person, if you are having a feeling or hearing a voice that is saying, "You are too young," that is the devil.

My oldest sister was saved, I believe, when she was nine years of age or younger. She lived for God through elementary and high school and has lived for Him all down through her life. I believe you can get hold of God at a young age and stay true to God. Friend, that is the best way. Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

The Way of Salvation Is Made Plain

The way of salvation is plainly stated in Isaiah 35:8, which reads, "And a highway shall be there, and a way. [There is a way to get on the highway, praise God! Jesus is the only way to get on the highway. You cannot get on it through church membership, by being baptized in water, or by turning over a new leaf, so to speak, and saying, 'I am going to do better.' You have to come to Jesus Christ. He is the only door.] and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

This text of Scripture says that it is so clear, so plain, and so simple "the wayfaring men, though fools,

shall not err therein." Thank God, the Bible says in Matthew 7:7 that if you want to be a Christian, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." John 7:17 says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

I would like you to look at some examples in the Word of God to see just how plain and simple this way is. First, let us look at Acts 4:13, which reads, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Friend, the world can tell if you have been with Jesus. This was the same Peter that God chose to be the spokesman on the Day of Pentecost. On that day they heard one sermon and obeyed it. There is no indication that the Gospel was so complicated when Peter got through preaching that they did not know what to do. Why? Because Peter told them what to do. In Acts 2:38 we read, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That is not complicated.

As far as we know, the eunuch heard one Gospel sermon. In Acts 8:30-31 we read: "Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" Philip preached Christ to him. Friend, it must have been very simple because they did not go far and the eunuch said in verses 36-37a, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." I thank God for the simplicity of the Gospel!

Another example is Saul of Tarsus. Saul was of the Jewish religion, persecuting the Church of God, all the while thinking he was doing God's service. Thank God, a Light shined about him on the road to Damascus. In Acts 9:4 we read, "Saul,

Saul, why persecutest thou me?" There was a man of God by the name of Ananias who explained to him how he could become a Christian. This same man, who went around persecuting the Church of God and who was exceedingly mad against them and compelled them to blaspheme, now preached the faith which he once destroyed. Praise God for the simplicity of the Gospel!

Let us look at the Philippian jailer. Paul and Silas, after being beaten, were locked up in prison. At midnight they were not heard singing the blues, but they were singing praises to God! God came down and shook that prison and all the doors swung open. Every man's bands were loosed, and the keeper of the prison, who would have been held responsible, was going to commit suicide. He had his sword ready. We read in Acts 16:28-31: "But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? [Paul told him what he had to do to be saved. It just took a short time and he went from being a sinner to being a child of God, a changed person, praise God!] And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." The command to believe is clear. God did not leave them in the dark, nor has He left us in the dark about what we are supposed to believe.

The Lord Is Near to You

We read in Romans 10:8-15: "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For

the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" There is no question about it. The Gospel also makes it clear where that faith comes from. Verse 17 goes on to say, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

My friend, when it comes to providing salvation, God has already done the hard part. He sent His Son from Heaven to earth and allowed Him to live here for thirty-three and a half years. He was crucified by wicked men, and buried in a tomb. On the third day, God raised His Son from the dead. Forty days later, thank God, He ascended into Heaven. You do not have to go to Heaven to try to bring Jesus down; He already came down. You do not have to look in a tomb to try to find Him because He is not in a tomb, thank God! He came out of the tomb, and He said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Revelation 1:18).

What is the result of all of that? The Word is nigh to you. What Word? The good news of salvation has drawn near: the Word of the Gospel. Jesus is near to you. I want you to know that no matter who you are, no matter where you have been, no matter whether you are old or young or middle-aged, God is near to you. He is not far off somewhere. You can get hold of Him now, dear one. He is anxiously waiting for you to repent and believe the Gospel.

You do not have to climb a mountain or go into outer space to find Him. He is not hiding from you. You might be trying to hide from Him, but He is not hiding from you. He will come to you, deal with you, convict you, and show you that you are a sinner and that you need to be saved.

Meeting the Conditions of Salvation

Many religious people get tripped up on good works. I believe in good works, but some have the idea that they can work their way to God. They have good works and they go to church. In general, they play by all the right rules. They think that Jesus is a long way off somewhere, so they work all their lives so that they might be able to find Him at the end of life. Friend, that is not what the Bible says. God has come near to us. He is near to your heart today. He is near to the sinner, He is near to the backslider, and He is living in the Christian's heart. All you have to do is open the door and let Him in. It is like going to the refrigerator and getting a drink of cool, refreshing water. It is like having a slice of bread. It is that simple. It is not hard.

This is how simple it is: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him . . ." (Revelation 3:20). This is all you have to do. You do not have to get down and beg and plead with God. He is already at your heart's door! If somebody comes to visit you and he knocks on your door, you do not have to plead and beg him to come in; he is ready to come in.

Thank God, when I was eighteen years of age, He was knocking on my heart's door one night. Christ had knocked many times before, but I would not open the door. Then one night I decided, "I am going to open this door tonight!" I have never been sorry one time that I opened the door. That is the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What does this mean to you?

You can be saved! You do not have to pray for hours or even minutes. You may ask, "How long is it going to take me?" Just as soon as you meet the conditions, you can be saved. I was preaching a revival one time and a young man about eighteen years of age was sitting in the back under heavy conviction. He talked to me about this later and said: "From the time you started your message, I started getting under conviction. It just got stronger and stronger, and I could not wait for you to stop preaching so I could go to the altar and get saved. I started asking the Lord to forgive me, and as soon as you gave the invitation, I went to the altar." He went to the altar, but he got saved before he ever got there. He had already met the conditions on the way to the altar. You might think it cannot happen that way, but it can.

Cornelius did not go to an altar. While Peter yet spoke, he believed and received the experience. There is no virtue in the altar. Thank God, it is a good place to kneel, but it is Christ who saves. Wherever you meet the conditions, thank God, He will save your soul. He will change your life and make you a new person.

Believing From the Heart

There is a story about a doctor and a lawyer who went to church. Both of them fell under conviction, and both went forward. The doctor was at the altar for only a few moments. They explained to him what he needed to do to be saved, and he got right up and said he felt that the load of sin was gone. He felt that God had saved his soul, and he had met the conditions. The lawyer was down at the altar for a while. They prayed with him and talked to him and prayed with him and talked to him. Finally, he got through. After the service, the lawyer talked to his doctor friend and said, "I do not understand. Nearly as soon as you got to the altar, you got up and said God had saved you. I was at the altar nearly an hour before I got saved."

The doctor said, "That is because I pled guilty and you pled your case."

You have to plead guilty to get saved. Do not blame your sins on the way you were raised, putting the blame on others. You have to say, "I am the one, O Lord, standing in need of help." Jesus is as near as the words spoken from your heart: "God, be merciful to me a sinner." It does not matter what sins you have committed, Jesus is not far away. It does not matter where you have been sleeping this week or last week, Jesus is not far away. It does not matter what the past record of your life is. No matter how bad it is, Jesus is not far away.

Our text of Scripture points out how simple it is. God has done the hard part by sending His Son. His Son was willing to come down and live for thirty-three and a half years, go to the Cross and pay that awful price, and suffer in pain and agony. Friend, He has taken care of the hard part. That is the reason it is not hard to get saved if you want to be saved. Now, if you do not want to get saved and you are wanting to hold on to the world and hold on to sin, then you are going to have a hard time becoming a Christian. On the other hand, if you are sick of sin and ready to give it up, it is not complicated to get saved.

The Bible says in Acts 17:27, "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us." I like the part that says, ". . . though he be not far from every one of us." If you are in the depths of sin and you want a Savior, He is not far from you. If you have been raised in a Christian home and you have lived a good moral life, but still you understand that you need to be born again, He is not far from you. If you are a child or a teenager and you know that you are lost and need to be saved, He is not far from you. Oh, I am so thankful that when I called upon His name, He was not far off! He was nearby.

We read in Romans 10:9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth

the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Friend, these words could not be simpler or more clear. If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved. You may say, "You are making this too simple." I am not the one who made it simple; God did. I am just telling you what God said about the simplicity of the Gospel.

Romans 10:10 says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Why did he say "with the heart man believeth"? Because it is possible to say that Jesus is Lord and not mean it from your heart. There are preachers who kneel down at the altar and have someone repeat a few Scriptures after them, and as soon as they repeat those Scriptures, they say, "Ok, you are saved now." That is not necessarily so. It is a heart condition. You can say things with your mouth and not mean it from your heart.

Dear one, repentance is more than repeating words. First, you must believe in your heart; then, you must confess with your mouth, but be careful that the mouth is not at odds with the heart. That is what is wrong many times. People confess things with the mouth but the heart is not in agreement with the mouth. You have to meet the conditions in the heart first. God has already done the hard part. He brought Jesus near so a sinner can be saved anytime, anywhere, and any place he meets the conditions.

God Is Always Available

I want to talk to you about availability. Romans 10:11 says, "For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." No one who trusts Christ like this with all his heart and soul will ever regret it. God does not play favorites. No groups or certain cultures have a special claim on God's grace, not even the literal Jews. I will put it in my language: there is no

difference between the tall or the short, the young or the old, the rich or the poor, the educated or the uneducated, the literate or the illiterate.

Verse 12 tells us, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Whether you are old, middle-aged, a teenager, or a child, He is rich to all who call upon Him. If you meet a person whose skin is not the same color as yours, it does not matter. Even if he is not of your ethnic background, you should go ahead and share the Gospel with him and show him Jesus. He does not have to look like you. He does not have to sound like you. He does not have to walk or talk like you. God's salvation is not limited to people just like you; it is to whosoever will.

God saves anybody who comes to Him through Jesus Christ. He is so rich in mercy that He can show mercy to the whole world and still have plenty of mercy left over when it is all said and done. He can show mercy to everybody, and He never runs out of it.

Suppose you were to come upon a crash and find someone who is near death. What would you say to that person? Do you have any good news for a dying man, a dying woman, a dying boy, or a dying girl? You would not be able to say, "Why don't you come to church Sunday?" because he may not live long enough for that. You could not say: "Here, I have *The Gospel Trumpeter*. I would like for you to read it." He may not live to read it. You could not say, "Let's get you baptized quickly." When someone is dying, you cannot say, "Give me your tithes." Like the thief on the cross, he is going down fast. We do have good news: the Gospel! It is just that simple. Just as with the thief on the cross, who said, "Lord, remember me when you come into Your kingdom." Jesus said, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." You cannot beat that, friend! That is as simple as it gets.

This is the same principle: He is the same Lord for all who call upon

Him. Thank God, we have good news for those who are dying. Verse 13 reads, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." No matter who you are, God opens the door of Heaven and invites you to come in if you will meet the conditions. Salvation is of the Lord, and God has done everything necessary to save this world. How did He accomplish this? He sent His Son to die on the Cross, and Jesus came up out of the grave to purchase your salvation.

God has made salvation so simple that people who are lost can be saved. He made it so simple that people who are guilty can know that they are forgiven. He made it so simple that those who have doubts can have full assurance. He made it so simple that folks like you and me can know that we are on our way to Heaven. That is God's simple plan of salvation for anyone who will meet the conditions, anywhere, anytime.

Simply Obey God's Word

The serpent beguiled Eve, causing her to believe what God did not say. This is what is behind false religion. The devil is still causing people to believe what God did *not* say. Eve understood God's command. The devil made it more complicated and convinced her to do what God said not to do. If you start dissecting what God did say and substituting for it what God did not say, that is when it gets complicated and confusing and you get yourself in trouble.

Let us read about the man who went to the temple to pray in Luke 18:10-14: "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon

his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. [Is that hard?] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." That is the simplicity of the Gospel. There is nothing hard about that, thank God.

I read about a teenage boy who had a disease. He was dying, and he knew it. The boy was not a Christian, and he asked his parents to call for the pastor. He told his parents that he would like to know what he needed to do to be saved. The pastor went to the hospital, and there the boy was under an oxygen tent with life ebbing away. The preacher asked the nurse if he could put his head under the oxygen tent and talk to the boy, and the nurse gave him permission.

He had a little Bible, and he began to talk to the boy. He said, "Son, they tell me that you are not going to live."

The young man said, "That is right. They told me the same thing."

The preacher said, "Your parents said you are not a Christian."

The boy agreed: "That is right. I am not a Christian, and I am not ready to die."

The preacher said in return, "I have come at your request to tell you what God says you must do to be saved."

The young man replied, "That is what I want you to do."

The preacher went through some of these very same Scriptures brought out in this message. When he got through those simple verses in the Bible, how a young boy can be saved, the boy looked the preacher in the eyes and said: "Is it that easy? Just confess, repent, and believe?"

The preacher said he looked the boy in the eyes and said: "Son, it is easy for you, but it was not easy for Him. Jesus went through a great ordeal; it was complicated and painful. He died a horrible death! It was hard for Him, but it is easy for you if you really want to be saved. That is the reason it is easy, because it was hard for Christ. His death commanded His life. It commanded His blood, and it commanded the suffer-

ing and the agony of the Cross. We are saved because of His suffering and His death and His resurrection." This is the simplicity of the Gospel.

I once heard in the Church of God, in the mission field, a brother went over and preached the Gospel and told the great story of salvation. A little lady there had never heard about Jesus in her whole life. She did not know that Jesus died and gave His last drop of blood so that she could be forgiven and saved. She went right to the altar and wanted this great salvation that the preacher talked about. She met the conditions and felt that the load of sin was gone, and she just knew she was saved. She did not know much about the Gospel.

After hearing one Gospel message, she went home. She came back the next night and got up to testify and said: "I thank God for the peace and joy I have now. The condemnation is gone." She turned around to the preacher and said, "What was the man's name who saved me last night?" That is the simplicity of the Gospel. She could not even remember Jesus' name, but she knew there had been a change in her life.

The Simple Plan of Salvation

Friend, it is as simple as A, B, and C. A: Acknowledge that you are a sinner. Psalm 51:3 says, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me." B: Believe the Gospel. What must you do to be saved? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). C: Confess. Romans 10:9 reads, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." First John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Proverbs 28:13 assures us, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have

mercy."

Are you saved? Do you *know* you are saved? Are you a teenager and you know that you need to be saved? Are you just a child, but you know that you need to be saved? I remember when I was a little boy (I was raised in the church, and I really believed that I was old enough to get saved), I really wanted to get saved. I came to the knowledge that I needed forgiveness. I did not understand everything, but I knew I was a sinner, and I needed salvation.

The pastor that we had evidently did not really believe that I was old enough to get saved. I went to the altar and bowed down there, crying. Nobody came and prayed with me. Everybody ignored me. As they made their way to the back door, I thought everybody was going to leave me there, so I got up. I often wondered if I could have gotten a real experience with God at that young age what it could have saved me from, because as a teenager, I went into the depths of sin. Friend, there is a price to pay in sin. Sin will cost you.

Matthew 19:14 tells us, "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me [you should never forbid any child from going to an altar of prayer]: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." We read in Luke 18:17, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." In 2 Timothy 3:15 Paul told Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The first Gospel appeal of the church emphasized the message and includes children. It includes everybody—the young, the teenager, the middle-aged, and the older people. Acts 2:39 reads, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The Lord can save children. He called Samuel at such an early age that Eli

(the high priest) did not think it was possible that Samuel could hear and discern the voice of the Lord.

Let us never forget that the Lord's plan of salvation is so simple that children can understand it and accept it. Many parents have witnessed this by seeing their children come to the Lord at a very early age. You need to be sure that if you have young children, they hear the Gospel as young as possible. Equally important, they should see it lived out in the home.

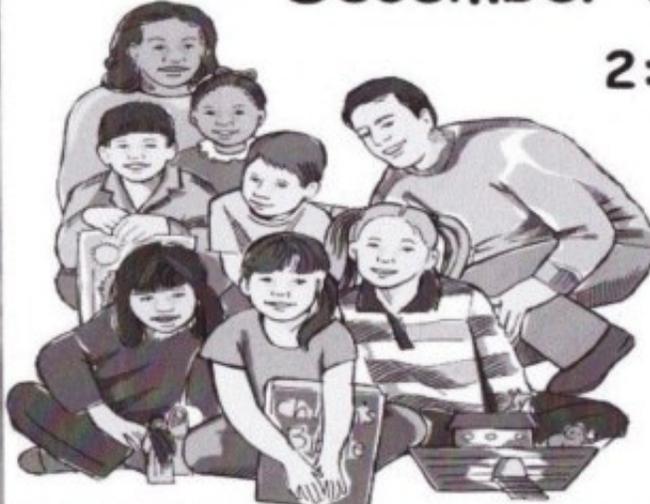
Friend, not one person going to

the judgment will be able to say, "Well, Lord, I wanted to be a Christian, but I just could not understand it; it was too complicated." No one will be able to give that excuse on judgment morning. As I read the Book of Acts, I cannot find one instance where someone went to the disciples and said the way of salvation was just too deep to grasp. This, my friend, is a way that is simple, if you really want to be saved.

Children, teenager, you are old enough to get saved. Now would be a good time. You may think you are

too young. No doubt, the devil is causing you to believe that. Now is a good time to get saved. While you are young, you can become a Christian. You can get your foot on the Rock. Some may feel their children are still too young, but dear one, it is not going to hurt your child to pray at an altar. Whoever you are, if you have not accepted Christ as your Savior, it is my prayer that you would ask Jesus to come into your heart today.

(Compact Disc TR-1355)



Please join us!

Winter Bible School

December 28-30, 2015

2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

Grades: K - 6
(including 12 year olds)

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Exodus 23:6 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

7 Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

8 And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Deuteronomy 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes,

which I command thee this day for thy good?

14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

15 Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

16 Circumcised therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

17 For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

18 He doth execute the

judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

19 Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

21 He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

22 Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Bribery



Brother Calvin Foster

The Gospel Is Fair

Bribery is money or a favor offered to someone to induce him or her to act dishonestly. Flattery is a type of bribery that uses words instead of money. In our world today there are many examples of bribery. For example, knowing their trucks are overloaded on the

highways as they go through the weigh stations, some truck drivers may offer the weigh master a bribe to allow them to go through. Whenever a police officer stops a person who is speeding on the highway, that person may take out his driver's license and a fifty-dollar bill. When the officer sees that fifty dollars, if he is not an honest offi-

cer, he may say, "In exchange for that fifty dollars, go ahead." He may take a bribe, but an honest officer would not do that. In that case, the speeder may say: "Officer, I didn't know that fifty dollars was there. Excuse me." A drunk driver may also try to bribe a police officer. Some people try to give a bribe for illegal dumping. A

restaurant owner may offer to pay off a health inspector. If the inspector is not an honest man, he may accept a payoff.

When it comes to God, any respect of persons would pervert justice or fairness. God is no respecter of persons. The Gospel is fair. God gives every one of us a chance to get saved. We should live by the Word of God with no respect of persons. What is good for the preacher is good for the layman, and what is good for the layman is good for the preacher. If we expect special treatment for saying something nice to someone, it is like offering a bribe. When people say nice things about you and you start giving them special treatment because they sing your praises, that is like taking a bribe.

The Apostle Paul faced that in Acts 16:16-18, which says: "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days [some preachers would love to have a woman like that around to praise them, but Paul recognized that spirit]. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." This woman followed them all the time. Paul looked at this woman and rebuked the evil spirit in her. Paul put someone out of business when he cast that spirit out of the woman.

Having Respect of Persons

Bribery is an offense to the character of God because it deprives people of justice and fairness. We have to be fair with the Gospel. Jesus told us how to act. Just because a man is dressed

really well and looks important, we should not favor him more highly than others.

Jesus told us how to act when we go somewhere to visit. He said not to take the high seat, but to take the low seat. If you take the high seat first, someone else might come in greater than you and they may ask you to move. If you would have followed Jesus' instructions, you would have avoided the embarrassment.

God wants His people to be fair with everyone. The least person in the congregation, the one who is the least intelligent, the one who does not have good clothes to wear, is to be treated with the same respect and judgment as everyone else. For example, if one brother has a problem, and the minister is soft on him, while another brother has the same problem, and he is not giving as much money to the church, the minister should not want to nail him, so to speak. God sees that. God shows no favoritism, and He takes no bribes. We read in Romans 2:11, "For there is no respect of persons with God." We serve a wonderful God. The person who got saved last night is just as saved as the one who has been saved for forty years.

James 2:8-9 tells us: "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors." Bribery can be done in the open or it can be subtle. Thankfully, the Lord treats us all alike, and He wants us to treat one another the same way. The Lord sent Jesus Christ into this world to die for all mankind. He died for all men everywhere. The Gospel is the same everywhere.

Spiritual Eyesight

Christ healed many people of physical blindness during His time on earth. I love to tell about blind

Bartimaeus sitting along the road crying out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." When the people tried to get him to be quiet, he cried out the more, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

Jesus said unto him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

He said, "Lord, that I might receive my sight" (read Mark 10:46-52). That is speaking of physical eyesight, but the greatest concern Jesus has is for our spiritual sight.

If one is trying to bribe the preacher, he does not have spiritual eyesight. Someone may say, "I will come to your church if you let me play the piano" or "I will come to your church if you let me direct the choir." Preachers do want more people to come, but not those who try to bribe them. Many people are being bribed these days. Some preachers are letting down the standard in order to fill up the pews. They are being bribed by some who say they will be faithful, or they will come and bring other people. The thing that should concern you is this: when they come in, are they going to live holy lives? Nothing in the world is more beautiful to see than holy young people.

Jesus is concerned about people's spiritual sight. In Matthew 15:7-9 He said: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." As a minister, if you start teaching the commandments of men, men are bribing and using you. They are putting their commandments on you. You need to think: "Why are they doing that for me? Why are they helping me?" God sees their motives. Are their motives pure because they believe that you are going to preach the Gospel and do right or do they want to control you like a puppet?

If you are being controlled like a puppet, you are not being a true man of God.

Consider King Saul. God told him to kill all the Amalekites, including King Agag and all the children. Samuel asked, "Have you done the will of the Lord?"

Saul said, "Yes, I did the will of the Lord."

Samuel asked: "What is this bleating of the sheep? The Lord told you to destroy everything."

Saul said, "The people wanted to bring the sheep back to sacrifice to the Lord."

Samuel replied, "To obey is better than sacrifice." You must obey the Lord.

In Matthew 15:10-14 we read: "And he [Jesus] called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

God wants you to keep your spiritual eyesight. You might lose your natural sight someday, but it is necessary to keep your spiritual sight. You need to keep your eyes on God and on the Truth.

An Honest Way

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Psalm 119:130 tells us, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." When you start

obeying the Word of God, God will give you light and understanding. You cannot get it unless you obey. It is God's Word that will open your eyes and cure your spiritual blindness.

You need to be sure that you are not trying to bribe the preacher. Likewise, a preacher must be sure that he is not allowing people to bribe him. We need the light of Jesus. The way of God is an honest way. Every preacher needs to be honest as he stands before the Lord. The word *honest* means: "characterized by exhibiting truthfulness and integrity; not deceptive; being truthful and having integrity." I have no underlying motive but to preach the Gospel so that souls can be saved. It is not about money. It is about saving souls. A true man of God is more interested in souls than anything else.

God is vitally interested in your soul being saved. You have only one soul, and you have only one life to live on this earth. If your soul is lost, you cannot blame God. You cannot say that He did not give you a chance.

This Gospel is for the soul. The honesty of God is our example. Hebrews 6:17-18 says: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." We serve a God Who cannot lie; it is impossible for Him to lie. Is that not wonderful? It is impossible for God to lie, just as it is impossible for me to fly, no matter how fast I run or how high I jump. Do not let the devil tell you that God is lying to you. God never lies to anyone. God has no tricks. He will tell you just like it is.

God cannot be bribed. You do not even have money to bribe with unless He gives it to you. You are

not healthy unless He gives you good health. You may have a good job, and you may have some money in your pocket, but God has the power to take it away. He could shut down the factory where you work and you would not have a job.

Put off the Old Man

Proverbs 6:17 tells us some things that God hates: "A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood." When you shed innocent blood, you are taking a bribe. You are trying to get rich. You are trying to do something your way, and God is against you. If God is against you, nobody can be for you. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that he should lie." I thank the Lord for that. The Bible is our guidebook, and the Holy Spirit has been our leader since the time we got saved. An old lying spirit was a part of our old nature.

Some try to get the preacher on their side. They want the congregation to agree with them. Some preachers preach what the majority want to hear. They preach what the people like to hear. Paul told Timothy to preach the Word. Some people have itching ears, and they do not want to hear it. However, Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Basically, he said to hold the people of God together under the Truth.

The old lying spirit was part of our nature before we got saved. Paul said in Colossians 3:9, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds." You must put off the old man and put on the new man. The late Brother Randolf used to sing a song entitled "Two Coats" that says, "I'll tell you the best thing I ever did do, I laid off the old coat and put on the new." When a person gets saved, the old coat of sin

is replaced with a new coat of righteousness. I love it.

Everyone likes to get something new. You can get a new car and it has that new car smell. You do not want others to touch it; you do not even want to park close to anyone, so you park away from the other cars so no one will hit it. You do not want any scratches on your new car. If you do not know Jesus, you are missing something better than a new car. You can have a new life; you can be a new man. You can feel good and be so happy.

The devil is the one who started the lies. John 8:44 states, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." People have been known to manipulate preachers. Some preachers may manipulate people, using trickery, having a lying spirit. They smile in your face and talk about you behind your back. They make you think they are on your side, but God sees what is going on.

People of Integrity

God called us to be people of integrity. Having integrity is being firm, sound, and undivided in what you stand for; it is the standard for your convictions. You will not let the convictions of your heart shift or fail. Your convictions are what you really believe and feel in your heart. I must hold my convictions and stand for them; that is my integrity. I must not deter from them. If I do, I will get myself in trouble with God. I cannot allow my wife, my children, or my family to get me into trouble with God. I must not let anything get me in trouble with God. That is what integrity is. You have to be firm in the convictions of your heart.

Psalms 119:128 reads, "There-

fore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way." The measure of a man's character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out. You may take a vacation in Florida, all alone in the sunshine where no one knows you. You may think you can go to the beach dressed immodestly and no one will ever know, but God knows. Some people think they can slip around in the dark and God does not see them. Do you not know that the Bible says that the darkness is light to God? God sees you at night on the computer. He sees what you are looking at on your smart phone.

None of us is born with a godly character, but after you get saved and study and obey the Word of God, you can learn to hate every false way and build up integrity. As you apply yourself to the Word of God, you can gain integrity. Sliding down the slippery path of evil is easy. Just because it seems to get you ahead faster by taking a bribe or by trying to bribe people does not make it right. If you love God, you will love His cause, His work, and His people. That is what causes you to give all you can to help others. Being faithful, trustworthy, dependable, and sure are desirable traits. A faithful person fears God, and dreads the thought of disappointing Him. I do not want to disappoint God. If I do, I will disappoint His people, hurt my family, and hurt myself.

True ministers have the greatest message and the greatest opportunities in the world. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." This is part of the integrity of the heart; there is no bribery connected to it. It is required of a steward that he be found faithful, trustworthy, and dependable. Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:12, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the

ministry." Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The Truth we have been taught in the Church of God makes us the men and women we are today. I thank God that He saved us from sin. We worship God; we do not worship the building.

The Word of God Exposes Your Personal Life

Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4:23, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." God is looking for people to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. I must be honest hearted and practice what I preach. I must stand for what is right. I cannot pervert judgment if I am to be a true man of God and to have the hand of God on me. I should not have a different motive.

If you are truly honest when it comes to worshiping God, then you are willing to accept the Truth even if it exposes your personal life, just like the woman at the well. Jesus told her to go and call her husband.

She said, "I have no husband."

Jesus said, "I know you do not have a husband, but you have had five husbands, and the man you have now is not your husband."

She said, "I perceive that You are a prophet." What did Jesus do? He exposed her personal life. People do not want the Word of God to get into their personal lives. The Word of God is going to get right into your personal life. You ought to want to know what is right so that you can do it. On the other hand, if there is something wrong going on in your life, you ought to want to know.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God gets right down into your very being. God knows what you intend to do. You may not accept the message. God knows whether or not you are going to accept it. He knows if you do not want to be right. Everyone who wants to be right will accept the Word of God and not merely give God lip service, so to speak.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." The late Brother Alvin E. Wilson used to say a giraffe has his head way up in the air, but his heart is much lower. That is just the way some people are. Their mouth is saying: "Praise the Lord! I love everybody!" but it is not really that way down in their hearts. They honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.

We can read about a married couple named Ananias and Sapphira in Acts, Chapter 5. The saints were selling their possessions and land and bringing the money to the disciples, and the church was growing. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and agreed together to withhold some of the money. They said they sold the land for a certain price, but they lied about it, thinking no one would know but them, and they kept back part of the price. What happened to them when they lied? They dropped over dead, and it frightened the whole church.

God sees people who are selfish but want to appear to be generous. You do not have to walk around and act like a saint; you can truly be a saint. It is dangerous to merely act as a saint because sooner or later God is going to pull the

covers off you. You may fool people, but you cannot fool God. Ananias and Sapphira had one opportunity to tell the truth, but they failed to do so, and they dropped dead. You will not be able to blame your sins or your failures on anyone but yourself.

Keep Your Conscience Clear

In the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, God said to Adam, in so many words: "I told you not to eat of the tree of knowledge. Who told you that you were naked?" Adam quickly blamed Eve. He said, "The woman gave it to me," but God did not accept that excuse. When you make foolish decisions, you need to admit it. You made that decision.

Consider the conscience of the wicked. First Timothy 4:2 says, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." Some people can look you right in the eyes and tell you a bold-faced lie. How can they do that? Their conscience has been seared with a hot iron, so it does not bother them to lie. When you become a true child of God, you will have a tender heart. If you tell something wrong, or if you make a mistake, you should straighten it out. You should want to make sure everything is right because your conscience is tender. I thank God for feelings of guilt that make me want to have a clean conscience before God and man.

A man's conscience can witness to him just as it did to those scribes and Pharisees in John 8:7-9 when they brought a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery to Jesus. Jesus looked at them and said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one."

Your conscience speaks to

you. If you do something wrong, thinking that nobody sees you, your conscience will speak to you. When Joseph's brothers stood before him in Egypt, their consciences spoke to them. They said, in essence: "Now we know why this is happening to us. We sold our brother Joseph; we put him in that pit, and now we are exposed." Their consciences spoke to them. A tender conscience is a good thing to have. You need to keep your conscience clear between God and man.

God loves souls. First Timothy 2:3-4 says: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." God wants all men to be saved. He loves all souls, and He does not want anyone to die and go to hell. God is doing all He can to keep you out of hell by giving you time to repent of your sins. One thing all people have in common is time, but no one knows when his time is going to end. One day your time will be over. Where will you spend eternity?

God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). May God help you to stand for God and His Son Jesus Christ. Paul had much to say to Timothy about Truth. He said some people would be ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth. How important the Truth is to the soul!

Godly Sorrow

God saved me from sin and got me off the dangerous streets of Chicago. He saved my life many times while I was being shot at. I ran from gangs that were trying to kill me. I was selling drugs, misusing women, and doing all kinds of ungodly activities. Now I am thankful to be saved.

I know the Truth, and I realize the value of it. I have been taught how to live free from sin. You cannot go to Heaven with sin in your life. You must be careful of anyone who tries to bribe you away from the Truth. They may promise you a position such as assistant pastor, choir leader, or youth leader, but they are just bribing you to take you away from the Truth.

I thank God for the day that I repented. I thank God for the day I felt sorry that I had sinned against God. I am thankful for the day that godly sorrow overtook me and changed my life. Had it not been for God coming into my life, I would probably be dead, in jail, or messed up on drugs. Young person, there is nothing out there in the world but regrets and heartaches.

I wish I had a needle that was filled with salvation so I could just shoot it in your arm. Living for God is good! I am not going to tell you that you are not going to have any problems or trouble when you serve God, but the way of the transgressor is hard. It is better to

serve God. The Bible says it rains on the just as well as the unjust. Your house might be burglarized or the roof may blow off in a storm, but it is still better to be saved. I am so glad for the day that I repented. Godly sorrow will cause you to feel sad. God is dealing with you, and you are sorry for your sins. Repentance is not getting your name in a church book or joining a church.

Do not play fast and loose with God. Do you remember reading about Esau? Hebrews 12:16-17, talking about Esau, says: "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Esau wanted the birthright blessing back, but it was too late, even though he cried. You may turn your back on God and leave the Truth, but for what? Would you forsake God for one morsel of meat or for a few moments of pleasure? Do not sell your birthright.

You need to stay with the Lord.

When I first got saved, an eighty-year-old man told me, "Stay with the Lord, Brother Foster." Those words have rung in my heart all these years. Second Corinthians 5:10-11 tells us: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." Knowing the terror of the Lord, knowing that someday Jesus is coming back, and knowing that someday you are going to die should scare you. That is the terror of the Lord. You are going to stand before God and receive the reward or the punishment for what you have done in your life. I want to encourage you to repent and be saved. May God bless you!

(Compact Disc TR-1362)

Announcements

Summersville, WV December 4-6

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

Newark, OH December 27-30

WINTER CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055
Worship service times: Sunday-Wednesday 10:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. Morning prayer services: Sunday - Wednesday 8:30 a.m. Teaching services: Sunday-Wednesday 3:00-4:00 p.m.
Heated dormitories. Three meals served daily in dining hall, plus the snack stand is open in the dining hall after the evening services. Bedding will be supplied; please bring your own towels.
For lodging reservations contact Brother or Sister Bush, 725 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055, or call 740-345-1213. Please make reservations in advance, if possible.
For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 87 Decrow Ave. Newark, Ohio 43055
Telephone: 740-344-2543

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camp meeting at God's Acres, Newark, Ohio.*

(See page 27 inside for more information.)