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**SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET**

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**Vol. 46 July 2016 No. 7**



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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PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:

Roger L. Decker, Pastor  
83 Decrow Ave.  
Newark, OH 43055

Email: [pastor@church-of-god-online.com](mailto:pastor@church-of-god-online.com)  
Phone: 740-344-2543  
Fax: 740-344-4737  
Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312

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the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and error,  
war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding  
traditions of men that have no biblical foundations.

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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Vol. 46 July 2016 No. 7

# Guest Editorial

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;  
and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:33

## TRUE RICHES

Today much of our society has  
been overcome by the spirit of  
materialism. Many people seem to  
be dissatisfied or unhappy with the  
things they have. Therefore, they  
continually to reach out to obtain  
more, thinking that those material  
possessions will bring them hap-  
piness. Jesus let us know in Luke  
12:15 that true riches are not found  
in the things that one possesses.  
However, a wise person will find  
true riches and real happiness  
when he seeks Christ first in all he  
does.

In no way is the writer saying  
that it is sinful to have wealth or  
possessions, and neither does being  
financially well off mean that a  
person is evil. Having the ability to  
be frugal in business matters is not  
an indicator that a man or a woman  
is wicked or greedy. Because a per-  
son holds a prominent position is  
no indication that he is crooked in  
business dealings.

The evil comes whenever some-  
one allows worldly riches or posses-  
sions or position to gain control of  
his heart and life. Spending too  
much time at seeking earthly rich-  
es can become dangerous if one is  
not careful. This condition can sub-  
tly move in and take first place in  
the Christian's life if a person does  
not stay alert and on guard. Any-  
thing placed ahead of Christ will  
soon rob the soul of peace and joy,  
and thus render the individual  
unfit for true service to the Master.

Remember that worldly fame or  
wealth is never proof of one being  
in right relationship with the Lord.  
There are times when riches have  
been mistaken for spirituality.  
Unfortunately, some people have  
thought they were pleasing God  
because they were blessed abun-

dantly. God sheds His goodness on  
the unjust man as well as the just  
man. When the Lord sends the  
rains, it blesses the sinner's crops  
the same as the righteous man's  
crops.

In 1 Timothy 6:9-10 the Apostle  
Paul wrote: "But they that will be  
rich fall into temptation and a  
snare, and into many foolish and  
hurtful lusts, which drown men in  
destruction and perdition. For the  
love of money is the root of all evil:  
which while some coveted after,  
they have erred from the faith, and  
pierced themselves through with  
many sorrows."

Earthly riches have often  
become a snare because many are  
tempted to put their trust in their  
riches instead of the God who gave  
them those riches, much like the  
rich, young ruler who came to Jesus  
seeking soul rest. He had obeyed  
all the commandments from his  
childhood, yet he lacked one thing.  
Something was missing in his life.  
When Jesus required him to go and  
sell all that he had and share it  
with the poor, his flesh cringed. He  
turned and went away sad and  
empty that day because he loved  
his wealth more than he loved or  
wanted Christ the Savior.

Jesus desires that all men seek  
the true and lasting riches, such  
as living a holy life and working  
in the kingdom by visiting the  
sick, winning souls, and doing  
many good deeds that manifest  
a Christ-filled life. These are  
valuable riches that are laid up in  
Heaven. They can never fade away  
nor be taken away from you. In  
Matthew 6:20 Jesus said, "But lay  
up for yourselves treasures in

*[continued on page 16]*

*Matthew 12:14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.*

*15 But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;*

*16 And charged them that they*

*should not make him known:*

*17 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,*

*18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.*

*19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.*

*20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.*

*21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.*



# A Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **Jesus Is the Answer**

As we look at these few verses of Scripture, we see that the Pharisees of that day were doing what they normally did. They held a meeting against Jesus, according to verse 14, to discuss how they might destroy Him. False religion has never changed its clothes. It is still out to destroy Him. How does it destroy Him? It changes His Word, disobeys His Word, and even mocks at the very thought of anyone living a holy life.

I want you to focus your attention on verse 20, which reads, "A bruised reed shall he not break,

and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory." Matthew was quoting the Prophet Isaiah, and he understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

You can read the same thing in Isaiah 42:3-4: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

The Lord would not break a bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. Isaiah was not talking about a literal reed or flax. He used that

analogy to let us know that Jesus is the answer to a broken heart or a broken spirit. He is the One who is there, He is the One who cares, and He is the One who will bring you back to a normal life of serving Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to bring men justice. The Greeks defined justice as something given to God and to demand what is his due; in other words, whatever someone has coming to him, it should be given to him. Jesus showed men how to live in such a way that both God and men may receive their proper place in their lives. He showed us how to behave both toward God and toward man.

Verses 15-16 of the Scripture text read: "But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; And charged them that they should not make him known." Two things about Jesus stand out in these two verses. First, He withdrew Himself. Why did He withdraw Himself? It was not time for a clash with the enemy. Second, He did not like to be surrounded with publicity.

Jesus did not want people standing around and applauding Him for the work that He had done. Prophecy says He would neither strive nor cry aloud, and neither would any man hear His voice in the streets. This lets you know that Jesus did not go down the streets crying out, "I am the Messiah." The word that is used for "cry aloud" is the same word that is used for the barking of a dog, the "kraa" of a raven, the bawling of a drunken man, or the uproar of a discontented audience in a theater. It means that Jesus would not brawl with men.

In the quarrels of conflicting parties, each tries to out shout the other, but not so with Jesus Christ. We know there is hatred in some theologians; that is one of the great tragedies of the Christian church. We also know about the oppositions of politicians and different ideologies. In Jesus there is quiet, strong serenity of One who seeks to conquer, not by brawling, by debate, or with strife of words, but by love.

Jesus will not break the crushed reed or quench the smoking flax. A reed may be bruised and hardly able to stand erect, but Jesus will not break it. At times, we have been bruised. A wick may be weak, and the light may be but a flicker. A man's witness may be shaky and weak, and the light of his life may be but a flicker and not even a flame, but Jesus did not come to discourage that one; He came to encourage. He did not come to treat the weak with contempt but with understanding. He did not come to extinguish the weak flame but to

nurse it back to a clearer and stronger light.

The most precious thing about Jesus is that He will not discourage you, but rather He is the great encourager. These verses in our Scripture text are some of the most tender verses in the Bible. Jesus loves fallen man, even to the place where he is about ready to draw his last breath. If God sees any hope or any flicker of desire within that soul, He will fan it.

### **The Fallen One Can Recover**

What do the "bruised reed" and the "smoking flax" represent? A reed is symbolic of weakness. In the Old Testament, Ezekiel 29:6-7 reads: "And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand."

Flax is symbolic of the wick of a lamp when the oil has burned away and nothing is left but smoke as it tends to burn itself out. What is Jesus saying to us today? He is saying a bruised reed represents a man who has fallen, but he may recover with the proper nutrients that Jesus can supply. The smoking flax may flame into life once again with a supply of fresh oil.

What is taught in these two verses? Jesus would not hurt a bruised reed, one who is weak and in a broken state, with most of his spiritual life drained out. Jesus would not put out that one with even the faintest desire for help. Dear one, no one can help you like Jesus Christ. Sometimes people reach out to other avenues. It is amazing how some people will go everywhere but to Christ. They know that is where they are going to have to wind up in the end if they ever receive any help, but often they try every other avenue first. They reach out to man, but there is no help in man.

If a man obtains any help, he must get it from God Himself. God will not stifle the desires of the one who is weak and faint. God will encourage him. Perhaps he feels down and out, but not completely out. Usually through God's Word, God will fan that little spark, and then that one will change from having a sad look to having a happy look. We each go through such times, and God does all He can to be right there for the one who is. Jesus will always be there in the most difficult situations.

Have you ever felt sorry for yourself? Probably almost everyone has wondered why a certain thing has happened. You might have questioned in your mind: "Why would that happen to them? They would not harm anybody. They live for God, and they are doing all they know to do." You might have wondered in your mind, "Why did that happen to them when other people out in the world are not even living for God and some are enemies of God?" Then you have to come right back to the Scripture found in Romans 8:28, stating that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord.

I can remember back in the early seventies when I had a problem with my eyelid closing. It was a real battle, especially trying to work at the factory. God did really help me in setting up machines and in doing other things. My eye doctor told me that I should see a neurosurgeon and maybe have a brain scan. I told him I wanted to trust God. He said whatever I wanted to do was fine.

One day during camp meeting, I was walking across the grounds and met a brother. I was feeling a little down about my eyelid problem and started telling him about it. At that time, it seemed that the affliction was not going away. The brother just quoted Romans 8:28. That Scripture really lifted me. I felt much encouraged, and God took care of it. It seems that God is always right there when you at your lowest. When you think you cannot

get down any lower in spirit, when you do not think you can get any more discouraged than you are, God is there.

I thank God for what people can say to bring encouragement, even at a funeral. I am thankful for brothers and sisters in Christ who can speak words of encouragement, but no one can give you grace but God. Someone may not always be around to encourage you, but God can be with you right around the clock, twenty-four hours a day. These Scriptures mean so much to me. God will be right there when you feel bruised. When you feel the fire has almost gone out, God will be there to help you.

### **Lean Not Upon Your Own Strength**

Do you feel that you are a bruised reed? Do you feel that your soul is broken and contrite? It could be for different reasons, but one reason could be sin. Do you feel weak and in the valley of despair, or in the valley of no hope? Dear one, there is hope for you, but do not look to yourself for help. You cannot continue to lean upon your own strength as a support. You cannot lean on your own wisdom or your own knowledge. You cannot turn to the world for strength and comfort. You cannot lean on these things and have your bruises healed.

We read in 2 Kings 18:21, "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him." This verse of Scripture lets you know that leaning on your own strength is likened to those who trusted in Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. In other words, it is going to be disappointing and hurtful. A bruised reed and the smoking flax are not good for anything in their natural state. A reed is weak anyway, but a bruised reed is even weaker. A bruised reed has a breaking point.

As you look at these Scriptures, I want to bring a few thoughts concerning each one of these conditions. First, a bruised reed represents a helpless condition, a condition that is out of control, a condition that is ready for total destruction. The reed is an emblem of feebleness, or a lack of stability.

Matthew 11:7 states, "And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" The meaning of our Lord's design in this and in the following verses was to convince the scribes and the Pharisees of the inconsistency of their conduct.

John the Baptist was a divinely authorized teacher. The scribes and the Pharisees did not believe in the very Christ to whom John the Baptist pointed them. John was a forerunner of Christ; John was of Jesus Christ. Christ also showed, from the qualities of John's character, that their confidence in John was not misplaced. The further argument was, why should they believe in him? John the Baptist proclaimed Christ as being far superior to himself.

A reed shaken with the wind is an emblem of an unsteady mind, which will speak and believe one thing one day and another thing the next day. Christ was asking those Jews if they had ever found anything in John like that. In other words, Jesus was asking those scribes and Pharisees: "Have you ever seen John looking like a reed shaken in the wind? Have you ever found John the Baptist to be one who says one thing one day and something else the next day? Have you ever found him giving in to sects or divisions?" The answer is no. They found him to be steady and stable. He was not "a reed shaken in the wind." He had a strong testimony. He was steadfast, and he preached the same message, that God was who He was. He preached what was true, even to the place of losing his head. He was steady and uniform in the testimony

that he bore of Jesus Christ.

One of the first things that Christ could see in John besides his steadiness was that he was convinced of the Truth. He continued to believe it and to preach it. Believing the Truth and obeying it is necessary for every preacher and every Christian. The devil will say, "You don't have to do all of that to be a Christian." If you take hold of that, you will begin to believe a lie. Some people listen to the devil and fail to walk in the Truth. They do not love the Truth. If you do not have a love for the Truth, you need to get one. John the Baptist was steadfast. You cannot depend on someone who changes his opinion one day and the next day believes something else.

The Scripture says the Lord will not break you, or rend you in pieces. Now, I am not talking about a strong reed but a broken reed, an emblem of a soul that is broken, one who is contrite because of sin. Christ would not be severe with a soul that is weeping and mourning from sin. He will not be harsh to that one but rather He will heal him, forgive him, pardon him, and strengthen him.

### **A Healing Balm**

The smoking flax shows a helpless condition where the life is slowly drained out, and you are ready to lose everything. In fact, your desire will begin to slip away, and you will slide into a hopeless condition. The Lord said He would not quench, or extinguish you. If there is a flicker at all, even though you may be feeble and almost beyond hope, Christ will pour in some oil. It takes just a little of the Holy Spirit, and once the oil hits that spark, a little flame will start to shoot up, and the next thing you know, a light will begin to shine from that vessel.

How does God heal a broken reed or the smoldering flax? Our Scripture text says in verse 20 that He sends forth judgment unto victory. What does this verse mean? Christ will not break a bruised reed

or snuff out smoldering flax, but He will send forth judgment through His Word. If you will heed His Word, it will lead you out of your condition and give you victory instead of weakness. He will send forth fanners. Who are the fanners? The fanners are the ministry. He used fanners against Babylon. Jeremiah 51:2 reads, "And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about." It takes a God-called ministry because they are the ones who are in the hand of God.

Matthew 3:11-12 states: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance [John was speaking]; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The fan is in His hand, and that is where God's ministry is. God has control of His ministry—their lives, their message, and their thoughts. Revelation 1:16 says, "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." What are the seven stars and where are they? Verse 20 tells us, "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels [or the pastors], of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." The seven stars are the angels, or the ministry. The letters were written to the seven churches of Asia, to the pastors of said congregations.

God has a healing balm for those who are bruised and about ready to go under—Jesus Christ. He will not break you, but rather He will heal you if you take faith in His Word. Jeremiah the prophet said in

Jeremiah 8:22, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Thank God, there is a balm, and it is applied when you believe His Word. There is a balm in Mount Zion.

Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Although your heart may be broken, God can make you whole. God is able to restore you.

Isaiah 61:1 says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." The brokenhearted are those who are distressed and afflicted, many times because of sin. There is healing, and the healing comes through the Gospel, if you will take faith and believe it.

Christ is not going to extinguish the smoldering flax once and for all, but rather He will fan that spark through faith in the Gospel and strengthen you, settle you, and put you on your feet as a solid child of God. I have heard ones testify that they were troubled in spirit, or troubled in their soul, not knowing what way to go or what to do, and by reading God's Word, God opened up the way and encouraged them at the same time. He will send forth His Word.

Will you believe His Word and try to get your mind off what *you* can do? You need to look to the power of God; that is where the healing for the soul really is. If you

feel that life has let you down, do not stay that way. At some point in life, everybody goes through a valley, but do not stay in it. You need to take your burdens to the Lord, and you can be assured that He will help you to get back on your feet again.

Others may not understand you when you try to explain your feelings to them, but God does. He sees every tear and every thought. Do you know what is great about God? He knows every one of your weaknesses. You can bring it all to Him, and you will be so glad that you did. I was so glad the day that I got saved. The only remorse that you might have is that you did not do it sooner, but the important thing is that you did it.

God is going to send forth His Word as a healing balm. If you are a bruised reed or smoking flax won't you seek His help now? If you have never been saved, I want you to know that being saved is not the same as joining a church; that is altogether different. You can join all the churches on the face of the earth and yet not be saved. When you get saved, God puts you in the church. You are saved when you confess and forsake your sin and ask God to forgive you. God will be right there to forgive you and to set you on a straight path.

If you have a need, won't you mind the Lord? That is all that God is asking of you. If you are not saved and want to be saved, won't you take advantage of this opportunity to do so now?

*(Compact Disc TR-1660)*

Be a real man or woman, no matter the struggle. In questions of actions, morals, or life, do not blindly follow the crowd or weaken in the face of opposition, but steady yourself, and with your hand in God's, play the part of a genuine Christian man or woman.

*Luke 1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,*

*27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.*

*28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

*29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.*

*30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.*

*31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring*

*forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.*

*32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:*

*33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*

*34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

*35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

*36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the*

*sixth month with her, who was called barren.*

*37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

*38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

*39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;*

*40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.*

*41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:*

*42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

# Is It Possible to Contact God Through Mary?



**Brother Allen Polston**

## **Rightly Divide the Word**

The Bible instructs us in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." There is much confusion in the

religious world. Many people are convinced that they can pray to Mary in order to contact God. If you will study God's Word carefully, soberly, and seriously, you will find that it tells something quite different.

Some time back, I turned on a radio and heard something that

caught my attention. I heard a form of prayer, and this is what they were saying: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our

death. Amen." Hearing that really stirred me, as I considered that this was being sounded out to so many people. As I listened, it sounded like a lot of people were saying those words in unison on the broadcast.

I began to look into this form of prayer and found that a declaration was made on November 1, 1950, called the "Dogma of the Assumption." In the latter part of this declaration, Pope Pius XII said: ". . . by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by Our own authority, We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."

This declaration had already been put into effect to some degree, but basically, it further stated that Mary did not die as the Bible says man dies. They declared that instead of her physical life coming to an end and going to the grave and returning to the dust from which she came, Mary was taken up into Heaven at the end of her mission here on earth. In other words, they declared that she did not experience physical death. The dogma goes on to proclaim that people can pray through Mary and call upon her to contact God. Friend, this does not line up with the Scriptures, and God would have us to know the Truth concerning this false doctrine. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

### **Give Honor to Whom Honor Is Due**

The Bible lets us know that God is an advocate of giving honor where honor is due. Even though this message may not be well accepted by some people, it is not to dishonor the work and the mission that the virgin Mary performed. Ephesians 6:2, which was one of the first Scriptures that we taught our

children, says, "Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)." God is an advocate of being thankful and giving reverence and honor to your mother and your father.

The tendency of this old world is to make the father look like an idiot and make the mother look as though she is old-fashioned and outdated. I believe there is something behind that. The world would like to tear down the role of the father and minimize his position. God wants you to honor your father and mother and to be thankful for them.

There are many other places in the Bible where we are instructed to give honor. In 1 Timothy 5:3 we read, "Honor widows that are widows indeed." Verse 17 says, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." God is not an advocate of destroying or dishonoring people. He believes in giving recognition to whom it is due. I am not saying that we should go around desiring fleshly glory, but God is an advocate of keeping things in their proper order.

Romans 13:7 states, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." We are taught to reverence and respect our Heavenly Father. When Jesus shared with His disciples a model of prayer in Matthew 6:9, He started the prayer by saying, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." That was a way of saying: "We reverence You, God. We thank and honor You."

Mary was used in a very unique and special way. No one else has ever been used by God in the manner that Mary was used. This message is not to discredit her role in the great plan of God. I do not want to be guilty of slandering anybody but the devil, and I say we should turn loose on him with both barrels, so to speak.

In our Scripture lesson text in verse 42, Elisabeth proclaimed

Mary's great role when she said, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." To that I say amen, and I thank God for Mary, Elisabeth, and Martha. Also, I thank God for Moses, Noah, and all the patriarchs and fathers of faith. There are many great men and women of God for whom we should be thankful.

We read of Jesus addressing the matter of Mary being exalted in Luke 11:27-28, which says: "And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

According to the words of Jesus in verse 28, who is really blessed? Those who hear the Word of God and keep it are the ones who are blessed. Too many times people begin to put things ahead of God. That is where idolatry becomes a definite sin.

### **Bible Guidelines Regarding Prayer**

When people pray to Mary (much of it is nothing more than repetition), they are instructed to say a "Hail Mary," which is a prayer, so many times, as they go through memorized forms of prayers repeatedly. As I was traveling, on a billboard I saw a part of what is called Rosary prayers.

As I studied, I found that many people are merely engaged in repetitious phrases that have been created for memorization. What does the Bible say about this? Matthew 6:7 tells us, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Just simply saying things over and over in a monotone voice is not God's idea of spending time in prayer.

I believe in memorizing the Scriptures, but merely going through a form of prayer is not good enough.

God has something greater than that in mind. Some people repeatedly say the name of Jesus so fast that they go off into a frenzy, and friend, that is against what the Bible teaches. Again, God's Word says in Matthew 6:7, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do."

The guidelines for making contact with God in Heaven do not require us to say a lot. I am not saying that you have to make your prayer short and sweet. We sing a song entitled "Sweet Hour of Prayer," and this can be a reality in your life.

The Scripture gives us an example of a person who prayed only seven words. In Luke 18:13-14 we read: "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." The publican said more in those seven words than a lot of people say when they say, "Hallelujah" repeatedly. Dear one, he said more in the words "God be merciful to me a sinner" than all the Hail Marys that have ever been spoken.

Communication with God is designed to involve both speaking to God and listening to Him. The latter part of Matthew 12:34 says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." God wants to hear what is coming from your heart. You may feel that you cannot pray very well, but what God is really interested in is what is coming forth from your heart, not paragraphs or sentences of memorization.

Jesus said in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." God wants your prayers to come from your heart and to be coupled with desire, not merely to go through a form, or the motions of prayer. God wants you to share with Him and to hear from Him. When people ramble off in lines that are nothing more than

mere recitals, they are not really engaging in prayer.

The Scriptures teach there is a mediator between God and man. There is One Who can be your intercessor. In 1 Timothy 2:1-5 we read: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

I do not know how it could be much plainer than what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy there and what we know to be God's inspired Word. There is one God, the Bible says, and one mediator between God and men, and that is Christ Jesus. He is the only mediator, and He is the only One who will ever be the mediator. He is the only One who ever lived a completely sinless life, and that made Him the only candidate to be able to take our sins, our transgressions, our needs, our thoughts and prayers, and our concerns to God.

Mary is not a mediator between God and man. Jesus does not need someone between people and Himself. The Bible clearly states that there is *one* mediator between God and men. If you are going through hard places, dear one, I want to recommend Jesus to you, because He can take your difficult situations and carry them right up to God the Father.

### **Who Is Our Intercessor?**

Hebrews 7:24-25 tells us: "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [Has the devil ever tried to tell you that you are not going to make it, that you

will not be able to follow through, or that you may be saved now, but something is going to happen? The Bible says Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, all the way to the end.] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Jesus "ever liveth."

In the Book of Revelation, when John got a glimpse of Jesus, Jesus told him in Revelation 1:17-18: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." I thank God that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for each of us. He is alive and well in the middle of a dark night. He is alive and well when the storms are brewing and blowing from every side. He is alive and well when the devil comes against us in a mighty way. He never slumbers nor sleeps. He is our Intercessor, our Bridge, and our Mediator.

We read in Romans 8:26-27: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

I want to reiterate, Jesus is the only go-between. Dear one, He is the only One who can take your prayers and your needs to God. Mary cannot do it. In Acts 4:11-12 we read: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Mary's name was a name under Heaven. Her name is not sufficient for salvation. Only One can save your soul and take your needs to God, and that is Jesus Christ.

If Mary were the means of gaining access to God, how did all the men and women of prayer come

into contact with Him before Mary? I have read of those in the Bible who got hold of God. I do not think Daniel went to his window three times a day without touching the throne of Heaven. I do not believe that those brothers and sisters back in Old Testament had no access to the Lord. They accomplished much through prayer, such as when the three Hebrew boys stood in the fiery furnace. They let the king know that no matter what, they were not going to bow down to the golden image that he had set up.

People were contacting God long before Mary ever lived. If she was the only means, how did all those brothers and sisters back then get in touch with the Lord? The fact of the matter is, Mary is not a go-between, or a mediator, between us and the Lord. Jesus does not need her assistance to hear from us or to speak to us. Friend, God does not need anyone besides Jesus to get a message to our hearts. God speaks to mankind through the foolishness of preaching. He chose to save those who would believe, but God does not need Mary to relay any message to Him. Jesus does not pass any messages to her so that she can pass them to someone else. No, God does not work that way.

### **"Believe Not Every Spirit"**

In John 16:12-14 as Jesus was speaking to His disciples and preparing them for His departure, He said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Who speaks to us? It is not Mary. The one who speaks to us is the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost. God's Spirit speaks to us. How does He speak to us? He takes a message from Jesus, from His Word, and

brings it to us. He did *not* say, "I will give it to my mother, and she will bring it to you." No, Jesus said the Spirit of God will bring it to you.

I believe there are spirits that people hear from other than God's Spirit. The Bible says in 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." When you hear something speaking to you, when you begin to get a thought formulated in your mind, or when you begin to think that you ought to do something, try it by God's Word. You need to try the spirits, to see what voice is communicating to you. You must try it by God's Word. If it does not line up with God's Word, it is not God's Spirit.

The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that even Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. In other words, Satan can bring thoughts into your mind to cause you to think something is light when it is not. You have to try the spirits and examine your thoughts by God's Word. God wants you to search the Scriptures.

Jesus, speaking to the scribes and Pharisees in His day, said in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Mary is not sufficient to be the mediator between God and men. I am not trying to dishonor or disrespect her. Neither would I try to disrespect the people who believe that way. I am like Theophilus in the Book of Acts: I just want to set in order what is really true and what is not true; that is my desire. It is not my intention to tear people down, but I am interested in souls being saved.

### **Be Not Carried Away in False Religion**

Salvation is the most wonderful thing I have ever experienced, and I want to share it with the world. God called me to preach His Word, not to

pat people on the back. He called me to let people know there is a better way than the way of sin and a better way than the way of false religion.

Many people are confused today. They have been misled along the lines of this false teaching that Mary can hear their prayers and speak to them. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians when dealing with this. First Corinthians 12:1-2 reads: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." Paul was not calling them dumb idols in the sense of their being stupid, but rather he was calling them "dumb idols" in the sense of being unable to speak. Man needs to be spoken to and directed along life's way.

When I was living in sin, I needed to be spoken to so that I could know there was something better and that forgiveness was available to me. That is what I needed to hear, and I thank God that He spoke that to me one night. Since I have been saved, I have needed God to speak to me many times. I want Him to speak to me as often as He sees fit.

Mary cannot speak to you and give you direction, but God can through the Spirit of God. First Timothy 4:1 tells us, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly. . . ." The Holy Spirit brings the Word to us, directs us, helps us, and guides us.

You have to forsake your own way. Isaiah 55:7 says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." That is what being saved is all about. You must let God's Word guide you. You should not just accept a set of creeds or a set of denominational rules in a handbook.

Jeremiah 44:15-16 reads: "Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood

by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee." I want you to take note of the attitude that was prevailing: those people were telling the Prophet Jeremiah that they were not going to hearken to the word that he spoke to them in the name of the Lord.

Verses 17-18 continue: "But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine."

Burning incense in the Old Testament times was symbolic of the praying that we do today. They would light incense, and it was a fragrant smell that lifted up into heaven. When a person gets down to pray in Jesus' name, it is a sweet smell to God. If you are coming to God and want to start the Christian life with Him, it is a sweet fragrance. When someone makes his way to an altar of prayer and really wants to serve God, that is a prayer that God will hear. Through Jesus that person can be delivered to God for salvation. When a saint of God prays and requests help for the things he needs through Jesus Christ, that is a beautiful aroma to God.

The people in Jeremiah's day were burning incense to the queen of heaven. They said they were not going to go God's way. That is the issue that brought Mary into an exalted place in the realms of false religion. If Mary could come here and speak, she would be against that

very system. She would instruct ones not to do such a thing. Thank God, the Word of God is what we have been given to hear and obey. Today we see similarities to the people back then. People refer to Mary as the queen of heaven yet today. They consider her to be a go-between, and they have their theology and their thinking to back that up, but it does not line up with the Bible.

### **Blessed Are They That Hear the Word and Keep It**

In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He did *not* say, "My mother and I are the way." Mary is not the way. She was a very important vessel used of God in a very honorable manner, but her mission came to an end. Even Jesus Himself pointed this out to us when He was on the Cross. Jesus wanted us to understand that the role of His mother here on earth had been fulfilled.

In John 19:26-27 we read: "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

What was Jesus doing? He was severing the ties. Why? The connection that had been used to bring Him into this world was finished. It was fulfilled, and now He said to His mother, "Woman," letting us know the other part was done. In other words, Mary's role of being His mother was fulfilled. He was not being disrespectful or dishonoring her. Jesus was making sure that she would have someone to take care of her and that she would have a son to replace the Son whom she had brought forth from her womb. Jesus wanted to establish that the connection between His earthly mother and Himself was finished.

Mary was an individual just like everyone else, yet Jesus took care of

her by assigning a son to her. Dear one, God does all things well. The Catholic Church tells people that Jesus assigned her to everyone as a mother, but that is not true because the Bible tells us in Galatians 4:26, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Mary is not the mother of all Christians, but Jerusalem (the church) is the mother of us all.

If Mary were our mother (but she is not), it would contradict Jesus' own words in Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not [or love less] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." What was Jesus saying? You have to put Him ahead of everyone else. There is no other name under Heaven whereby we must be saved.

Mary was a good person. She was a very honorable and blessed individual. However, the Bible says in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Second Corinthians 5:10 tells us, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Somewhere along the way, Mary finished her life here on earth. I am convinced that, even though we do not read of it, she finished it in good standing. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Mary's body was laid down somewhere in this earth, and it returned to the dust.

One of these days, there is going to be a sound across the land. You are going to hear the sound, I am going to hear the sound, and Mary is going to hear that sound. It is going to be a sound that will awaken the dead, and dear one, it could come any day.

In the twinkling of an eye, there will be a sound across this world, and not one soul that has ever lived

will escape hearing that sound. The Bible tells us in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Mary will be in that number, and hopefully you and I will be in that number that will rise to meet the Lord in the air. Mary finished her

mission. She is not an advocate or a mediator between man and God. There is only one mediator, and His name is Jesus. There is no other name under Heaven whereby men can be saved.

If you are not a Christian, God can change that through Jesus Christ. You can pray in Jesus' name, and your life can be transformed. Mary cannot do anything for you, but Jesus can! He can make the difference between night and day. He can translate you from the kingdom of darkness to the King-

dom of Light. I believe it is good for the Christian, as the pillar and ground of the Truth, to understand these things. I trust this message has been a blessing to you. Again, Luke 11:27-28 states: "Blessed is the womb that bear thee, and the paps which thou has sucked. But he [Jesus] said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

*(Compact Disc TR-1276)*

# Youth Corner

## Waiting on the Lord

Looseness in courtship and lying in each other's arms and kissing and kissing is not good. Many a precious young person's downfall has started in being too free with a friend. Keep yourself in your place, and if you get married, you have a lifetime to love each other. If you do not get married, you are better off not to have played around. Young people need to know how to control their affections.

I want to say to the young and the old—it pays to wait on God. Do not get in a hurry. When you get in a hurry, it is often lust instead of love, and that will not stand the storms of life, but love will. If you are a Christian, you may say, "Oh, there are so few Christians." The question should be, "Is God in it?" If not, wait on the Lord. If you are a Christian, you are not your own and should be willing to submit your life into the hands of One who sees

and knows the future.

Some say, "I do not want to be an old maid." You had better be an old maid if God does not have it otherwise than to marry some unsaved man who may one day desert you for another woman. In that case you would be left alone anyway, and you may backslide and lose your soul.

When you choose your way on any line, you cannot have the favor of God on your life as you would have if you let Him choose. You are better to live twenty years together and be happy than to be together fifty years with the wrong companion and be unhappy.

Let me quote Brother C. E. Orr in *The Instruction of Youth in the Christian Life*: "When two are in love, it is difficult to determine the will of God. There needs to be a perfect yielding to the will of God. It is one of the most difficult periods

in the history of man for him to yield his will to God. Many have thought they had but were mistaken. A young man once said, "I thought I had my will entirely surrendered to God, but when I prayed and my lips said, "Lord, Thy will be done," my heart said, "but give me Mary."

You need to watch your heart, young Christian. Do not give too much heed to what the lips say. Listen to the heart beats. Does it beat in perfect unison with the will of God? God wants you to be guided, not by your feelings, but by His providence, by the counsels of true friends, and by the good, sound mind He is willing to give you."

I want to relate an incident that happened much later in my life for the encouragement of others. After I became pastor, a girl in our congregation grew to the age of desiring a companion. She was a good Christian girl, and we all loved her. There were very few young people in our state at that time who were saved, and if one got saved he or she almost had to stand alone as far as young people were concerned.

One day she came and talked to me about her burden. She wanted to live for God, and if she did, it looked as though she could not have a home of her own, for there were not any Christian boys locally.

After talking with her I said, "Sister, put God first." She said that

*[continued on page 26]*

# Choosing Your Eternal Destiny

*"Choose you this day whom ye will serve."*

*Joshua 24:15*



*Brother Larry Dishman*

## **Man's Responsibility**

God has laid at your doorstep the responsibility of choosing your eternal destiny. True religion consists of serving the Lord. David exhorted Solomon to serve the Lord with a perfect heart. The whole duty of man is to fear God and to keep His commandments. Paul let us know in Romans 1:9 that he served God with his spirit in the Gospel of God's Son. The blood of Christ can purge your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God. The Bible says to serve Him with your whole heart.

It is one thing to say that you are

saved, but it is another thing altogether to say that you are serving the Lord. Service includes the worship of God. You are to bless, adore, praise, and extol the Lord. Also, you are to reverence Him. Service includes obedience to His ordinances. You are to walk in His ordinances and to regard with serious attention all the institutions of the Gospel.

The early church continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine. Man is responsible for his service to God. God does not force anyone into His service. He will not accept the service of constraint. The universe obeys Him of necessity. He has given us laws, but a man is rational, intelligent, and free. God

will only accept the cheerful service of the heart.

In 1 Chronicles 29:5b we read, "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" Man has two choices, or two ways that he can go: God or idols, God or sin, God or the world, God or self, God or Satan, life or death, blessing or cursing, good or evil. The Bible contrasts these things, but I have not done my duty as a preacher until I have taken the blood of a sinner off my hands and thrown it back on his own soul. I take preaching the Gospel seriously, because I believe that it is my responsibility to preach God's Word wherever God opens the door.

Therefore, when a service comes to a close, not one sinner has an excuse for not getting right with God. A preacher has not discharged his obligation until everybody who hears him is without excuse.

God calls each person to decide his destiny. If you are a sinner, God is calling on you to make a decision. One is not responsible if he cannot make a decision. Adam and Eve were endued with the power of choice to obey God and live or to disobey Him and die. They chose to eat of the fruit of the tree that God had forbidden them to eat of. Friend, you have a choice: you can either serve the gods of this world or serve the true and Living God. Everyone in the world is going to make this choice.

If a man were not a creature of choice, how could he be held accountable for his sin? The false doctrine of individual predestination portrays Christians as zombies—powerless to determine character or destiny. A person cannot choose the date or the place of his birth. He cannot choose who his parents are going to be. Also, he cannot choose the color of his eyes, the shape of his face, or the talents or the limitations with which he will be born.

Many things happen that one cannot control. However, when it comes to moral issues (issues of right and wrong), man must choose, and every man will choose. Man was created with the power to choose. He was created in the image of God with the capability of reason and free exercise of his will. I believe that God did just what He said He did; namely, He set before people a choice—life and death, blessing and cursing. The latter part of Deuteronomy 30:19 says, "Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

### **The Plan of Salvation Is for All**

Had God decreed that Adam must sin, then Adam would not have endured guilt for what he was not

responsible for. He had to have a choice in order for him to be guilty. The very fact that Adam and Eve hid themselves is proof that they had a choice. Without a choice there would have been no condemnation or guilt. Adam and Eve fell from holiness, and they lost paradise by deliberate choice.

You have been given the choice and the power to become a son of God or not to become a son of God. Along with that, you must assume the consequences. When you make a choice, you are not only making that choice temporarily, but the choice that you make will have eternal consequences. Dear one, this has remained unchanged since the Garden of Eden. The prerogative of free choice guarantees that your salvation is not a thing of God's predestination but of man's determination.

Friend, it is clear in God's Word that life has been offered to all mankind. The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that "he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." This does not leave anyone out. First John 2:1-2 says: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." This is not just for a few predestinated ones. Christ made a way so that *every* individual can be saved.

God offers freedom from the sentence of death. Sinners are already spiritually dead and condemned, but God offers to repeal the sentence and to blot out the crime. God offers regeneration of the spirit. He offers to raise the soul, to quicken it, to put breath in it, to put new life in it, to take away the heart of stone, and to put in a heart of flesh. To be dead in trespasses and sins is only a shadow of the woe that awaits the sinner in the eternal world. Friend, there is a great difference between the shadow and the

substance, yet one is the emblem of the other. Deuteronomy 30:15 goes right along with Joshua 24:15. These Scriptures make it so clear that we each are choosing our destiny.

We read in Deuteronomy 30:15-19: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

"But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live."

Friend, the choice that you make can have an effect on your children. If you do not live for God, that can have a negative effect upon your sons and your daughters. You have a choice. If a person were predestinated to go to Heaven, then death would not be set before that individual. If a person is predestinated and foreordained to go to hell, then only death has been set before that individual; life has not been offered. Therefore, we know that such doctrine cannot be true because the Lord said He set before you two choices: life and death, blessing and cursing. You must make the choice. Clearly, God's Word says to the sinner that "whosoever will" can come to the Lord. That does not leave anyone out.

### **The Seriousness of Making the Wrong Choice**

It would be sad to see a bum stagger down the street with his hair

matted with dirt, with a dirty face, and with ragged garments, knowing that his father was a gentleman worth millions of dollars, or possibly knowing that his father was a good Christian man. Suppose this bum had once inherited one million dollars and had a chance to be a gentleman, but he chose to be a bum. You may think, "Nothing could be worse than that," but something is worse than that. Today millions of people are walking up and down the corridors of hell with parched tones, crying for a drop of water when they could be walking the streets of Glory, but they chose the wrong way.

In the Book of Genesis, you can read that Cain made a choice. Genesis 4:7 reads, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."

Christ invited and exhorted, but the Jews would not come to Him so that they might have life. He had life for them, but they refused Him. The passages in the Word of God clearly urged the sinner concerning the responsibility to choose. Those who reject this doctrine make mere machines out of men. Every one of us must give an account of himself to God, and He demands a decision. God calls for you to do so. He will not allow compromise. When it comes to making this choice, God throws the whole responsibility upon you. Friend, He leaves it to you to decide.

Life and death, blessing and cursing, are within your reach. You need to think about the seriousness of this decision. Heaven or hell is right within your reach, and it is your decision. Friend, this decision is not out of your power, nor is it impossible for you to choose life. Oh, how the devil gets people in situations where it looks impossible to choose life. On the authority of God's Word, no matter how dark the devil has painted the picture, it is not impossible for you to choose life.

You can make that choice now. You do not have to wait until next week or next year.

You may ask, "Do I really have a choice?" Look at the prodigal son in Luke, Chapter 15. He made a choice while in that far country. In verse 18 he said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Just like that prodigal son, you can make that choice. You can say to yourself: "I am like the prodigal son. I am going to arise and get saved." God has laid at your doorstep this responsibility.

Look at Saul in the Book of Acts, Chapter 9. You can read in verse 6 that Saul asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He made a choice. Consider the three thousand who were saved on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts, Chapter 2, you can read that they made a choice. A choice was set before them, and in verse 37 they asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" In Acts, Chapter 16, you can read about Paul and Silas dealing with the Philippian jailer. That Philippian jailer and his whole household made a choice. In verse 30 he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Friend, you, too, can make the choice to be saved. The longer you put this decision off, the more difficulties will arise. You are wasting a precious opportunity. God invites you, Jesus beseeches you, and the Spirit waits and hovers over your soul. Many have been ruined by putting off this decision. Sometimes an hour's delay has brought destruction. All who choose death and evil will perish. Every lost soul has destroyed itself in hell. If you fail to get saved, you will have eternal remorse, eternal agony, eternal despair, and a never-ending death. You will regret making the wrong choice.

### **Stumbling Blocks That Satan Uses**

Isaiah 1:18 states, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scar-

let, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." If you are not saved, let us reason together. I ask you to open your heart for a few minutes and reason this out in your mind. It seems so easy when, in essence, the Lord said: "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose you this day whom you will serve."

Many times after hearing God's Word preached, I have watched sinners stand with tears streaming down their faces, yet they held on to the pew in front of them and refused to move. The devil made the decision seem so difficult by placing stumbling blocks before them. He did that to me the night I got saved. I had to climb over stumbling blocks. The devil put before me reasons that I needed to wait and get saved some time later.

I would like to talk to you about some of the stumbling blocks that make it so difficult for the sinner to overcome. One stumbling block that the devil puts before the sinner is the company they have been keeping. The devil says: "If you get saved, what about your friends? What about your boyfriend or your girlfriend? You know he or she is not going to go this way. If you make the decision to live for God, you are going to lose that person." Well, if that person really loves you, if he or she is your true friend, that person will not cut off that friendship because you make a choice to serve God. If he or she does cut you off, then that person does not really love you or care about you. No acquaintance or friendship on this earth is worth losing your soul in the devil's hell.

A stumbling block for some is the addiction to drugs or alcohol. They know if they get saved, they will have to stop drinking or stop using drugs, and that is something they do not think they have the power to do. Well, they do not have the power to do it, but God's power and God's Spirit are strong enough to break the bondage of those sinful

habits. Friend, if you are bound by the tobacco habit, you might say, "I have tried to quit, but I can't do it." I am glad you understand that. *You* cannot quit, but God's power can give you the victory to overcome that stumbling block.

A stumbling block for some people is that they are unfaithful to their spouse. They want to get saved, but they know that if they get saved, they will have to make it right with their spouse. The fear of that keeps them from getting right with God. God can work out any situation. The devil makes that look so impossible and so hard. Friend, with God's help you can get through that difficulty.

Another stumbling block for some people is that they are unwilling to give up the world. My friend, God can change your heart and make you a new creature. Then old things will pass away and all things will become new. Many times it is some sin that individuals are unwilling to give up, so it makes the choice seem too difficult. With God's help you will want to give up that sin. He will give you the power to give up whatever it might be.

### A Frightful Warning

Dear one, what holds you back from making the right decision? Whatever it is, you need to weigh it in the light of eternity. My friend, weigh it in light of where you are heading if you fail to make the right

decision. The time to choose is limited. The Lord said in Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." What a sad and frightful warning! If God's Spirit does not call, men will not repent. If God's Spirit does not call, men will not trust Christ. If God's Spirit does not call, the sinner cannot be saved.

In that verse the Lord was talking basically about the people in Noah's day. Their sin and rejection of the Spirit had become so great that God withdrew His Spirit and conviction. Once that was done, those people crossed a deadline. Just as surely as the Lord withdrew His Spirit from those people, today He will withdraw His Spirit from the sinner who continues to deliberately reject His call. Many people deliberately trample the mercy and the grace of God under their feet; that is the danger of not making the right choice.

If God withdrew His Spirit from a whole generation of people in Noah's day, who had less opportunity than you have had, what makes you think that it could never happen to you? It *can* happen to you. Sinner friend, do not wait until your soul becomes deafened to the tender call of God's Spirit. How long will you trifle with the influences of God's blessed Spirit? Only as the Spirit of God brings you to know that you are a sinner and helps you to believe that Christ is willing to save you can you be saved. After being greatly enlightened, if the sinner steadfastly

refuses salvation, the Spirit of God may leave that individual alone forever.

This day has been given to you by God. Now is the accepted time of salvation. The time to come to God is right now. How is it in your heart and life? Many other hindrances can stand before men. Many times people do not understand the perfect will of God and become bitter toward God. They blame God for things that have happened in their lives. For example, there is a law of gravity. If a little child were to fall from a twenty-story building and land on the ground, that child would die. Someone may ask, "Well, then, would it have been God's will for the child to die?" Some people look at God as a monster, but it was not God's perfect will. God has a law of gravity, and in that respect it was the will of God. On the other hand, it would have been the will of God that the window had been shut and that child would not have been able to fall.

Friend, God is a loving God. He is too good to be unkind. He cares about you. What is your choice? The Lord has set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Won't you make the right choice? Will you choose to serve God? I have never met an individual who was sorry that he had chosen to serve God.

*(Compact Disc TR-569M)*

**Do not face the day until you have faced God in prayer.**

*[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2]*  
heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

What are some of the precious riches that you can lay up for yourself? First, you must live a holy and consistent life every day before God and your fellow man. Second, you must allow your faith to be built up

as you go through each test, trial, or hardship. Doing this helps to cause you to be a more effective witness to the grace and power of God. Third, exercising your heart to be kind and caring to and for others is essential. As Jesus came here to serve mankind, you must also be ready to serve wherever and whenever possible.

Last, you must let your heart be

encouraged and challenged to seek the true riches. There is great joy in serving others and in striving to be a blessing whenever opportunity presents itself. Being physically rich may be pleasing, but being spiritually rich is far greater and more rewarding eternally.

Selected

# TRUE REPENTANCE



*Brother E. David Stegmeier*

## **Cleanse Yourself From All Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit**

What frame of mind do you have toward the Gospel? Are you serious minded? What kind of demeanor do you have in the house of God? Each of us is going to stand alone before God on Judgment Day. I have a wonderful wife, but my salvation is contingent upon my personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You must be clear with God. You are not clear with God unless you are clear with every man, woman, boy, or girl on the face of this planet.

Isaiah 30:8-13 reads: "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this is a rebellious people, [We

are living in a rebellious age. Young person, you need to serve the Lord while you are young. When you get older and become rooted in habits that are difficult to break, it will be more difficult to serve the Lord.] lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD [God has a law; you can break it, but not without consequences]: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

"Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despised this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: Therefore this iniquity shall be to

you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant." Verse 15 reads, "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not."

There is a false repentance, and it is shallow. It fails to do what God intended it to do. Synonyms for the word *true* are "void of deceit, sincere, unfeigned, not a sham, not counterfeit, genuine."

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Sanctification is a progressive work.

You might have been saved for a while, but there still may be things in your life that you need to cleanse yourself from. If you want to be a child of God and you want Him as your Father, then you must cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit. You must be clean morally.

Moral cleanness begins in the mind, and you must be clean in the mind. Paul said to cleanse yourself of the filthiness of the flesh and the spirit. There is a spirit within you that motivates you to do what you do and to say what you say. One song says, "He's still working on me." People should not go to church halfheartedly and indifferently, looking all around and sizing up the congregation. Some people fail to get a hymnal and fail to bring a Bible. We each are eternity bound souls, and we need to get into the Word and study it and allow God to give us a true picture of how we really are.

### **Be Careful of How You Live**

The Apostle Paul continued in 2 Corinthians 7:2, "Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man." How many people can really say they have wronged no man? If true repentance has worked in your life and you are where you should be, then you can say that. When the past is forgiven and you have taken care of any past wrongs, you are living where you are not hurting or causing wrong to God or any individual.

As far as I know (and I am not speaking boastfully), I am clear with every man, woman, boy, and girl in this universe, and that is how we each should live. If you are a father, you need to be careful of how you live, because your children are watching you.

The Apostle Paul went on to write in 2 Corinthians 7:3-11: "I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

Great is my boldness of speech toward you [Church of God ministers who are living right have boldness], great is my glorying of you; I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

"Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. [Let us get the background of this letter. Paul had heard of incest going on in the congregation at Corinth. He said that incest was not even named among the Gentiles, or the outside world. He told them to straighten it out. When Titus returned and said the church took care of it, Paul was thrilled.]

"For though I made you sorry with a letter, [Sometimes a pastor might have to write a letter, and that can be very grievous. Sometimes he might have to call an individual into his study and talk plainly and very candidly. If you cannot take rebuke or correction, you are not a true child of God. It is hard in this day to rebuke a person. An older brother told me years ago that the further we go in time, the harder it will be to discipline people. If you are a real Christian, you will take discipline and appreciate the disciplinarian.] I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a

godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

You need to be sure that you are clear in matters, and sometimes it may be extremely painful. I heard of a farmer in Michigan who was threshing his crops and the machine caught his arm. Rather than lose his whole body, he grabbed his knife and cut off his arm. It was very painful to lose his arm, but he saved himself.

The same is true of sin. Sometimes getting rid of sin is a very painful process, but it is necessary. That is the reason I am very, very careful of how I live and of what I get involved in. As you look back over your life and weigh your actions, things that you have been involved in, are you clear in matters? Sometimes repentance is a very painful process. Young person, you need to keep your life pure. You need to be careful of what you get involved in.

### **Taking Steps to Clear Yourself**

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:12-16: "Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you. Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all. For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice therefore that I have

confidence in you in all things."

I want to use 2 Corinthians 7:10 as my Scripture text. It says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." No minister likes to deal with hard problems that hurt people, but sometimes it is necessary. I was a school teacher for fifty years. Discipline is not a joyful matter, but many times it is necessary.

Again, the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Are you clear with God? Are you clear with every man, woman, boy, and girl in this whole earth?

The Greek word for *repentance* means "a complete reversal or change of mind." We change our minds in repentance. Roman Catholics teach penance, but repentance is a deeper work than penance. In repentance one is not only sorry but also changes his mind, and by the grace of God, lives a different life. Penance is merely being sorry. Repentance is being sorry and turning your back on sin and the world. The first step in salvation is having godly sorrow, which works repentance. When a man truly has godly sorrow, he recognizes his sins.

Every individual who has true, godly sorrow recognizes how wretched, undone, and miserable he really is. He does not try to pass the blame on to someone else. Adam did that with Eve, and Eve did that with the serpent. Adam and Eve were passing the blame from one to another. Some husbands blame their wives when they fail, and some wives blame their husbands. Others blame their children or their in-laws. The person who receives help acknowledges, "It is I who needs help."

David received help when he

said, "I acknowledge my transgressions." King Saul did not go deep enough. He blamed the people, saying that they made him do it. No, he did it because he chose to do it. When a man truly has godly sorrow, he recognizes his utter sinfulness, his absolute helplessness, and his complete failure. We are failures without God. Regarding the rich man and Lazarus, to the world the rich man would be considered a success, but according to the Bible, Lazarus was a success.

The Corinthians became very diligent and determined to clear themselves of all wrongdoing. They hated what they had done, and they were careful to right themselves with man and God. I am reminded of a Scripture in Acts 24:16, which says, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." Today lots of people exercise themselves physically, but how about spiritually? You need to be sure that you are clear with everyone. Perhaps you have not had this experience, but I have had an experience where I said something, and after I left, I thought others might have taken what I said the wrong way. Possibly, they did not completely understand what I was saying, so I had to go back and explain what I meant.

I remember one time when I went into a store, and when I got back to the car, I realized that the cashier had given me too much change, so I went back in and told the woman that she had given me too much change. We need to be clear with everyone. I do not want to lose my soul for a few dollars or a few cents.

The Corinthians deeply regretted what they had done, and they made a complete change and reformation. True repentance comes when a person does everything he can to right himself with everyone and with God. He conforms to God's will for his life in every way. You will never regret taking steps to clear yourself.

## Worldly Sorrow

Next, I want to talk to you about the sorrow of the world, or worldly sorrow. You can read about Pharaoh in the Old Testament Book of Exodus. He changed his mind for a while and said he would let God's people go. However, it was not long before he changed his mind again. King Saul regretted what he had done.

In the New Testament, you can read that Judas went so far and repented, but the Scripture lets you know that it was a false repentance. Matthew 27:3-4 states: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that." Judas repented, but he did not have godly sorrow. He was merely sorry for the way it worked out.

In all sincerity, has godly sorrow and repentance worked in your life to where you are clear with everyone? If God should require your soul tonight, would you wish that you had taken care of anything? I want to be clear in my soul, don't you? Jesus has taken care of all the requirements. He shed His blood for you, but there is a part that you must satisfy, and that is to repent of your sins. Repentance is required of all men.

God wants everyone to be saved. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God does not want anyone to perish. I do not want to see any soul lost, but you have the prerogative to choose. You must make a choice. Repentance is required of everyone who desires to make it to Heaven.

Paul exclaimed on Mars Hill in Acts 17:29-30: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we

ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent."

Second Timothy 3:12 reads, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Before I retired from teaching, everyone at the school was aware that I am a minister, and they all knew where I stand. Whenever I came near this one teacher in the hall, he would say, "Sinners, repent!" He thought he was being funny. Someday he will wish that he had repented. He visited our church a time or two and said, "You require too much of your people," or something along that line. Someday he will wish he had repented, and it will not be so funny then.

### **Working Out Your Salvation**

God has appointed a day that He will judge the world in righteousness, according to what is right. Is that the way you are living? Is that the way you have been living the last few days or the last few months? Are you doing everything according to the principles of God's Word? Acts 17:31 reads, "Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

I like what the Amplified Bible says: "Because He has fixed a day when He will judge the world righteously (justly) by a Man Whom He has destined and appointed for that task, and He has made this credible and given conviction and assurance and evidence to everyone by raising Him from the dead."

In this life you may argue with your pastor, your Sunday school teacher, or your parents, but on Judgment Day you will have to admit what Christ knows about you. He will expose you just as you are. The purpose of preaching is to in-

form you and to weigh you in the balance to see where you really stand. Your children know whether or not you are a real Christian, and your neighbors probably know too.

Jesus told of two incidents in Luke, Chapter 13. One was when the question was asked about the Galileans who were killed when they went to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, and Pilate had them killed. You may think, "Surely they must have been sinners above all others for Pilate to mingle their blood with their sacrifices." That is not so. Jesus went on to speak about the Tower of Siloam, which fell and killed eighteen people. Twice Jesus brought out the lesson to show that it is absolutely a necessary requirement for everyone to repent. Those to whom He was speaking were in need of repentance as much as the greatest of sinners.

Everyone must be born again. It was not excessive sin or ungodliness that brought about these two tragedies, letting us know that even the most respected must repent. You might have repented years ago, but have you lived consistently since then? Jesus was trying to teach us about excessive sin. It was not ungodliness that brought about those two tragedies. It is not the amount of sin that requires repentance, but rather it is just the fact that you have sinned. Paul said in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

When I was just a child, I was very serious, and I still am when it comes to church. I want to know where the Truth is. I am not married to people. I have a wonderful wife, but I am not where I am because of my wife. I know beyond a shadow of doubt that I am standing on the Truth. As I was growing up, I remember that we did not go to massive evangelistic crusades. Our pastor said that the work done at those events was too shallow and deceptive. All that was required for someone to accept Christ was to raise a hand and say, "I believe." When people went back home, their

lives never changed. We went to visit relatives, and on the television, a certain religious leader began to pray. They gathered around the television and put their hands on it. My mother always said: "Stay away from that television set. It's time for us to go home." The world is full of false religion.

The Bible says to work out your salvation. Christ works within us. When I was a child, there were times when I did things that were not necessarily sin, but God would point certain things out to me. One time I said something about an older saint, so to make the thing right, I went from one side of the tabernacle to the other and asked forgiveness. We are working out our own salvation.

In mass evangelistic meetings, many people go forward or raise their hands and say they got saved, but they still smoke, drink alcohol, and chase women. Workers tell people all they have to do is believe and they will be saved. Do you know what the Bible says? The devil believes and trembles. They rest their hope of glory on a false premise.

### **The Work of Genuine Repentance**

The Church of God believes in the Truth. I do not want cheap religion. Heaven's best was given to purchase what we have; therefore, it requires our very best as well. Are you really serious about salvation? You need to look at yourself in the mirror of God's Word. Passing a Catechism test, joining a religious organization, or getting baptized without the work of repentance is useless. I repeat, everyone needs to repent. Again, you might have repented years ago, but since that time, have you been living for God as you should be living?

In true repentance an individual must be sorry and regret offending God. That is where repentance starts. If you sin, first of all, your sin is against God. There are two important points that you need to realize. You must acknowledge your sins

and take responsibility for them. The husband and the wife should check each other. An individual must feel sorry for his or her own sin and take responsibility for it.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." True repentance causes an individual to be ashamed of his sins and to loathe, or hate, them. Conviction awakens an individual to his sin, but conviction alone is not repentance. The Bible says when Paul expounded to Felix in Acts, Chapter 24, Felix was under conviction, but did he get saved? No, it takes more than conviction. John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Apostles taught repentance. The great commission that we, as ministers, are told to preach teaches repentance. Luke 24:47 states, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

I remember well when I was saved and had to make restitutions. Restitutions are a part of repentance. Many years ago, a brother preached a message about repentance. He said a girl who went to the altar said, "I have never gotten a settled experience. My pastor told me I just need to leave it and shouldn't discuss it."

The preacher said: "There is a reason that you do not have a settled experience, but you can have it if you want it. God has it for you. He

is no respecter of persons. Daughter, tell me, every time you give up, what causes you to give up?"

She said, "I hesitate to tell you."

He said, "Well, let us pray about it." They prayed, and then she said, "I go along really good for a while, but all of a sudden these tiny little fingers and tiny little toes appear in my mind."

He said, "I don't understand."

She said, "I had a child aborted, and I just can't forgive myself." God has salvation for everyone if sin is truly repented of.

In another situation a woman had a problem getting established in her experience. She said that years ago she had burned down her house to collect the insurance money, and she had never confessed it. Restitution is painful, but it is part of salvation.

There ought to be more seriousness in every one of us. You do not have to go around asking people if they think you are right with God. You should know that yourself. You need to know where you stand. Restitution is an important part of righting yourself with God. Psalm 85:10 says, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." To me that means if you are completely truthful with God about your life, He will deal with you in mercy. When I got saved, I wanted to repent of everything that I had done wrong in my life. I wanted to be clear with

God. When you are completely honest with God, you will have righteousness and peace and a very close union with Him down in your heart. You will be right with God, and you will have the peace of God.

True repentance is when you repent of everything on your own after God has brought conviction on you, and you want to be clear with Him. The fruits of repentance are godly sorrow for your sin and humbleness of mind, along with a turning from sin. You should never want to get involved in it again. Then you will have peace, joy, righteousness, a love for the Truth, and a love for the brethren.

If you are serious about repentance, you should do everything possible to clear things up. Remorse and regret do not go far enough. You must go on and make restitution. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Are you clear in your soul? Have you done everything you know to do to clear yourself? True repentance is genuine. There is no deceit; it is true.

*(Compact Disc TR-472E)*

Faith is a grasping of almighty power;  
The hand of man laid hold on the arm of God;  
The grand and blessed hour  
In which the things impossible to me  
Become the possible, O Lord, through Thee.

*2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

*Revelation 20:11 And I saw a*

*great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

*12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another*

*book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*

*15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

# The Final Judgment



*Brother Fred Barrows*

## **A Time of Preliminary Judgment**

A day is coming when we each are going to stand before God and see Him on His great, white throne. Most of us know or have heard it said that we all are going to stand before God and give an account of the deeds that we have done in the body. Are you really taking it seri-

ously? Some people are not being serious enough about the things of God.

We must be reminded that we are living in the Laodicean (luke-warm) age. This is the last age before Christ comes. One of these days, Jesus is going to move from His throne of mercy and take His place on the judgment seat. My

question is, Are you going to be ready? The Scripture lets us know that the Second Coming of Christ will come in the twinkling of an eye. We are in a period of preliminary judgment right now. God is allowing trials and other things to come upon us, not to hurt us, but to prove us.

You cannot go to Heaven unless you have earned it. You may say,

"Well, I will ask God to forgive me and then take me on." God is going to have a tested and tried people. One song entitled "Sin Can Never Enter There" reads:

*Heaven is a holy place,  
Filled with glory and with grace—  
Sin can never enter there;  
All within its gates are pure,  
From defilement kept secure—  
Sin can never enter there.*

*If you hope to dwell at last,  
When your life on earth is past,  
In that home so bright and fair,  
You must here be cleansed from sin,  
Have the life of Christ within—  
Sin can never enter there.*

*You may live in sin below,  
Heaven's grace refuse to know,  
But you cannot enter there.  
It will stop you at the door,  
Bar you out forevermore—  
Sin can never enter there.*

*If you cling to sin till death,  
When you draw your latest breath,  
You will sink in dark despair  
To the regions of the lost,  
Thus to prove at awful cost,  
Sin can never enter there.*

I prayed and asked God to help me to bring this message in such a way to help you to think more seriously about the life that you live. It is time to get your life squared away, because one of these days you will have to give an account of the way you have lived. He is going to ask you, "What did you do with Jesus?"

Friend, what did you do when Jesus so faithfully stood at your heart's door and knocked? Did you turn Him away? If you are a young person, you may feel as though you have many years to live. I remember a boy whom my boys used to run around with. On his way to or from work one morning, a car crossed three lanes of traffic and hit him head on, and he went into eternity. None of us has a lease on life. None of us knows when his day is coming, so it pays to be ready.

## **God Will Bring Every Work Into Judgment**

The Scripture says to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). This is no time to play church. I hope through this message that you will get the point that God is waiting on you and expecting you to do something. God's mercy has been extended to some people many, many times, yet they have spurned His love. They have made promises to God and then either refused or neglected to keep them. Dear one, it is time to do something about your soul. The Judgment is coming.

When you stand before God, He will tell you to get on His left hand or His right hand. The right hand is reserved for the blessed few who have heeded and obeyed the Word of God. What a great and terrible day the Judgment will be to mankind when all who have ever lived will stand before God—the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the saved and the unsaved. Everyone will be required to give an account for the life he has lived when Christ leaves His mercy seat and goes to the seat of judgment.

The Book of Revelation tells us that God is going to judge everyone. Will your name be found written in the Lamb's Book of Life? It will not make any difference if your name is written on every church membership book in the world. You must have your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, which is kept in Heaven. No book is more crucial than the Lamb's Book of Life. God has a book that records the names of each and every one, and it contains an account of all the deeds done in each person's life. There may be things that you do not remember, but those things will be remembered at the Judgment if you have not repented of them. A person's life records are sealed and protected in this Book.

Every act done in life has been recorded, whether it has been good or bad. When the books are opened,

each person will hear what his eternal destiny will be. Some people will say: "Lord, Lord, did we not do many wonderful things? We went to church, visited the sick, and did lots of good things in life," but they failed to repent. They failed to have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts.

It is easy to go to church and to visit the sick, but do you have a real burden for others? Do you labor for God with the motive in mind: "Lord, I am going in Your stead. I am going to do what You want me to do." What a blessing it will be to those who are saved to hear: "Well done. Come to My right hand"! That will be the greatest day!

Some people will say: "Search the Book again, will You, Lord? I went to church, and I did many good things."

The Lord will say, "Depart from me, because you have iniquity in your heart." Maybe you harbor secret sins. Secret sins are sins that no one else knows about. The enemy is good at deceiving individuals. Perhaps you have convinced yourself that nobody else knows what you are doing.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 reads, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Isaiah 29:15 states, "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?"

Before I was saved, I spent time in the night clubs, and they are usually dark places, but everything is light to God; there is no darkness with God. You may hide in the darkest closet, but it will be like daylight to God. Nothing can be hid from Him.

## **Secret Sins**

I want to talk to you about secret sins—those little things that no one knows about, such as cheating. What if you were to cheat your

brother or your sister out of something or cheat on your income tax. You may say: "Well, no one will ever know about it. Besides, the government has so much money that they do not need it." Dear one, the point is, if it is something that you ought not to claim, you should not claim it or it is cheating.

The question is, Do you want to be pure? Do you want to be holy? Do you want to be completely clean before God? When you stand before God, if there are any spots on your garment, you are not going to make it. Living in the human flesh, I realize there are some imperfections. However, those faults must not be sinful.

Years ago I worked for someone who was a great guy, but he did not think anything at all about lying. Sometimes he would tell me to lie or to shade the truth to others, but I always said, "No, I am not going to do that." No Christian should ever lie and tell somebody something that he knows within his heart is not right. He should never try to cover something in such a way to make someone think one thing when really it is something else. God in Heaven is looking down. He weighs the motives of your heart.

You should not tell falsehoods or say something about another that is not true. Also, you should not tell something in a way that makes someone think you mean something else. You might have your own idea, but you must line up with the Word of God. Stealing is wrongfully taking something that belongs to another. You should not borrow something from someone and say, "Oh, he will not miss it." You should return it.

God wants you to get closer to Him. The closer you get to Him, the further away you are going to get from sin and the things of this world. That is what pleases God, and that is what will make you a more spiritual and useful individual in God's sight.

God is investing His grace, strength, and power in the Christian

to work through him. One reason that Jesus said it was needful for Him to go away was so that we could do the works that He did. One cannot throw his head back and say, "I did this!" If you do that, you might find out the hard way who the Boss really is. You would be better off to take admonition and gain the blessing. It is always a blessing when you can help someone and say, "Thank You, Lord, for using me and for helping that person."

Do you cherish evil thoughts or have you imagined something about another person that is not true? If so, you need to seek God's face in a serious manner. Sometimes with the habits of life some people say, "I just cannot get victory." The main reason is, they do not really want it bad enough. When a person truly wants victory, he is going to get it. You can have victory in Jesus if you want it. Some people say, "I would like to surrender all to God, but I just can't do it," but they really do not want to. There is a God in Heaven Who is there for you. When you show Him that you really want victory, there are not enough devils in hell that can stop you. The enemy is always going to throw darts at you, because that is his job, but you can have victory over whatever you face in your life.

### **"You Can't Do Wrong and Get By"**

The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." There is a job for each of us to do. You cannot say, "Lord, save me," and then just sit back and do nothing. Dear one, you are going to have to work and do something for God. Each day you must prove to God and to yourself that you are no longer the devil's servant.

I tell the devil when he comes around to try to hound me, "Devil, you are bound, and you cannot do

anything except what I allow or what God permits." He can blow all he wants, but he cannot defeat you if you do not want to be defeated.

You must not live haphazardly and say, "Well, I sin, but so what?" The Scriptures tell us about presumptuous sinning. What is that? It is the attitude: "Well, I will go ahead and do this. I know I really should not, but God will forgive me." Dear one, you need to keep before your mind all the time, "Do I really want to make Heaven my home?" If you want to make Heaven your home, you can.

There is a God in Heaven Who sees all. No one can see your heart and no one can see mine either, but people can see the outward acts. I want the outward acts of my life not to be a show, but to reflect what is really in my heart. I want my heart to be pure at all times. What about you? The more time you spend with God in prayer, in reading the Word, and in meditating on the Word, the closer you are going to be to God and the less likely the enemy will be able to infiltrate your heart.

There is a work to be done. You are not going to make it to Heaven on a flowery bed of ease. There is a song entitled "You Can't Do Wrong and Get By" by Lethal A. Ellis. It reads:

*There's a God who's standing at  
heaven's door,  
He's looking this universe o'er;  
And He sees each mortal with a  
searching eye,  
You can't do wrong and get by.*

*Out into the darkness you alone  
may go,  
And seeds for the wicked one sow;  
There's an eye that's watching from  
the throne on high,  
You can't do wrong and get by.*

*Yes, He knows your secrets,  
everything you do,  
He knows that your life is untrue;  
You can ne'er deceive Him, there's  
no use to try,  
You can't do wrong and get by.*

*You can't do wrong and get by,  
No matter how much you may try;  
Nothing hidden can be, everything  
He doth see,  
You can't do wrong and get by.*

What are you going to do with the life that you are now living? Has God spoken to you time and time again, and for whatever reason, you have spurned Him? I do not know what those reasons are, but you do. I realize that some people try to blame hypocrites, but you will not get by with that excuse at the Judgment. Jesus is going to ask you, "What did you do about Me?" What about the saints whom you saw living consistent, Christian lives. Friend, you are not going to get by blaming anyone else at the judgment bar of God.

### **Strive to Keep a Clean Life**

I want to talk to you about the use of slang words. There are times when people use slang words such as "golly," "dagnabbit," or other euphemisms that people use to replace words that take the Lord's name in vain. You are not saying the curse word, but it means the same thing. If you use such words, you need to cleanse yourself of that bad habit. God expects you to cleanse yourself of that.

What about jealousy? Someone who is jealous may say, "I wish I could preach like he does" or "Who does he think he is?" or "Who is she that she thinks she can sing so much better than someone else?" Is a spirit of jealousy working on you? If it is, God sees that, dear one. Oh, you may laugh and try to make someone think that you really like that person when you do not. Acts 24:16 says, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men." This is something that you are going to have to work at.

A Christian truly strives to keep his life clean and clear at all times. He must constantly guard against

things that might slip in on him. I ask the Lord quite often: "Lord, are you satisfied with me? Is there anything about me that I have overlooked? Help me, Lord, to see myself as you see me." I do not want death to come upon me and then hear God say at the judgment bar, "You did not take care of that." Sometimes I have had to go to someone and apologize. The devil will try to make you feel like a fool, but I do not care if that is what I have to do. I want to keep everything right before God, because one of these days, this old boy is not going to be here anymore. You will not be here either when God calls you home. If you do not give closer heed to the way you are living, you are going to find yourself on the wrong side.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness [too many times people are not careful enough in their daily living] it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

A person should have a healthy fear of God. Sometimes people do not do things because they are afraid to, but I am thankful for the fear that I have in my heart of not doing things that are wrong. Both Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10 tell us, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Having a healthy portion of fear is good. One reason that some people falter and fail along the way is that they have allowed the spirit of godly fear to be lifted off their lives. Often they say: "That doesn't bother me. What makes the difference whether I do this or that or if I go here or there?" Dear one, it makes all the difference in the world.

### **What Will You Do With Jesus?**

I do not want anything in my life that is contrary to the Spirit of God and that could affect my final resurrection. I want to see Jesus one day, and by God's grace I am going to see Him. I want to see His loving-kindness and see what He has prepared for those who have been faithful. Can you imagine what it is going to be like to see the inside of Heaven? Our human minds cannot even begin to comprehend it.

Perhaps you have read in the Old Testament about Solomon's house. He did not spare any riches in lavishing it with gold, silver, brass, ivory, and so on. He had everything in that house that a person could ever imagine, but that will not compare to what God has prepared in Heaven for those who are willing to pay the price. There is a price, not just to give up sin now, but a continual dying out to self and what you want. There will be times when things are going to rise up. Possibly imaginations that you have to deal with and get rid of.

I trust that God will bring across your mind the things that you need to do so that you can become more pure. The preaching of the Gospel is for the perfecting of the saints. When you first get saved, you are as perfect as you can be at that particular moment. Had you died at that moment, you would have gone to Heaven. However, God usually allows one a space of time to live to become more perfect every day.

If you want to make it to Heaven, you can do it. However, you cannot do it in your own strength. It is going to take some work. Do you have it in you to do what you need to do to make Heaven your home? Heaven is attainable. God sent Christ to help you make it if you will listen and obey.

The Christian has a vehement desire to do what is right and is against that which is wrong. Dear one, how heartbreaking it is going to be when some people stand before the judgment bar of God and find

out that they have been rejected. Human comprehension cannot take that in. When you think about eternity, time without end, do you not want to go to Heaven? If you are not ready, now is a perfect opportunity for you to settle the account.

When the brethren of the morning church preached the Gospel, the people who heard said:

"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38).

If you are not where you need to be spiritually, friend, will you do something about it now? It is up to

you. What are you going to do with Jesus? What are you going to do about the Judgment? What are you going to do about your life? I trust that if you are not right with God, you will do something about it before it is too late.

*(Compact Disc TR-1378E)*

*[Youth Corner—continued from p. 12]*

was what she wanted to do. I said, "God knows the future, and when He saw Adam needed a companion, He created one for him. He can save one just for you if you keep all submitted to Him." She said that was just what she meant to do, and she did. We had prayer and asked God to help her and provide for her future life for her good and to His glory.

Time went on and she continued to live for God. One day her brother came to town to visit them. He had with him a young man who was practicing to be a prize fighter and had come to town to take lessons for fighting. Prayer meeting night came, and her mother asked them to come to the meeting. They did, but the young man had never been in a meeting like it. Her mother, being a great hand to invite folks to the services, asked him to attend the Sunday night services. He enjoyed attending the services and began to attend regularly. When we held a revival meeting a short time after that, he got saved, gave up his training, and really lived for God. Later his affections were turned to this young sister, and in time they got married.

As he grew spiritually and learned of the doctrine of the church, the Lord called him to the ministry. Later she came to me and said, "You said God could give me a companion if He had to save one just for me, and it seems that He did just that."

Selected

## ***Knock and It Shall Be Opened***

*O'er the door of heaven's kingdom  
Are the words forever true,  
"If ye knock it shall be opened"—  
Opened, sinner, yes, to you.*

*Oh, how kind this proclamation  
To the vilest sinner lost—  
Perfect, free and full salvation,  
Purchased at a boundless cost.*

*See the blessed invitation:  
"He that knocks may enter in";  
Will you now accept the offer,  
Casting off your load of sin?*

*Have you long withstood His mercy?  
Has your heart unfeeling grown?  
"He that knocketh here may enter,"  
Is as sure as heaven's throne.*

*Come, poor sinner, read the writing,  
Knock at mercy's door today;  
Hear the love of God inviting,  
Come and enter while you may.*

*Sinner, come, why still delay?  
Knock at mercy's door today;  
"Lost and guilty," be thy plea,  
Then 'twill open wide to thee.*

*D. S. Warner*

# Announcements

- Canby, OR**  
July 11-17  
**Camp Meeting:** Church of God, 522 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Canby, OR 97013  
Complimentary breakfast at motel. Meal after morning services; snack stand after evening services.  
Two services daily: 10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. The first begins Monday at 7:00 p.m.  
Please make reservations in advance, if possible. Everyone welcome!  
For more information contact: Pastor David Stegmeier. Telephone: 503-266-9297
- Warrensville, NC**  
July 11-17  
**Revival:** Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Road, Warrensville, NC 28693  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Brother Mark Rupard. Telephone: 336-385-3501
- Newark, OH**  
July 31-August 7  
**Camp Meeting:** Church of God, God's Acres, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055  
Three services daily: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. The first service begins Sunday at 10:00 a.m.  
The afternoon services will be teaching services. Children's services, Youth services, Prayer services.  
Meals reasonably priced. Air-conditioned tabernacle and dining hall. Book store open between services.  
For lodging reservations contact: Brother or Sister David L. Bush at 740-345-1213.  
For more information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker. Telephone: 740-344-2543
- Blue Ash, OH**  
August 12-13  
**Revival:** Church of God, Civic League 9306 Towne Square Avenue, Blue Ash, OH 45242  
(at Ronald Reagan Highway and Kenwood Road)  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Brother Boch. Telephone: 513-260-1960 or 513-791-0691
- Mt. Pleasant, PA**  
August 22-28  
**Revival:** Mt. Pleasant Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
Service times: Monday-Saturday: 7:00 p.m. & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.  
For more information contact: Pastor Paul Prinkey. Telephone: 724-547-2151
- Niles, MI**  
September 2-4  
**Revival:** Coulter's Chapel Church of God, 3176 Detroit Road, Niles, MI 49120  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Brother Dave Frazer. Telephone: 269-635-1530 or 269-684-3499
- Medina, OH**  
September 3  
**All-Day Fellowship Meeting:** Church of God, 6745 Wooster Pike, Medina, OH  
Service times: 10:00 a.m. & 2:30 p.m. Meal will be served by the local congregation.  
For more information contact the church at 330-725-5993 or call 330-421-0187
- Harvey, IL**  
September 11  
**Special Services:** Church of God, 14701 Myrtle Avenue, Harvey, IL 60426  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Brother Charles Johnson. Telephone: 708-606-7136
- Chicago, IL**  
September 12-18  
**Revival:** Harding Street Church of God, 3924 W 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago, IL 60623  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Brother Aurelius Reedy Raines. Telephone: 708-751-1534
- Kalamazoo, MI**  
September 19-25  
**Revival:** Comstock Avenue Church of God, 555 Alger Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49041  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Pastor Jerry Miller. Telephone: 269-998-3194
- Morehead, KY**  
September 26-  
October 2  
**Revival:** Blue Bank Church of God, 3200 Blue Bank Road, Morehead, KY 40351  
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi  
For more information contact: Brother Jeff Fannin  
Telephone: 606-784-2858 or 606-776-2639 or 606-784-9241

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