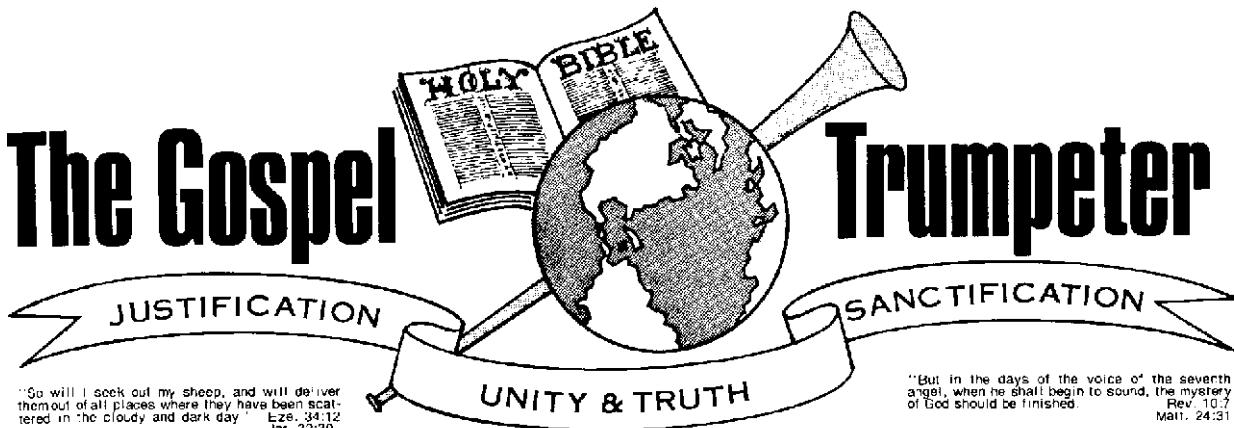


The Gospel Trumpeter



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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 46 December 2016 No. 12



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS

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

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

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Vol. 46 December 2016 No. 12

Guest Editorial

"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"

Job 23:3

Discouragement May Come

In this Scripture Job was suffering with deep heartache. He lost everything he had within a short time. His children were taken away suddenly, and then he lost his servants and his cattle. All that he owned and cared for was lost. Remember, Job was a righteous man in God's sight. He walked pleasing before the Lord day after day. His wife even failed to be the support that she needed to be.

Next, we find that he was sorely afflicted in his body. In his hour of desperation, this trial had become very heavy and burdensome. From a human standpoint, it looked as though God had forsaken him. He felt so alone, and it seemed that he was unable to gain God's attention. Job cried out from the depths of his soul, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

Job went on to say what he would do when he found God. He stated: "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me" (Job 23:4-6).

Although he was sorely oppressed and did not know which way to turn, he had faith in God and knew that God was not only able to help him but also would come to his rescue. Job was unable to feel God's presence, still he kept his confidence fixed in God's ability to deliver. In the midst of losing all he had, he had to contend with three

so-called friends who accused him of being unrighteous. Pressure and trouble was coming from every side. This severe trial appeared to be more than he could bear, yet he refused to abandon his integrity. Job's steadfastness and faithfulness has brought comfort and encouragement to millions of people throughout the ages as they have faced trials.

When we think of the many people who are cumbered with adversity and trials of various types, we understand their feeling of discouragement. Discouragement can come to anyone of God's children; however, it is something that each individual must overcome. If not dealt with quickly and properly, this tyrant can lead one on into murmuring and complaining, and then finally into sin. Trials are never designed to turn anyone away from God. Their purpose is to strengthen one's faith and build spiritual maturity. During the times of trial and affliction, one may become weary because of the lingering circumstance. If that person is not careful and prayerful, the situation can lead an individual to giving up in the battle.

Discouragement is neither an uncommon nor an abnormal situation; also it is not a sign of failure. Some have fallen captive to discouragement through no fault of their own. Sometimes circumstances arise and there seems to be no way out, but you must remember that God is a way maker. When there is no visible way out, you must trust that God will create a way.

[continued on page 12]

Luke 2:1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

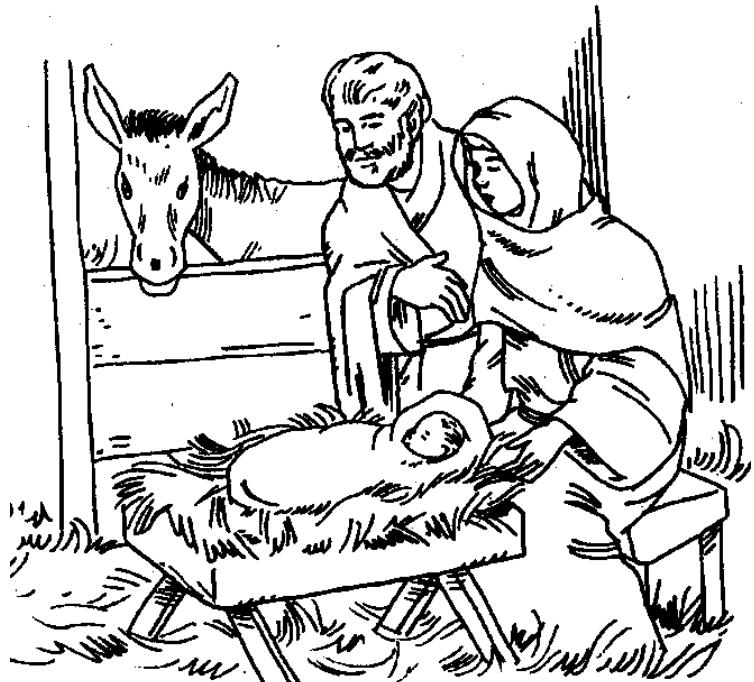
4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

No Room in the Inn



Brother Roger L. Decker

Circumstances Surrounding Jesus' Birth

We want to focus on verse 7 of our Scripture text, which says that "she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." There was no room for them in the inn because at that time the inns were crowded and already filled. Here we read of the birth of Jesus Christ. We are coming to the days when the world will be celebrating Christmas, and I want to take this opportunity to discuss Jesus' birth.

I want you to look at the

conditions surrounding His birth. It is recorded that periodic censuses were taken for two reasons: one was for taxation purposes, and second was for military service. The Jews were exempt from military service, so for the Jews the census was only for taxation. Actual records have been found of the censuses.

The census required that everyone return to his own city wherein he was born for enrollment. This is the situation recorded in the first five verses of Luke, Chapter 2. The Scripture tells us that in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus for all the world to be taxed. This taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of

Syria. Everyone went to his own city to be taxed. Joseph went to Bethlehem because he was of the lineage of David. He went with Mary, his espoused wife, who was great with child.

The Scripture says that while Mary and Joseph were there, it was time for the child to be born. It was the time of Mary's delivery. The latter part of verse 7 is where I want to take my main thought from: "There was no room for them in the inn." That is symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus Christ. Men having no room for Jesus started at His birth. The Scripture lets us know that when He came into the world, He was rejected, unwanted by the

world, and unwanted by those whom He called His own.

John 1:10-11 says: "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The world rejected Jesus Christ, and those who were supposed to be His own people also rejected Him. The words "no room for them in the inn" is symbolic of the hearts of mankind. The only place His own people and the world could find for Him was on the Cross, and that is still where they want Him yet today.

The Secrets of the Heart

As in yesteryear, He still has a difficult time finding a place in the hearts of mankind. Some people will allow Him in a nativity scene, in a school play, or in a sectarian church play. Others will sing about Him and talk about Him, but that is enough of Jesus for them.

Many do not want Jesus in their hearts, and the reason is that too many hearts are filled with everything but Jesus Christ. Also, they know what He expects from them. By keeping Him in the manager, or only keeping Him around during Christmastime, they feel they can still do as they please and keep Jesus at a distance. To some, Jesus is just a tragedy in a sad story, and to others He is merely about a holiday. Many people only think about Him at Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving. Others think about Him in times of death, at weddings, and in times of sickness, but the rest of the time they have no room for Jesus Christ. Wrong never becomes right until the one who is wrong gets right and turns from the wrong.

Having no room for Jesus in the inn represents people's hearts that are full. Why is it that they have no room in their hearts for Jesus? Their hearts are filled with too many other things, and they know that if Jesus was there, a lot of those things would have to be cleaned out. The heart, as it is spoken of in the Scrip-

tures, is not talking about the blood pump. The heart represents the center of one's affection. Just as everything in the physical body revolves around a literal heart, the same is true of the spiritual heart. Sometimes the arteries that feed the blood through the physical heart become clogged, and it causes the heart to go into cardiac arrest, or a heart attack.

The same is true of the spiritual heart. Things can clog up those two golden pipes that empty the golden oil into the candlestick. What are those two golden pipes? They represent the Word of God and the Spirit of God. Dear one, you have to hear from God to live spiritually. He has those two golden pipes, and they empty the golden oil into the candlestick; that is how you stay alive spiritually, through the golden oil.

Look at how the Word of God describes the heart. Psalm 44:20-21 reads: "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart." God knows the secrets that you might have hidden in your heart but have not been revealed to anybody else.

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 17:9-10: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

The heart is deceitful. It can cause you to sit in the seat of the scornful and yet feel that you are all right spiritually. What does the Bible say about the seat of the scornful? Psalm 1:1 states, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

Anger and Bitterness

Sorry to say, many people are so filled up with the world there is no room for Jesus in their hearts. Some

are filled with bitterness, yet they try to cover it up. When bitterness gets in the heart, it is difficult to go on without that thing raising its ugly head and defiling many. They have no peace because of their bitterness, according to the Scriptures. Isaiah 38:17 reads, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."

Some attempt to serve God when they are full of bitterness. It would be so much easier to get rid of the bitterness. What they do is motivated by bitterness, and many become defiled. Sometimes people listen to what other people tell them, and because they are good friends, they fall under the same spirit, and they spread bitterness to others. Some people hold things against others, yet they do not even know for sure what really took place.

What did the Hebrew writer say? Hebrews 12:15 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." The word *defiled* simply means "contaminated." Bitterness should never be in the life of a Christian. You may say, "You do not know what all they have done to me." Well, you might have had some things done to you that were not right, but how do those things compare to what Jesus Christ suffered from men?

Paul wrote to the Ephesians in Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." You will notice that these sins run together: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking; they are the outgrowth of bitterness. It is astonishing whose hearts are full of bitterness and yet they still profess to be Christians. I have never heard of a bitter person doing anything good, only evil.

Paul mentioned wrath and anger. Wrath is the start of anger. When it reaches its highest pitch, clamor is

loud boisterous talk. Evil speaking is the result of these other sins that were not kept in check. Evil speaking is injurious speaking, or blasphemy, saying words to hurt those whom you are against. Using words to defame and destroy someone is evil speaking.

Paul also used the word malice, which is a combination of all these sins that cause one to continue to look to revenge by the destruction of others. When people allow bitterness to work in their lives, they cannot rejoice when somebody else gets exalted. They cannot rejoice when somebody else is a good singer or a good preacher. They cannot enjoy it like they would if their hearts were not full of bitterness.

Sin Is a Destroyer

The Psalmist said in Psalm 64:2-3: "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words." Often when people get in that condition, they become deceived and think they are just as saved as anyone else. Do not let an ecumenical spirit get hold of you. God still commands holiness of heart and holiness of life, and anything less than that will not get you into God's Heaven.

The Scripture text says "there was no room for them in the inn." The hearts of many men and women are full of the world. They are afraid they will miss out on some new fad or fashion that might come along in the world. They are really busy keeping up with all the crazes that come out. Others are so occupied with what other people think that they have no room in their hearts for really selling out and getting real salvation as they ought.

Some people's hearts are full of wickedness, and they are too wicked to allow Jesus room in their hearts. Oh, they always say they are having a good time. You can tell by whether

or not they light up when you talk to them about Christ. Because things seem to be going all right now—they are in good health, and they have a decent job—they do not feel the need of turning to Christ.

You need to keep in mind that pleasure is only for a season. We read in Hebrews 11:24-25: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

A season is only temporary. You will notice that the writer used the word pleasure. He did not use the word happiness. Real happiness is not found in sin. The word *pleasure* means "sensual delight; desire." When you consider sinful pleasures, it truly opens your eyes to the awfulness of sin. Sin is a destroyer.

Had Moses stayed in Pharaoh's court, it would have been only for a season, and it would have soon vanished away. A life of sin is filled with calamity and disappointment. Sin leaves one empty and lonely. Dear one, do not let the pleasure of sin excite you to the place where you live a short life. After a short life of pleasure here, then you would go before God as an unpardoned sinner. Do not throw your life away on a little excitement.

Make Room for Jesus

How can you make room for Jesus? In Luke, Chapter 2, we find that the first message of Jesus' birth came to some shepherds, those who were hated by the Orthodox Jews. They were unable to keep up the ceremonial part of the Law. They could not keep up with all the hand washings, the rules, and the regulations; however, they were people who had time to listen to God. They were a plain, humble people who made room for the message from God. To receive anything from God, one must humble his heart and obey what the Lord has to say.

Proverbs 16:19 reads, "Better it

is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud." Proverbs 29:23 states, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

James 4:6 tells us, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." I would much rather have grace than resistance. We read in James 4:10, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

Is your heart filled with other things? If so, will you make room for the Lord? The Lord is not going to force His way into your life. If you want Him to abide with you, you have to make room for Him to dwell in your heart. He stands at the door and knocks. If you want to be close to God, then He must have room to lodge in your heart.

A new year is fast approaching, and if the Lord tarries, you do not want to be found squeezing the Lord out of different areas of your life. The decision rests with you. Either you have a heart that is too full to accommodate Jesus, or you are willing to have Him take your complete vessel and make it a vessel unto honor. Jesus Christ can work with any vessel as long as that vessel is clean and presented to Him. As long as that vessel has room in his heart, Jesus Christ is willing to take that vessel. It is not who you are or how well off you are financially that matters, but that you are a willing vessel, willing to fully consecrate yourself to God and give your heart to Him.

Only you and God know what is in your heart. If your heart is full of worldly things that ought not to be there, then you need to empty it out. You will be glad that you did. You are the one who is going to benefit from it. You are the one who is going to gain from it. Will you obey God?

(Compact Disc TR-1462)

IN MEMORIAM

Roxanna J. Decker

February 25, 1941 – October 2, 2016



Sunday afternoon, October 2, 2016, God called the soul of Sister Roxanna (Allen) Decker to depart from the tabernacle of clay she lived in for 75 years. She completed her life's mission and with patience finished her course. Passing through this vale of tears and sorrow, she made her way upward to the portals of glory. All the burdens and trials of life are now and forevermore past—never again will she suffer pain, heartache, or affliction. Thank God, Sister Decker is safely resting today in the arms of the Savior she loved so dearly.

Sister Decker was born February 25, 1941, in Watkins Glen, New York, to Alfred W. Allen and Winifred V. (Holton) Allen. In the late 1950's, she met the love of her life, Roger Lee Decker, and they were married on October 24, 1958, at her father's home in West Virginia. The beginning of their nearly 58 years of marriage was rocky, as neither one gave any attention to spiritual realities. Over the years, God blessed their marriage with a large family of five wonderful children and many grandchildren.

Sometime during the early 1960's, destiny caused them to move to Newark, Ohio, in search of employment. Brother Decker applied at a local manufacturing company in the area and was hired. There he encountered some men who were real saints of God, one of whom invited him to come and bring his family to the Church of God at God's Acres. While in attendance, they became acquainted with the Chief Shepherd of their souls, and God's Spirit began to work.

As they listened to the messages of Truth, conviction seized their hearts. In 1966, Sister Decker humbled her heart and was gloriously saved, but her husband was more reluctant to give up all to serve Christ. Nevertheless, our sister forged ahead, taking the children to church faithfully. Many times, as she was preparing to leave for service, Brother Decker would try to convince her to stay home with him. Giving no heed to his pleas, she pressed on and put God first. Seeing her determination, it was not long before her husband met the Lord at an altar of prayer. The born-again

experience he received began a long and useful life of service to Christ.

After the death of Brother Emerson Wilson in April 1987, Brother Decker was called to become the pastor of the Newark congregation. Sister Decker was a godly mother and devoted pastor's wife, conscientiously laboring and using her time and talents for the Lord. Faithfully, she stood by Brother Decker's side and they journeyed together for 29 years, working faithfully for the Master and serving the congregation.

In her later years, Sister Decker's health began to decline, and her impaired physical condition often made it impossible for her to attend the church services. This deeply grieved her heart, as she loved being together with the saints and hearing the Word of God. When she could attend a service, she would rejoice and praise God for the Truth and for His goodness to her.

As the end of her journey on earth grew to a close, her family stayed close at her side. One evening in the early weeks before she passed, she fell into a deep sleep. When she

awoke, realizing she was still alive, she made the statement, "What a bummer—I'm still here!" She told Brother Decker that what she had seen was so beautiful that it could not be put into words, realizing she had witnessed a heavenly realm that is beyond this veil of human comprehension. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:4, "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." Sister Decker saw and heard things that were greater than human words can utter. Yes, she loved her husband and her family, but she wanted to leave this world and go to Heaven more. Paul also wrote in Philippians 1:23 that he had a "desire to depart . . . which is far better." Getting a glimpse of Heaven and the face of the Savior, who would want to stay on this earth any longer?

When the time came for Sister Decker to make her crossing into the wonderful glory world, Brother Decker asked, "Honey, do you see Jesus?" Even in her unresponsive state, her lips moved as if she was trying to speak, but no words came

from her mouth. After a few more breaths, Sister Decker's soul peacefully took its flight to the Lord's haven of rest.

Psalm 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." One reason it was precious for Sister Decker is that she faithfully lived for God and withstood the tests and trials of life. She successfully overcame temptation, allurement, and the snares of Satan's crafty deceits. She will never again be plagued with suffering, and she can say, as Paul stated in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

While living, Sister Decker showed a pattern of good works, leaving behind a legacy that demonstrated true righteousness and holiness. The Lord inspired John to pen these words found in Revelation 14:13, "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." The godly deeds Sister Decker performed will still

linger on through the years, as people reminisce of her acts of love and kindness.

Sister Decker's homecoming memorial service took place on Saturday, October 8, 2016, in the tabernacle of the Church of God at 11:00 a.m. Each song was previously selected by her, and God's presence was felt in the service. Brother David Stegmeier read the obituary and reflected upon Sister Decker's life with special words of comfort to the family. Sister Millie Stegmeier so eloquently read sentiments that had been written by several family members. Brother Larry Dishman brought the message, Parable of Motherhood, and Brother David Stegmeier gave the benediction and committal at the gravesite.

IN APPRECIATION

Brother Decker and the family wish to express their thanks to every person and the congregation who showed their love and support with cards, flowers, visitation, food, and other acts of kindness during this time.

Some Blessed Day

*Some day we'll cease our toiling here,
Our hopes are now on things above,
Some day without a doubt or fear,
We'll gather home to those we love.*

*Some day the cord of life will break,
That holds us to our house of clay,
In which we groan till we shall wake,
In that fair home of endless day.*

*Oh glorious hope, the sweet some day!
That hope the anchor of our soul,
To keep us saved in Christ the way,
And trusting Him tho' billows roll.*

*Some day, the time seems strangely near,
When life's frail thread shall severed be,
And we shall see that home so dear,
From earthly cares forever free.*

Chorus:

*Some blessed day, oh, joyful day,
When we shall speed from earth away!
Our feet shall press that golden shore,
To be with Jesus for evermore.*

W. W. Titley

(Chorus by D. O. Teasley)

Titus 3:4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according

to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our

Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Being Renewed



Brother Larry Dishman

Living a New Identity

I want you to focus your attention on verse 5. The latter part of this verse speaks of the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." By regeneration and renewal, men and women are given a fresh spiritual start. I want to mention several things concerning the need to be renewed. First of all, according to the Word of God, you need to be renewed in your mind. The Bible says in Romans 12:2, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and accept-

able, and perfect, will of God." The Christian life requires a renewing of the mind. You probably do not hear too much about that, but it is important to be renewed in your mind.

Ephesians 4:17-24 says: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all

uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

After being saved, your mind needs to be retrained, or reprogrammed, to reflect the Truth. The former mental strongholds need to be destroyed. Your thought life

needs to be trained to reject and avoid the world's system that opposes the way God thinks. A renewed mind is a mind that has been trained to think according to the truth instead of a lie, reality instead of an illusion of the world, and in line with the Spirit of God and not with the flesh.

Before you were saved, your mind went in a particular direction, and the longer you stayed in sin, the more deeply that became ingrained in your mind. This is the reason it is better for one to get saved while he is young, but one should not put off salvation no matter how old he is. The Bible says in Colossians 3:10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." The renewing of the mind means that you now think as God does.

God wants you to think as He thinks. His attitudes should become your attitudes. His passions should become your passions. His purpose should become your purpose. In other words, a new pattern of thinking is established when you have a renewed mind. Your old way of thinking according to the world's system should no longer be your frame of reference. Your reaction to temptation should be in line with how Jesus would respond when you have a renewed mind. Your response should no longer be that of lust, indulgence, depression, hopelessness, consuming alcohol, using drugs, or anything else that would have power over your life. As a result of this new way of thinking, your life changes into having God's nature and God's character. You are truly transformed when you are converted. You begin to live a new identity. You now live in Christ.

Seeking the Mind of Christ

Again, Romans 12:2 reads, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." This

is the key to living a consistent Christian life that is holy and in the will of God.

The Bible says in Colossians 1:21-22: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight." You may say, "That is what I want; that is what I need." Each of us struggles daily in a spiritual battle between the flesh and the Spirit. We are not fighting against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. In order to align your thinking with God's thinking, you need to consistently and constantly go back to the place where you can put God's thoughts into your heart and your thought life. The Bible is where you find God's thoughts recorded.

The Scriptures need to become your new frame of reference. If you want to know what God thinks, you must read the Word of God. The thoughts of God are contained in the Word of God. Colossians 3:16 tells how you can have a renewed mind. Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

The more time you spend in the Word of God, the more you will know how God thinks. Your thought life is reprogrammed from the fleshly ways as a result. Your response to temptation, your environment, and the evil around you begins to change. You will always be tempted as long as you are in this fleshly body, but when you have this renewed mind, it will keep you from having ups and downs all the time. Old habits will drop away. Some take longer than others.

You behave differently as you begin to think differently. If you think right, you will do right, by the grace and help of God. What does a renewed mind do for you as a child

of God? As a Christian, you have a renewed mind, and it will begin to cause you to seek godly goals, aims, and views. If you think like God and I think like God, if you have a renewed mind and I have a renewed mind, then our goals, our aims, and our views will become more and more alike. How is this possible? We both are seeking the mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:5 says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Each of us should strive to develop a mind just like Jesus Christ. The more we become like Him, the sooner we become of the same mind. A renewed mind makes a consecrated effort not to be snobbish but to be associated with the humble and lowly people. A renewed mind will maintain a strong sense of humility, an awareness that one has much to learn from God and others. We still have much to learn as the people of God.

A Renewed Vision

In addition to having a renewed mind, you need your vision renewed. Proverbs 29:18 reads, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." What is this vision? It is having your heart on what God's heart is on. Only a miracle of illumination will reveal God's point of view. A true vision is a vision that is God inspired. When God's people lose spiritual vision, the whole world is impacted.

The Scripture is very clear that when God's people lose their vision, people will begin to perish. If you lose God's vision, you will cease to be the salt of the earth as Matthew, Chapter 5, says to be. If you lose your vision, you will cease to be the ambassador that the Apostle Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 5:20 when he said, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

Christ came to this earth with a vision. Hebrews 12:2 reads, "Look-

ing unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus was following a vision. I believe His vision was of a redeemed world. When Jesus was dying on the Cross and going through that agony, He saw souls down through the course of history. He saw you and me.

Jesus Christ had a clear vision of what His mission was. As a result, His life had purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. He achieved His mission on earth. Friend, if you do not have a vision, you are not going to know what your mission is, so you need to be renewed in your vision. You will be what you will see. What you do not see, you cannot be. You will become what you behold, but what you do not behold, you will not become. A loss of vision produces moral anarchy, and that is what is wrong in the world today. Church, we must have a vision of lost souls. We need to be able to envision souls going out into eternity without God.

Renewed Hope

We need not only a renewed mind and a renewed vision but also a renewed hope. We are living in a day and time when people are becoming discouraged and losing hope. As I was thinking about this, my mind went to Luke 24:13-21, which reads: "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

"And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou

only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done." You talk about losing hope! After all the preaching that they had heard from Jesus Christ and after all the miracles that they had witnessed, yet they doubted Him!

Luke 24:22-32 says: "Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at the table with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he

opened to us the scriptures?" They had lost hope, but their hope was renewed.

Maybe you have been through some difficult situations, and your world has been turned upside down. Perhaps you have been praying and praying and it seems there is no hope. Do not give up! Your hope can be renewed. At times in my life, I have not known which way to turn, but my hope was renewed.

I want you to think about the Apostle Paul and those people on the ship spoken of in Acts 27:20. It reads, "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away." Have you ever seen your hope being taken away? Sometimes all hope that a situation is going to work out is taken away, and then God steps in and works it all out. If your hope needs to be renewed, now is a good time to do it. You may have days when you feel that you cannot survive. Sometimes your dreams may be shattered. Sometimes friendships fall apart or loved ones may hurt you. Finances may worry you, sickness may overtake you, or you may even lose someone you love; nevertheless, God will always be there to guide you through even the toughest time. You must never lose faith! You need to hold on to hope and trust God always.

Renewing the Inner Man

Sometimes we need to have the inner man renewed. The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." How is your inner man getting along? You may look good on the outside, but is the inner man being renewed day by day? He needs to be recharged every day.

Ephesians 3:14-16 reads: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would

grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." You need strength for the inner man. The inner man has to be renewed. In the writings of Paul, several times we find him referring to the difference between the inner man and the outer man. In this picture from the epistle to the Ephesians, Paul prayed that the saints would be strengthened by the Holy Spirit in the inner man.

The outer man is your physical body. As you observe the outward person, it can be very strong or it can be very weak. Some of the football and basketball players are strong outwardly. They have been through a lot of physical training, so they have the strength physically, but many of them do not have inner strength. Some cannot keep from beating up their wives or their girlfriends. Some cannot restrain themselves from raping women, and they have other sinful habits.

You can be strong on the outside with big muscles and look tough, but how do you look on the inside? God is concerned about the inner man. Some people are extremely healthy, and then there are those who, because of accidents or illnesses or old age have become quite weak outwardly.

As you read through the Scriptures, you will find people who have a strong outer man, but the inner man is not always strong. Let us take Samson as an example. Certainly, no one was ever stronger than Samson as far as the outward man is concerned, but inwardly Samson was a weakling. He often proved to be unable to control his passions, his anger, and his lust. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul did not seem to be very strong physically. He said that other people thought his outward presence was weak. Knowing all the beatings and all the forms of abuse that the Apostle Paul had been through, he probably looked a little weak. Though he might have been weak on the outside, what strength he had inwardly! That is the most

important thing.

How much strength do you have on the inside? Paul had strength to go on many missionary journeys. He spread the Gospel of Christ around the world at the cost of his physical health. He was thrown in prisons, and he suffered many beatings as well as several shipwrecks, but he kept going on for the cause of Christ. What inner strength he displayed as a man of God!

The Daily Care of the Inward Man

The outward man refers to the physical body, and includes the brain. You might have noticed during your life that a person's mind can become weak. Perhaps you know someone whose mind is not as strong as it once was. There is more to the inward man than just his thoughts, as some would have you to believe. The inward man is spiritual. The brain is still a part of the body, so the brain can become weak and sick. A person can have a stroke and the mind may never be what it was before. A person can develop Alzheimer's disease, and it is terrible to watch.

People can have strong intellects and at the same time be very weak in a moral and spiritual sense. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. In his writings he certainly demonstrated great wisdom, but anybody who thinks he can handle seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines is demonstrating some severe weakness in wisdom. With all those wives I wonder how he coped with all those mothers-in-law.

In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul said, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." No one has to tell us that our bodies will perish. We can look in the obituary column and see that people of all ages die every day. Whether you realize it or not, your outward man is perishing, and one of these days, you are going to leave this old world.

The inner man does not have to

decay and perish like the outward man. The inner man can help you in times of temptation. How well are you conquering temptations? Are you victorious? If you are not victorious, it could be that you are not strengthening the inner man enough. Perhaps you have not been feeding the inner man, and the inner man is not being renewed. You eat two or three times a day to keep the outward man going, but how much time are you setting aside for the inner man? What is the inner man feeding upon? What kind of music are you feeding the inner man? What kind of literature are you looking at? What are you watching? Are you feeding the flesh or the spirit?

It is the inner man that receives the comfort of God when you are facing sickness or tragedy in life. One of the saddest moments in life for many people is when they are confronted with a strong temptation and find that they do not have the strength to be true to God. They do not have the strength to say no to the devil.

You have to take care of the inner man. The Bible says he needs to be renewed every day. Sometimes even the Christian learns that his inner man has not been sufficiently nourished and has not been strengthened. When trials come, he finds that the inner man is very weak. If the inner man has not been nourished enough, the inner man is not strong enough to overcome the desires of the flesh. Flesh cannot overcome flesh; it takes the inner man to overcome temptation. The outward man lets you know when it is time for bodily nourishment, but it is different when it comes to the inner man.

Paul wrote in Romans 7:22-23: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." Paul said very clearly in Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and

these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Friend, a constant battle is going on between the flesh and the Spirit. I trust that you are feeding the inward man daily.

Do You Need Your Strength Renewed?

Isaiah 40:31 gives us this promise: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

The Old Testament is full of examples of God's people trusting Him, putting their faith in Him, and finding that God is faithful. He will do exactly what He has promised to do. In the Book of Exodus you can read about Israel's victory over the Egyptians and the great victories that Israel experienced in their journey through the wilderness and as they traveled into the promised land.

Who can forget such men as Samson who relied on the Lord? When His people were faithful, God strengthened them to perform their duties. Of course, when Samson stopped relying on the Lord, the Lord no longer strengthened him. The Lord no longer fought his battles, and so it is with you. You have to be on God's side and be obedient if you want God to fight your battles. The fact that our Scripture text says that you are renewed in strength implies there can be weakness. You can become weak.

The Bible tells us in Isaiah 40:30, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." It is significant that this text would choose the strongest among men to make the point. It mentions the youth because they are in the prime of life. In the days when these words were written, the youth were the ones who could run and run. Similarly, young men, though slightly older than the youth, are still symbols of strength and vigor. A young man can work and

work and seemingly never tire.

The youth were the strongest men of that day, and they are the strongest men of this day. In hard physical labor, they seem to go on and on, but God's Word says that even the strongest men will grow weary and faint. Their energy eventually comes to an end. The message is clear: man at his strongest is still weak, and he can become helpless. The youth, though they may be physically strong, are weak compared to God.

This physical picture points to a spiritual picture. The spiritual picture of weariness and stumbling lets you know that without God's help you are prone to get weak and fall. Without God's help you are prone to weakness in your spiritual life as well as your physical life, and especially in your spiritual life, you are weak. You are going to face enemies in the world. How many times in your life have you not been strong enough before the enemy? You definitely needed God's help.

Sometimes life seems so difficult that you may be tempted to think that God is not with you. At times, you may feel that you cannot make it, but then comes the wonderful message from Isaiah that those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. You may say, "I have been through so much, and I do not have any strength left." Maybe you feel that your spiritual reservoir is empty and you do not have strength to go on. That is the time for spiritual renewal. It is perpetually a possibility in your life, and spiritual renewal is just a prayer away.

Do you need your mind renewed? Do you need your vision renewed? Have you lost hope? Do you need your hope renewed? Perhaps you have prayed, yet the devil has convinced you there is no use. Do you need the inner man renewed? None of us can make it without God. Friend, you cannot make it without His help.

(Compact Disc TR-1675)

/Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2

The children of Israel stood helplessly at the Red Sea with nowhere to turn. Their defeat and doom appeared to be sealed. In that hour of desperation, God told them to "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" (Exodus 14:13). By faith they obeyed, and God made a way just in time. He will do the same for you. Your part is to simply stand still and keep your faith fixed in Him. God will not fail a trusting soul.

Today things surely look discouraging and hopeless. It appears that sin and ungodliness is prevailing on every side and that we have no way out. Dear friend, God in Heaven has everything under His control, although we may not see it. Remember, God has never forsaken His people, and He is not about to forsake us now. When the time is right, God will step in and make a way for His people to overcome and to be victorious. It is our responsibility to trust and obey His never-failing Word.

Are you going through a deep trial of adversity or affliction? If so, be encouraged, lift up your head, and look to God. You must endeavor to look beyond the discouraging circumstance that faces you and realize that Jesus is there, and He is ready and able to help. No situation known to man is too great for Him to handle. We challenge you to put your faith and hope in the One who can bring you through with overcoming victory. There is no real reason for a saint of God to remain in a discouraged condition indefinitely. I ask you to ponder the words of the Psalmist that he spoke so profoundly in Psalm 42:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

Selected

God never commands and commissions without providing grace to obey.

The Trial of Your Faith



Faith is a weapon of warfare, the shield which wards off the darts of the enemy, but there are times when the shield must be tried. When the attacks of the enemy are fierce to the utmost, the one who wields this weapon must do it boldly, knowing that there is a power emanating from Heaven which enables a resistance against the most severe attacks of the opposing elements round about.

There must be a determination on the part of the soldier for Christ to go through with victory. When one has Christ enthroned within, meeting with oppositions of the enemy, passing through fiery trials, and enduring hardships and persecutions does not take away the victory, for this is the victory, even our faith.

It is our privilege to have the victory before the severe battle begins and to continue to have it in the hottest conflict with the enemy, when Satan is raging with all his forces on every hand. When the shield of faith is constantly held up and we are moving on the perfect line of truth, the conflict will end with glorious victory. Sometimes from an outward appearance, and were one to go by feelings in the matter, it might seem that defeat could not be avoided. However, as the true follower of God does not walk by feelings but by faith, he has the assurance that so long as his faith is centered on Christ, he has the victory through Christ, and all

the powers of Satan are unable to make a passage through the presence of God, and His presence is round about us as a wall of salvation. Oh, how precious to be hid away in the secret of His presence, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty!

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:3-4). Truly we can be true to God in time of trial. It will result in rich experiences, and we will be entire, wanting nothing, and better fitted for what is before us.

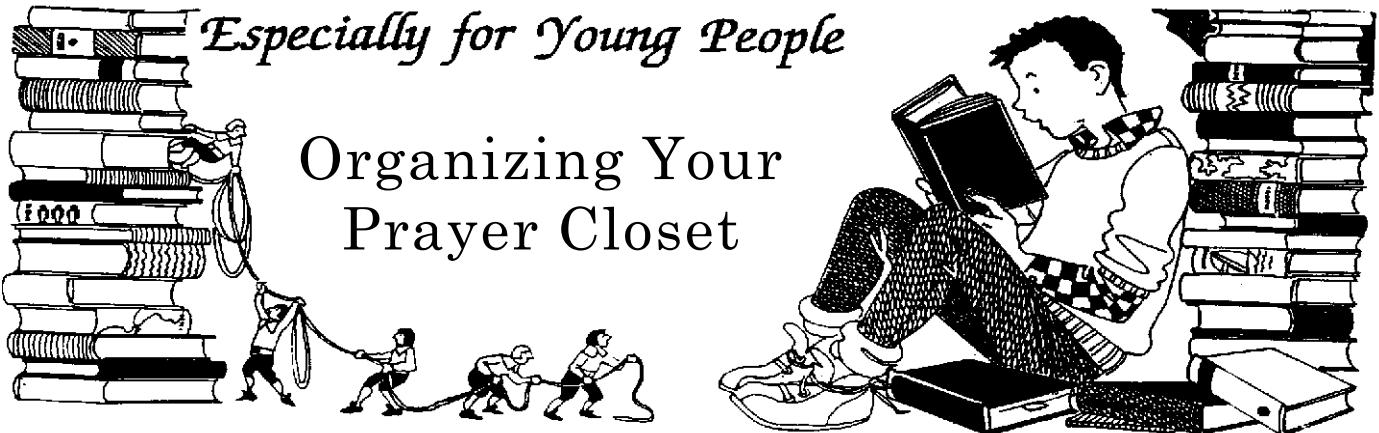
Again, the Apostle said, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." When a people are true to God in all things, and passing through severe trials, they are getting much gold; yea, something more precious than gold. They are having experiences that will strengthen the soul and enable them to stand more firm and rejoice in the

glory of God.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). Faith enables us to look beyond the realm of human vision and lay hold upon things unseen. It enables us to grasp the eternal promises of God. As we get a sure foothold upon them, their solid foundation, and the truths implanted in the heart, we learn not to stagger when things are swept from before our eyes, but continue looking unto Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of our faith. When we learn just what He has promised, and learn to lay hold upon them with perfect submission to His will in all things, and a determination to go through, our souls will take a wonderful advance, and our pathway will be crowned with victory all the way along.

Selected

Daily prayers will diminish
your daily cares.



Especially for Young People

Organizing Your Prayer Closet

Matthew 6:6 reads, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father." A word that stands out to me when reading this verse is the word *closet*. When thinking about prayer and how to strengthen my prayer life, I compared organizing a literal closet in my home to organizing the private, personal prayer life. Cleaning out my literal closet involves cleaning out cobwebs, throwing away things that do not fit or work, and organizing the contents. Likewise, there are times in the Christian's life when he or she should take a good look at the prayer closet, throwing out what is not working, and clearing out spiritual cobwebs.

Find or create a prayer closet: If none of the rooms in my home had literal closets, I would find it necessary to have closets built. If you have never created a prayer closet, now is the time to begin. You cannot organize something you have not started. First, consider where your prayer closet will be. A prayer closet is a place where you can have private, personal prayer time with God. Some places to consider are a literal closet, your bedroom, or your car. Are there other places in your house where you can go to be alone with God? You might have more than one prayer closet. My favorite place to pray is in my bedroom, but there have been times when driving my car that I have made that a prayer closet as well. Most importantly, you must create your closet.

If you already have one established, you can begin the organizing.

Take everything out of your closet: There have been times when my closets were so full that it seemed difficult to see the closet for all the "stuff" that was in it. For me, the best way to clean and organize these closets was to take everything out first. If you have a prayer closet, now is the time to take a look at what is in it. How do you pray? When do you pray? Are there hindrances to prayer in your prayer closet? If praying whenever and wherever (no established prayer closet) is not working well, you should throw that out. If praying late at night makes you fall asleep before you are finished praying, you need to throw that out. If silent prayer makes it too easy for your mind to wander, you should consider throwing that out. This lesson is a good time to evaluate what exactly is in your prayer closet.

Timing: Before cleaning out a literal closet, timing is important. It would not be wise to begin cleaning (taking everything out) right before going to bed or a few minutes before leaving for an appointment or a church service. Tiredness or having my mind on what I need to do in the next few minutes is distracting. Thus, there are better times than others to work on a closet. So it is with a spiritual prayer closet. Are there better times than others to pray? While looking at the contents of your prayer closet, ask yourself these questions: When do I pray? Do

I have a regular prayer life (same time of the day)? Would praying at approximately the same time every day help with procrastination? Just as the Old Testament Israelites brought their best to sacrifice to God, are you bringing your best to your prayer closet? Are you bringing a tired body and a cluttered mind? Would another time of the day be better? You need to ask the Lord to help you to determine the best time for you to pray. Do not become discouraged if you have failed in this area. God will help you if you ask Him. Once you find what works best for you, then you need to do it.

Preparation: Before beginning a literal cleaning and organizing project, there are a few preparations that I need to make. There are cleaning supplies that need to be gathered. I might need to put on work clothes. Sometimes I need to mentally prepare myself as well. When I was a child, knowing how to clean did not come naturally. I had to be taught by my mother how to clean and organize a home. Jesus' disciples' request in Luke 11:1 lets us know that we also need to be taught how to pray: "Lord, teach us to pray." How do you learn how to pray? It is important that parents teach their children at a young age how to pray at mealtime, at bedtime, and for scrapes and cuts. As children get older, it is important that they pay attention to Sunday school lessons, preached messages, and family devotions. These are opportunities to learn more about prayer. Other

ways to learn how to pray are to read good, spiritual books on prayer and also talk to people who have the gift of prayer.

Before you pray, you should check your attitude. Are you coming to prayer with a humble attitude or do you have a proud attitude as the Pharisee in Luke 18:11-12? Are you praying only because you know you should or because you want to? Do you have a thankful heart or do you look at your prayer closet as a supply closet, a place to get whatever you need? Your attitude will determine whether or not your time in your prayer closet is pleasing to God. For me, writing a list of things to do while working in a literal closet is the most efficient way to get things accomplished. Likewise, I have created a prayer journal that I often take with me to my prayer closet. In this journal are lists of prayer requests of unsaved friends and loved ones, names of people who are sick, and special burdens that I am concerned about. By reading through this list before praying (and sometimes while praying), I can remember many needs that I would otherwise forget.

Shut the Door: When cleaning and organizing literal closets, one of the greatest hindrances is interruptions. The phone might ring or I might hear the notification of a text message. When my children were younger, they liked to make a mess or whatever I was trying to straighten up. There were times when it was necessary to literally shut the door. When Jesus told us how to pray, He said to "shut the door." How do you shut the door of your prayer closet? You might literally shut the door if it is in your bedroom or closet. More importantly, you must shut the doors in your mind. In other words, you need to close out all thoughts unrelated to prayer. Here is something to consider: are there certain types of entertainment, such as music, books, social media, or text messaging, that make shutting the door more difficult? You might consider praying earlier in the day before too many

things enter your mind that would crowd out the attitude of prayer.

Purpose: Before cleaning out a literal closet, I must have a goal or a purpose. Why am I working in this closet? What do I hope to see accomplished? Usually, it is to organize the closet's contents for later use. Then I can more easily find what I need. Once you have organized your prayer closet for the purpose of finding what works and what does not, you need to think about the goal of having personal, private prayers. The answer to the question, Why am I in this closet? is to pray. What or who should you pray for? God plainly answers this in His Word.

First, He told us to *pray for one another*. James 5:16 says to "pray one for another." You should not pray only for things you need. You ought to pray for the needs and burdens of friends, family, and people in your congregation as well.

Second, you need to *pray for your enemies*. Matthew 5:44 reads, "Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." The word *despiteful* means, "insult, accuse falsely, threaten." Jesus said to pray for these people. You are to pray for people who treat you badly and make fun of you.

Third, you need to *pray for God's will*. Matthew 6:9-10 tells us: "After this manner therefore pray ye . . . Thy will be done in earth, as

it is in heaven." You should ask God for direction concerning the many choices you have to make in life. Also, you should ask Him to help you to understand His will and to make a way for you to do His will.

Fourth, you should *pray for all men and those in authority*. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "I exhort therefore, that . . . prayers . . . be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority. . . ." In your daily prayers, it is good to pray for your pastor, your Sunday school teacher, your school teachers, your boss, and the leaders of your country.

When I have finished cleaning and organizing a literal closet, I like to take a few minutes to look around and appreciate what has been accomplished. Is there anything else that needs to be taken care of? Did I miss something? In the same manner of thinking, you should consider spending a few minutes of quiet time in your closet after you are finished praying. What did it feel like to have actually talked to the One Who created the universe? Is there something God wants to say to you? He often speaks in a still, small voice, but you must listen carefully and quietly. He wants to talk to you as you spend time in your prayer closet.

Sister Sheri Strelecky

The Sunny Side

Just as in walking on a cool day it is good to keep in the sun, so we should keep on the sunny side of the Christian path. To that end we must keep God's commandments and keep our hearts with all diligence. On one occasion a man in a prayer meeting prayed twice that God would "sweep the cobwebs from his heart." Another arose and prayed, "O Lord, help us to keep the spiders out of our hearts!"

Numbers 14:15 Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

16 Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he sware unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

17 And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my LORD be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

18 The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by

no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

19 Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.

20 And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word:

21 But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

22 Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my mira-

cles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

23 Surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

24 But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

Complete and Unlimited Obedience



Brother E. David Stegmeier

Are You Totally Committed to God?

You ought to be fully obedient to God. Whatever God has revealed to you, or whatever truth He has

shown you, you need to walk in that light. Also, you must be receptive of any future requirements that God might place upon you, including any greater understanding that you might receive.

Verse 24 of our Scripture text says that Caleb had another spirit. His spirit was different from the other men who left Egypt. When the Israelites left Egypt, there were more than six hundred thousand men of

fighting age. Only two of those thousands of men made it into Canaan. This was a very small percentage of all those who came out of Egypt and who made it into Canaan.

Today the percentages are similar. Along the way, thousands of people who start serving God imbibe a wrong spirit that is not fully obedient to God. You must be very careful of the spirits that you play around with, lest you imbibe a spirit that is against the cause of God. Six times in the Book of Numbers, we read that Joshua and Caleb wholly followed the Lord. Because of their consecration and obedience, both of them were successful in gaining entrance into the promised land.

How is your obedience? Is it complete or is it limited obedience? Many people see no connection with the happenings of the children of Israel and their behavior today. I have often told my congregation at home to identify with someone among those thousands of people. With whom would you identify yourself? Would you be like Joshua? Would you be like Caleb? Would you be like Achan or someone else who rebelled against God? Joshua and Caleb totally obeyed God. Both of them were consecrated, obedient, successful, and totally committed to God.

Years ago a man came to my congregation. Many times when I am preaching, I refer to the Old Testament. This man said: "Oh, Pastor Stegmeier, you should not go to the Old Testament. You should only use the New Testament."

I said: "How many times did New Testament writers quote the Old Testament? It contains many principles that we can use and implement in our lives today."

As the people of God, we must be very careful that we continue to be the people of God. Again, very few people see a correlation between what the children of Israel did in their day and what they are doing today. There are principles that we

can glean from the children of Israel and use to implement in our lives.

Paul, writing to the Church of God at Corinth, said in 1 Corinthians 10:5-6: "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness [today many people are overthrown in this land of religious wilderness]. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." Anything that impedes your progress, comes between you and God, or hinders your enthusiasm for God is an evil thing.

Most of my preaching is to the church because the church needs to be strong so converts can be born again. If the church is weak, there will not be new converts. A strong mother will inevitably bring forth children. Paul said with "many of them [all except two] God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." I have been around the Church of God for about seventy years, and I have seen many people overthrown in the wilderness of false religion and sin. Again, anything that is more important to you than God or the furtherance of His cause is an evil thing.

Measure Yourself by God's Word

If someone is not following what is preached, such as the standard, or does something questionable, do not look to that person; look to God. Some feel justified in disobeying the standard of the Word of God. You should not measure your obedience by any other individual on the face of this earth. You ought to measure yourself according to Jesus Christ. He is your example, not another person or a group of people. To measure yourself by another or by a group is unwise. You are to measure yourself after God.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:12, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves

[or lift themselves up]: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." That is not wise. You must measure yourself according to God's Word and what He has revealed to you. Someone once said, "It would be obvious that if a person's only standard is himself that he would always be right." Our standard must be Christ. He is our light; He is our example.

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus in Ephesians 4:11-13: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, [Can you be perfect? Absolutely! You must be perfect in your obedience. You can do all you know God wants you to do right now, but God might have some further requirements as you go.] unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." You must measure yourself according to Jesus Christ. You need to forget about looking at others. You must look to God and measure to His Word.

The Apostle Paul enumerated the wonderful benefits and privileges afforded to the children of Israel under their exodus from Egypt. However, all of them, except Joshua and Caleb, perished in the wilderness. My heart is in the work of God. I have no desire to go out into the world.

Our Scripture text tells us their bodies were in the wilderness; however, their hearts were still in Egypt. How many people are physically present in the worship services, but their hearts are somewhere else? When I go to the house of worship, both my body and my heart are there. Someone may say, "Well, my spirit will be there." You had better come with your body. Your spirit will not be there unless your body is there. Failing to attend the services

when you can be there is sin. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The Hebrew writer tells us not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. This is an imperative sentence in the English language. It is a command, and the subject is you. I thank God for faithful people.

Take Heed, Lest You Fall

As I already mentioned, the Hebrew people were in the wilderness, but their hearts were still in Egypt. I ask you, where is your heart? It ought to be in the things of God, in the furtherance of the cause of God. If you are a real child of God, you need to be in the services. The children of Israel were a highly privileged people. Church of God, we are a highly privileged people. We have an awesome heritage, and with that comes great responsibility. Even though the children of Israel were a highly privileged people, all of them but two allowed unbelief to take hold of them.

Many people whom I have known in my years of serving the Lord have left the things of God. They have not been true to God. Many events that happened to the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt can be applied to incidents that happen today. We can learn some valuable lessons by studying their actions and reactions. We should be careful that we do not lust after evil things. I do not agree with the adage that says, "Clothes make the man" because it is what is inside a man that really counts. We should be content with what we have.

We should not read and study the Old Testament merely for historical reasons, but rather for what we can learn from the stories and how we can apply the knowledge to our lives. Those Scriptures have a practical application for you and me. The Apostle Paul gave us some practical applications. In 1 Corinthians 10:11-13 he wrote: "Now all these things happened unto them for

examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall [we need to be careful of self-confidence]. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." If you are tempted along some line, you need to stay a long way from it.

There is a story about a stagecoach company that advertised for a driver back in 1851. Three young men answered the advertisement. The owner said, "I want you to come with me and drive my horses up this mountain road."

The first young man got up in the seat and said, "Giddy up."

They came around a curve with a deep ravine, and the stagecoach owner said, "How close can you get to that ravine?"

"Oh," he said, "no problem. I can get within a foot of the ravine." The stagecoach owner's eyes got really big and his hair stood up on the back of his neck.

The second young man took hold of the reins, and he got really close, within about an inch and a half from the edge. The owner said, "That was great!" He was sweating all over and shaking, and he was about as white as a sheet.

Then he went to the third man. When they got to the curve, the owner said, "The first driver got as close as about a foot, and the next one got within an inch and a half. How close can you get?"

He replied, "If you don't mind, sir, I'm going to hug the hill."

The owner said, "You are hired." Just as the third driver endeavored to stay as far away from danger as he could, we must stay as far away from sin as we can.

I realize that the only power for my preaching comes from living a sinless, impeccable life. The power that we have in living for God and preaching the Gospel must come from a clear, clean relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such

is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." This is a solemn warning against being too confident.

Having Faith in God

We need one another. You need a pastor, and you need a church. The Gospel of Jesus Christ makes a man a good, godly father who is true in the body and in the mind. A real man of God is clean physically and mentally. A real man of God is a good father, a good husband, and a good citizen. The Gospel makes a woman a godly mother and a godly wife. The best place for her is in the home.

All your trials and temptations are common to man, but God is faithful to help you. He does not keep you from trials, but he tempers them according to your ability to cope. God knows what you can suffer and what would be too much for you. He will never allow you to suffer more than you can bear. God will help in your trials; however, you should not deliberately and presumptuously expose yourself to temptation. If you do, you may succumb to it and sin.

Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Praise God! To help us deal with our problems, we have the Old Testament. It was written to give us important advice. We should study it and apply the principles to our lives.

Twelve leaders, one from each tribe, had just returned after four days of searching out the land of Canaan with two different reports. Ten of them brought back an evil report. Numbers 13:27-28 says: "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the

cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there." Verse 30 continues, "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." God said to possess it. If God says to do something, He will give you the grace and the ability to do it.

Joshua and Caleb had faith that the others did not have. We could say that Caleb and Joshua were optimists who were surrounded by pessimists. Joshua and Caleb's report was inspired by faith. We need people who have faith. A pessimist is a person who is seasick for the whole journey of life. An optimist will say the cup is half full while the pessimist will say the cup is half empty.

The Word of God goes on to say in Numbers 13:31-32: "But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land." This negative report brought by the ten spies created pandemonium among the nation. It brought confusion, rebellion, and great disorder. The people spoke of mutiny, or rising up against Moses' authority, which they did. The unbelief of ten men resulted in the world's longest funeral march; it lasted for forty years. God compelled them to wander in the wilderness until the death of everyone who was twenty-one years of age and older. What was the difference in the two reports? Caleb and Joshua looked away from their own inability and focused on God's ability. That is what you and I need to do. When you come to a hard place, do not worry about your own inabilities. You must look to God. If He wants you to do it, He will help you.

Prompted by Unbelief

The ten other spies were fearful of their own innate strength and their own incapabilities. They lacked faith in God. No doubt, their rela-

tionship with God was not like that of Caleb or Joshua. You need to have a clear relationship with God. Joshua and Caleb were not overwhelmed with the problems that confronted them, because they were God's chosen people. Sometimes you need to look away from your difficulties and look to God. One songwriter wrote: "*Through faith we will conquer, though often cast down; He who is our Savior our strength will renew; Look ever to Jesus, He'll carry you through.*" There are those who would discourage interested souls from serving the Lord. Just as the ten spies, they have a negative report.

Paul and Barnabas had to contend with negative reports in their day. There is always someone around who will try to draw disciples away to themselves, who will try to pervert the Truth, or who will keep people from understanding the truth. Acts 13:6-12 reads: "And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

"But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord."

One early American writer wrote, "*Once to every man and nation comes a moment to decide, In*

the strife of truth and falsehood, For the good or evil side." Judas had this moment, and so did Pilate. It is very serious to sit in a Church of God congregation and listen to the Word of God. I often tell my congregation that the sermon is like an operating room to a man of God. During surgery at a hospital, it is serious. Often doctors operate on people who are hanging between life and death. Similarly, a preacher is operating on your soul with the Word and the Spirit of God. Your soul is far more important than your body. You need to be still and listen. Undoubtedly, Bar-jesus, the sorcerer, was being used of the devil. Therefore, he was an enemy of Truth.

Numbers 14:1-5 states: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel." To me, this was a ridiculous reason to return to Egypt. They were being prompted by the spirit of unbelief.

Limiting God by Unbelief

Why would the children of Israel want to return to Egypt? The country was devastated by God. What would Pharaoh have done had they returned? Would it not have been better to trust God to take them into Canaan? When you come to a difficult place, you need to trust God. The Israelites should have recounted the many miracles that God had performed for them while they were in the land of Egypt, such

as how God parted the Red Sea. They should have recalled how He fed them with manna in the wilderness and supplied water from a rock for them. There is a song that says, "He has brought you this far; He will not fail you now."

If you are troubled with difficulties looming in your pathway, you should consider how God has helped you in the past. Could not God have destroyed a few giants for them? Their words and actions revealed a low estimation of God. They doubted His power. In our day too many people have lost their estimation of the power of God. Unbelief can ruin an individual or a group of people. Too many people limit God by their unbelief. I believe we would see more divine healing and more accomplished for God if people would not be limited by unbelief.

Psalm 78:15-22 reads: "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers. And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."

I believe that whatever God has done in the past, He can still do today. God has not lost any power or rescinded any of His promises. Those promises are still for you and me today. God was greatly disturbed because His people would not trust Him. They insinuated that God had led them into the wilderness to die of starvation. The children of Israel doubted God's ability to provide for

them. Caleb and Joshua considered their problems as opportunities. When you have a problem, you need to look at it as though it is an opportunity to see God move.

Caleb and Joshua considered their problems as opportunities to see the power of God manifested before the children of God. This could be true in our lives as well. Second Chronicles 16:9a tells us, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." I believe that is true today. The eyes of the Lord still run to and fro, so that He can show Himself strong in behalf of those who have perfect hearts toward Him. I am talking about having complete and unlimited obedience. Have you obeyed the Lord up to this point? Are you going to continue to obey the Lord?

The Spirit of Perseverance

The character of Caleb and Joshua was truly noteworthy. We find imperfections in Samson, Solomon, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Aaron. There are some imperfections in the people's character. The Bible tells the whole story. Some had no imperfections. I do not find any in Enoch or Joseph. Both Joshua and Caleb possessed an excellent spirit. The Word of God says they possessed another spirit, which lets us know there are other spirits besides the one they possessed. There are many bad spirits around, but they had a right spirit. They had the spirit of obedience, the spirit of faith, and the spirit of hope. They believed God. Caleb said, in so many words: "We are able to conquer and possess the land and to build for God." Joshua's sentiments were the same.

Caleb and Joshua had spirits motivated by faith and zeal. I like to see people have zeal for the things of God. Psalm 69:9 reads, "For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." Someone said the ten spies wanted rest without the journey,

reward without the labor, and victory without the warfare. Joshua and Caleb possessed the spirit of perseverance. You have to persevere. They stood firm. They wanted to go forward.

Saints of God, we have the ultimate Truth. We need to go forward for God. You may ask, "Why do you call it the ultimate Truth?" There is truth in mathematics. For example, two plus two equals four, four plus four equals eight, and four times four equals sixteen. There is also truth in science and in physics. One saying says, "He that sitteth on a hot stove will surely rise." I often say "ultimate Truth" because this Truth will bless people here and will take them to Heaven. Knowing two plus two equals four will not take you to Heaven, but what does make a difference is that you know how to get to Heaven. That is the ultimate Truth.

Again, both Joshua and Caleb possessed a spirit of perseverance. They stood firmly, and they wanted to go forward. Their hearts were right with God. We see godly principles in their lives. Since the tree was good, the fruit was also good. Since the fountain was pure, the stream was also refreshing and pure. Both of them had the right attitude, and they were overcomers. Both of them continued on the course that God had intended for them at the very beginning.

Joshua and Caleb followed God fully. Since the law of God was in their hearts, their steps did not falter. They did not consult their own personal feelings. Likewise, we cannot consult our own feelings. Sometimes you may not feel like going to church. When I was teaching in the public schools, there were times I would come home after teaching to prepare the message for church that night. After teaching all day, I was weary, but I felt so much better when I got together with all the saints. There are times when we must not consult our feelings.

Joshua and Caleb did not consult the thoughts of others or their views

of the situation. You need to be careful to get God's thoughts and God's views. Both of them sought the will of God, and they were faithful to the very end. They persevered until they found rest. Out of approximately six hundred three thousand (that is close to the population of the state of North Dakota), only two who were over the age of twenty in the wilderness entered the promised land. I have seen lots of people fall by the wayside. We must have complete and unlimited obedience. Caleb and Joshua received the approbation of God, and God commended them. They received their reward of entering into Canaan land.

Proving Your Love to God

To prove your love for Christ, you must obey Him. John 14:15 says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The Church of God practices feet washing and the Lord's Supper. People are getting away from these ordinances. What is the problem? It is pride. Jesus said in John 13:17, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." You prove your love for God, not by the service you render, not by the amount of money you give in the offering, and not by the sacrifices you make, but by your obedience.

John 7:16-17 reads: "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Your understanding of Truth is limited by your obedience to the Truth that you have already heard. It is a matter of privilege and responsibility, knowing and doing, hearing and believing, informing and conforming, preaching and practicing, listening and acting, receiving and responding. I must practice what I preach.

Some of my students have come to church and said: "Mr. Stegmeier, you are different in the pulpit. We do not know you up there." Well, at school I cannot preach. Let me re-

peat: your understanding of Truth is limited by your obedience to the Truth that you have already heard. It is a matter of privilege. Saint of God, it is a privilege and a responsibility to know and do, to hear and believe, to inform and conform, to preach and practice, to listen and act, and to receive and respond. If any man wills to know, he can know what the Truth is.

Deuteronomy 4:30-31 tells us: "When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them." God wants you and me to be obedient. Verse 30 says, "... and shalt be obedient unto his voice." Someone wrote, "The Holy Spirit is our teacher, but only the vow of obedience opens our understanding and fits into the truth He longs to impart."

The purpose of teaching is that we practice it. Jesus said if you know these things, happy are you if you do them. In Luke 6:46 Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Listening to the Truth and then acting upon it is the secret of the Christian's stability. Isaiah 1:19 says, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." What kind of spirit do you possess? Are you like Joshua and Caleb who followed the Lord in complete obedience? Are you willing to walk in any future understanding that God may impart?

Having a Consecrated Spirit

James wrote in James 2:10 reads, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The Bible has a standard of how men and women should look. When people go to a congregation and wonder how they should look, I teach them what the Bible says. I also tell them

to look at my wife. A pastor's wife should be an example of what the Bible teaches. The Bible is very explicit. If you are disobedient in any point, you are guilty of all. You might be 99 percent obedient, but if something is in your life that you have not taken care of, you are 100 percent disobedient. When I got saved, I had restitutions to make, and I took care of them. If there is one thing in your life that you have not taken care of, you are 100 percent disobedient.

Are you walking in all the understanding that God has shed on your pathway? What course are you following in life? Do you have a hope of eternal life? You need to have a consecrated spirit to feel love, faith, and zeal for God. When you do, God will come in and bless you. Is there a problem in your life, such as Kadesh-barnea that the children of Israel faced? Perhaps it is a challenge that God has intended for you to conquer in His name. What really matters in each situation is that you commit your problem to God.

When you are following Him and being obedient, He will work out all situations for your good. Joshua and Caleb won the battles of life because they first won the battle of faith, obedience, and entire commitment. Remember, God can do the impossible. Is there a river in your life? Step in, and God will cause the waters to recede. Ephesians 3:20 states, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

God has given the Church of God a legacy of beautiful hymns through men such as D. S. Warner who wrote a song entitled "Obedience." It reads:

*By Thy blessed Word obeying,
Lord, we prove our love sincere,
For we hear Thee gently saying,
"Love will do as well as hear."*

Feigned hearts Thy name

*professing,
Thy commandments cast aside;
But we feel Thy great salvation,
And in all Thy truth abide.*

*Every word Thy mouth hath spoken
Is essential to our life;
All Thy mandates love betoken,
To oppose them is but strife.*

*In Thy wisdom, Lord, confiding,
We will follow in Thy way;
With Thy love in us abiding,
'Tis delightful to obey.
Each commandment Thou hast*

*given
Is a waymark on the road,
Leading up from earth to Heaven,
To the blessed throne of God.*

*Dear Redeemer, we would hallow,
All Thy word, so firm and true,
In Thy footsteps meekly follow,
Thy commands we love to do.*

Are you being fully obedient to God? Are you willing to move up if God should show you something? Serving God is an individual commitment. My salvation is not dependent on another individual, such as my parents or my former

pastor. My salvation is contingent upon the Word of God and my obedience to it. I wonder, where are you individually? One older Church of God minister often asked people on Sunday mornings, "How are you and God getting along?" That was offensive to some people. I ask you to be honest. Sometimes it is hard for people to be honest with themselves. You need to have Judgment Day honesty. How are you and God getting along?

(Compact Disc TR-1434)

Please join us! **Winter Bible School**

December 29 – 31, 2016

2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

**Grades: K - 6
(including 12 year olds)**



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Matthew 8:24 And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.

25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the

winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.

27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

John 8:21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

22 Then said the Jews, Will he

kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.

23 And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

Jesus—God and Man



Brother Mike Wilks

The Beauty of Christ

We want to study along the line of Jesus being both God and man. The definition of *God* is, "The one Supreme Being, the Creator, and ruler of the universe." The definition of *man* is, "a human being; person; human race." I thought about those two definitions, and they could not be further apart. God's way is high above man's way, and man's way is far below God's way; yet Jesus was both of them.

One of the greatest feats ever accomplished by the Son of man, Jesus Christ, was that people could see Him as more human than God. When you hear the name Jesus, you

think of a man, but He was only here for about thirty-three years out of eternity. He is far more Deity than He ever was man; yet people can relate to Him, and that is the beauty of Christ.

We can look in the Old Testament for example after example and see the relationship between God and His people. Some people say, "The Old Testament is just that—old." Who gives those people the authority to make such calls? Someone told me that he attended a youth service in a denominational church, and the speaker got up and said that the things in the Old Testament do not mean anything. He also said that homosexuality is okay,

which is contrary to what the Bible says. Who could have more authority than the Apostle Paul? He used the Old Testament, and Jesus used the Old Testament. Who are those people to wrest the Scriptures?

In Titus 1:10-11 Paul wrote: "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers. . . . Whose mouths must be stopped. . . ." Paul said they must be stopped because they were subverting whole households of faith. Today many people are speaking their own opinions, and that is all, because they cannot find those teachings in the Bible. Romans 3:4 reads, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written."

Before Christ, man was left to wonder about God, and He seemed far removed. Exodus 19:16-17 says: "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount." That is exactly what many people do today. They stand at the nether part.

We read in Exodus 28:35, "And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not." For more than four hundred years, the prophets were silent. Can you imagine that? Because the prophets went silent, the people just carried on in their own religion. Why? They wanted it their own way, but guess what? People miss out on the blessings of God when they have it their way.

Money cannot buy what I feel in my heart. What does God want? He wants a living sacrifice, one that is alive. When you sacrifice your time for God, when you could be out doing other things, God is pleased with that.

During those many years of silence, God prepared a bridge from Heaven to earth in Jesus Christ. Think of the Guest who was to arrive on earth, born of a woman under the Law for you and me! Alexander the Great wanted to tie the east to the west, and he wanted to hellenize the whole world. God wanted to bring the whole world together. Think of the separation that was in the world at the time of Christ. There were all these divisions, nations, and religions, but Christ was to gather us all into one.

Our Divine Example

Jesus was in the temple at the age of twelve reasoning with the doctors and lawyers. Luke 2:52 says,

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Jesus was living out His life two thousand years ago without all the amenities that we are so blessed with today. He did not come in the twenty-first century; He came when life was hard.

Jesus was a carpenter Who had nothing. When He left this world, He had nothing but His garment; that was the only thing that the Son of God owned. I cannot even relate to that, but if you were to go to some countries, the people have nothing. Jesus can relate to them, because He lived that kind of life. Jesus learned what it meant to be human. He knew what it was like to be hot and cold; He experienced all these things.

Jesus was a working man with religious responsibilities, and that is still the definition of a true man today. A man that can and will work and serve God is a true man. Some people work themselves almost to death, but they totally neglect the house of God; that is not a true man. He is not putting forth the right example for his family. Some parents run themselves ragged so their children can play sports, but they neglect the house of God. Jesus took two major steps that separated Him before He passed into Heaven.

Hebrews 12:14 reads, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Christ showed holiness to us, and that is what separated Him from others, and that is what separates God's people from the world yet today. That is the only way people can see the Lord. Many people profess to know God, but holiness is the only way you can see God. You cannot see Him any other way.

Jesus offered the most important possession that He owned—His body. There was nothing greater that He could offer in this world than Himself, and He laid down His life willingly. It would be hard for you to comprehend if someone were to call you and say, "These people hate you, but I want you to give them everything you have." That is

exactly what Jesus Christ did. He gave Himself for people who hate Him. Jesus was asked to pay the highest price. He spent forty days with His disciples after His death and Resurrection to prove His Resurrection, and then He passed into the heavens.

The Humility of Christ

Hebrews 4:14 says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." When Jesus passed into the heavens, He was made Lord of all. Some people want to portray Jesus as looking like one of the Beatles. He did not look like a Beatle or any other rock star. Jesus did not have long hair as some artists depict Him.

Daniel 7:9 says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire."

Revelation 1:13-17a reads: "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

If you are a sinner, I want you to think about this: The Apostle John said when he saw Jesus, he fell at His feet as dead. What would happen if you were to fall dead and have sin in your heart? It would be a bad day for you, because you would be lost forever. When I was living in sin, I thought many times, "Oh, if I meet Christ right now, it is going to be bad." I never want to go back to

that life again. There is only one way for each of us to make it to Heaven, and that is to be saved and to labor for Jesus Christ. Christ is the Son of the Living God; He is divine. Can you imagine the reunion that was going on in Heaven when the Son of God went back to Heaven? One day we are going there. That is an experience that we do not want to miss!

Philippians 2:5 in the Amplified Bible reads, "Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility.]" I want you to notice that Paul did not say, "Let your brother or sister be your example in humility." You should not look around and measure yourself by others. You must look to Jesus Christ.

Verses 6-8 read: "Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained, But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being. And after he had appeared in human form, He abased and humbled Himself [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the Cross!"

If Christ had come as the President of the United States, he would have humbled Himself greatly. I want you to understand that He did not humble Himself because He had nothing. He humbled Himself to become a man. He could have come down here and had everybody in this world waiting on Him, but He still would have had to humble Himself. That should touch your heart. His obedience was to the extreme of death, even the death of the Cross.

Verses 9-10 continue: "Therefore [because He stooped so low] God has highly exalted Him and has freely bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, That in

(at) the name of Jesus every knee should (must) bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." Friend, Christ did not pass up into the heavens and prop up His feet and retire. He is interceding for souls right now. He is interceding for me. I must have His help. If you are a sinner, He is interceding for you. He is reading your heart right now. All over the world, He is reading the hearts of mankind.

Christ Is Lord and High Priest

Have you ever heard the expression that man wears many hats? Jesus is that Man, and I want to discuss two of them. The first hat we want to look at briefly is that He is Lord. Webster's Dictionary says the word *Lord* means, "a person who has authority, control, or power over others; a master, chief, or ruler." Before Christ ascended to Glory, He took on the titles: Son of David, Son of man, Messiah, Master, and Teacher, but when he passed through the heavens, He took on the title "Lord of all."

When somebody calls Jesus Christ Lord, that is quite a statement. When you say, "I am a Christian," you are basically saying, "Christ is my Lord." If Christ is your Lord, you will not have a filthy mouth, and you will not drink alcohol, gamble, or live any old way. Friend, that would not make good sense. If Jesus is really your Lord, you will live holy. Jesus Christ is Lord.

Jesus said in Matthew 11:30, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Do not be mistaken: there is a yoke with Christ, and He puts it right on your shoulders. If you serve Jesus Christ, you are going to have to labor in His kingdom. There is no other way around it. In the ancient world, slaves had no rights whatsoever; they were the property of the one who bought them, and so are we. We are redeemed with a price. Christ bought us with His blood. The Christian carries out God's agenda on this earth. You need to ask your-

self, "Am I carrying out God's agenda every day?" Only you can answer that question. God is not going to come down and do it Himself. He works His agenda through those who serve Him.

The second hat that Jesus wears is that of High Priest. Some people do not realize the importance of Jesus being their High Priest. If I could just get this one nugget of truth across to you, I will feel that I have done my job. Christ as our High Priest is a huge, exhaustive study. Doctors and lawyers have important jobs, but the office of the High Priest is by far the most important. Jesus Christ's title of being our High Priest is the greatest title ever given.

Doctors and lawyers are important, but what if the guys at the power plant do not show up to do their jobs? All the lights would go out. They have important jobs too, do they not? We all have a part in society. We all play a part in making this thing go, but none of us is as grand as the High Priest. He is your link to God. Christian friend, while you were living in sin, you were adrift, yet Christ continued to intercede for you. Most of the world hates Him, but He is constantly offering a lifeline to souls.

The Old Testament is a guide to how Christ's office works. I could not find one single advantage for a man to be a high priest in the Old Testament. First of all, that high priest was sinful, so he had to go into the holy place and make a sin offering for himself before he could make a sin offering for the people. There was no advantage to that. Could you imagine not having your conscience purged of sin? Think about that. That is exactly what Old Testament Israel had to deal with. The consciousness of their sins was always there. Think about trying to worship God and praise God with something working on your mind that you had done in the past.

Second, they had to die. They were men who constantly had to be replaced. Another would take their

place. Third, a high priest had to be of the tribe of Levi; he was born into the office. Christ came from the tribe of Judah. Christ was not a High Priest because of the lineage He was born into; He was the High Priest because of who He was, and that makes all the difference. He was holy.

Hebrews 7:15-26 tells us: "And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Have you ever read the Scripture that says, "Like people, like priest" (Hosea 4:9)? Do you line up with your High Priest? His first attribute is holiness. The Greek word is one special idea: one who faithfully and meticulously does His duty before God. It describes goodness that is pure in the sight of God. Can you say that about yourself? Are you meticulous about the things of God or are you careless? Are you careless in your church and Sunday school attendance? Do you support the man of God? Are you loose in your visitation?

The Greek word for harmless describes a man so cleansed that his life is like an antiseptic. In his heart is the loving-kindness of God. Are you like antiseptic wherever you are? On the job, do people recognize there is something different about you? When you walk into an area and you have been there a little while, do you cleanse that room, so to speak? Wherever you go, can

people see Jesus Christ in you? He was undefiled, absolutely free from any blemishes or defilement that might make it impossible to draw nigh to God. Does that describe you? Are you still clear before God? If you are struggling and you really want to talk to God, you can say: "Lord, is something in my life holding me back? Do I have defilement or a blemish in my heart that is holding me back from really serving You the way I should?" You need to search your life.

To make yourself available to God, you have to show yourself friendly. There is a way to do that without indulging in what sinners are indulging in. People want to see something real. I am so thankful that we serve a High Priest who has all those attributes. He is worthy to be praised.

If you are a sinner, I implore you, there is help with our High Priest; He cares about you. He is a faithful High Priest. He is not sleeping. God looks out for each of us. There is comfort in knowing that I can call on Jesus Christ. If you are saved, you are blessed beyond measure. Sadly, many people in this world have no idea who God is. Do you know Him?

(Compact Disc TR-1196)

Unchanging Love

C. H. Spurgeon was talking to a farmer who had on his farm a weathervane on the arrow of which was inscribed "God is love." He said to the farmer, "What do you mean by that? Do you think God's love is changeable—that it veers about as the arrows turn in the wind?"

The farmer answered: "Oh, no! I mean that whichever way the wind blows, God still is love."

Announcements

- Summersville, WV** **Revival:** The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
December 2-4 Evangelist: Brother Richard Talbot, Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania
Service times: Friday 7:00 p.m., Saturday 6:00 p.m., Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.
For more information contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders. Telephone: 304-872-4047
Visit our website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV.com
- Newark, OH** **Camp Meeting:** The Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055
December 28-
January 1 Three services daily: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. The first service begins Wednesday evening. The afternoon service will be a teaching service.
For lodging reservation, please call Bro. & Sis. Dave Bush at 740-345-1213
For more information contact: Pastor Roger Decker, 87 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055. Telephone: 740-344-2543



2017 Camp Meeting Dates

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July 30 - August 6
December 27 - 31

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