

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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 45 January 2015 No. 1



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

*Psalm 122:1*

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

# Guest Editorial

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

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

### THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

### SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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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"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9

### GOD CARES FOR THE LOST

God sorrowfully looks on as the world waxes worse and worse on its downward plunge to a lost eternity. Men and women are continuing to go deeper into sin and ungodliness with no thought to their lost condition. Satan cleverly blinds people's minds to the finality of the pending judgment. He works to convince people by telling them: "There is no need to become alarmed about your soul. Enjoy life, have fun, and don't worry about tomorrow.

It is sad that souls do not realize how much God really loves them and desires to deliver them from destruction. He sent His Son to be the sacrifice so everyone could be redeemed. In our Scripture text we find that God has no pleasure in seeing men and women being separated from Him and dying lost. He has made the necessary preparation for all people to be redeemed. What, then, would cause a soul to go on in sin and refuse the pardoning love He offers? The only conclusion is simply that the individual is not willing to seek the Lord. This is such a terrible mistake for a man or a woman to make. There is no need for anyone to be lost and spend eternity in hell.

God's power is the same today as it has always been. He is able and willing to save the vilest of sinners. He is ready and able to break every chain that binds the soul. Regardless of the depth you may have gone in sin, God's arm

is not too short that it cannot reach down and lift you out. One song that tells us, "His hand reached further down than I could reach up." Dear one, God does not want you to be lost! There is hope, but you must turn to Him in true repentance. Can you not sense Him calling out to you to come to Him? You must forsake your ways and your thoughts and accept His way. Jesus, speaking in John 6:37, tells us, ". . . him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." You need not go on another day in your lost condition!

Every Scripture in the Word of God that pertains to salvation is in your favor. It lets you know that God is able, willing, and ready to pardon all your sins. There is no slackness on God's part, nor could any weakness prevent Him from delivering you from sin's awful destruction. He is able to perform all that He has promised. In Ephesians 3:20 we find that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." With all His promises being "yea" and "amen," please note that failure to find forgiveness totally lies on the part of the individual. There is no reason for anyone to be lost!

The long-suffering and the mercy of God waits in anticipation for each wayward soul to make a full surrender to Him. Beware, dear one, of the danger lingering in sin! Great calamity

[continued on page 24]

1 Peter 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may

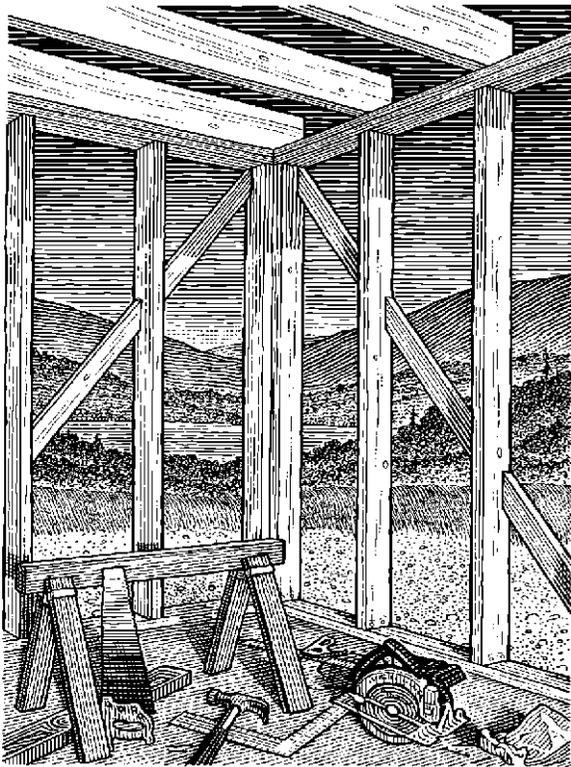
grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but

chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.



# Building a Spiritual House

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## "Desire the Sincere Milk of the Word"

We want to look in the Word of God to see how we can build up the spiritual man and to understand how the spiritual man can stay spiritual. When it comes to building, you do not start with the roof first and build down, but rather you start with a foundation and build up. The same is true with building a spiritual house. You start with a foundation, the basic truths of the Gospel; that is what you build upon when building a spiritual house.

The word *spiritual* is used twenty-eight times in twenty-three verses. It is a *very* important word in your Bible. The word actually means "supernatural." Four things in our

Scripture text stand out in those five verses, and they are necessary to build up a spiritual house. In verse 1 we read, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings." This verse lets us know that certain things have to be laid aside.

Verse 2 reads, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." In other words, Peter was saying there has to be a desire and there has to be growth. A mother would begin to fret and worry if she saw that her child had no appetite. She would know immediately that something was wrong with that child. The same is true in Christianity. If you lose the desire to grow spiritually

and you become satisfied as you are, then something is wrong spiritually.

There is a need for spiritual sacrifices. You can read that in verse 5: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

How does the spiritual man build? Too often men and women come to Christ only to slide back into their old fleshly ways. Sometimes they do it in a very short time. God has something much better than that, but a person must have a desire for the things of God. Many people seek forgiveness, but they really do not have a desire to grow spiritually. The Apostle Paul let us know in 2 Corinthians 7:10 that "godly sorrow worketh repentance." He went on to say in

verse 11, "In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." One way is by having "vehement desire."

Anyone who comes to Christ and truly sells out automatically has a desire to do things he has never done before. For example, maybe he never attended the house of God before, but after his conversion he has a desire to do so. He never read the Word of God before, but he has a new desire to read the Bible. He never talked to God before, but he has a desire to talk to Him. He did not want to be around God's people before, but now he has a desire to be around the saints of God.

### **Building According to the Pattern**

We all are builders, spiritually speaking. To build a spiritual house, a builder must do some things. Although you are not necessarily out there with hammers and nails building literal houses, if you are professing to be a Christian, you are a builder. The Psalmist said in Psalm 127:1, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." As laborers, we build the house according to the pattern that the Lord gives us. The Lord gives us a pattern showing us how to build. Thank God, we do not strike out on our own; we do not have to go to a brother or a sister and say, "How do I build?" Thank God, He lays it out for us very explicitly in His Word. God wants all of us to read the same Word of God, and the same instruction is for everyone in the Word of God. He does not have a different set of instructions for everyone building a spiritual house; the pattern is laid out in His Word.

Hebrews 8:1-5 says: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not

man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."

We are to build according to the pattern that God shows us in His Word. He showed Moses the pattern in the mount, and He was talking about Mount Sinai. He laid out the pattern in His Word for the temple, for the altar, for the priest, and for you and me to grow thereby.

Matthew 7:24-25 reads: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: [Your spiritual house does not have to fall. Why?] for it was founded upon a rock." We know that Rock is Jesus Christ.

To build a spiritual house, you have to do some work. You cannot be a lazy Christian and build a spiritual house. Serving God is more than just saying, "I went to an altar of prayer and received forgiveness for sin, and now God will take care of everything from this point on." Certainly you must go to an altar of prayer and ask God for forgiveness of sin. God will clean up your life; however, you must do some things. You have to build up, and you have to lay aside some things.

### **Are You Taking a Chance With Your Soul?**

Too many think they will do just enough to be accepted of God, and that is all. How much is that? How much can you do to barely get by?

Would you want to take a chance on that at the Judgment? I would not want to have barely enough spirituality to get in. How much is that? Do you want to take a chance with your soul in only doing just so much, figuring that you will get by? Do you really want to take that chance at the Judgment? I do not want to take that chance. I do not want to do just enough to get by. I want to build up the spiritual man. The Word of God lets you know how to build up this spiritual man, if you desire to do so.

I was never one to be satisfied to simply sit, soak up the good things of God, and only take it to my own house, and that is it. I do not know about you, but to me that is not satisfaction. I do not mind soaking it up, but when I soak it up, I like to share it with other people. I like to spread what I have learned to other people.

People sometimes get the feeling that they can just do enough to be religious. Well, I am not saying that the Word of God wants us to be more religious, but it does want us to be more spiritual. God's desire for us is to be more spiritual. The world is full of religious hypocrites.

To be spiritual, you have to get beyond giving in to peer pressure. Young person, you are not so young that God could not call you home. You do not have to be an old person to die. You need to get a real experience for yourself. If you are old enough to know right from wrong, if you are old enough to know what you should do about your soul, you need to do it. You need to build up your life and become a spiritual young man or young woman. If you are older, you need to be a spiritual elder. God will help you to do it. I know there is peer pressure out in the world. Too many youth worry: "What will So-and-So think? He'll think that I'm just a religious fanatic. He'll think that I've gone off the deep end or something." Peer pressure works, and it works among God's people. Peer pressure causes young people to think: "What am I going to do about this? Am I going to bow my head to pray in school when some-

body sitting across from me who goes to the same church is not spiritual?" You have to get beyond what somebody else thinks. We do not measure ourselves by ourselves. You have to go to the pattern that Jesus Christ set before you.

Are you afraid of what others might think if you pursue a more spiritual life? What would they think if they knew that you read your Bible? What would they think if they knew that you prayed several times a day? You need to get beyond what people think and care more about what Jesus thinks of you. It is what Jesus thinks of you that makes all the difference.

### "A Double Minded Man"

You are not going to get by at the Judgment just moping along. You are not going to get by drifting along as though you are in a daze. You are not going to get by when sometimes you act saved and other times you do not act saved. God commands every one of us to grow spiritually. Now, this is the good news. You can be as spiritual as you want to be. You can be more spiritual if you desire to be. If you want to get closer to God, you can.

Many times a cleansing has to take place to get close to God. Sometimes people get caught up in things that they have to be cleansed from. The Word of God tells you how to cleanse yourself and how to draw closer to Him. James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." James mentioned two things that definitely have to be cleaned up. He said to cleanse your hands, you sinners, and to purify your heart, you double minded.

James 1:8 says, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." A double minded man acts as though he has two souls: one for the earth and one for Heaven. He wishes to make sure he is secure in both. He will neither let go of the world nor of Heaven. He tries to

keep one hand on the world and one hand on Heaven at the same time; therefore, he is double minded. He is continually distracted by one world or the other. He is unstable because the world keeps interfering with Heaven. He knows he can be loyal to only one, and yet he clings to both of them. People who get in that condition continually struggle. They struggle with their prayer life, their Bible reading, their church attendance, and putting their all into the services. They are continually in a struggle because they are double minded. Again, James said they are unstable in all their ways.

A good example of being double minded was the literal Jew. He had a struggle laying aside the old Levitical rites, and yet he did not want to entirely renounce the Gospel. He could not let go of the tradition of the elders. That is the way some people are today. They do not want to denounce the church or the world. They are trying to hang on to both worlds. When they try to hold on to both worlds, they become unstable, because one keeps interfering with the other.

### Have You Fallen From Grace?

Paul said in Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Paul was referring to the old Mosaic Law, and he went on to say in verse 4, "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." If you are in this condition, you do not have the power and the strength of God in your life any longer. He told the Galatian brethren not to go back to the old Levitical Law. They had been established in Jesus Christ, and turning back to those old rites and rituals caused them to fall from grace. People in that fallen condition never progress. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else

he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [or the world]" at the same time.

In our Scripture text in 1 Peter, Peter mentioned five things that should not be a part of your spiritual house. Those five things are *malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil speakings*. He said you should lay aside those things. When should you lay them aside? You should do so as a newborn babe. They should be the first things to go in the Christian's life. Peter mentioned *evil speakings*. What is *evil speaking*? It is simply speaking evil. To lay aside something has the illusion of putting off clothes, to discard them and no longer wear them.

Peter also mentioned *malice*. We are no longer to practice malice. Malice is not just evil, but it is a particular kind of evil that carries with it a spirit of revenge. A person who has malice would like to see something happen to another person. He would like to see that other person fall on his face spiritually or become embarrassed. The person who has malice in his heart toward another person carries an attitude to do injury to another, because he gets personal gratification from it.

Romans 12:19 reads, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Malice is a terrible, destroying spirit, and Peter said to lay it aside. If you have malice in your life, you cannot build up your spiritual house.

Paul said in Romans 13:12-14: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Peter also mentioned *guile* in verse 1 of our Scripture text. This is

deceit of all kinds. Psalm 32:2 says, "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." First Peter 2:22, speaking of Jesus, states, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

Peter then mentioned *hypocrisies*. A hypocrite is a pretender. A hypocrite pretends to be something that he is not. He pretends to be sincere about the things of God when he really is not. The Word of God speaks out very strongly against hypocrisy. Job 20:5 says, "That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?" Job 27:8 reads, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"

The next one Peter spoke of in verse 1 of our Scripture text was *envies*, which is the hatred of others because they have attained more. It could be because they possess something that you do not possess. They have something you wish that you had, and it has left you envying. Often mixed with envy is jealousy. We read in Proverbs 6:34, "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance." Song of Solomon 8:6 says, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." Just as the grave refuses to let go, so does jealousy.

Evil speakings, slander, destroying reputations, and undermining character should not be in any Christian's life. I might not agree with you and you might not agree with me, but nowhere in the Word of God does it give me a license to run you down or give you a license to run me down. In fact, you are not to receive an accusation against an elder except before two or three witnesses who actually saw i t , not heard about it. You do not want God to charge you with evil speaking. You do not want God

to charge you with the slander of your brother or your sister. God will not hold you guiltless if you are caught up in evil speaking, slander, destroying one's reputation, or undermining another's character.

### **Will You Be a Living Sacrifice?**

You cannot make someone serve God. If a person has a desire to serve the Lord, he will do so; but if not, he will be in and out. You cannot give somebody a desire to be spiritual; he has to obtain it through old-time repentance and the forsaking of sin. Second Corinthians 7:11 reads, "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." You can be spiritual, and you can stay spiritual, if you desire to do so.

If you want to go far with the Lord, the opportunity is there. You can go as far with God as you desire to go. You have a lot to do with your own spirituality. If you want to fool around all the time, then the Lord is not going to make you do any differently. He is going to let you do it. However, when calamity comes, you might have a struggle getting your prayer through to get help.

Peter also said in verse 2 of our Scripture text, "... that ye may grow thereby." If you are going to grow spiritually, there are some really simple things that you need to do. If you stop doing any of those things, you will begin to become lean in your soul. There are some things that come along with salvation. When you sell out to God completely, you become a changed man or woman, and you desire the things of God. Doing those things will make you more like God. To grow spiritually, there is a need of prayer in your life. Also, you must read the Bible, not just take it to church. Do you know what a good thing to do

is? You should ask God to help you when you read it. You should ask God to lead you to something just for you. It is amazing how God works.

I will tell you what I do. I read the Bible completely through each year. Now, that is not my Bible study, but it makes me feel good to read the entire Bible. It makes me feel that I am pleasing God. You will feel pleased in yourself to read the Bible through completely. If you put forth the effort, God will help you. Also, God will help you to testify and to witness to others. You see, the Gospel is not just for you. God has trusted you with the Gospel so that you can reach out to others. You need to walk in the light of His Word and reach out to others. Most of us who are saved went to the house of God because someone witnessed to us. I watched an individual at work when I professed to be a Christian. He finally invited me to church.

There is no reason that Christians cannot grow. I am afraid that too many professed Christians wake up in the morning with everything on their minds except serving God. Somebody may say, "Well, the youth have things they like to do." So does every other age besides youth. We all have things we like to do. Second Peter 3:18 reads, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

Today there are spiritual sacrifices, but not animal sacrifices. God wants us to be living sacrifices. We read in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This calls for more than lip service; it calls for a total commitment of the whole man.

First Thessalonians 5:23 reads, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." You must be ready to sacrifice your time, your energy, your money, and your

talents to serve God.

What are you building? Are you building a spiritual house where the Spirit of God can feel free to move as He desires? You are to build a place where the Lord desires to dwell. The Holy Spirit is waiting for you to tap into His power.

I read a story that touched me. It reads: "An American with a man

from England was viewing the Niagara Falls, and they looked at the whirlpool rapids. The American said to his friend, 'Come, and I will show you the greatest power in the world.' He took him to the foot of Niagara Falls and said, 'That's the greatest unused power in the world.'

'Ah, no!' the friend replied. 'The greatest unused power in the world

is the Holy Spirit of the Living God; that is the most untapped power present in this world.'" That is so true. The Holy Spirit is waiting for ones to tap into that power so that He can show Himself strong in their lives.

*(Compact Disc TR-1114E)*

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# For You!

You may lose your friends, you may be reduced to poverty, and you may be robbed of your liberty and reputation. You may be cast out from society and doomed to spend your days in solitude and suffering; but if the presence of the Lord Jesus is realized in your heart, you can dispense with the fleeting splendors of earth.

You may lose your money, or the object around which your affections may have been centered for years may be torn from you; but when the Lord Jesus is left to you as your unfailing Treasure, your satisfying Portion, He will give you songs to sing for the darkest midnight of your sorrow, and His faithful promises will be the grave of all your cares.

You may sustain every conceivable earthly loss; but if your soul is saved, and you are right for eternity, the honor, the glory, and the endless bliss of the future life will more than compensate for all the ills of this life.

## ***BUT—WHEN THE SOUL IS LOST, ALL IS LOST!***

There is no remedy, no alleviation, no refuge. Heaven is lost, and with it the joy of pardon, the test of reconciliation, and the friendship of God. No haven of repose for an awakened conscience! No green spot in the solitude of desolation! No friendly hand stretched out to deliver! No pitying eye to shed a tear of sympathy! No struggling ray of hope to pierce the deepening gloom! Memory holding up no pleasing picture. Love breathing no soothing tale! (Mark 10:44-48).

## **ARE YOU QUITE SURE THAT YOUR SOUL IS SAVED?**

If not, do not rest satisfied until you can say with your heart, "It is well—it is well with my soul." Matthew 16:26 states, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

## **A POINTED QUESTION**

How wonderful that God's first words to a disobedient creature should be a question of infinite grace! He might have left Adam and his consort to wander on in their chosen course, and reap for eternity the sad consequences of their sin, but God's question reveals the deep yearning of His heart after His fallen creatures.

**Where art thou?** — Are you in a refuge of lies, and hidden under falsehoods? Alas, how true! Lies are the refuge of the unsaved; God's Truth is the refuge of the saved. Which refuge is yours?

**Where art thou?** Are you on the broad road, where all the worldly multitudes throng its many paths, the end of each of which is death? There is only one path to Heaven—the new and living way opened by the blood of Jesus.

**Where art thou?** Are you afar off, where your feet may soon stumble upon the dark mountains, where your adversary, the devil, may soon devour you? But wherever you are, Jesus is waiting to deliver you; for He has died and given Himself a ransom for you. Therefore He is mighty to save!"

**Where art thou?** Are you in the world which lieth in the wicked one, under condemnation—condemned already? The wrath of God abides on you, because of your unbelief, but at any moment it may fall upon you. Awake! Awake! Be not deceived by the deceitfulness of your heart. Answer God's question in His presence: "Where art thou?"

Friend, flee from the wrath to come. Jesus saves! Christ died for your sins and rose again. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Selected

Exodus 32:15 And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

16 And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

17 And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp.

18 And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear.

19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

20 And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and straved it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

21 And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

22 And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

23 For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among

their enemies:)

26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

27 And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29 For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.



# Being on the Wrong Side

*Brother Richard Talbot*

## **The Danger of Standing in the Wrong Position**

Many years ago in the western mountain ranges, two men who were the closest of friends worked together for many years in the log-

ging business. They labored out on the hillside of the Rocky Mountains where the trees grew large. Their names were Al and John. One day they were working on a very large tree and finally cut it down. Since they were working on a steep slope

of the mountainside, they braced the tree with some rocks while they finished cutting off the branches.

When they trimmed off all the branches, the only thing left was the huge trunk laying on the side of the mountain. They braced the tree

with some more rocks, and they decided to take a break. As they were sitting there, Al was on the upper side of the log, and John was on the lower side, leaning against the log. While they were drinking their coffee and talking, for some unknown reason, that log began to roll a slight bit down the hillside. First, John noticed it, and then Al noticed about the same time and hollered, "John, get over here on my side!"

Before John could make a move, the log had picked up some speed, and John was not far enough ahead of it to run around the log; it was too long. The only thing left for John to do was to try to outrun that log as it tumbled down the side of the mountain, picking up speed, drawing closer and closer to him all the time. Al was running behind screaming and hollering for help, but there was nothing he could do. That log finally hit a boulder, bounced up into the air, flew out, and came down on top of John and crushed him to death. What a terrible, tragic accident!

John was in trouble before the log began to roll, because he was on the wrong side of the log. If he would have used some safety measures, the accident could have been avoided. Often people think: "We've done this hundreds of times. All we have to do is block this log with a rock, and it will stay right there until we can cut it down to size." On the other hand, safety says, "Stay on the upper side of things, just in case the log begins to roll." So John was in trouble before he ever realized that he was in trouble. He was in danger before the danger ever became a force with which he had to contend. He was in that position because he was on the wrong side of the log.

James tells us in James 1:15, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." If you are in an unsaved position, you need to realize that you are on the wrong side of the log, so to speak. You may not sense any danger now. You may be getting along quite well, and you may not

be in immediate trouble as John was. However, common reasoning would have you to know that you are on the wrong side.

John might have drunk a couple cups of coffee sitting there. Maybe he ate a sandwich. Perhaps he was feeling rested and comfortable. Many living in sin are doing that today, relaxing in a backslidden condition, relaxing in a sinful life, feeling comfortable, safe, and secure, not realizing that one of these days something is going to dislodge that "log," and it will roll.

The danger that many face today is the complacency that has come in among spiritual people: the casual living, the casual lifestyle, relaxing in spiritual life, taking things for granted without putting forth very much effort into really being spiritual and close to God. Many get comfortable on the wrong side of things. Complacency, or casual living, is a plague among many people today. Never has there been a time when so many are affected by this terrible "disease." Many ancient landmarks that God set in place and established in the lives of His people have been removed or pushed aside, just a little, or shoved off on the edge.

You will get in a lot of trouble if you start fooling with God's landmarks. You need to realize there is no room to play around with the Lord and no room to play around with your soul. You should hold to those things that God has established in your life. When you have God-given convictions and you know that God is definitely laying things on your heart for your own protection, you need to lay hold of those things and keep them strong in your life. You should not play around with what God has warned you about. Today not as many people are standing for the old truths as there were in the past. Satan is stealing the spiritual lives away from many dear folks, and they do not even realize they are in danger. Many are on the wrong side of the log.

## **The Carelessness of the Children of Israel**

Moses was called up into the mountain by the Lord. We want to consider some things. Exodus 24:12 reads, "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them."

Moses was up in that mount for forty days and nights. God gave him tablets of stone, a law, commandments, a pattern for the tabernacle, the order of the priesthood, the offerings and sacrifices, and the ransom of souls. What a time that must have been for Moses to be up there in the mount for forty days and nights talking to God! It must have been a powerful time, and Moses must have had a wonderful, marvelous experience. What a time it must have been!

Exodus 31:18 says, "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Moses saw the finger of God writing in stone. He saw the glory of God moving. God gave Moses the Law, the commandments, and all those things to take back down off the mountain and teach them to the people.

Verses 16-19 of our Scripture text state: "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables. And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount."

Moses went from one extreme to

the other. He was up there in the clouds on that mountain in the presence of Almighty God, communing with the Lord in a powerful way. God gave him those sacred tables of stone written by His own finger for Moses to carry back down to the people. When Moses saw what had happened to the people in his absence, he became angry and his countenance was changed. Moses was stirred with righteous indignation regarding the carelessness of the people. Those people had no solid foundation, and they were easily persuaded to help make that golden calf.

Moses threw down those tables and broke them, and he took the calf which Aaron had made, burned it in the fire, ground it to powder, threw it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink it. Moses asked Aaron what this people did to him that he would have brought so great a sin among them. In essence, Aaron said: "Let not your anger wax hot. The people were set upon doing mischief, so they said, 'Make us gods to go before us, for we do not know what happened to the man who brought us up out of Egypt.' I told the people whoever had gold, let them give it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and out came this golden calf." You talk about being a coward! Why could Aaron not stand before Moses and say, "I persuaded the people to do it, because we did not know what happened to you." Aaron did not have that kind of backbone about him.

### **The Influence of Others**

Our Scripture text reads in verses 25-28: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of

Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."

What a terrible scene that must have been! Having destroyed the golden calf, Moses could sense the fear of God upon him, and he knew something was about to break. He knew God's wrath was about to fall, and that is the reason he bellowed out to the camp: "Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come to me." The only people who moved were the sons of Levi. Everybody else stood there watching, looking to see what was going to happen. He was giving the people an opportunity to get themselves on the right side of the log, for this log was about ready to roll.

Many folks are on the wrong side of the log, not because they really intend to be there, but they are caught up in the influence of their surroundings. I believe that many people in Israel's day were caught up in the goings-on of the whole camp, not really understanding much about what was happening. They were caught up by the influence of others, but whatever the reason, they were on the wrong side of the log.

It is common sense to get on the right side of the log, or to get on the right side with God. Do not blame your position on others. Do not blame your failures on anybody else. Do not look around and criticize others because you are not on the right side of the log. That is immaterial. The important thing is to get on the right side. Do not let the enemy sell you the lot of goods that things are okay in your life, that you have everything blocked up and secure. Dear one, if you are on the wrong side of the log, you are not in a safe position, no matter how you may feel.

### **Make Haste to Get on the Right Side**

Looking back at the story that I told you in the beginning of this message, John probably would have lived many years longer had he just told Al, "Before we take a break, let me get over on the other side of this log." Then had the log broken loose, it would not have hurt him. John did not stand on the lower side of the log because he was being belligerent or stubborn. He just did not think or really consider what might happen.

Today we are living in a dangerous age. Before you make moves, you need to stop and consider everything. What side of the log are you on? Their reasoning did not help the children of Israel when Moses issued the call. They refused to move to the right side. When John and Al cut down that huge tree, their sides were determined by how the tree fell. Oftentimes our problems are the result of many other situations in life. Some things we have control over and other things we do not.

Sometimes due to circumstances, you may find yourself on the wrong side of the log. When you do, you need to make haste to get on the right side. Do not stay on the wrong side, thinking: "Well, I'm over here because that happened. If So-and-So wouldn't have said what he said to me, I would have been on the other side of the log." You should not waste time trying to justify why you are on the wrong side; just get on the right side. That is the important thing. It is not important why you are over there. The important thing is to realize, "I'm on the wrong side of the log, and this thing can kill me." Then you need to work your way around to the upper side of that log.

As I said earlier, John should have given some thought to his position. Even though the log was blocked, it would have been prudent for him to have climbed over the log just to be safe. Complacency causes a person to relax in the

wrong position. Apathy is the hand inside the devil's glove, and he uses that to work so many people into a careless, indifferent attitude about their circumstance.

I do not like being on the wrong side of things. I have been there at times. When God shows you things, you need to get on the right side of the log. Sometimes it may take a lot of humility. Sometimes it may take breaking your will. I can just imagine that if Al and John were to have had a talk about that, Al might have said to John, "Hey, John, don't you think you ought to be over here with me?"

"Oh, no, Al, we've got this log blocked quite well. I don't need to be over there. I'm okay. Let's just drink our coffee and have a nice break."

Perhaps Al might have said a little later: "John, I really think you need to be over here. I'm worried about this log sliding."

"Ah, I blocked it really well. I put those rocks under there and tapped them in; it's solid."

Al trying to persuade John could have been part of the reason John stayed there, because it takes humility to say, "Yeah, Al, I guess you're right." Nobody likes to have to admit that down deep inside, but it would have been wise for John to have listened to his friend, had his friend warned him.

When that log in your life lets loose and begins to roll, nobody can help you. It is a serious thing to make sure you are on the right side of the log.

One morning as I was driving, a sudden, brilliant flash of lightning came right in front of my eyes. The Lord brought to my mind, that is just how quickly you can leave this world. I did not even see it coming; it just came. Friend, you had better not take a chance of being on the wrong side of the log, because you do not know when that thing is going to let loose and begin to chase you down the hill. Logs do not roll uphill; they roll downhill.

Although John was running as

fast as he could possibly run, that log caught him. Sin, no matter how you describe your condition, separates you from spiritual life. No matter how you feel about it, it is the only thing that can separate you from God. No matter how you try to justify sin in your mind, no matter how much you accept it, and no matter how comfortable you feel in it, it is still sin. The Scripture tells us in James 1:15 that "sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

### Obstacles

In the Scriptures many people are mentioned as examples of those who found themselves on the wrong side of the log. King Saul played out his game of life on the wrong side of the log. When he was warned the first time, God gave him another opportunity, and he sinned again and again, until God got so fed up with him that when Samuel was praying for King Saul, God interrupted his prayer and said, in essence: "Samuel, don't grieve for this man anymore. Don't even pray for him, because I have rejected him."

Things got quite out of hand for King Saul. He disobeyed orders, and that disobedience put him on the wrong side of the log. He had opportunity to get back, but he persisted in his disobedience. He knew what the Prophet Samuel had told him.

Dear one, you know what the pastor has preached to you. You know what your parents have warned you about. You know by the examples of others who have sinned. Some are in their graves, and you know that, yet you persist in living on the wrong side of the log.

The log may represent any kind of obstacle. It may be a trial, a test, a temptation, or a strong pull on your will power, pulling you toward the wrong side. I want to tell you, everything that appears to be an obstacle may not really be an obstacle if you will just decide to take care of it. I found in my own life that

things I thought were so hard to do were not as difficult as they seemed to be. The devil almost talked me out of doing them, but once I set my mind to obey God, it just seemed as though God knocked the walls down as I walked. He took those obstacles out of the way.

God wants to see whether or not you are willing to obey Him. If you will take that first step toward God, He will meet you more than halfway. It is God's desire to see you on the right side of the log, and God's desire is actually stronger than any desire you will ever have on the wrong side. He wants you to be safe.

While driving the school bus many years ago, I had to drive down a narrow road about a mile into the bottom of a hollow to pick up some children. One morning an old log rolled out into the road from the hillside, sticking out about halfway into the road. The road was only one lane. At the time it was dark outside, and I saw the log in my headlights. I had to turn the wheels to miss the log, go down to pick up the children, and come back up and steer around the log again. I did that for several weeks. I thought to myself, "Why doesn't someone get out and move that thing?" I did not move it either.

One morning I said: "I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to try to move that log with the wheels of the bus." When I got down there, I eased the bus over to run the tires up against that log to push the log out of the way. I did not feel a bump or anything, as I expected to feel. I did not know what happened. When I went back up the road, I looked where that log was, and it was completely shattered. It had been an old, rotten log. When I hit it with the tire, it just flattened. All that time, I thought that was a real obstacle until I decided to do something about it. I came to find out that it was not a problem at all, but it looked like a problem.

Sometimes people get into a backslidden condition because things look like such big problems.

If you want to get on the right side of the log, God can help you. You will find out when you look back that the thing that was standing in your way was not such a big thing at all. You will feel terrible that you wasted all that time over that thing you thought was such a big problem. Do not insist on living on the wrong side of the log. What benefit is it? Even if the log does not break loose, what good is it to be on the wrong side of things? However, you do not know whether that log will break loose or not. Again, James makes it very plain that sin, when it is finished, brings death, endless death, complete separation from God, which could be forever.

### **Negligent and Careless Living**

Matthew 21:42-46 reads: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived [they understood their position; their knowledge was awakened] that he spake of them. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."

Those people came to a knowledge of truth, but they refused it, and that log rolled right on down the hill, right over the top of those Jews, and that Jewish nation was crushed. Jesus said it is better to fall on the Rock and be broken. It is better for you to be broken—your stubbornness and your hard-headedness—than to let the Rock fall on you and grind you to powder. Those scribes and Pharisees knew they were on the wrong side

of the log. They perceived, or understood, that He was referring to them.

Many evils that overtake people work like high blood pressure; the medical profession calls it "the silent killer." It does not show immediate symptoms, but danger is just out ahead. That which is working in your life could suddenly explode and take you away from God. Some things can come upon you unawares. Often people have already been drifting in their spiritual experience, through neglect and careless living, never noticing or paying much attention to what side of the log they have been resting on.

In closing, I want to look at one more example, and that is Esau. Genesis 25:29-34 reads: "And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright."

Esau sold his birthright under what he thought was really serious distress, and the only bad thing about Esau selling his birthright was the fact that he did not die. He believed that he was going to die, so he thought, "What good would the birthright be to me when I can have a bowl of soup and eat and die satisfied?" Therefore, Esau sold his birthright, but he lived many years after he sold it.

I have never been able to determine how many years it was between the selling of his birthright and when the blessing came in Genesis, Chapter 27. When Isaac was old, his eyes became dim. Esau was out hunting and had not gotten back to his father yet. Since Isaac could

not see, Jacob (Esau's brother) put on the skin of an animal to deceive his father. Jacob prepared a meal for his father and went into his father's tent first, and he received the blessing. Isaac leaned over and smelled his son. In essence, Isaac said, "You smell like my son Esau." Jacob was disguised, and he received the birthright blessing from his father and left the tent. Genesis 27:34 says, "And when Esau heard the words of his father [that he had already given the blessing to his brother], he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry."

Oh, what crying that must have been from the depths of his being—that deep wound, that deception, and the hatred! It began to build down inside and well up in him like a volcano about ready to erupt, and out came that horrible, exceedingly bitter cry, but he had no one to blame but himself. Years ago, in a careless moment, he had sold his birthright, and he had no legal claim to anything.

### **The Challenge**

I can just imagine the cry from the hearts of many good people on Judgment Day when they are fully expecting to be welcomed in but will be turned aside. Oh, dear one, do not let that be your lot. What a wasted life it would be if you were lost forever! Being on the wrong side of the log does not profit anyone, but it is so easy. I want to challenge you. If you will just make the effort, you will find that what I am telling you is true. The devil has people chained and bound in their own mental deception of things, and it makes them feel that they cannot get right, but they can. You can, because it is not God's will that any should be lost. God's will is that all should come to repentance.

I thought about a story that I read about the Antarctic many years ago. Back in the days of the wooden sailing vessels, an exploration voyage was going on. There a vessel got locked in the ice, and the sailors

were trapped all winter long and could not get the boat out. Finally, a little thaw came, and the ice began to break apart. The men got their axes and tools and went out and began to chip away and break the ice loose the best they could, and the thaw continued for a few days, long enough that it opened up a little stream between two huge layers of ice. As the stream began opening up, they got the ship ready and thought, "If we could just get the ship down through that crack in the ice, we might be able to get out of here and save our lives." And they did. If they had played around and thought, "There is no way to get this ship down through there," they would have been frozen there for

another winter, and no doubt, all of them would have perished. However, as they saw a small unexpected thaw begin (it was not even the time of the year for a thaw), it seemed that Providence (God) was making a way.

God may be thawing out some of your stiffness or your hardness. God may be thawing out some of the coldness of your sin, opening up a way so that you can see a little opening. Oh, friend, take advantage of the opportunity that the Spirit of God and His great love and mercy is affording you as He pleads with you and calls for you, while things are warming up a little. It might not be very warm, but it may be starting to warm, and with a little effort, you

can break loose of some of that cold, icy grip of sin and self-deception and break free. You need to get on the right side of the log. You do not have to be on the wrong side. Do not be like John and think you can outrun it. Nobody yet has outdistanced sin. It will catch you and destroy you.

If you are separated from God for any reason or feel your life drifting, if your spiritual experience is not what it needs to be, I urge you, do not waste time. Time is something that you do not have enough of to waste. Now is the time. Won't you press your way to God and get on the right side?

*(Compact Disc TR-957E)*

## Kindness

A word of kindness is a seed which, even though dropped by chance, springs up a flower. A kind word and a pleasant tone of voice are gifts easy to give; be liberal with them. They are worth more than money.

Kindness makes sunshine wherever it goes. Write your name by kindness, love, and mercy on the hearts of the people you come in contact with, and you will never be forgotten. There is nothing like kindness.

It is impossible to resist continued kindness. In a moment of petulance or passion, we may manifest coldness despite exhibition of good will on the part of a new acquaintance; but let him persist, let him continue to prove himself really benevolent of heart, generously and kindly disposed, and we will find our stubborn nature giving way, even unconsciously to ourselves.

If this be the result of kindness among comparative strangers, how much more certain will be the delightful result at home within the charmed circle of friends and relatives? Home courtesies, home enjoyments, home affections cannot be too carefully or steadily cultivated. Cultivate the home virtues, the household beauties of existence. Endeavor to make the little circle of domestic life a cheerful, an intelligent, a kindly, and a happy one. Our friends we must prize and appreciate while we are with them. It is a shame not to know how much we love our friends and how good they are till they die.

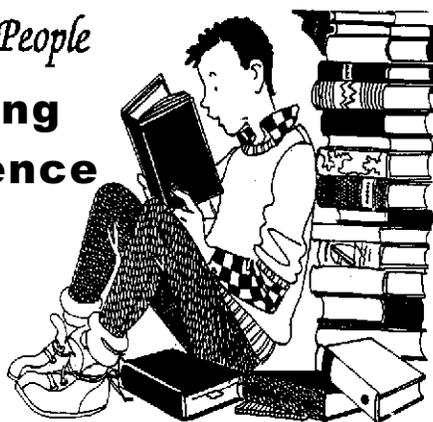
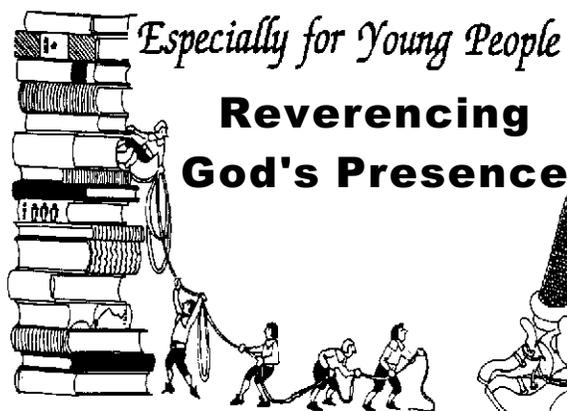
We must seize with joy all our opportunities; our duties we must perform with pleasure; our sacrifices we must make cheerfully, knowing that he who sacrifices most is noblest. We must forgive with an understanding of forgiveness, and use the blessings we have realizing how great are small blessings when properly accepted.

Hard words are like hail stones in summer, beating down and destroying what they would nourish if they were melted into drops. Kindness is stored away in the heart like rose leaves in a drawer, to sweeten every object around them. Little drops of rain brighten the meadows, and little acts of kindness brighten the world. We can conceive of nothing more attractive than the heart when filled with the spirit of kindness. Certainly nothing so embellishes human nature as the practice of this virtue. A sentiment so excellent ought to be emblazoned upon every thought and act of our life.

The principle of kindness underlies the whole theory of Christianity, and in no other person do we find it more happily exemplified than in the life of our Savior, Who while on earth went about doing good. How true that is that

"A little word in kindness spoken,  
A motion, or a tear,  
Has often healed the heart that's broken,  
And made a sincere friend!"

Selected



sometimes we think nothing of depriving a friend of many thoughts in the sermon which are more important to his spiritual life than food is to his physical life. Thus, even if you are sure you are not in need of what the minister is saying, remember that your friend may be.

Now there is one more reason why I believe we should reverence God's presence: because of ourselves. Here I am not merely referring to our being quiet and refraining from whispering during the service, but I am thinking more of a reverence of mind. Certainly we are not reverent when we are continually thinking of irrelevant matters. I, too, have been guilty of sitting through sermons with my thoughts on what I was planning for the remainder of the day, or on the mathematics I was supposed to have for class the next morning. Regardless of how ennobling the sermon may have been, regardless of how much time my pastor may have spent in prayer and preparation, and regardless of how God blessed the delivery of that sermon, I lost all the spiritual help it could have afforded me because I was not reverent in mind. It was I who lost, not the pastor, not God, not the other members. I might just as well have been where my thoughts were.

At other times I have listened attentively to the sermon and allowed God to speak to me. Those are the times when I found something concrete to apply to my life and my problems, something that made me more Christlike in my contact with others, and something that made me appreciate the privilege of being a Christian. That is the sort of reverence I wish to cultivate, and I am sure a few minutes of study along these lines will convince us of the necessity of reverencing God's presence, especially during communion with Him through prayer.

Carl E. Olson

Just as many young people have listened to their pastor tell of the necessity for reverence in God's house, I have listened to my pastor chastise our energetic group. Sometimes I have thought that my pastor was much too harsh and expected too much from care-free young folk like myself. I know that most of you who read this have advanced beyond that sort of reasoning, but I am wondering if you have really stopped to think why reverence in God's presence is necessary.

Recently in a service I had a little experience which caused me to consider the necessity of our being reverent Christians. During the offertory prayer I heard the clinking of fingered coins as each person reached for his offering. Now that was a very small distraction on the part of each, but the combined noise was as audible as the minister's voice in prayer. Perhaps the noise was unavoidable, but it seems to me that we should make a special effort to be quiet during prayer, for then even the rattle of a coin is almost like intruding on a conversation with God. Certainly it is not necessary to whisper and engage in conversation during prayer. Anyway, that incident caused me to ponder the necessity for reverence in the presence of God. Naturally one reason for reverence in God's presence is to show respect for Him. When we go to the house of a friend, we show respect to that friend. If several of us visit a mutual friend, we

go to enjoy the added company of our host. We do not talk just among ourselves about our own affairs and exclude our host. That would violate the rules of etiquette. However, have we not noticed and been guilty of this discourtesy to God? We go to God's house and then seem to forget that He is our host. I am afraid that sometimes God's guests even converse about affairs in which God can and will have no part. Sometimes I even wonder what prompts some people to go to church. I only hope that during a lull in their own conversation, they sometimes overhear a thought that proves valuable to them.

The lack of attention will sometimes distract a speaker. If we are having difficulty focusing our attention on what is being said in the pulpit, could we not start praying for our pastor? Nothing can make a sermon more effective than prayer. Thus, instead of increasing our pastor's burden by distracting him, we get under and lift him through prayer. It is only proper to show our respect to God by giving careful attention to the words of His servant.

Not only should we be respectful to God, but we should show courtesy to those near us. If we attempt to engage them in conversation, we may distract their attention just when they are interested in a thought particularly vital to them. If a friend were eating, we would not snatch away the bite he was putting to his mouth, but

*Matthew 9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.*

*36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

*37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the*

*labourers are few;*

*38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*



# A Divine Compassion for Souls

*Brother Reggie Stegmeier*

## **Laying Down Our Lives for Others**

I want to focus on verse 36 of our Scripture text for the message. It reads, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Another translation says, "He felt great pity for the crowds that came, because their problems were so great, and they did not know where to go for help." I want to speak along the thought of having a divine compassion for souls.

The word *divine* means "from above, heavenly in nature; descending from above." The word *compassion* means "pity for suffering with a desire to help; sympathy, mercy, empathy, and love." When

you pass individuals in the community who clearly lack sound biblical teaching, do you feel compassion toward them or do you look at them and make fun of them and thank God that you are not like them? Do you turn your head and walk away? Do you really have a heart of compassion for those individuals?

First John 3:16-18 says: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." In Galatians 6:1 the Apostle Paul said, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye

which are spiritual. . . ."

The Bible tells us to look at little children for lessons about this or that. When I look at little children, I think about a child that is starting out in life. He is learning how to walk, how to eat, and how to do many necessary things. When that child stumbles and falls, the parents do not cast him aside or punish him. The parents allow him to grow in these things and show compassion toward him.

The church is like a mother. If you see someone struggling, perhaps you should invite that person over for a meal, take him out for a meal, call him, or ask him how he is doing. It takes a lot of work in laboring with souls. It takes much work to really build a congregation, but it is worth every minute of it. Let us have the compassion that God wants

us to have for lost humanity.

We are told of a beautiful story in Luke, Chapter 15. Perhaps you are acquainted with the parable of the prodigal son. The younger son asked for his portion of his inheritance. The Bible says in verse 13, "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous [or excessive] living."

In verses 20-24 we see a beautiful picture of that son returning to his father's house. This is a picture of one who is lost in sin returning to the house of God, returning to the Heavenly Father. The verses read: "And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."

The father saw the son afar off and ran to meet him. Are you running to meet the soul that is lost? Does divine compassion cause you to seek an individual who is perishing without God? Do you really have the compassion that God wants you to have? Our Scripture text says in verse 36 that Jesus was moved with compassion. The Bible lets us know that He was really stirred about those who fainted or were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.

### **"Winners of Souls Are First Weepers for Souls"**

Psalm 126:5-6 reads: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bear-

ing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The Bible tells us that seed is the Word of God. God will surely reward His people with future harvests or with the bringing in of lost souls.

One Bible scholar said this: "Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no burden without travail, so there is no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our own hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression, we shall break other men's hearts."

Another writer said, "It is heart-broken prayers that get results." I wonder, when was the last time you spent a long time in prayer for a lost soul? God wants you to have a soul burden. God will lay souls that are lost on your heart if you really want to carry that burden, if you are really concerned. One mark of a true, born-again believer is that he has a soul burden. The Christian wants everyone else to have that same experience that he went through when God cleaned him up and gave him a new life.

We are told repeatedly in the Word of God that God is a God of compassion. Psalm 78:36-39 says: "Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he [speaking of God], being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."

Have you had to cry out for the compassion of God at one time or another in your life? Maybe you made a mistake. Maybe you said something that you really should not have said, so you cried out for God to have mercy upon you. We ought to have such compassion for one another, dear one. You need to allow for some faults in others, because they will have them. Words

will be spoken, but you should have compassion. Psalm 86:15 states, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

We read in Micah 7:18-19: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." That is what God does for every born-again individual.

Psalm 103:10-13 reads: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [We should be thankful for that. No one is worthy of what God has given us; but God is merciful, and He has had compassion on us.] For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him."

We read in the Word of God that God is often likened to a father, just as you and I have fathers of the flesh who are concerned about us and care for us. That is how God is with us. Verses 14-15 read: "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth." Verses 17-18 state: "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

### **A God of Love and Compassion**

Why did God repeatedly repent of the evil that He had pronounced against individuals, even whole nations? We can read of Jonah and the city of Nineveh and many other

individuals where God repented of the evil that He had once pronounced upon them. He had compassion on those individuals when they repented, or when they did an about face and turned from their evils. God is not willing that any should perish. His desire is that all come to a knowledge of the Truth. That is the reason the world still stands. God is a God of love and compassion. God is not desirous that any perish. No matter how much sin you have been involved with or what your past has been like, God wants to save you. We ought to look on individuals out in the world as to what they could be if God should get hold of them.

I do not believe that we should look at individuals that we face on a daily basis and think, "They are just worthless sinners." The Bible says not to say "raca" to anyone, or to say they are worthless, but to look at them as individuals that God could use if they should submit themselves to Him. God is not desirous that any perish. I repeat, we are serving a God who is full of compassion. No matter what you have been involved with, God wants to save you.

Isaiah 53:6-7 reads: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Today some individuals want to fight if someone accuses them of this or that. Christ stood faultless before all mankind. His accusers spat upon Him and hit Him, yet the Bible says He opened not His mouth.

Verses 8-10 read: "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;

because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him." Jesus did all of this willingly. He was obedient unto death.

As a child of God, you are to be obedient. God wants to bless you, as the Bible says in Isaiah 1:19, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." If you choose not to do those things, you will be cut off with the sword. In other words, God wants to bless you, but you have to be obedient to His precepts, or to His Word. God wants to have compassion on you, but you must be obedient. The latter part of Isaiah 53:10 states, "And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."

First Peter 2:20-25 says: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

### **Our Example in All Things**

The Bible tells us that Jesus was our example in all things. Jesus said in John 13:15 and 17, speaking about the ordinance of feet washing: "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Christ was a man acquainted with sorrow. He was despised, and He endured humiliation. He was

mocked, reviled, hit, spat upon, and crucified; yet He showed compassion for lost humanity. Remember, as He went to His own, the Bible tells us in John 1:11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

Looking out over Jerusalem, Jesus said in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" God does not want division. He wants us all to dwell together in perfect unity. He wants us all to be together. He wants us all to love one another. We are not to allow for sin — that is not it at all, but He wants us to get along.

We need to pray for those who are being taken down by the devil and for those who are struggling. We should show them compassion and genuine love. Verses 38-39 read: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The shortest verse in the Bible is "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Jesus was tempted in all points as you and I are tempted, yet He had no sin. He was compassionate. The Bible tells us repeatedly that He was a man of compassion.

I thought about the way Jesus dealt with individuals. In John, Chapter 8, we can read the story of the woman who had been taken in adultery and brought to Jesus. Perhaps you have read about this woman and of how those religious leaders brought her forth. They thought she should be stoned. In the Old Testament, no doubt, she would have been stoned, but Jesus did not want to do that. Jesus did not come to destroy life; He came to restore life. He came to deliver people from their sins and to give them power to live above their sins, not in them.

Those scribes and Pharisees thought they could catch Him at His words, so they brought her forth.

Verses 5-9: "Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down [you might say He was a man of few words; He just stooped down on the ground], and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, 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, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

We read in verses 10-11: "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Jesus had compassion on her. He did not want to kill her as the old Law in the Old Testament said to do. He told her to go and sin no more. That is how you and I should be with the lost souls around us; we should have compassion on them. Our desire should be to see them saved, to live this beautiful life.

### Having a Passion for Souls

We can read more about the compassion of our wonderful Lord and Savior in Mark 6:30-34: "And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and

ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things."

Jesus went on to feed those people food with the five loaves and two fish. Verses 41-44 read: "And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men." God had compassion on them.

As I was studying, a song came to my mind entitled "Give Me a Passion for Souls." It reads:

*As I was thinking of souls lost in sin,  
Souls that the Savior His life gave  
to win,  
I was so burdened, where could I  
begin?  
This is the prayer that I prayed:*

*Souls, Lord, souls, Lord,  
Give me a passion for souls, I pray.  
Help me to open this mouth of mine,  
Tell of your wonderful love divine.  
Souls, Lord, souls, Lord,  
Help me to win them for Thee.  
Help me to be a witness for Thee,  
Give me a passion for souls.*

*Friend, are you burdened for souls  
lost in sin?  
Souls that the Savior His life gave  
to win?  
Are you concerned that they be  
gathered in?  
This is the prayer you should pray:*

*Souls, Lord, souls, Lord,  
Give me a passion for souls I pray.  
Help me to open this mouth of mine,  
Tell of your wonderful love divine.  
Souls, Lord, souls, Lord,  
Help me to win them for Thee.*

*Help me to be a witness for Thee,  
Give me a passion for souls.*

Do you really want to see souls saved? I want to see the church grow. Most importantly, I want to see souls saved from the life of sin.

If your enthusiasm and love for the Truth begins to die, the spirit of divine compassion will also begin to die. When you no longer have a desire to get to the house of worship, you will lose your desire to read the Bible and pray, to see souls saved, and to have divine compassion. The world goes about with a fabrication of love and compassion, but a true child of God has divine compassion that is from above.

You may say, "I'm a shy person, and I can't speak for God as I ought to." God can help you in all avenues, in all ways. Remember, even the Apostle Paul prayed that the Lord might open his mouth boldly to preach the Gospel and to make the truths known. Every Christian should have that desire.

### Working With Souls

The Bible tells us that Jesus came to comfort those who are feeble-minded, to heal the sick, to open the eyes of the blind, and to raise up souls from a life of sin. God is a God of compassion. First Thessalonians 5:14-15 says: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly [or those who do not work], comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

Are we above Christ that we should not do the same? We may be called on at times to comfort those who are feeble-minded. Have you ever had to spend some time with someone who was not in his right mind? That takes much patience. Nevertheless, Jesus said to do it. He said to "comfort the feeble-minded." That is your responsibility and my responsibility as well.

Ezekiel, Chapter 34, is a proph-

ecy that goes right along with God's desire that His sheep be gathered into one fold. Verses 11-12 read: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock. . . ." I thought of this because I think sometimes when we are looking for souls, we have to really search them out and seek them.

I know in working with souls personally, when the time for the service has rolled around and someone I had invited was not there, as soon as the service was over, I called that person or went looking for him. Where was he? He should have been in church. If you are not in church, the saints get concerned, and you should get concerned too. We are our brother's keeper. I call people and say: "Where were you? We had a beautiful service. We missed you. We love you. Is there anything we can do to help?" That is a job for every Christian, not just the pastor or the elders.

Ezekiel 34:12-16 reads: "As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

"I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment [or preaching

of the Gospel of Jesus Christ]."

I think it is a good test for the honesty of a soul to bring him right into the house of worship to see how he stands under the preaching of the Gospel, to see how he sits under judgment preaching. If a person is really honest, he will like it, and he will stick around and inquire about it. On the other hand, if a person is not honest, he will make light of it and flee.

It is beautiful to see people who dress according to the standard of God's Word, who will be obedient to a man of God and obedient to the Word of God. The Bible lets us know that we have to be obedient so that our prayers will not be hindered. If you really want God to hear you, you must live right and act right, and certainly we need God to do that.

### **The Compassion of Christ**

What joy comes when a soul returns to the fold! In speaking of the parable of the prodigal son, I do not believe that one should have that older brother syndrome, where he stands back and makes light and says, "Why does he get all that attention?" When someone gets saved, we should rejoice with that person. The Bible says when others rejoice, we should rejoice with them. When they weep, we should weep with them. God's people are compassionate. We are touched when someone is hurting. When someone rejoices, we rejoice. Why? Because we care and we are concerned. We are our brother's keeper.

Luke 15:7 says, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." What a beautiful thing it is to see a soul saved, to see a lost one brought into the Father's house! The Lord sets them down to eat of the fatted calf, the precious Word of God, as the prodigal son did. They are clothed in robes of righteousness and instructed in the ways of Truth,

and then God begins to write His laws on their hearts, those hearts of flesh.

You need to have a divine compassion for souls. Having a divine compassion will bring results. If you are really concerned about someone, if you are really praying for someone, you will weep for that person's soul. Results will come sooner or later.

Matthew 14:14 says, "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." Jesus was moved with compassion, and often it followed an act of God. He healed the sick; He raised them out of their sick beds. Matthew 20:34 says, "So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."

I thought about the story of Legion, who was possessed with devils. Jesus touched him. I love the verse where it says that Legion was sitting, clothed and in his right mind. That man went about naked, cutting himself, doing all kinds of weird things; but when Jesus got hold of him, he shut up, put on some clothes, and was in his right mind. He began to act right, talk right, and dress right. That is what Jesus does for people.

### **Having the Love of God**

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12, Paul discussed the spiritual gifts and talked about the beauty of them all. The Apostle Paul was very gifted. He said in verse 31, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way." What is that way? It is the way of love. I really believe that among Christendom, genuine love, just having a simple love for humanity, is lacking so much of the time.

First John 3:17 says, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" If you close up your heart of

compassion when you see your brother has need and say, "I can't help him," and go about your way, how do you pillow your head at night? You cannot do that if you have the love of God in your life.

The Bible lets us know in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, that love is patient, it suffers long, and it is kind; that is the love of God. His love cannot be fabricated, made up, or produced from works; it comes through a born-again experience and obedience.

There is hope for this world, and it is found in Jesus Christ. There is not a reason in the world why anyone should perish without Him. There is no excuse for anyone to perish without the Lord. Christ is out searching for all lost souls. He is seeking the lost, and He has to use you and me; we are His instruments. If God saved you, you are an instrument of righteousness, and you are set apart for God's use. God wants to use you. Are you willing? Are you obedient? If you are, you will eat the good of the land. Your life will be blessed, and God will use you in a miraculous way. God needs you to further His cause. John 10:16 reads, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." God has others that He wants saved, and I believe that is the reason this world is still continuing as it is.

Saint, be encouraged. Do not lose hope for your loved ones, for a son or a daughter or whomever you are praying for. You need to continue praying and hang on to your faith in God. Hang on to that thread of hope, as one songwriter put it, because God will come through. He said He would.

The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 13:1-2: "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." You never know when you are going to entertain an angel of God, so you need to be obedient. Open up

your house, if that is what it takes, to entertain those who need a meal or do not have a place to go; take them in. God will bless you for it.

We read in 1 John 3:18, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." If you really love God, you will obey everything He says. Dear children, let us stop just saying we love one another, but let us really show it by our actions.

### Travailing for Souls

In closing, my prayer is that the hearts of all God's people will be moved with compassion as our Lord's heart was when He saw people scattered abroad. His heart was moved with compassion, and our hearts should be moved with compassion for lost humanity. If this compassion is a divine compassion, it will bring about results.

Isaiah 66:8 says, "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." What does the word *travail* mean? It means to labor with some pain. When a woman goes through child-bearing, she experiences a lot of pain.

Dear one, if you have labored hours and days and months and years for a soul, and that person has gotten saved, I am sure you would say that it was worth it. Seeing one soul saved is worth all the world. It is worth all the effort to see one soul saved from an eternal hell. What did the Prophet Isaiah say? As soon as Zion travailed, or as soon as the church really labored with pain for souls, she brought forth. As soon as you really labor, really show compassion for souls, you will see them saved. I am sure that you know ones who are outside the ark of safety.

The wise man said in Proverbs 11:30, "He that winneth souls is

wise." I trust you want to be wise. It is what you do individually that will count on the Day of Judgment. Each of us will stand alone before God. You need to consider your own life. What are you doing for God?

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth." I understand that youth is a time of vanity and a time of hard places, but the Apostle Paul admonished Timothy not to look down upon it and not to allow others to look down upon it. In other words, do not allow others to belittle your youth. You must be a believer in word, in deed, and in action.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Do you need to renew your motivation, your love, your concern, and your passion for souls? How is your compassion for lost humanity? Do not get content in your walk with God, to get into a routine. Getting into a routine of meeting Sundays and Wednesdays is easy, going through the motions and singing the hymns. Let us awaken ourselves. When we assemble, let us get everything out of the service we can.

Young person, if you see those who do not seem to be accepted, you need to see what you can do to help them. I am sure all of us have been lonely at times, maybe have felt as if no one cared. Let us look out for one another. Let us be aware of those who are struggling and those who are discouraged. If you see a brother overtaken in a fault, what did the Apostle Paul say in Galatians 6:1? ". . . ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted [lest you fall the same way]." Let us be careful. Let us be aware of one another's hurts. If your brother hurts, you should hurt with him, pray for him, comfort him, and see what you can do to help. Let us have a divine compassion for souls.

(Compact Disc TR-014)

*James 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

*3 Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.*

*4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.*

*5 Even so the tongue is a little*

*member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!*

*6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.*

*7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:*

*8 But the tongue can no man tame;*

*it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*

*9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.*

*11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?*

*12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.*

# The Little Villain



*Brother Michael Wilks*

## **God Will Purge His Floor**

According to these Scriptures, as long as we have a tongue, the possibility of trouble is there. The devil knows that. In order for the devil to work his plan, there are certain things that take a while for him to hatch. You may speak in an instant, and maybe you are not thinking, and you can get into deep

trouble. James 1:27 states, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Many times people's religion is merely a form of religion, but God looks on personal purity. Some people like to do good works, but they do not like personal purity.

Why? Because it takes God. The only way you can live purely is to serve God and to live the preached Word of God. Also, you must have the Holy Ghost if you are ever going to make it. Personal purity requires you to put forth effort. When you are out in the world, lethargy is all around.

Some people encounter a little resistance, and they give up. Friend,

if you are going to run every time you have a little resistance, you are going to have a rough life. This is where God comes in. God can help you. You see, if you go out to do something, unless God is in it, you are going to fall on your face. If you will get down on your knees and say, "Lord, I need You," that is all you have to say. God's power will be there to give you victory over whatever it may be. It could be a small thing in your life or it could be huge to you. God is a personal God. He wants to help you.

Some people believe they can get by with things. They start doing things and think: "I have been going along fine for years. I am getting along well." Friend, you cannot get by with anything. Luke 3:16-17 tells us: "John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor."

Friend, God will purge His floor. If you are not producing fruit, you are eventually going to be purged. Some people think they can do all kinds of things, but they will be purged. They can probably fool some people, but God is watching. Your life is naked and open before Him. Every day whatever you are doing, He knows. If you are playing church, you are going to be purged. It might take a while, but God is eternal. Thirty years is nothing to Him. He does not have a watch. As I meditated on that, I thought: "What a warning!"

Are you going to be serving the Lord if the world stands for another thirty or forty years? The only way you are going to be serving Him then is to put your best foot forward. The only way you are going to make it is to give God all you have. You are going to have to run well and lay aside any weights that easily beset you. There are lots of weights out there that the devil has for you.

Some people are getting too caught up in the world, and they will be purged. We must be refined by God.

### **The Need to Be Cleansed on the Inside**

John 13:10-11 says: "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean." We know that one little member needs cleansing. If not, this little member can get you in a lot of trouble. Every one of us has dealt with it.

This little member can get you into situations where you have to back up. The devil knows that if you have to back up and apologize to someone, then he can start working. That is what he wants; he just wants an open door. The devil will tell you, "You do not have to do that." Then comes a battle, and it is not easy. Some religions are putting this battle far out into the future, the battle of Armageddon. Friend, it is a battle every day to serve God, and the only way we are going to do it is through His grace. Every day we are walking along a spiritual cliff.

You are going to be faced with situations where someone is going to rub you the wrong way. The flesh wants to speak out, but God's law is so much higher. His thoughts are so much higher than our thoughts. He does not want you to lash out at anyone. You need to know what manner of spirit you are. This takes a daily work. Friend, you can say things and the intent is right there. The way you say something is important. Body language is also important. People are watching you, and your actual words are just a part of your influence.

Some people listen to your enthusiasm, your body language, and how you say things and your tone. When you are speaking to your family members, there are those listening to how you speak. If you are harsh, it is easy to pick up

on that. It does not take a genius to say: "That person is harsh. I would not want to live with that person. He sounds rough." This is where the Holy Ghost comes in and gives you grace. You need power to help with your tongue. If the devil wants to get you to sin, he may do lots of planning. Every day as we are talking to others, the devil has an opportunity, and he will use it. He is looking for just one opportunity. Friend, we each have an influence, and all it takes is just one word to damage that influence.

Matthew 15:18-19 tells us, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." What is in the heart is just like dropping a wick in a glass of water. That wick is going to pull up whatever is in there. When people get upset, the tongue is going to draw up what is inside.

Some people have a religious profession. They know they should not talk a certain way, but when they get in a hard spot, the wrong thing comes flying out. Why? They do not have the power of God. You must be cleansed on the inside, otherwise you are just going to recycle all the stuff that is down inside. You might be able to suppress it for a while, but that wick, or that old tongue, is going to draw it up at some point if you do not have the real goods.

### **The Power of Words**

The tongue is quite a topic. As I was studying the lesson text, I noticed that James talked about ships. He mentioned the rudder, and I looked this up. It is amazing that only 3 to 4 percent of that entire submerged surface is actually steering the entire ship. Have you ever heard that the one who speaks softly carries a big stick? That is exactly what the tongue is. The tongue does not need a weapon, but there is

power there.

The Jews had a fascination with words and the power they carried. Has anyone ever said something out of line or something mean to you? No doubt, you still remember it. That is how powerful words are. What about when somebody said something really nice about the way you looked? You probably still remember that to this day. Friend, I do not know of any greater power than words. The Word of God is powerful going forth. It will not take long to see who is steering.

We all like power steering on a vehicle. If you have ever driven a car without power steering, you know that it is miserable. However, when you get in a car with power steering, you barely have to work. This is exactly what everybody needs, a good dose of "power steering" for the tongue. Otherwise, it is going to get you in trouble every time. Only God can supply that power. The Scripture says in verse 8 of our text, "The tongue can no man tame." When your tongue is tamed, no one can take credit for it but God.

Evil things proceed out of the heart, and you need a change of heart to speak something different. When I got saved, I stopped using profanity. There are some people who claim to be saved, yet they are still using profanity. Friend, if you are still cussing, you do not have salvation. If a person claims to be saved, he must control his tongue. God can help your experience. He has something better for you than that. I can remember that I had been saved for just a short time, and I was doing what I loved to do—playing pickup basketball. I hit the floor, and out came some words that I used to say. I felt so upset with myself. After that happened to me, I went home and told the Lord how sorry I was and said I would give up basketball until I could get myself under control. Thank God, He gave me the victory.

People in false religion see people with a profession, yet they talk any old way. They dress up, go

to church, and do all kinds of religious activities, but they cannot control their tongues. Unless you have God, you cannot control your tongue. If you are around people long enough, it is a litmus test. Some people are churchy, but when something happens and things do not go their way, awful words come out their mouths. I have witnessed some of this, and it made a great impression on me. Friend, I do not want to be a hypocrite, do you? That is the worst thing that a person could ever be. Everyone should want to live this experience and be genuine before mankind. There are lots of different ways that you can get in trouble. Have you ever heard of innuendos? This holy living gets really close. This is a common salvation. When I get up tomorrow, I am going to battle the same things you are. I will be asking God to help me.

### God Keeps a Record

Matthew 12:36-37 reads: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." In the Amplified Bible it says, "But I tell you, on the day of judgment men will have to give account for every idle (inactive, nonworking) word they speak. For by your words you will be justified *and* acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned *and* sentenced."

God has a record of all that we say and do. Think of the billions of people who have lived on this planet! God is keeping an account of everything we say. When we stand at the Judgment, all these things are going to be brought forth. In that day we will remember the things that we have said, and we will be measured by what we have said and by what we have done.

I tremble because one day I am going to give an account for everything I say. No one will be able to help me out. I will have to stand

alone and will have to give an account of what I have said and how I have lived my life. Friend, you should make sure that you are living the right life before your family, because you are going to give an account of how you have conducted yourself. You should want to do what is best for Jesus Christ.

James 3:8 speaks of man being unable to tame the tongue. You cannot put your tongue in a cage, like an animal in the zoo. The only place you are going to find a tamed tongue is in a true child of God. That is not to say that we cannot say something wrong, but a true child of God has the closest thing to a tamed tongue that you are going to find. Why? Because in the back of our minds, we know that everything we say and do will be judged by the Word of God. If I speak wrong to someone and then you invite him to service, he might look at me and say, "There is that guy who spoke harshly to me." Our influence is important. It is so important to live our testimony.

Just a little spark can destroy much. Undoubtedly you have heard of the wild fires that occur out west. Sometimes a fire starts by just a lightning strike, and it burns thousands of acres. That is how a rumor can work. Once a rumor gets started, it can destroy much. This is the reason you need to be careful of what you say and what you repeat.

When you say things, you are sending those words out to others with your name on it. As it goes out, people are going to listen. You have a responsibility to be careful of what you say. A rumor is a terrible thing. The words that you send forth may hurt others. A child of God should not backbite anyone. That is not a right spirit. All you can do is leave the matter with God, but that is still not easy when people are saying things against you.

### Words Fitly Spoken

Let us be ever so careful about the tongue. The tongue can speak

venomous words. If I say that there is a venomous creature out there, you may think of snakes, spiders, or certain types of fish. If you were to handle a garter snake versus a rattlesnake, your conduct would be different. Why? One is poisonous, whereas the other is not. Everyone has the ability to harm others with the tongue. You can hurt or wound somebody with your words.

Proverbs 18:19 says, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." Once the harm is done, it can be almost impossible to win a person back. Every time that person sees you, that conversation is going to come back to his mind. He is not going to listen to you, because you have hurt him. You may ask for forgiveness, but friend that wound goes deep. Proverbs 21:23 tells us, "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles." If you find that your tongue is getting out of control, you need God to help you. At the center of the Gospel message is the need of God. You cannot get your life in alignment without Him, and you cannot get your tongue in alignment without God. It takes His power.

Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof." I just want to end the message with a few thoughts about the goodness of the tongue. How many wonderful messages have you heard throughout your life? How many wonderful songs of Zion have you heard? Can you think back to when the Lord spoke marvelous words of life to you?

One of my favorite Bible verses is Proverbs 25:11, which says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." That just makes me happy to say that. Those are beautiful words. Have you ever been discouraged and a saint said the perfect words to you? That is the power of the tongue working for good. A good word is so much better to encourage people. Have you ever felt the need to say something to someone and really say it with much emphasis?

Selling something is easy when you believe in what you are selling. People can sense it when you care. Proverbs 25:15 reads, "By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone." Sometimes one of the hardest things to do is to give a soft answer.

Blurting something out is much easier, but to give a soft answer when you are rubbed the wrong way, so to speak, is where the grace of God comes in and the impact is made.

Proverbs 25:25 says, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Friend, this verse reveals the power of words. You need to be aware of how powerful the tongue is.

Your conversation influences other people. Some people are bold and say any old thing. If you are a child of God, you should have a different demeanor in the way you speak. People quickly pick up on that. You need to remember how important your words can be. First of all, you should not want to disappoint Christ. You need to think about what He has done for you. If withholding words will glorify Him, that is what you should do. You should not want to hurt Him. If you need help along this line, won't you ask the Lord to help you today? He can help you to get greater control of your tongue.

*(Compact Disc TR-1110)*

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[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2] awaits those who put off their salvation. Why? No one ever knows when death will come and cut him or her off. Remember, every day one remains under sin's dominion, eternal doom is awaiting. Today is the accepted time. "Behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts" (Hebrews 3:7-8). The decision rests totally in your hands, friend. You

have the right to choose how you want to live in this life. However, the choice you make will determine where you will spend eternity. Choosing to continue to live your own way is a great mistake. It will be a choice that you will regret throughout all eternity. God does not want you to die in a lost condition!

It is to your best advantage to seek God while He may be found and while you have the opportu-

nity. God loves you, but He is angry at the sin and the rebellion. In Deuteronomy 30:19 these words are penned: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." The decision lies totally in your hands. What will your answer be?

Selected

ALL SOME PEOPLE LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES  
IS TO BLAME THEM ON OTHERS.

# The Miraculous Deliverance

Bruce McDougale was a circuit rider of the early seventies. To be exact he went with his young bride to the Dakotas in 1872 to minister to the widely scattered population of those states.

Elizabeth, his wife, used to watch from the door of their prairie shack until he and Flyer became a mere speck on the horizon, then disappeared altogether. Bruce was often late in returning. He knew very well that Betty had been straining her eyes for an hour for the familiar speck to loom up out of the sunset. Her eyes were often red and swollen, but he talked of the experiences of the day, the heartaches, trials, and testings of the dear people they both loved, and so helped her to forget her loneliness. He reported:

"Sam Wilkins, over on the creek, heard from home today. His mother died back in January. Joe Saunders lost his Jersey cow last night—choked on a rutabaga—and Mary Jones' baby has the thrush."

As Elizabeth remembered the abundance of food in the shack, the box that had brought many comforts and conveniences from the home friends in Ohio, the measure of health they both enjoyed in spite of Bruce's frequent exposure, she felt herself an ingrate and vowed she would never weep again for mere loneliness.

After her twin babies came in 1875, Elizabeth had plenty to fill her heart and hands. More houses sprang up on the prairie, and she got to see a neighbor more often

than during the first two winters in the West.

Bruce McDougale had taken a definite stand on the liquor question—a touchy one to most of the settlers. Bruce said that strong drink and Christianity had nothing in common. So he believed and so he declared. In consequence, old Toughfeel, the blacksmith, had threatened mischief, and the men of the settlement knew it was in him to do exactly as he said. Hence, they had warned Bruce to be on his guard, to which Bruce answered, "My times are in His hand."

On a certain Saturday morning in late March, Bruce had bidden Elizabeth good-bye, and when he had reached that point on the plain where he appeared to her as a mere speck, he suddenly wheeled and came back, pushing the spurs into Flyer. What made Bruce do it? A strange, ominous feeling led him all the way back to the shack.

"Bundle yourself up, Betty, I'll take you and the babes to Fullers'. I can't leave you here, though I can't tell why. You will at least be with friends." Bruce managed to get them to the "settlement," a group of dwelling houses, a general store with post office in the rear, a blacksmith shop, and a schoolhouse where the youngsters of the community learned the three R's, and a tiny meeting house where Bruce gave forth the Gospel every first and third Sundays of the month.

Bruce rode at least forty miles that day, visiting and comforting the sick. On the way back, the sky

suddenly grew dark; the air was filled with fine, cutting, pelting particles that almost smothered him. A blizzard was on. In five minutes the snow was coming down in sheets. Bravely he held to the saddle and prayed that he might reach the next shack (old Toughfeel's) for the night and, if possible, make peace with him. The next day was Easter, a day for old scores to be forgotten in the glory of the new life in Christ.

Bruce did not find Toughfeel's shack. He grew more and more bewildered, felt himself growing numb, then sleepy—oh, so sleepy! He longed to lie down in the snow and escape the singing, hissing wind. "Good old Flyer," he whispered as he leaned forward on his neck. Then he slipped easily to that inviting bed of snow and knew no more.

Missing the weight of his master, Flyer could not go on. He sniffed about the prostrate form, then faced the wind and neighed. It was a call for help, afterward described by old Toughfeel as "awful loud at first, then kinda a whinny, soft an' coaxin' an' mournful like." It was Flyer's SOS call that brought old Toughfeel from his shack.

As the old settler led the horse to shelter and dragged his master to the shack through the darkness, he little dreamed the man was the preacher against whom he had vowed mischief for his bold assertions. In the darkness of the shack (for even candles were precious then and not to be wasted), Toughfeel put the stranger on his own bunk and

warmed him with his own body. He was a fellow creature in need; morning would reveal who he was. Each slept unconscious of the other.

At dawn Toughfeel eagerly scanned the face of his sleeping guest. Was it—could it be? Yes, it was McDougle—in his shack, in his bed!

A great wave of magnanimity swept over the older man, a feeling akin to love, mercy, forgiveness—an emotion altogether different from anything he had ever known before. It was as if he sensed the presence of an angel. Awed, he crept to another part of the shack and actually prayed.

"O God, is this r'ligion er is it Heaven? I wanta stay here alers. Sump'ns happened. I'm differn't; I don' wanta hate an' murder no more." So the old man poured out his soul to his Maker—nobody knows how long. When Toughfeel, melted and subdued, bathed in holy tears, opened his eyes, they fell on Bruce kneeling reverently at his side. The two men embraced, and he wept again. Finding his voice with

difficulty, Toughfeel stammered, "Seems if everything's changed aroun', Parson."

"Not things," corrected Bruce, "but you. Toughfeel is changed."

"Is this r'ligion, Parson?" said the old man as simply as a child might.

"It seems like the real thing, Toughfeel."

"Then you an' me is brothers, eh?—not enemies no more," he reasoned. Then he confessed to have planned to burn the preacher's shack that day, Betty and babies in it.

A search party out hunting for the preacher, whom they feared must have lost his way in the blizzard or had fallen into the hands of his sworn enemy, found him with Toughfeel, both on their knees.

The service that day in the little white meeting house carried the message of life—life in Christ. The pastor himself had been rescued from an untimely death, Betty and the babes had been spared, while old Toughfeel, hardened and steeped in sin, passed from death to life. The throb of divine life made

his old face radiant.

Though the church has grown with the years and ever increasing population, it has seldom known so blessed an Easter as the Easter of the blizzard of 1875, when Toughfeel was saved. Asked to explain his conversion, Bruce said it was God's grace that he dropped into the snow, praying for Toughfeel's salvation.

Selected

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*"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).*

*"The blood of Jesus Christ, his [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).*

*"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).*

*Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).*

## The Church Is Alive and Well

In spite of what some people say and think about the church, no other institution has lasted so long.

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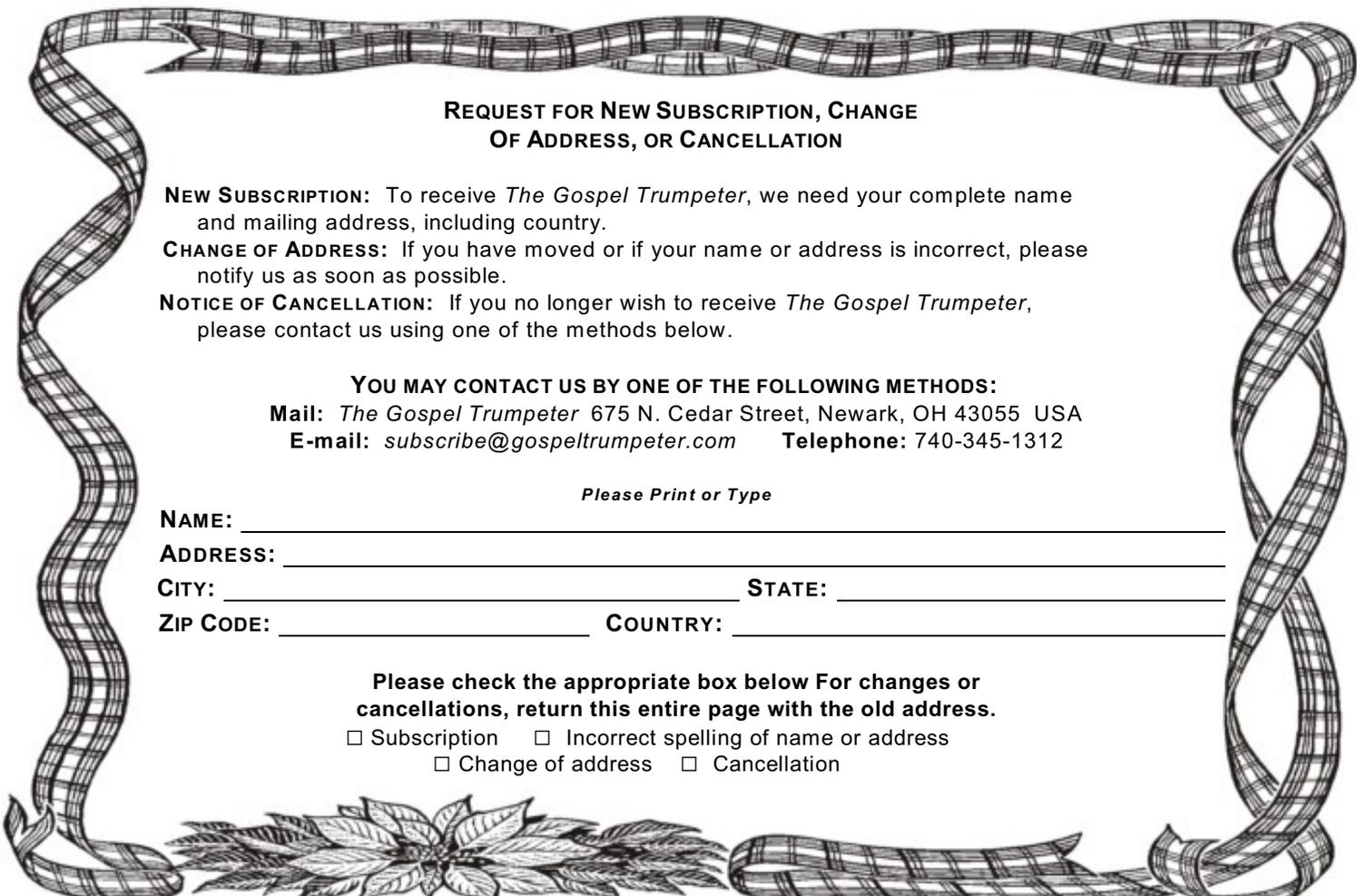
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