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SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

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Vol. 45 September 2015 No. 9



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

***Psalm 122:1***

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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# Guest Editorial

*"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!"*

*Matthew 23:37*

## "And Ye Would Not"

In this Scripture we find Jesus mourning over the deplorable spiritual condition of the Jews, God's chosen people. He was grieved because they rejected Him, their only hope of finding real peace. On many occasions He performed miracles, proving that He was the promised Messiah. Yet with all these infallible proofs, they still would not believe or accept Him. Multitudes yet today hold to this same attitude toward Him. Regardless of how much He does to show His love, many simply disregard His loving care.

Throughout the course of history, God has sent prophets and messengers to convince men and women of their lost condition. Sad to say, frequently when He sent these servants, they were beaten, misused, stoned, or killed. Finally, God sent His only Son to redeem the lost house of Israel. He thought they would surely accept His Son and the plan to reconcile them to Himself. God's desire is to bless people rather than to execute wrath and judgment upon them. Isaiah 28:21 informs us that judgment rising in wrath toward a people is God's strange work. In Jeremiah 29:11 He tells us, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an

expected end."

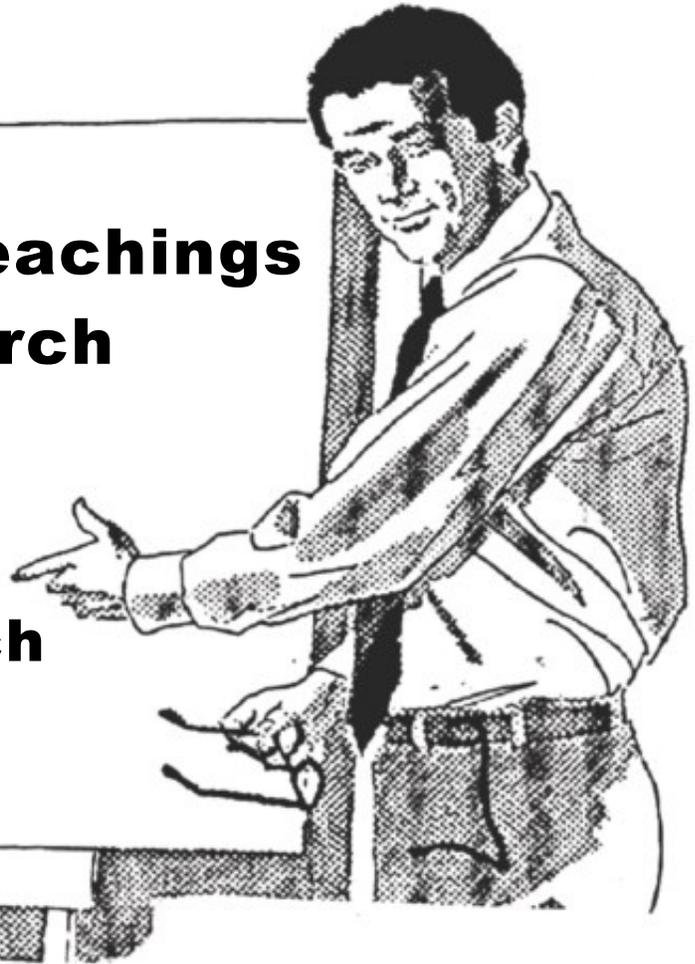
Unfortunately, as it was then, so it is yet today that people want to live their own way, do their own thing, and refuse to obey His commands. Many are determined not to surrender to the Savior's call to repentance. They have resolved to walk in the paths of sin and unrighteousness. The holiness lifestyle is not appealing to them and their corrupt way of living. What a sad picture this portrays! Rejecting Christ's offer of redemption will prove to be the saddest tragedy a man or a woman will ever choose in this life.

It is recorded of a rich, young ruler in Luke 18:18-23 who spoke face to face with the Savior, wanting to know how to get to Heaven. Jesus instructed him to do the commandments that he knew. The young man replied, letting Jesus know he had done this from his youth and was living a good, clean, moral life. Jesus told him that he lacked only one thing that could bring him to salvation, peace, and a home in Heaven. He was instructed to go and sell all he had and give to the poor. Forsaking all his riches was too great for him to do; therefore, he turned from the Savior and went away sorrowfully. He was so

*[continued on page 12]*

# **The Cardinal Teachings of the Church**

## **The Head of the Church**



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

### **A Holy City—Separate and Distinct**

We have been studying the cardinal teachings of the church. I believe it is of vast importance to keep the teachings of the church before us, especially our young people, because there will be a day when we are going to be moving to the upper story of the church. Young people are going to be the ones who will stand in our place, and these vital truths need to be instilled in their minds.

The Old Testament, especially in the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 6, speaks of how to teach your children about the things of God. You should speak of them when you rise

and speak of them during the day. They should be the main conversation in the home. We must allow the Word of God to be the final authority in all spiritual matters. It is not what I say or what you say that is important, but rather it is what the Word of God brings to our hearing.

As we get into these teachings, we will find that no other institution, organization, or church can fulfill these doctrinal teachings but the Church of God. No other church except the Church of God can stand on every one of these doctrinal teachings. The Church of God is separate from nominal religion. It is neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish (I am speaking of literal Jews). The church has never wallowed in the

doctrines of false religion. John saw her as a holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven. That is where she originated, and that is the reason you are born from above when you are born again.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Paul wrote: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in

them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, [You may say, 'I don't like that separate business.' Well, it is in the Word of God, and it is a command of God that we are to be separate.] saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Paul wrote, ". . . come out from among them." Of whom was he speaking? He was talking about unbelievers, the unrighteous, those in darkness, false worshipers, and infidels. God's church is not a church that wallows in the quagmire of this world. She is separate from this world. She is a city that is set upon a hill that cannot be hid.

We have studied the founder of the church and shown in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ has said He will build His church. The church is the apple of God's eye. The Bible says that. Zechariah 2:8 tells us, "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." We also looked at the fact that many churches or denominations can trace their founders back to some men and women, and I gave you some examples. For example, Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith, and the Seventh-Day Adventists were founded by James and Ellen White, Joseph Bates, and J. N. Andrews. The Jehovah's Witnesses were founded by Charles Russell. The founder of the Christian Science religion was Mary Baker Eddy. These people were the ones who started those organizations.

Next, we studied the foundation of the Church of God. We found in 2 Timothy 2:19 that Paul said, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." We saw that this seal is a twofold seal. One part of the seal brings us comfort.

What is that? "The Lord knoweth them that are his." The second part of that seal brings responsibility on our part. Paul said, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

### **Christ—the Head of the Body**

In this message we want to look at the Head of the Church of God. The Church of God has a head. Let us find out where Jesus Christ fits in this dispensation. What is the head? The head is in a dominant position, a position of leadership, or first importance. The head is the principal person, a leader, a ruler, or a chief. These are some synonyms for the word *head*. Everybody has a head, whether they want to own it or not.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Paul said the head of the woman is the man. Notice that he did not say the husband, but he said the head of every woman is the man. If a woman lives in her father's house and is not married, her father is her head. It makes no difference whether she is eighteen or fifty years of age.

The Bible speaks expressly about the Head of the church. Paul said in Ephesians 1:18-23: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Colossians 1:18, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

We want to look at some of the heads of denominations. First of all, let us consider the Roman Catholic Church. The head of the Roman Catholic Church is the pope. The president of the Baptist World Alliance is John Upton, who oversees the alliance of Baptist Churches and organizations around the world. The president of the World Methodist Council is Bishop Paulo Lockmann. He oversees the council which comprises most of the world's Wesleyan Christians. The president of the Southern Baptist Convention is Reverend Ronnie Floyd.

The Chairman of the World Pentecostal Fellowship is Doctor Prince Guneratnam, and he oversees the fellowship of Pentecostals across the world. Thomas Monson is president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These men are in the dominant positions of these different denominations. When we consider the head of a religious organization, we think of one who is looked upon as a spiritual leader.

### **Building According to God's Pattern**

A spiritual leader is supposed to receive from God spiritual guidance and instruction, and he passes it along to his followers. Here is an example. Revelation 1:1 reads, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The head sets policies and interprets the Scriptures for the church for His servants or followers.

In the Old Testament, you can read that Moses built according to God's pattern. We read in Hebrews 3:1-6: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who

was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Moses was also a mediator between God and the people.

Hebrews 8:1-6 states: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a 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 shewed to thee in the mount. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises."

### **Resisting God's Divine Plan**

Since God sent the Law through Moses, the Jews looked to Moses as their spiritual head. In John 5:44-47 Jesus said: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye be-

lieved Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

In John, Chapter 9, you can read that Jesus healed a blind man, and the Pharisees questioned him about his healing. Verses 27-29 reads: "He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is."

Moses was the name that was brought up to Jesus Christ throughout the Scriptures. There were two who stood out: Moses and Abraham. Everywhere Jesus Christ went, they compared Him to Moses or Abraham. God gave the Law, and He gave the Law through Moses. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Israel of old could not let go of Moses as their head. They knew of a promised Messiah, and they had long awaited Him. The women in the patriarchal age longed to give birth to a man child, hoping he would be the Deliverer who was to come, but Israel had a misconception of the Messiah. They thought He would come and restore literal Israel to its pomp and glory, especially when they were victors over other nations. Israel of old always wanted to be like other nations and have a king.

The Jews did not want Jesus Christ to rule over them. They were well satisfied to have Moses and Abraham, both of whom had since passed away. What they really desired in Jesus Christ was for Him to restore the kingdom so they could have victory over the Romans and all their other enemies. They did not see the spiritual part of the kingdom. Why did they not see the spiritual part of it? It is the same reason that people do not see the spiritual part of the kingdom yet today. If you turn down Jesus Christ, you are turning

down the key that opens the door to spirituality.

First Samuel 8:4-5 reads: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Many people do not want to live right and do not want to measure to truth; therefore, they seek their own leaders yet today. They want leaders who will tickle their ears, those who will preach smooth things. If you ever get inside the gates of Heaven, you must hear the Truth. There are going to be some things that you will hear that you are not going to like, but those things that you do not like are what you really need.

During the time when Moses sent out the spies to check out the land of Canaan, only two men came back with a good report. Ten men did not have a good report, and those ten whined and cried until all Israel was whining and crying. They turned on Moses and Joshua, and in Numbers 14:4, they said, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." Egypt was a type of sin, and that is exactly where many leaders today are taking people—back into sin. Some people who profess to be Church of God have a worse standard than nominal religion. Jesus said in Luke 12:48b, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." God gave us the Truth to walk in it. We are not just to choose what we want to do with it. The Spirit of God wants to have His right of way in the heart of every individual.

### **The Ushering in of a New Dispensation**

Matthew 2:1-2 reads: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in

the east, and are come to worship him." Herod was a king, but He was not the type of king that Israel was looking for. Israel was looking for literal restoration, but God was sending them spiritual restoration; that is what people need yet today.

The thought of a literal restoration was difficult to remove, even among the disciples themselves. They did not really see the kingdom before the Day of Pentecost. The change in those Apostles came on the Day of Pentecost. Up to the death of Jesus Christ, they were under the Mosaic Law. There has to be a death of a testator first before a will can come into effect. Study the Apostles before and after the Day of Pentecost. In the beginning they hid themselves, but after the Day of Pentecost, they became as bold as lions.

The thought of literal restoration was always in the minds of the Jews, and even the Apostles. Acts 1:5-6 says: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" In other words, the disciples were asking Jesus: "Are you going to make this a kingdom as it used to be in times past of our forefathers when we were able to subdue every nation? We had great leaders like Joshua, David, and others. Are you going to restore the kingdom again like that?" Their minds were still fixed on a literal restoration.

We know that the head is the essential part of the literal and spiritual body. If you lose your head, the body is not going to function. The head is the command center. All the movements in the body come through the command center, or the head, first. That is the reason that when riding a motorcycle or playing sports, a person should protect the head. In the spiritual body, the Head is where we get our instructions regarding how to live holy. How does God instruct us? He does it through His Word and through the

gifts of the Spirit.

We read in Matthew 8:20, "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." At that particular time, Jesus had nowhere to place His head, but now He places His head on the body, the spiritual body, the Church of God. The head goes on a body. Jesus has a spiritual body for His head to rest upon. Wherever the body of Christ is, there is the Head. Jesus is the Head over all those who will submit to His rule. The Head of the Church of God is holy, so the members are to be the same.

First Peter 1:15-16 states: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." Jesus gave commands in the morning-time church through the Apostles, and He gave commands through the Holy Spirit. He could not be with every Apostle and give commands when He was walking in a literal body, but through the Holy Spirit, God could give commands to all people everywhere.

Acts 1:1-2 says: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen." Jesus gave commands. He could not be everywhere when He was here in the physical body, but through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ can be in Africa, in Haiti, in Honduras, and here all at the same time, giving commands to His people. He gave commands to the Apostles through the Holy Spirit, and He gives commands yet today through the Holy Spirit. He gives commands to me to pass on to you. He gives instructions to teachers and evangelists. He gives other gifts of the Spirit, and He gives them to instruct, to teach, to help, to organize, to discipline, or whatever the need is in the body of Christ. When you buck

against a God-called pastor or teacher or others gifted of God, you are bucking against the Head.

### **Do You Have an Ear to Hear?**

Can the Head give you commands that He knows will be carried out? Everyone who is saved is subject to the Holy Spirit. Can the Holy Spirit give you commands, such as instructions regarding advice on the dress standard? Will you receive it? Sometimes I wonder how some people who claim to be Christians can walk out of the house dressed the way they are. Evidently, they live in houses that have no mirrors. Sister, you need to look in a full-length mirror and ask yourself these questions: Is it long enough? Is it loose enough? Is it high enough? You do not have to dress the way women did in covered-wagon days or the way women did back in the 1950's, but you ought to dress modestly. That is the key—modesty. You can dress up and look attractive and still be modest. You should dress as a child of God ought to dress. If God should reveal something to you about the dress standard, would you obey it?

If the Head would speak to you about your entertainment, could He get your obedience? If He should talk to you about someone with whom you keep company, would you continue to keep company with that person regardless of what the Head tells you to do? If the Head were to talk to you about your conduct, would you obey Him? What if the Head were to talk to you about your church attendance? What if He talked to you about attending Sunday school? If God talked to you about your church attendance or about your Sunday school attendance, would you ignore Him? Does He ever remind you that you need to get out of bed and go to Sunday school? Does He ever talk to you?

What if the Head would talk to you about your prayer life? I wonder, would He tell you: "You're getting awfully lax! You hardly ever

talk to Me anymore. You merely murmur a few words to Me now and then. You don't really take much time to talk to Me." Could He get you to change that?

What if God were to talk to you about your Bible reading? The Head says to bring your Bible to church, but then you take it home and lay it somewhere, and there it lays until the next service. Maybe the Head wants to talk to you about that. Sometimes you may become lax in certain areas, and the Head has to remind you individually. He has reminded me. He may remind you individually or through the preaching that you need to take care of certain things.

God is never going to force you

to do anything if you do not want to do it. If you do not pray, God will remind you, but He is not going to keep beating on your door to get you to pray. If you do not want to dress according to the Bible standard, then He will let you go your way and do what you want to do, and people will lose confidence in you. God will not force a person to do anything that he does not want to do, but He will remind him through the Holy Spirit if he is lacking in a certain area.

Though the Head of the church will speak to you if you become lax in some of these areas, when He speaks to you, He expects you to take care of it. God is so good, and that fits in with holiness. Can the

Holy Spirit nudge you along certain lines when you become lax? The Head of the church wants you to receive His instruction, His correction, and His reproof, but some will not.

The Head of the church loves the church. It is His spiritual body. The church is the apple of His eye. He desires that you conform to the image of Jesus Christ. The Head of the church is Jesus Christ. If He is speaking to you, He is doing so because He loves you, not to make you feel bad or condemned. He wants to help you.

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# Beware of the Snares



*Brother Irwin Sesher*

## **The True Investment**

A snare is anything that misleads, entangles, or entices; it is a form of trickery. The devil wants to ensnare each of us. There is a danger in the snares of the devil. Exchanging the things of this old world for your spiritual well-being is a costly venture. Sometimes people only think about how they can get ahead. That is the kind of world in which we are living today. Seemingly, nearly everyone you talk to is trying to

get ahead of someone else.

Many people say, "Well, I can cheat this individual out of his money" or "I can cheat that person out of his investments, his property, his houses, or his cars." Friend, you must be careful of what you allow your mind to dwell on. True riches and true happiness are not found in this world. True investment can be found only in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 62:10 reads, "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not

your heart upon them." Proverbs 11:28 says, "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch." To the child of God, true riches are found in Christ Jesus. I am so happy that one day I found that out. I found that I was not doing well the way I was going, and I knew that I needed a change in my life. I am so glad that I turned my life over to Jesus. He is the One that we need to look to in order to prosper, no matter which avenue in life we travel.

Often multimillionaires have committed suicide because they were not truly happy. You might think people who have much wealth and prestige would be happy, but happiness is not found in riches. Also, it is not found in whom you know or in what you know. It is found only if you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Sad to say, too many are exchanging their spirituality for the things that this world has to offer.

### **A Little Taste of Sin**

Jesus Christ is the answer that this world needs today. Only Jesus can satisfy your soul, not drugs, alcohol, dip, snuff, or living close to the world. I am concerned that many people are living too close to the edge. They do not have the true victory that Jesus wants to give them. There is nothing in this old world that can match the goodness of our dear Savior. The enemy is sly and cunning, so beware of his snares. Saint of God, those snares are out there to capture your mind, to capture your life, and to take you down just as far as the devil can get you to go. He wants to get good people to dabble in sin so they can get a taste of it.

The devil is crafty. He knows that a child of God would not go into deep sin right away. He will not try to convince you to go headlong into sin. He just wants you to experiment a little. He will tell you, "Go ahead and try it; it won't hurt you." That is how he works. The enemy knows that you will not go into deep sin all at once. That is the reason he works to get you to let down a little here and there and to lighten up on what you are doing to serve God every day. The devil wants you to think that what you do for God does not matter. He puts bait in front of your eyes so that you can get a little taste of it. He will say, "Look at what everyone else is doing." He will tell you that you are missing out in life. I want to miss anything that could take me down spiritually.

There are many things out in the world that can take you down, saint of God. We need to stay strong in the things of God. The devil wants you to fail to line up with the message and the Bible standard. He wants you to let down on your commitment to Christ, your prayer life, your Bible reading, and your church attendance. All these things are important.

One thing Satan will tell you is that you do not need to be in the house of God. Friend, you need to attend the worship services whenever possible. The devil will get you to a point where you do not testify, but that is one way to gain strength; that is a way to grow spiritually. You need to let the devil know, "I'm not going to follow you; I'm going to follow Jesus Christ." The devil will try to get you to question this or that. Once you let down, you will not see the need to do the things that you once strived to do.

Once you have a newborn experience, you will want to be in the services, and you will want to do the will of God. You did your will too long. God brought you out of sin, and by the grace of God, you need to stay out. The devil has taken you around by the nose long enough.

### **Sacrifice for the Truth**

I remember that while I was growing up, my parents saw the importance of being in the services where Truth was preached. Where I grew up, there was no true Church of God, but my parents knew there was one about two and one-half hours away, and they strived to be in the house of God. They knew the importance of being in the house of God where they could get their souls fed. Every other weekend my dad had time off from his job, and he made a point to let my mother and me know that we were going to travel to Newark, Ohio. No matter what school assignment I had to do and no matter how much I tried to talk him out of it, he would say, "You get that assignment done Friday night or Saturday, because Sun-

day morning we are heading to Newark."

I thank God for godly parents. I did not understand it then, but thank God I do now. No matter how much I grumbled or complained, there was a reason behind it. I did not understand their commitment and their dedication, but as I got older, I understood their sacrifice for the Truth. Where is that kind of sacrifice today? It was the love of the Truth that drove my parents to be in the services with the saints of God. What is wrong with people who live just a few miles away and yet do not attend the services regularly? I will tell you what the problem is. They do not love the Truth, and they do not really want it. If you want something badly enough, you will sacrifice for it. Where is the desire today? Where is the burden? Where is that true commitment today? You must work for that commitment, and you must work to stay spiritual.

As a boy, I had a morning paper route, including Sunday. I had one hundred sixty-two customers, so I got up at four o'clock Sunday mornings to deliver the newspapers before we traveled to church. I thank God for the sacrifice.

You have to work at salvation. You must not let down or coast in this. The devil will know if you start to back off. He knows if you want to let down a little here or there. That is when he will start to move in and work on your soul. You have to beware of the devil's snares. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

### **Seek God for Your Future Plans**

When I graduated from college with a degree in education, the first thing I wanted to do was to get a job teaching school. I believe that getting a job is on everyone's mind as he gets out of high school or college. I did not go to college for four years for nothing. I had spent time in a classroom doing student teaching,

and it was time to secure a job. I could not find anything down where we lived. Why? God did not want me there, and I thank God that I did not stay there. God knew exactly where He wanted me. He wanted me in Newark, Ohio. Why? It all stems back to the sacrifice. God worked it out.

I had an interview for a teaching position, although I still had a summer class to take. Technically, I had not graduated from college. The superintendent told me, "Finish your summer course, and you have a job here in the fall." That was God who worked that out. He is a master at working out situations and technicalities. Right when I did not think I would get a job, I got a job. I thank God that He still works out situations.

Young person, you need to seek God's face regarding your employment. You should seek God's face to see where you need to go. I cannot stress that enough. Right when you think you want to go one place, God might have a different place for you. Parents have an important voice in it too. They raise their children and want them to live for God. Christian parents want their children to be spiritually minded. Parents need to be careful of where they guide their sons and daughters when they go away to school.

I did not want to live away from home while I was in college, so I drove back and forth to school. I went to school, came home to eat, changed clothes, then went to a part-time job. I kept busy. When young people are busy, they are less likely to get into trouble.

Young people should have a mind to work. When you have a good work ethic, you will not have a tendency to depend on someone else to give you money. You will want to work. I think that is a problem today. It seems that too many people want a handout.

When it comes to choosing a college, some schools might have a good reputation regarding certain programs they offer, but what about

your child's soul? That is the most important concern. It is not how much money he might make starting out or where he can go to see the sights. The most important consideration is his soul. You raised your child up in a Church of God congregation, and you want him to continue to grow spiritually. Is there a true Church of God congregation close enough where he can get his soul fed? Young person, that is the most important need you have. Some parents do not have enough influence regarding that. They often say, "Well, this school offers what he wants to take."

### **You Need God in Your Life**

First Peter 2:5 says, "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 are your sacrifices? If your experience for the Lord cools, the enemy will get you to think that you can handle the things of this old world without having God in your life 100 percent. You need the Lord 100 percent of the time every day.

The enemy will cause you to think that you do not need God all the time. You might have some money in the bank, a car to drive, and a home to live in, but you still need God. Remember, the enemy is a liar. The enemy is never going to tell you the truth. He is never going to show you a way to get out of a bad situation. Someone once said, "When the devil reminds you of your problems, you need to remind him of his defeat." You need to let the Lord fight your battles. The Lord wants to help you. You do not have to go through life alone. You do not have to fight the enemy in your own strength.

Saint of God, you have to fight battles every day. Do you thank God enough for what He has brought you through and for what He is going to lead you through? You need to be in your place in order for the Lord to help you with your battles. Also, you

need to be 100 percent obedient to the Word of God. The Lord enjoys it when you obey Him with your whole heart. He enjoys it when you put your full trust in Him.

The need for approval drives many people. They allow someone close to them to control their lives. Too many people seek approval from the wrong avenues. They seek approval from their peers. Many people seek approval and always consider what others want them to do. If you follow a crowd, you will lose your way. Do not follow the opinions of others. You need to seek the Lord for the pathway that you are to follow. All other roads lead to a dead end. What is wrong with seeking godly counsel? Many people do not seek godly counsel because they already know what the answer is going to be.

### **God Pays Close Attention to Details**

When Noah built the ark, everything had to be done God's way. It is the same way today. Often people do not want to go God's way, and that is the reason they suffer spiritually. If you are going to prosper spiritually, you must go God's way. God did not tell Noah, "You go ahead and build the ark the way you want to build it." Can you imagine what that ark would have looked like if Noah had built it any old way? In building the ark, there were many details to which Noah had to give attention. Likewise, in your walk with God, you must give attention to details. We cannot serve God any old way. God required exact measurements for the ark. Today people say, "You don't have to dress that way to be a saint of God" or "You don't have to live so close to be successful." That is the devil's talk. You must beware of his snares.

In building the ark, God specified the size, the shape, and the materials, just as He directs the true Church of God today. There are specific details that you must abide by in the Church of God. The true

Church of God is built upon the Rock, and that Rock is Christ Jesus. It is not built on man's ideas, but it is built from above. In building the ark, nothing was overlooked. That is how God operates, everything is right down to the most minute details. God pays close attention to every detail.

Noah did not tell God, "Well, I want to go another way." Genesis 6:22 reads, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Saint of God, when you pay close attention to the details of what God has for you, you will not fail; however, if you deviate from those details, you are going to run into problems. Noah loved God wholeheartedly because he knew God. He knew how God had directed him, and he knew that God was going to take care of him.

Do you love the Lord? You might say that you do with your words, but do you truly love Him? When it comes to proving it by your walk, by your talk, by the way you dress, by where you go, by those with whom you associate, and by being in the house of God, that is detail. You cannot pick and choose what you want to do. You have to take in the whole spectrum. The people who do that question, "Well, do I really have to do that to serve God?" Often in their hearts, they have reservations. They still want to hold onto their worldly ways.

### **Understanding Can Wait, But Obedience Cannot**

Let me ask you a question. If God asked you to build a giant boat, would you have a few questions, objections, or thoughts? Too many people want to question God: "God, why do You want me to do this?" When God tells you to do something, you need to do it. It might not be building a giant boat, but what about going over to your neighbor's house and inviting him to the house of God? You are doing the will of God by inviting others to the regular services, to special revivals, or to camp

meeting services.

Many people want to be directed by God by saying, "Well, I will pray about it." I believe in praying for the Lord to give you direction on what to do, but if God told you to do it, you had better do it. Putting it off when you know that it comes from God will not be beneficial to your spiritual growth. When God directs you to do something, He does not owe you an explanation. God does not owe you a reason. He just wants you to do it. Someone once said: "Understanding can wait, but obedience cannot." Being obedient will clear up a lot of doubts and confusion, if you will go forward with God.

Saint of God, you need to stay consistent in dressing modestly, in your talk, and in your godly living. By staying consistent, you are sending a message to the world.

My wife and I were at a restaurant some time ago, and a man who has not been to God's Acres for more than thirty years came up to us and said, "Do you go to the Church of God at God's Acres?"

I replied, "Yes, we do."

People remember the saints that they saw years ago. They do not forget how the saints dress, how they conduct themselves, and how they look. In the course of conversation, I invited him to come back. He said, "I plan to come back." I thank God for His mercy and goodness. God is still working. It is not time to put the brakes on, so to speak. It is time to let your light shine. Some people in this world are still seeking. They are tired of nominal religion. They want to see the Truth.

Too many people have reservations when it comes to serving God. They want serving God to be like a buffet: they want to pick and choose how they will serve Him. They say, "I will serve God, but I can't be in every church service." If you can go everywhere else, you can be at the house of God.

Someone may say, "Well, I cannot serve God, and I cannot tithe." You cannot afford to neglect serving God or tithing. Malachi 3:8-

11 says: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation [when you withhold the tithe, God will send things that will devour your paycheck; the more you withhold, the deeper you will go].

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts." There is a rich treasure in serving Jesus Christ. God wants to bless you, but if you withhold the tithe from Him, He cannot do it.

### **Develop the Habits of a Christlike Character**

People are searching here, there, and everywhere for true happiness, but they are coming up short. Beware of what you are exchanging for your soul. You need to get grounded in the work of God. When you are rooted and grounded in the things of God, there is little chance of your being carried away with every wind of doctrine. The reason some people are being blown away is that they are not rooted enough in the things of God.

I am thankful that one day the Lord showed me where I needed to be and what I needed to be in order to be successful. It was not found in a paycheck; it was found in being in a true Church of God congregation where I could grow spiritually, meet the one who was to become my wife, and raise our children in the Truth. Thank God, those are the things that I will never forget, and it all goes back to a godly heritage.

Parent, what type of heritage are

you leaving to your children? God is not found in education. I know education is important, but do not put all your emphasis in that. He is not found in finding a companion. What you gain in life is getting your soul right with God, and when that happens, He will direct your footsteps. It is still the same today. You can look in the Bible at how God directed men's and women's footsteps. They were willing to listen to the voice of God.

Saint, the world is getting worse every day. It is getting in a terrible condition. It seems that every unclean spirit is being loosed in our world today. You need to stay close to God and stay close to His mercy and grace. You must get away from

the world and its influences. It will take you down if you are not where you need to be spiritually. The only way to develop the habits of a Christlike character is to practice them, and it takes time. There are no instant habits.

The Apostle Paul urged Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:15-16: "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Only Jesus can satisfy your soul. People are seeking a better way to go. Are you showing a godly influence to the world? Are you showing the individual who is seeking

something the way to find God?

The highway of holiness is a strait, narrow road, and there is no room for error. Matthew 7:13-14 tells us: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Dear one, do not let the cares of this life take you down and block your vision of Christ. How is your experience? The Lord wants first place in your heart. Why not give it to Him?

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*[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]*  
close, yet he ended up being lost.

Today millions of people forsake the Savior for things that are of much less value than this man's riches. To some, a bad habit is too much to turn from in order to have peace. To another, it may be an evil attitude they carry toward an individual or a condition with which they are faced. Oftentimes a person may hold unforgiveness in his heart toward one who has deeply hurt him. There have been instances when a spouse has violated the marriage vow. The innocent party suffers much pain and sorrow, and with that injustice the innocent person holds an unforgiving

spirit toward the one who committed the infraction. Heartfelt forgiveness must be granted to the guilty party. Jesus said, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). Regardless of how cruel the damage that was done, forgiveness must be given. The damage done may be a very critical issue; however, forgiveness must be given.

As Jesus views your life, what is it that stands in your way of obtaining His free gift of salvation? You may or may not realize that the Lord grieves over your sinful way of living. He wants to gather you under

His wings to redeem you from the awful calamity that is coming to you just out ahead. As He stretches out His hand in mercy to offer you pardon and deliverance from sin, why not take advantage of this opportunity to receive Him into your heart today? The people in our Scripture text refused the only One who could bring help and deliverance from their sinful condition. Their decision caused them to suffer greatly in this life and will continue throughout all eternity.

Selected

## WANTED . . . MEN!

There is a story to the effect that a certain society in South Africa once wrote to David Livingston: "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how to send other men to join you. Livingston replied: "If you have men who will come ONLY if they know there is a good road, I DON'T WANT THEM. I want men who will come if there is NO road at all."

# Paul's Persuasion

Paul used the term "persuaded" in the sense of assurance. When he said that he was persuaded of a thing involving God's attitude, he meant that he was fully convinced that it was as it was stated to be. He meant that to him it stood out as a reality; it was a thing that he no longer questioned. In Romans 8:38-39, Paul spoke of one of the things of which he was persuaded. He did not seem to feel about it as some feel; and when they read what he said, they realize that they do not feel just as he did. He stated: "For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Some people are all the time worrying, lest they should be separated from that love, lest God's love should be turned into hatred against them. They walk before Him with fear and trembling. They are all the time questioning whether their conduct merits His approval. They are ever fearful, lest they might do something that would bring His wrath upon them. Their life is a life of fear and of bondage. Paul had no such fears and no such feelings. He knew that the great heart of God is a heart of love, of tender pity, of compassion, and of sympathy. He knew that God is tender toward His earthly children. Why, even when we were sinners, Christ died for us, and the Father so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son. This love was for rebels. How much greater His affection for His sons! Instead of thinking that he might be easily separated from the love of God and that he should have to be exceedingly careful lest he should be, Paul cried out in verse 35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" By this he meant, "Who or what shall be able to separate us?"

Paul knew something of the strength of earthly love. He knew mother-love, how tenderly it holds to its own. He knew that no matter where a son wanders, a mother's love goes with him; a mother's love calls him back; a mother's love

yearns over him. He knew love in other forms—how tenaciously it clings to its objects; but the love of Christ, or the love of God in Christ, is above and beyond all human love. Therefore, Paul cried out, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Then he named some things and asked if they should separate us from God's love, and when he looked at them all, he was still persuaded that nothing should be able.

Paul said, "Neither death nor life. . . ." If death should lay its icy fingers upon us, it would be but the ushering into the more immediate presence of that great love. If we must continue to live on in our earthly circumstances and surroundings, that very life cannot separate us from the love of Christ, for He will love us through it all. Through various changes, through all the trying situations that may face us, that love will hold us fast. Time and change cannot make that love grow cold.

Paul said, "Nor angels . . . ." God is in Heaven, surrounded by the angels, but He wants us to understand that those angels cannot take up so much of His time and attention that He will forget us. Nor can those evil angels that hate God and hate us separate between us and His love. Even Satan himself, their leader and master, has not power to come between us and the love of God. Ah, soul, do not be afraid. Satan has no knife sharp enough to cut that love. He has no strength to tear its tendrils out of our hearts. He cannot burn those cords that hold us. Even all his legions cannot touch that love, if we trust it and trust ourselves in God's keeping.

Then he said, ". . . nor things present. . . ." O my brother, sister, do you believe that? Do you believe that the things of this hour, whatever they may be, cannot separate you from the love of God? How many things are present! How many things there are that press in upon us! How many discouragements there are in life! How many perplexities! How many things that trouble! How many things that would draw us away! Yet, if we keep our trust in God, none of these things will be

able to separate us from His love. None of these things will make Him turn His back upon us.

Next, Paul said, ". . . nor things to come. . . ." Do you look into the future with dread? Do you see with forebodings the things that appear there? Do you think, "How shall I ever pass through it? How shall I ever overcome?" Ah, those things that are ahead of you cannot separate you from God's love. That love is going to securely hold you through them all. That love is going to be your strength and your safeguard, your hope and your all. Cast away your forebodings. Look to God with confidence until the confidence of Paul enters your soul and you can say with the same assurance that he did, "I am persuaded."

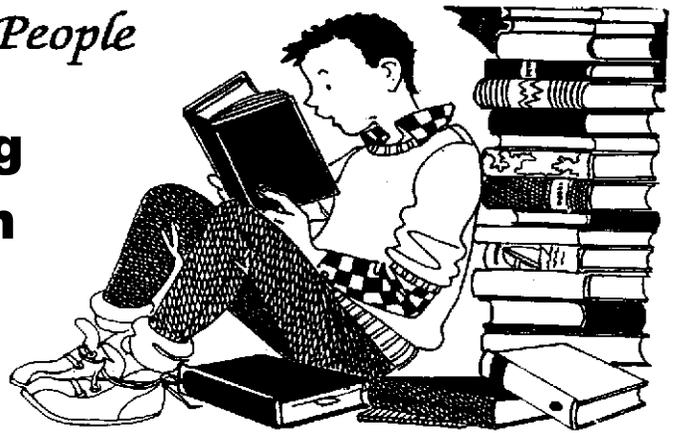
Again, he said, "Nor height, nor depth. . . ." It matters not if God is in Heaven, high above us. It matters not if He is so great, so majestic, so powerful. His height above us shall not prevent His love from reaching us and holding us up. It matters not to what depth we sink, whether it be depths of discouragement or depths of fear or depths in the feeling of our own helplessness. It matters not if God is very high and we are very low, if He is very great and we are very small; our depth shall not separate us from His height. His love will bridge the gulf.

O soul, trust in God's love; rely upon it. It will never fail you. It will securely hold you in the gales of life. Tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or perils or storms—none of these things shall be able to separate you from Him. The Apostle continued to say, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (verse 37). Love will bear us up as with eagle's wings. It will make smooth the rough paths. It will give strength to the fainting heart. It will preserve us while in the midst of temptation; and even when we have come short of our expectations, when we realize that we have in a measure failed, that love will not cast us off, but will hold us safe and secure until the end. Let us look to that love, and be confident, and rest in full assurance of faith.

Selected



## Overcoming Temptation



James 1:12 states, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Temptation is universal. It shows no partiality; it manifests no favoritism; it makes no exceptions. It attacks the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the learned and the illiterate. Let no soul be deceived. Every inch of ground between the moment of surrender to God and the final triumphant entrance into Heaven will be contested by the enemy. He will use every available resource to sidetrack and destroy a Christian and a Christian life. In going to Heaven one must travel at right angles with the world, and the opinions of the world, and the desires of the world. Certainly, he is contrary always to the wishes and interests of Satan. Consequently, he will be opposed. Temptation is frequent in all lives being lived for God and the salvation of humanity. Think it not strange when the same temptation is often repeated or when those appear unexpectedly that you had not had before. Satan is a being of great power and intelligence and, therefore, a being of very large and extensive resources. In addition to these facts, he has had the experience of wrecking the lives of men since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. People sometimes deceive themselves by vainly imagining that they have already been tried in all conceivable ways. You will often be attacked at an unexpected point and at a time when you are least expecting a temptation. In the meantime temptation is being constantly repeated at your weakest spot.

D. L Moody once stated: "No man on earth is beyond the reach of the tempter.

I used to think that when I got along a certain distance in my Christian life, I would get beyond the tempter, and he would have no more influence over me. I have given that up. The tempter will follow you from the cradle to the grave, and the nearer you get to Christ, the hotter the fight will be. As someone has said, Satan aims high. When he wanted one to sell the Lord, he went to the treasurer of the company; and when he wanted one to deny him, he went to the chief apostle. When he wanted to call down fire from heaven on those Samaritans who refused the disciples hospitality, he went to John, who was nearest the heart of the Son of God."

Temptation appears innocent and does not reveal the hidden dangers. "The beginning of temptation is so easy and looks too innocent—just a peep into the book at examination time; just a dollar taken from the till, to be replaced tomorrow; just a tiny glass of wine with a pleasant companion—but the most formidable attribute of temptation is its increasing power. Every act of repetition increases power and diminishes resistance. It is like the letting out of waters—where a drop can go, a river can go. Whoever yields to temptation subjects himself to the law of falling bodies. He who sleeps by a magazine of gunpowder needs to take care even of sparks; who walks on slippery ice, let him not go star gazing, but look to his feet, to take care that he does not fall. Whatever provokes sin, though beautiful as Bathsheba, is a danger against which we cannot be too much on our guard.

Temptations, even the most severe, may be overcome. Christ, tempted in all points, lived a sinless life. The tempta-

tions of our Savior were no sham. He was tempted like as we are. His temptations were as real to Him as ours are to us. At the very beginning of Christ's ministry, he met severe temptation. For forty days and nights he was in the wilderness tempted by the devil (Matthew, Chapter 4). He overcame temptation by refusing to allow His mind to dwell on the attractive features of the temptations presented. Instead, He kept His mind fixed on His duty to God and put the devil to flight with Scripture.

*Faith in God's Word, the help of God engages, And "it is written" puts to flight the foe.*

We, too, may overcome temptation by keeping our minds fixed on God, His promises, and our duty to Him. A man, so the story goes, once asked an Eastern king if he could tell him how to avoid temptation. The king told him to take a vessel brimful of oil and carry it through the streets of the city without spilling one drop. "If you spill one drop," said the king, "your head shall be cut off," and then he sent the man out to the street with his vessel of oil.

There happened to be a fair going on in the town, and the streets were crowded with people. However, the man was very careful and returned to the king without having spilled one drop of oil. Then the king asked, "Did you see anyone while you were walking through the streets?"

"No," said the man. "I was thinking only of the oil; I noticed nothing else."

"Then," said the king, "you have learned how to avoid temptation. Fix

*[continued on page 18]*

*Ephesians 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

*5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all,*

*and in you all.*

*John 17:20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

*21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in*

*thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

*22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.*

# Perfected in One



*Brother Mike Wilks*

## **God's Peculiar Treasure**

Being perfected in one is one of the doctrines of the Church of God, and it is powerful. It is through unity that men can see Jesus Christ. The definition of *one* is "a single unit, an individual; common to all." We read in the Bible of a common salvation. There are two ways for the church to be perfected in one and to convince the world: first, men conduct themselves well in a congregation and around the brethren; second, others can see the unity of a congregation as the saints work together and have

fellowship. People are watching, and what they see is a convincing element.

We know that God knows man. Psalm 33:15 says, "He fashioneth their hearts alike." He started long ago with the calling out of a nation. Genesis 12:2 reads, "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." History progressed, and Psalm 135:4 states, "For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure." In the midst of the civilized world stood the nation of

Israel. There was one nation, and God has always had a unified body. He started from the foundation of the world with one nation. There is something peculiar about only one, and this is the thought I want to talk to you about.

As I was studying for this message, I thought of the Grand Canyon, the Pyramids at Giza, and the Great Barrier Reef. These are just a few sights that continue to draw men. Why? There is only one of each of these great wonders. There can be a powerful influence in only one.

Before Christ, there was no

unity, and there was no hope of unity. Since the beginning of the world, men have longed for peace, and they still do. There are nations that constantly fight and war with others, but God's vehicle to bring peace is Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:9-10 says: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." That is a profound Scripture. Here is where it all started. He began gathering, and through Jesus Christ, the barriers began to fall. Unfortunately, division is a stronghold that has held and still is holding people.

As humans, we all like choices. We like choices when it comes to food, clothes, cars, where we live, and so on. For the most part, mankind has enjoyed the choice of religion, but that is not God's plan, and that is what we want to consider. Earthly minds tell you to attend the church of your choice. You might find that in the newspaper, but you are not going to find it in the Word of God. God's Word tells you about only one church, one unity, and one faith.

### **Breaking Down Barriers**

The early morning church began to conquer and to break down barriers. It is said that Paul compared Rome to what Christ did in the church. Rome conquered the then-known world, and though many nations fought for hundreds of years, Rome brought them all under their law and rule, and peace reigned for a period of time. Paul looked at that as Jesus Christ and the church marched on and conquered barriers.

The morning-time church was powerful. Acts 2:41-47 states: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they con-

tinued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

The one thing that brought power was, they were perfected in one. As you can read in the letters of Paul, he corresponded with all the churches. He built many of those churches and corresponded through letters and he brought them doctrine and reproof. All things are possible through God; that is Scripture. The one barrier that stood out was that of being a Jew or a Gentile. Now we are going to look at how Christ brought these two groups together.

If it had not been for Christ, there is no way they could have brought these two entities together. The Jews had a unique standing with God to carry out His commandments, and they carried contempt for the Gentiles. The Gentiles said the Jews were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell. Think about that. It would have been impossible to reconcile that relationship through any means other than Christ.

The Amplified Bible reads in Ephesians 2:11-16: "Therefore, remember that at one time you were Gentiles (heathens) in the flesh, called Uncircumcision by those who called themselves Circumcision, [itself a mere mark] in the flesh made by human hands. [Remember] that you were at that time separated (living apart) from Christ [excluded from all part in Him], utterly estranged and outlawed from the rights of Israel as a nation, and strangers with no share in the sacred compacts

of the [Messianic] promise [with no knowledge of or right in God's agreements, His covenants]. And you who had no hope (no promise); you were in the world without God. But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were [so] far away, through (by, in) the blood of Christ have been brought near.

"For He is [Himself] our peace (our bond of unity and harmony). He has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one [body], and has broken down (destroyed, abolished) the hostile dividing wall between us, By abolishing in His [own crucified] flesh the enmity [caused by] the Law with its decrees and ordinances [which He annulled]; that He from the two might create in Himself one new man [one new quality of humanity out of the two], so making peace. And [He designed] to reconcile to God both [Jew and Gentile, united] in a single body by means of His cross, thereby killing the mutual enmity and bringing the feud to an end." This is what Christ and His church started out to do. It began in the morning time, and it is still happening now.

### **A Divided Society**

Ephesians 2:11-16 in the King James version reads: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making

peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

Just as Christ began breaking down barriers, we must lay some groundwork. It is important to have unity. In John 17:21 Jesus prayed, ". . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The world has a real problem with believing. The world's unbelief is rampant, and the reason for this is false religion.

Some time ago I asked an individual, "Where do you go to church?" He said: "I don't go to church. I'm an atheist. I've never seen anything out of a Christian that would make me believe there is a God." He went on to say: "My mother was a horrible person. All through the week she was terrible, and then she went to church on Sundays and praised God." This man was very bitter because of that. This is what false religion is doing to the souls of mankind. As I listened to him, it made me sad, because there is a better way.

What is the problem? We are living in a divided society when it comes to Jesus Christ. We are living in a time when light is shining brighter than it ever has; that is Bible. There is a saying, "When the sun has risen, the lamps cease to be of use." We know that Babylon is fallen, and it ceased to be of use. It is pure confusion, yet it is all around us.

We are so blessed to know Truth, but many around us do not know the Truth. We want to look through their eyes at what they see. We know, as they look across the land at the religious landscape, there is no unity. It is truly broken down. As the Church of God, we worship God in Spirit and in Truth. This thing is not complicated. It is simply light and darkness, but people do not present it that way. There are all kinds of churches out there, and you can pick up a name of any sort and hide in that, but there is nothing except darkness, and there never will be anything else there.

## Changes That Salvation Brings

The unbeliever should ask about the name of the church. Second Thessalonians 1:4 reads, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God." The city of Corinth was a large commercial city, and it was a sparkling gem in the Roman Empire. It was a tremendous city. In 1 and 2 Corinthians Paul referred to the church at Corinth. People did not organize in a building to worship as we do until the third century. Paul addressed them as the church at Corinth, the Church of God. We want to look at the unity of the Church of God, which was at Corinth. First Corinthians 1:2 states, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus."

The power of a godly influence on someone can never be underestimated. That is how I was won, and it is the only way the world is going to be won. It is going to be the personal touch of somebody watching your life, day in and day out, having confidence in you. It is a personal relationship. Second Corinthians 3:2 states, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men."

Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Getting saved is all about repentance. Salvation is not found in raising your hand and making a choice. Godly sorrow must work in the heart, turn you around, and cause you to regret your sins. If you regret something, you surely do not want to do it again. The Holy Spirit empowers that desire.

An unbeliever may ask, "Why do you dress so modestly?" First Timothy 2:9 says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel [that applies to men too], with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." That is what is precious to God. He could not care less about the price of your clothes that you have on as long as you are modest. The inward man must

please Him too; the whole package is important to Him.

The unbeliever may ask, "Why do you attend church so much?" Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." When I was unsaved, going to church was not something that interested me. For me, going to church was like attending a soccer game. I had never been to one, and I did not care to go to one because I did not understand the game. However, when I got saved, I got a new heart. As I was thinking about someone who is a soccer enthusiast, that person would never understand why I do not care about soccer. So it is with getting saved. When you are born again, other people do not understand why you are always attending church and why you enjoy it so much. The Church of God does not bring in rock music or the world. We worship God in Spirit and in Truth.

Some churches have brought in rock music, but rock music was born out of rebellion. It was not in the church and then taken to the world. Worldly men who were drug addicts were the ones who came up with it, and now some are incorporating it into their church music. It does not work. Church is where we draw our spiritual strength. There is always something for us. When you go to Sunday school, you should ask God, "What is in this lesson for me?" It might be just one thing. You should never get the attitude of being a know-it-all, because we are always learning.

## God's Transforming Power

How can you live a holy life in this evil world? This is my favorite thing about the Holy Spirit. He enables and endues us with the power to live holy lives as He transforms us into new creations. Many people do not realize the transforming power of Christ, and it is up to us to be witnesses to the world. God's trans-

forming power enables a child of God to become a new creature. A child of God has a teachable spirit. The Holy Spirit changes a man or a woman into someone who is not even recognizable. I used to be a horrible person, but God changed my life completely. That was not in my own power; it was God. I am so thankful for what He has done!

The Holy Spirit is a foretaste or a pledge of what is to come. Sometimes you may get high in the Spirit, and there is nothing like it. That is just a foretaste of what is to come. We do not know what is in God's Heaven, but we do know there will be no flesh, and there will be no devil. Jesus is going to be there, and

that is all we need to know. We do not need any more specifics.

What is the goal or the purpose of all of this? I read about a basketball player who had a horrible problem with drugs. He struggled and struggled with that habit. As I got down to the end of the article, it talked about how he had found a purpose in life. This is what men are looking for, regardless of what they say, regardless of the life they are living. They may look as though they are having a great time, but human nature says there has to be something greater than this. Many people are troubled, but they do not want to think about it.

The goal of all of this is to make

Heaven our home. If you think about the Holy Spirit and what He has done for you, and still you do not want to make Heaven your home once you have tasted of salvation, I do not know what else will convince you, because there is no greater power. There are examples of this foundation that has been laid. It is perfected all in one, and He wants you to remember that. We all are perfected, not because of anything we have done, but so that the world can see us as we strive and labor together. We are convincing agents.

*(Compact Disc TR-801E)*

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*[Esp. for Young People—continued from p. 14]*  
your mind on God as you fixed it on the vessel of oil. You will not then be tempted to sin."

The main entrance for temptation is at the door of attention. Therefore, we should always guard this door with great care. Do not permit the attention to be centered upon any person, object, or mental picture that would have a tendency to arouse a feeling or a desire that would, if satisfied, lead one astray. Often we see and hear more than is good for us. If someone makes an ugly remark about you, refuse to give it your attention. It might hurt you. What should you do? You must forget it.

It is a fatal thing to play with temptation. There is usually a time when any temptation could be easily overcome, but there is a later stage when a person often finds himself well-nigh defeated before he begins to assert his power of resistance. You should say no, and say it at once, and the fight is over, or at least you are strengthened for the next attack of the same character. Any intelligent or well-informed soul can usually tell, and that almost instantly, whether a desire arising can be satisfied properly. If it cannot be so satisfied within legal and moral bounds, crush it, and crush it at once. A temptation re-

sisted grows weaker each time, and the soul correspondingly stronger. A temptation yielded to becomes stronger, and the soul weakened for the next fight. One of the alarming results following defeat is a tendency for one to lose confidence in himself, even losing faith in his power to stick to anything. Don't give up, even if you do not always win in the fight. Try it again. Never give up. If you start to Heaven and fall down every ten feet, always try to fall face forward, and get up at once and try it again. Let the mind be set on the goal. That is the main thing.

In order to overcome temptation, it is most necessary to watch and pray. Very often temptation comes in an unexpected form or from an unexpected quarter, when you are off your guard; hence, the necessity of watching and praying, because if you are not on the alert, you will be tripped up by the tempter. Have you ever been in a forest after a great storm has swept through it? Where the roots just run along on the surface and do not have any depth of earth, acres and acres of trees will be torn up. A friend from Scotland said to me, speaking of a place where I had been, "Sometime ago they had a storm that blew down between four and five thousand of the finest trees

on that old estate. Do you know why? Because the storm came in an unexpected direction. It had never come from that quarter before. It had blown in every direction but that one, and the forest wasn't prepared, and away the trees went." It is said that Edinburgh Castle, in all the wars of Scotland, was never taken but once. Then the enemy came up the steep rocks at a place where the garrison thought it was so safe they need not guard it."

Many people have proved Christ's promises of help to be true. John Fletcher, a man known for his goodness, piety, and holy life, was nevertheless often severely tempted. He told John Wesley how Satan had often tempted him to put an end to his life. Being of a passionate nature, he was often tempted, too, to speak harshly. Yet by spending much time in prayer—sometimes the whole night—he was given such victory that no one, unless told, suspected his temptations, and he was famous for his gentleness. Wesley said of him: "For twenty years and upwards before his death, no one ever saw him out of temper, or heard him utter a rash expression or any provocation whatever."

Selected

*Proverbs 23:19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise, and guide thine heart in the way.*

*20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:*

*21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.*

*22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.*

*23 Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.*

*24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.*

*25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.*

*26 My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.*

*27 For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.*

*28 She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men.*

*29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?*

*30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.*

*31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright.*

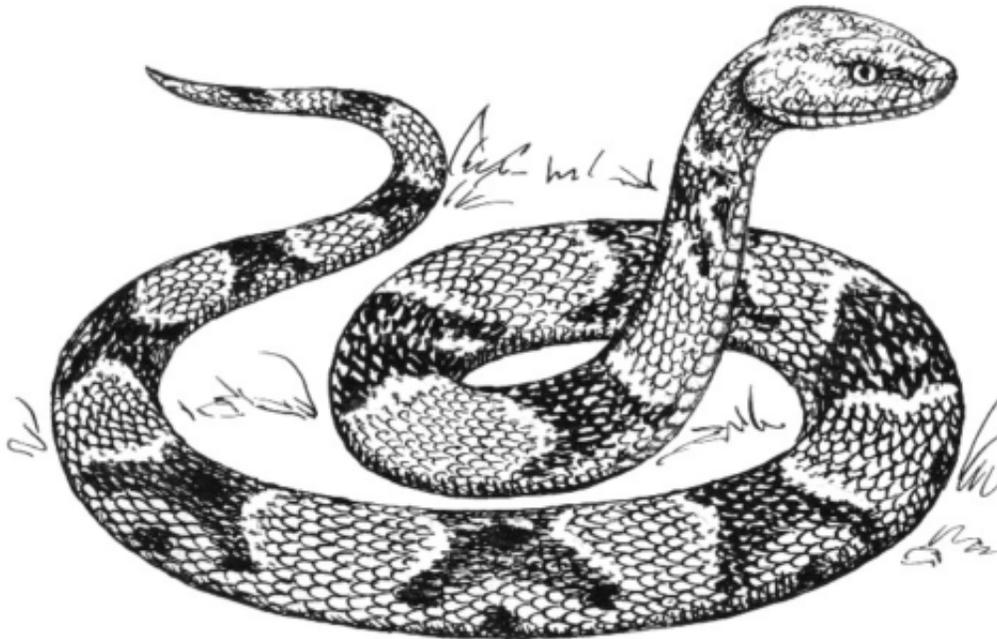
*32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*

*33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things.*

*34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.*

*35 They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.*

## ARE YOU TRIFLING WITH A SERPENT?



**Brother Reggie Stegmeier**

### **Guard What You Look Upon**

The Proverbs writer said, "Hear thou, my son." I always find it inter-

esting that parents have to say: "Are you listening? Do you hear me?" Well, God has to do the same thing. He has to get you to stop in your

tracks and put the thoughts of the world out of your mind so that you will listen. The word *trifle* means "to treat something or someone without

any respect, or any seriousness; to talk or act frivolously; to treat a matter as if it is trivial, unimportant, or nonessential; to mock and become deceived."

There is a fable that says a serpent found himself surrounded with a ring of fire, and he said to a man standing near, "Lift me out."

The man answered, "If I do, you will bite me."

Over and over, the serpent pledged himself that he would not do it. Finally, the young man reached over and lifted the serpent from his perilous position, but he was no sooner safe than his fangs protruded. He got ready to strike with the sting of death.

"You promised that you would not do that," said his rescuer.

"I know I did," said the serpent, "but it is in my nature to bite, and I cannot help it."

This is true of strong drink, and it is true of every temptation. Men trifle with temptation and they imagine that when they choose to do so, they can break themselves free from its power, but it is in its nature to sting, to kill, and to destroy. None of us is so strong that he can overcome temptations such as alcohol, illicit sexual sins, pornography, or whatever it may be. None of us is so strong that he can overcome these sins if they get hold of our lives, because it is in sin's very nature to kill and to destroy.

Are you trifling with a serpent? Our Scripture reading in Proverbs 23:31 says, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." Why did the writer say that? In the end it bites as the serpent; it stings as an adder. Satan's inlet into your heart is through your eyes. When something gets in your eyes, it gets into your mind, into your heart, and then into your members. The Bible tells us not even to look at it.

In Matthew 6:22-23 Jesus said: "The light of the body is the eye [that is the reason it is so important that you guard what you look upon and

practice 'filter control,' because that is the inlet to the body]: if therefore thine eye be single [or clear, the Greek says], thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee [or in your conscience] be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

When your eyes are fixated on something, your awareness of everything else is reduced. For instance, if you take your eyes off the road while driving and look at something else, what happens with your car? You may swerve off the road. That is true with temptation. When you look at something, you fixate on it, and your mind is going to go that way. That is one reason it is so important that you guard your eyes.

The same is true with this world and Christ. If you trifle with this old world and the things offered to you, you will swerve off the straight and narrow path leading to Heaven and lose complete control of your life. In essence, Colossians 3:1-2 tells us to keep our eyes fixed on Christ.

### **A Losing Battle Without God**

Our Scripture text states in verses 31-32: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour [The Amplified Bible says 'when it sparkles in the wine-glass.' It is deceptive, attractive, and glamorous. It looks enticing, and those who drink it seem to have a good time, but it does not taste good. They only think it tastes good because they have habitually given in to it and acquired a taste for it.] in the cup, when it moveth itself aright [or when it goes down really smoothly, and that is what alcohol does in the body; it takes you down really smoothly]. And at the last [or in the end] it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder [that is a small, deadly Asian snake, or viper]."

You may think that you are strong enough to control your cravings, your desires, or your temptations, however attractive they

may be. They are attractive, otherwise they would not tempt you. They are the ever-present work of the devil. However, you are fighting a losing battle without God in your life. You will become deceived by the devil's tricks. He will get you to say, "This will be my last drink" or "This will be my last smoke" or "This will be my last indulgence in . . ." Friend, that is contrary to God's Word.

You may say, "That's my last slip up; it is the last time I am yielding to this temptation" or "These are my last few days of rebellious living." How many times have you said that? Young person, did you ever say this: "I am just going out in the world for a while, Mom and Dad, but I will be back." Now years have passed, and you have regrets, a broken marriage, a broken home. This is the reality of sinful living.

If there was ever a time to be serious and sober-minded, it is today. You need to look at the lives of people in sin. They are all twisted and messed up. If only they would accept Christ and let God work out their problems. Their lives would be so much easier, but through their own desires and their own stubborn wills, they choose to go their own ways, and their lives are in such messes.

One man told me he had quit smoking and that he could quit whenever he wanted. The last time I checked, he was still smoking. He has quit twenty to thirty times, but he is still smoking. The habits of life and the habits of this world are binding. One day it will be his last, but it may be too late. No one is strong enough in his or her own strength to take on the devil alone. You need God in your life more than you realize.

First Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth [or the person who feels sure that he is standing firm] take heed, lest he fall." The Amplified Bible says "lest he fall [into sin]." This is right where alcohol and all other temptations will take you.

James tells us that when sin is finished, it will bring forth death.

### Counting the Cost

Often people in sin spend time counting the cost to be saved. They may say: "Oh, it is going to cost me so dearly to give my heart to God. I would have to give up smoking, drinking, and cheating. I would have to start dressing modestly and look like a child of God. I would have to start attending the church services regularly, give up worldly friendships, and start living right morally. Also, I would have to clean out my music library and books and burn them just like the early church disciples did."

Do you remember reading that in the Book of Acts? They had a big burning party. I read that the books they burned equated to millions of dollars in our dollars today. They were so sick of the old life that they just took the books out and burned them. They did not try to sell them to make money off them. They burned them and got rid of them. They did not want anyone else to have those evil things.

Perhaps you have counted the cost to be saved, but have you ever stopped to count the cost if your soul should be lost? It is a far greater cost. If you gain the whole world and lose your soul, that is a far greater cost than the cost of being saved. If you give up your own little petty ways, God will give you abundant life and all of Heaven. If you are saved, the cost of losing out with God is great. When was the last time you took some time to count the cost of letting down in your walk with God?

What about your prayer life, your reading of His Word, your attendance to the house of worship, and your burden for souls? Is it still as great as it has always been? Have you let down? When was the last time you took time to count the cost of your involvement in worldly activities such as sports, hunting, fishing, or other hobbies? These things have

their place, but some people become too involved in them. These things can become as serpents in people's lives. They can become binding and addicting. They take your time and your thoughts away from God. They may take your desire away from being in the house of God. They may steal your desire for reading God's Word, your desire to spend time in prayer. I wonder, are you trifling with a serpent?

An old song entitled "Have You Counted the Cost?" by Arthur J. Hodge is an awesome old song. It reads:

*There's a line that is drawn by  
rejecting our Lord,  
Where the call of His Spirit is  
lost,  
And you hurry along with the  
pleasure-mad throng—  
Have you counted, have you  
counted the cost?*

*You may barter your hope of  
eternity's morn,  
For a moment of joy at the most,  
For the glitter of sin and the things  
it will win—  
Have you counted, have you  
counted the cost?*

*While the door of His mercy is  
open to you,  
Ere the depth of His love you  
exhaust,  
Won't you come and be healed,  
won't you whisper, I yield—  
I have counted, I have counted  
the cost.*

*Have you counted the cost, if  
your soul should be lost  
Tho' you gain the whole world  
for your own?  
Even now it may be that the line  
you have crossed,  
Have you counted, have you  
counted the cost?*

### The Devil's Crafty and Deceptive Nature

I am dealing with the thought of trifling with a serpent, which means

treating something as if it has no consequence or is of little importance. You may say: "Do not worry about me. I am doing all right. These are just enjoyments, some outlets." I wonder, are you trifling with serpents in your life?

In Genesis, Chapter 3, we have the first appearance of the devil in the Garden of Eden through the instrument of a serpent. Verses 1-6 read: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

"And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes [remember the eyes are the inlet to the body], and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

Why did God choose a serpent as the first opposing force in the garden? The word *serpent* in Latin means "something that creeps"; it is a snake. Serpents are wise and crafty by nature. The Bible says the serpent is the most subtle beast of the field which the Lord had made. That is the reason God chose the serpent. To be subtle is to be so clever and precise as to be difficult to analyze and describe. It is an indirect method to achieve something, and the world does just that with its cleverness. Although God made the serpent, He did not want it to be trifled with. The serpent was to be a tempter, not to be conversed with.

Genesis 3:2-3 says: "And the

woman said unto the serpent [she should not have had a conversation with him], We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it [she added to God's words], lest ye die."

Again, you should not converse with the devil. The devil also works through people. He is not just out there speaking in the midst of the air. You may meet a false prophet or a worldly individual who will talk about religious matters. You should not get involved in deep matters unless you really know what you are talking about, because people may cause you to become so confused that you will not know what to say or do. You need to be careful. Remember, this serpent is subtle, and he is still at work today.

After the serpent's response to Eve, she should have fled for her life, but she did not. Like Eve, most people think they can handle the devil, or their "serpent." Someone may say, "I am having a little problem, and I need to stay out of a few services, but do not worry a thing about it." After a few weeks go by, he says, "Oh, don't worry about me. I have been wrapped up in some things, but I have it under control." A few more weeks go by, and soon he backslides. We should be concerned when someone neglects the house of God.

You should not be deceived into thinking that you can handle alcohol, tobacco, drugs, sexual pleasure, evil temptations, sports, or anything else that steals your time, your finances, or your attention from the Kingdom of God. It is the serpent's nature to deceive. He is subtle and crafty.

He has been in the business of deceiving for more than six thousand years. Deception is his motive. Every time he opens his mouth, he is out to deceive. Instead of entertaining him, fixing your eyes on him, opening your heart's door to him, and then eating of his deceitful meat, you ought to flee for your life.

Eve trifled with the serpent and

was kicked out of the Garden of Eden, a type of the New Testament Church of God. There Adam and Eve experienced total bliss and beauty, but after they sinned, they experienced thorns and thistles. What did the serpent do? He very cunningly tried to lessen the importance of God's commandment. What else did he do? He lied. The devil is a liar, and he has been a liar since the beginning.

### **On What Are You Focused?**

The Bible says in Genesis 3:5, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." God desires that we remain simple to evil and wise to that which is good. God does not want you to know evil. You should stay away from evil. The devil, through the instrumentality of the serpent, tricked and pressured Eve. He tricked her into adding to God's Word. After Adam and Eve disobeyed, God removed them from His presence.

In Genesis 3:3 we read that Eve said, ". . . neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." According to Genesis 2:15, Adam and Eve were responsible to dress and keep the garden. How do you dress and keep it without touching it? The commandment was not to eat of it. Eve responded to the devil with some truth, but then she added a few of her own words to what God said. God says not to drink strong drink, but many prominent figures in society such as movie stars, athletes, politicians, and even some religious leaders say the opposite. They say it is all right to drink a little strong drink.

The Bible plainly says in 1 Timothy 4:8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Today much emphasis is placed on the outward man, so much so that even in religious circles more discussion is made about the outward man than about

the inward man, the part of man that will never die. That troubles me when people come to church and their conversation is all about worldly things. Do you know what that indicates? That is what they have been meditating on.

The Bible says in Matthew 12:34, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." When you go to church, your conversation should be primarily about God. You are in the house of God. God is interested in souls, not frivolous activities. Therefore, your dealings should be about that which pertains to the inward man.

The Bible says that bodily exercise profits little. Exercise can be of some profit. I have known many great men and women of God who have endeavored to stay healthy by eating right and getting a little exercise, which is good for the body. I am not condemning that, but the emphasis today is more on the outward man than the inward man, the part of you that will determine where you will spend eternity.

I read a statistic that said each year United States citizens spend 1.5 billion dollars on dietary supplements and vitamins. Fifty billion dollars are spent on exercise equipment each year. I wonder how much is in the offering plates each year? Most people do not care much about their souls. They do not care as much about soul food as they do about their physical food. They love their bellies more than they do the inward man. In some places pastors are nearly starving while the movie stars and sports stars are making millions. Where is your focus? How much are you giving to God? Money speaks where words cannot, and words cannot reach where money can.

Again, Genesis 3:6 says, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Whatever you are trifling with may appear desirous,

but it can be deceptive.

The very nature of whatever is tempting you and fighting for your time is there to entrap, to ensnare, to kill, and to destroy your precious life. It may feel good to your outward man, and it may look inviting. Your friends may be having a good time doing whatever it may be. It may look really attractive, but you need to look at the end of what it will do. It will kill and destroy your walk with God, and ultimately your life.

### **Do Not Be Corrupted by Associates**

Our Scripture text reads in verses 31-32: "Look not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last [or in the end, whatever is tempting you] it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Wine is an alcoholic beverage, or fermented grape juice. That is the reason the Proverb writer said not to look upon it when it has become fermented. Verse 30 says, "They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." This verse lets you know this red wine is mixed, and God does not want you to play with mixed and altered truths. God desires that we see the pure, unadulterated (or unaltered) Word of God.

Second Peter 1:20 lets you know the Scriptures are not intended to be singled out by themselves for any private interpretation, or in order to prop up false doctrine. They are rather to be taken in the light of the rest of the Bible. Isaiah 28:10 tells us, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Second Timothy 2:15 says that we need to rightly divide the Word of God.

The Bible likens sin to the color red. Isaiah 1:18 reads, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What is the color

scarlet? It is a brilliant red. Sin is likened to a brilliant red. Matthew Henry, who is well known for his Bible commentaries, said this: "The pleasures of sin give their color in the cup, but at the last, or in the end, they bite." James said the pleasures of pure religion will be pleasures forevermore.

Alcohol and all other temptations tempt their victim to linger in that temptation. Next, they seek an inlet into the mind and the heart; then they wrap themselves around their victim's affections with great enticements, enchantments, and entrapments. At the last, they lunge at them with the sting of death. This sin of trifling with the serpent is more serious than many people realize.

What about social drinking? It is very prominent in our society to partake of what is called "social drinking." The problem with anything done in a social gathering is the pressures that are involved with it. The world wants to get you caught up in social events where people are dancing and drinking or going to the movies. Often what comes with sociability is temptation and peer pressure. Social drinking is a very serious thing. Who you associate with is very serious. Exodus 23:2 says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." Another translation says, "You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment."

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Church of God at Corinth, spoke about deception. What was that deception? It was in their friendships, their communications, and their associations. They were deceived and thought that it was no problem. Sometimes associates try to get you to mix with the world, or take mixed wine. They say there is not a thing wrong with it, but Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Your associations and worldly activities that you engage in can take you away from pureness and holiness. Do not be

deceived. You cannot run with a skunk and smell like a rose.

Some people are kind of quiet, and that is beautiful, but I believe that the Apostle Paul encourages those who are quiet not to let good manners get you into a situation that you should not be in. When you get in a large group, do not let those good manners take you into evil situations. Do not say: "I was just being polite. I did not know what to do, so I just went along with them." They may corrupt your good manners. You must be careful of that. You cannot expect your worldly associations not to affect you in your pure and holy life and your way of living.

### **Are You a "Social Drinker"?**

Proverbs 23:20 reads, "Be not among winebibbers [or do not associate with excessive drinkers]; among riotous eaters of flesh." It says not to be among them. The Apostle Paul warned in Philippians not to associate with those who live to drink and eat, whose god is their belly. You should be nice to them and be friendly to them, but do not associate with them. You must be careful.

You must stand for what is right. Philippians 3:19-20 says: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation [or conduct] is in heaven." Our minds should be occupied with heavenly endeavors, but not so with the worldly for their end is destruction. Why? Because their god is their belly. They are trifling with a serpent.

Where does social drinking often take place? It appears in dark rooms. If you have ever passed by the door of a bar and looked inside, you saw that it looked dark in there. Nowadays it is hard to find a restaurant that does not serve alcohol in some form somewhere in the restaurant. If you look at the area where they serve, often the lights are dimmed. Most often people drink at night. Generally associated with these

events are many other evils such as smoking tobacco, dancing, carousing, illicit sexual activities, and extramarital affairs. Sometimes husbands switch companions, which one must never do.

In our dealings, Christian husbands and wives must be ever so careful not to communicate with others of the opposite sex. If you do, you are trifling with a serpent. If you are married, you need to be careful. Young people must be careful of social media. You must be careful in your dealings, because you might end up trifling with a serpent.

First Thessalonians 5:7 says, "For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." They are children of the night. Thank God, as Christians, we are children of the light, as Ephesians 5:8 tells us. A child of God has no business in a dance hall, a movie theater, or a bar. The business conducted there is anything but godly. What would Jesus do? He would not go to a dance hall; He would not go to a bar.

First Thessalonians 5:22 instructs, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." You may say, "What goes on in there is just fine," but does it *appear* evil? The Bible says to abstain from all evil appearances. In the Greek 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says to abstain from every form of evil. Does the place appear evil regardless of what is really taking place inside? If so, the Bible says to stay away from it. To abstain means to restrain yourself from doing something, such as to refrain from drinking alcohol. Even the world knows that to drink alcohol is evil. The world knows it is harmful.

First Thessalonians 5:21 says, "Prove all things." How can you do that? You must examine them. Right now you are examining this business of trifling with a serpent.

Our Scripture text reads in verses 29-30: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long

at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." While drinking pretends to be a social thing, in many cases it renders men unfit for society. They become abusive with their tongues and outrageous in their passions. Wine, or strong drink, has in its very nature the ability to deceive. Why do you think the devil uses this avenue so frequently to cause ones to lose out and quit, often never having another opportunity to make things right with God? The devil knows the binding power of addictions.

Social drinking is nothing more than people who want to be reassured and comforted in their evil actions. They draw other men and women into it. They take part of all this frivolous activity together, and it just satiates their minds. Alcohol alters your mind and your judgment. We are told repeatedly in the Word of God that we are to be sober.

### Be Sober-Minded

First Peter 1:13 says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober [that means do not be affected by strong drink; you are free from alcoholism] and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

First Peter 4:7 says, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." How many are watching and praying at social drinking events? How many drinkers and indulgers of fleshly desires are in a state of prayer and sober-mindedness? I realize that Church of God people do not have a problem with this, or should not, but I am talking about temptation in general. Some people are playing with this stuff. They are like the man out there who wants to go over where they are testing the voltage; then soon it kills him. Why? Because he was so attracted to it.

Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant [the word *vigilant* means 'ever awake']; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom [he is looking for an inlet into your life] he

may devour." The serpent of sin and sinful pleasures will devour you if you refuse to remain in the state of soberness and vigilance. How we need to be sober and serious minded! I have been with Jesus, and He told me that this life is too short to mess around and go out into sin. I do not know when my life might end, and you do not know when your life might end either. We need to be sober minded.

If social events where social drinking takes place were intended to accomplish a task at hand, like they say they are, they would have to leave drinking alcohol out of it all together, because it alters the mind. Why do so many people engage in worldly activities and consequently trifle with a serpent? Sin yields pleasure for a season, but that season is very brief and very destructive. There is a day of reckoning coming for all of us. The sowing stage of sin is often pleasurable to the flesh, and that is the deceptive part; but you need to look out for the reaping. It is the paycheck that no one wants, but everyone must cash it some day.

Galatians 6:7-8 says: "Be not deceived; [again, trifling with a serpent is deceptive, more so than people realize] God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh [Drinking and worldly enjoyments are fleshly activities; they gratify the flesh. Now, I enjoy the physical activity of throwing a ball around, but it does not do a thing for my soul. I enjoy being active, but I do not neglect the house of God or the Word of God. I certainly do not partake of sin. Some things are enjoyable, but they are fleshly.] shall of the flesh reap corruption [or decay; the body is going to die]; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Everything that you sow in your soul is going to be rewarded someday. You are not going to lose that unless you turn your back on God; then God will forget about it. We spend much time working and building. We need to remind ourselves

that everything that we can see with the eye is going to be gone someday. Yes, it will be burned up. It is only the soul that will live on. Our fleshly body is not going to Heaven. We are going to get a new body. We work so hard to pamper ourselves, but our physical bodies are not going to Heaven.

### **Strong Drink Is Raging**

Many times at college I was challenged with wine, but I memorized some Scriptures and kept them in my mind. One of them was Proverbs 20:1. One young lady came up to me often, and she knew my standard. She would say: "Oh, just a little drink is not going to hurt you. Everyone is doing it. The Bible says that a little drink is okay." Then I would quote her Proverbs 20:1, which says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." I would tell her, "It is not wise; strong drink is raging." Young person, you should memorize that Scripture; that is a good one. I love that Scripture; it is powerful!

Jesus said in Matthew 10:16, "Be ye therefore wise as serpents." The Bible lets you know that you can overcome this serpent. You can be as wise as a serpent. Proverbs 1:5 reads, "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain [he will reach] unto wise counsels." This is so that he may be able to steer his course rightly. God can give you the wisdom to match and surpass the wisdom of these serpents that war against your soul, but you must ask for His wisdom and listen to the voice of spiritual teachers and leaders. The desire for strong drink is a fleshly desire. If you give in to your flesh and its desires, you will be mocked in the end and die with it.

The devil, through this serpent called alcohol, promises pleasure. He promises freedom, bliss, and satisfaction, none of which he can give. On the contrary, alcohol is actually a depressant; it makes a person feel

depressed. This is the reason many alcoholics take other drugs with it, like Prozac and marijuana to help combat these anxieties. In the end alcohol does as the Scripture denotes; it deceives, ensnares, entraps, and causes a person to believe something that is not true. What did Jesus say? Luke 21:34-36 says this: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged [geared up] with surfeiting [or excessiveness], and drunkenness [you can be drunk on the things of this world and be drunk on alcohol], and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

Jesus warned against alcohol and sinful pleasures. Proverbs, Chapter 20, says that strong drink is raging. That word means it is violent, and alcohol may cause you to become violent. The Bible says the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. That tells me that alcohol causes you to become raging, and raging works are not the righteousness of God. I do not think you need to be too smart to realize that you should stay away from alcohol.

Again, our Scripture reading says in verses 29-30: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." Proverbs 25:28 says, "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." What are those walls? Isaiah 26:1 tells us they are the walls of salvation. It is like a city without salvation. If alcohol causes you to be raging, and one who rages has no walls, then he does not have salvation.

Proverbs 23:1-3 says: "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:

And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat." What does meat do? Meat satiates your appetite; it satisfies. Alcohol promises to do that, but the Bible says it is deceitful. While it promises to be a meat or nourishment to your body, in the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. You may say, "Well, it takes a lot of drinks to get me drunk, so I am just going to have one drink." You are on your way to having more of those drinks, so you ought to stay away from it altogether.

### **Be Wise to the Devil's Clever and Indirect Methods**

How is your Christian influence and witness in your community? We are commanded to have a good report of them that are without. Those at work and your boss should have good things to say about you. Now, they may not like your stand, but at the very least, they should be able to say, "He is a good worker." What would go through your mind if you saw your pastor taking a drink of alcohol? How about your Sunday school teacher? How about your brother or sister?

You see, we tend to put each other on different levels, and many people tend to be very easy on themselves. We know it is not right for a man or a woman to be drawn into the deception of one drink or ten drinks when we are plainly warned of the consequences in the Scriptures. It is a deception. A drunkard is a fool, the Bible says.

Our Scripture text says to look not upon the wine when it is red. This text lets you know that you are trifling, or acting frivolously, playfully, or flippantly with a serpent when you look at it. When you gaze at that temptation with a desire to see it fulfilled, that is where sin begins its work. Martin Luther said, "You cannot help it when the birds fly over your head, but you can surely keep them from building a nest in your

hair."

Matthew 5:27-28 tells us how sin takes place in the heart as much as in the actions. It says: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh [if you look on the temptation, then you begin to lust after it, and you have already committed adultery in your heart: you have already committed sin; it is done] on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

A serpent in your life is not limited to alcohol. It could be any hobby. Maybe you are so involved with cars, and that hobby becomes an inordinate affection and the work of God gets neglected. You are trifling with a serpent. He said when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin, and sin brings forth death.

Your serpent may not be alcohol. What the devil is tempting you with may be something completely different. Whatever the temptation is, are you trifling with it? Remember, by nature the serpent is the most subtle beast of the field. It makes use of clever and indirect methods to get to your soul with its goal of killing you. A serpent is anything or anyone who gets you to question your stand with God.

A serpent steals your time away from the work of God. A serpent will get you to question the Word of God and make statements like: "Is this really necessary? I do not see the importance of that anymore." In the end the serpent will bite you with a sting of death, killing your experience, your godly influence, and your witness in the community.

Parent, it will impact your children, and it may destroy them. Father, mother, I cannot impress upon you enough to walk a straight line. What made the difference for me was to see that consistent life in the home. I did not see hypocrisy or an up-and-down experience. I saw a father and mother who labored and who are yet laboring. That made the difference in my life.

I saw it in my grandmother, Grandma Stegmeier. One of her favorite things to say was, "Is there church tonight?" When she forgot everything else, she did not forget church. We need to be that dedicated. My parents never miss. They impressed that upon our lives. God means more to me than anything. I refuse to trifle with the serpent.

### **Stand True in the Test**

Someone may ask, "How about 1 Timothy 5:23, which says, 'Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities?'" We have greater truth and understanding in purification methods of water today. We do not need to do that today. We understand more Truth than any one before us. We are living in the evening time, and we are looking back on all seven church ages. Do you not know that a little leaven, a little evil influence, leavens the whole lump? What a great tragedy it would be to misrepresent and to inappropriately apply just one verse in light of all the others I have given you.

Wine is a serpent; temptation is a serpent. Are you trifling with it? Many people like to bring up Noah and Lot. The Bible says Noah was perfect in his generation. For us to be perfect in our generation, we had better abstain from the appearance of alcohol and all the things that go with it. What about serving alcohol? Well, I would advise you not to do that either, because you are setting up others for failure. You could serve someone wine, and it could cause that person to get in an accident and die. Let us be careful of these things.

There was an individual whom I knew well. I talked to him about his soul many times. He was in a false religious system, and he kind of made fun of religion in general. As time went on, I saw things that really alarmed me. I talked to him a little, but I did not know what all he was doing.

Later, I found out that he was into all kinds of pornography and all

kinds of ugly, grotesque sins. I knew this man well, and it hurt like a dagger when I heard that. He trifled with a serpent. Temptation is nothing to play with. His influence has been ruined. He lost everything and ended up in prison.

Saint of God, do not get on computers and play around with temptations. If you do, you are trifling with a serpent. Dale Oldham wrote, "Dead to every worldly pleasure." Whatever it is in your life, are you trifling with a serpent? If you are, you need the power of God to break that binding power. Will you cry out to God and say: "God, I need You. This temptation is so strong." Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. He was in that terrible temptation, but after that, the devil left Him. The Bible says that angels came and ministered to Him.

Matthew 4:11 says, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him." That is so beautiful. God's presence came and comforted Him after He stood true in that test. Let us be true in the test, whatever it may be. If you have a need, I beg of you to give it to God. Ask God for His help. He wants to help you.

*(Compact Disc TR-1059)*

**Be bold in what  
you stand for, but  
be careful of what  
you fall for.**

# Announcements

- Niles, MI**  
September 3-6  
**Revival:** Coulter's Chapel Church of God, 3176 E. Detroit Road, Niles, MI 49120  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For further information contact: Brother David F. Frazier  
Telephone: 269-635-1530 or call church phone: 269-684-3499
- Medina, OH**  
September 5  
**All-Day Fellowship Meeting:** The Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH. Service times: 10:00 a.m. & 2:30 p.m.  
A meal will be served by the local congregation.  
For further information contact the church at 330-725-5993 or call 330-421-0187
- Mt. Pleasant, PA**  
September 7-13  
**Revival:** Mt. Pleasant Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
Service times: Mon.-Sat. 7:00 p.m.; Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
For further information contact: Pastor Paul Prinkey @ 724-547-2151
- Chicago, IL**  
September 15-20  
**Revival:** Harding Street Church of God, 3924 W 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, IL 60623  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For further information contact: Brother Aurelius Reedy Raines @ 708-751-1534
- Chicago, IL**  
September 21-23  
**Revival:** All Nations Church of God, Central Park & 3615 Cermak, Chicago, IL  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For further information contact: Brother Prince Michael Martin.  
Telephone: 773-292-0411
- Comstock, MI**  
September 24-27  
**Revival:** Comstock Church of God, 555 Alger Street, Kalamzoo, MI 49041  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For further information contact: Pastor Jerry Miller @ 269-998-3194
- Chicago, IL**  
September 28-30  
**Revival:** Central Church of God, 3015-17 West Flournoy Street, Chicago, IL 60612  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For further information contact: Sister Young @ 312-509-3947
- New Castle, IN**  
October 1-4  
**Revival:** Ninth Street Church of God, 125 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, New Castle, IN 47362  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi. Service times: Thurs.-Sat. 7 p.m.; Sun. School 9:45 a.m., Sun. Worship 10:45 a.m. & 5 p.m.  
For further information contact: Pastor Allen Polston  
Telephone: 765-524-1776 or 765-521-8284
- Morehead, KY**  
October 5-11  
**Revival:** Blue Bank Church of God, 3200 Blue Bank Road, Morehead, KY 40351  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For further information contact: Brother Jeff Fannin  
Telephone: 606-784-2858 or 606-776-2639 or 606-784-9241
- Old Fort, NC**  
October 12-17  
**Revival:** Old Fort Depot, 25 West Main Street, Old Fort, NC  
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Heath, Ohio. *Preaching from the Book of Revelation nightly.* Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m., Sat. 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m.  
For further information contact Brother Joe Brewer @ 828-738-3370
- Summersville, WV**  
Oct. 26 - Nov. 1  
**Revival:** The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651  
Evangelist: Brother Irwin Seshier, Heath, Ohio  
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m., & Sun. 10:30 & 6 p.m.  
For further information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047  
Visit our website: [www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com](http://www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com)

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