

The Gospel Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 48 December 2018 No. 12



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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

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Vol. 48 December 2018 No. 12

Guest Editorial

WINTER CAMP MEETING TIME

It is hard to believe that in a few weeks, Winter Camp Meeting will begin on December 26, 2018, at God's Acres. God's people will gather to worship and to have fellowship together. As always, camp meeting is a special time when we come to have our souls renewed and refreshed. What a wonderful opportunity to feast on heavenly manna and to enjoy the good things of God! He prepares a table that will encourage and lift the heart. The saints are enriched with greater understanding and challenged to keep pressing toward the goal. In Psalm 122:1 the Psalmist David declared, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." He knew the importance of going to the house of God. It was there he received spiritual instructions for living a godly life.

As it has been said so often, we live when the forces of evil have been turned loose against God's people. Those forces are determined to destroy our faith and love for God and for one another. Satan is seeking to divert the saints away from the path of holiness and righteousness. We all need greater enlightenment from the Lord. Learning about the good way and the things that please God is more needful today than ever before.

The Hebrew writer instructed in Hebrews 10:25 not to

forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We need to hear the Word of God and then believe it and obey it. This is what will bring victory to the soul. James warned, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." This is not a time to relax your efforts in your living for God, but rather it is a time, as Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:12 to "Fight the good fight of faith, [and to] lay hold on eternal life." The wise man said in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." We need to gain all the understanding we can and not let it slip away from us. Truth brings freedom and spiritual stability. It also requires diligent obedience.

Camp meeting is held for your spiritual prosperity and blessing. Our desire is to provide a place for you to come and learn of His ways. We encourage you to do all you can to be here so your soul may be fed and enlightened. We write this to stir up your pure minds and to provoke you unto love (Hebrews 10:24). Living for God takes effort. To make Heaven calls for a deep determination and consecration on your part. Regardless of the cost to make it through, it will be worth it all. You must keep in mind that just one glimpse of His dear face will amply repay whatever cost you have suffered or endured.

[continued on page 9]

The True Israel of God



Brother Roger L. Decker

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

I want you to take a look at the nation of Israel. If you take old Israel out of the so-called rapture, the millennium, the antichrist, and the tribulation, there is no need for those doctrines. Every one of them is based around old Israel. Why is that? People do not understand Israel today, and that is what I want to teach you.

Inside the front page of every issue of *The Gospel Trumpeter*, you will find the cardinal teachings of the church. No one can preach them except the Church of God. Other churches preach evangelistic messages, but they cannot preach those cardinal teachings. Someone may inquire, "Why can't they?" What about when

you come to the name of the church? I will never understand how people can be raised on Church of God doctrine and end up worshiping in Babylon. That boils down to one reason, and that is, they have a strong delusion.

When I got saved, I was fed doctrine, and it is through doctrine that I saw the church. Evangelistic messages are necessary, but to see the church you need doctrinal messages. Babylon cannot teach those messages. We need to study the nation of Israel, especially today with so much going on in the Middle East. People who do not know the Truth are confused. A lot of people get confused when the headlines, whether it is on television or on other forms of media, are filled with things about Israel and Pal-

estine. It gives the enemy ample room to plant false theology and to sow seeds of false doctrine in the minds of those who do not know the Truth.

Israel and Palestine have been battling over the land with no signs of either party giving in. Once in a while, they will sit down at a table and supposedly draw up a peace pact, but it does not last very long. Many people take sides about who is right and who is wrong. Because of the false impressions that have come across the pulpits of our land, some feel that when ones engage in battle with Israel, they are actually in a battle against God.

Speaking of old Israel, Jeremiah 3:15 reads, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understand-

ing." First Timothy 2:4 states, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Paul wrote to Timothy saying earlier in that chapter that prayer should be made for all men, for it is God's will that all men be saved first and then come to the knowledge of the Truth. It seems that whenever people see the word Israel in the Bible, they automatically link it to Israel of old. Why? Because of the falseness they hear on the airwaves and in the pulpits, but what they need to do is rightly divide the Word of Truth.

I encourage you to always take your Bible to church and follow along with the preacher. Otherwise, how would you know that he is quoting you the right Scripture if you do not follow along? We are blessed to have a Bible. God has given you that privilege. Truth always stands investigation, but Truth is not of private interpretation.

The Sons of Israel

First, I want you to take a look at when there was first an Israel in the Bible. You will find the word first appears in Genesis 32:28, which reads, "And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Most Bible students know the story of how Jacob wrestled with the angel, or the Scripture actually says a man, and prevailed against him. (If you do not know the story, you can read about it in Genesis, Chapter 32.) His name was changed that day from Jacob to Israel. From that moment on, Jacob was a changed man. Jacob had twelve sons, and they were called the sons of Israel. The twelve sons became the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. When Jacob was old and failing, he called in his sons and blessed each of them. Jacob gave a name

to each one of his sons with a blessing. For example, when he blessed his sons, he said Judah was a lion, which meant praise. Out of the lineage of the tribe of Judah came Jesus Christ. Benjamin was called a wolf, which meant "son of the right hand." Out of that tribe came the Apostle Paul.

There was a tribe of Levi, and violence was the symbol of the blessing, which meant "attachment." It was out of the tribe of Levi that the priesthood was taken. There is a reason that God chose this tribe for the priesthood. The tribe of Levi was the only tribe that stood with Moses against the people when they worshiped the golden calf.

Exodus 32:25-29 states: "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

"And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." That is how the tribe of Levi came to be the priesthood. They were very obedient under Moses.

Of the twelve sons, only two were born to Rachel, and they were Joseph and Benjamin. It is true that Israel of old was God's

people throughout the Old Testament. The Bible makes that very plain. Israel was made up of Old Testament Jews who were guided and directed by ordinances, by the Law, by the prophets, and by God's chosen leaders.

The Idolatry of Solomon

We find that Solomon got caught up in idolatry, which he had no business getting caught up in. It got into his heart. Solomon was a king whom God had blessed immensely, but he got into idolatry and committed a terrible sin against God. When he did, it caused severe division.

First Kings 11:1-13 reads: "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and

sacrificed unto their gods [you wonder how a king who witnessed God's presence come in and blessed him so wonderfully could get so wrapped up in idolatry].

"And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen."

Verse 9 tells us the Lord was angry with Solomon. Why? His heart was turned from the Lord who had appeared to him twice. You never want God to get angry with you. God was angry with Solomon. Sin is sin, no matter who commits it. God was more displeased with the idolatry of Solomon than He was with the vilest of the heathen. Solomon was wise. We often talk about the wisdom of Solomon. He knew better. His understanding showed the vanity as well as the wickedness of idolatry. Although God appeared to Solomon twice, it was to no avail.

The Consequences of Solomon's Sin

Solomon's idolatry was not a secret sin. This was a sin that brought reproach on the nation of Israel. None of the Edomites,

the Zidonites, the Moabites, or the Hittites were as responsible as Solomon. They did not personally know the true God, but Solomon was well acquainted with God. God appeared to Solomon in the dedication of the temple. Second Chronicles 7:12-14 reads: "And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Second Chronicles 7:17-22 states: "And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments; Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel."

"But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house? And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which

brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them."

Backing up to verse 1 we read, "Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house." God was pleased with Solomon. Fire came down as an answer to his prayer. Solomon knew the presence of God, and he also knew from a warning from God that if he went into idolatry and worshiped strange gods that God was going to be angry with him.

God did just what He said He would do. He did not rend the kingdom while Solomon was alive, but He did rend it from Solomon's son. After Solomon's death, the kingdom split into a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. The northern kingdom was known as Israel, and the southern kingdom was known as Judah. The northern kingdom lasted about two hundred years, and then they were overthrown and taken captive by the Syrians. The southern kingdom lasted longer, around three hundred years. You can read that it was taken captive by the Babylonians in Daniel, Chapter 1. It was taken under King Nebuchadnezzar. There was a remnant of the southern kingdom that was allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, when Babylon was overthrown by the Persians under Cyrus the Great.

The Divided Kingdom

At the time of Jesus Christ, there was a divided kingdom. There were the Samaritans, the Gentiles, and the Orthodox Jews who claimed the pure lineage of the tribe of Judah, the pure

lineage of the Israelites. There was severe hatred between the Samaritans, the Jews, and the Gentiles. You can read in John, Chapter 4, of Jesus and the woman at the well.

John 4:9 reads, "Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." In other words, the Jews had no communication with the Samaritans. That is understood to mean that the Jews would be under no kind of obligation from the Samaritans, would not borrow anything from them, would not drink from the same cup, would not sit down to meals with them, would not eat out of the same vessel, would have no religious connections, and would have no commercial dealings with the Samaritans.

This deadly hatred that existed between these two nations was known to all. The Jews cursed the Samaritans and believed them to be accursed. The Jews wanted them to be annihilated. There were several sects of the Jews. The largest groups were the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. The Pharisees were the most elite of all the Jews. They were strong supporters and professed keepers of the Law, and that was the same group that the Apostle Paul belonged to. Then there were smaller groups, such as the Herodians, the Galileans, and the Therapeutes.

How was God going to bring all these groups together? If you were given the job to bring everyone together, how would you do it? Suppose you came into a divided world such as Jesus did. How would you have overcome such hatred? The Sadducees and the Pharisees gathered together against Jesus, but the two groups could not stand each other. The

hatred was so severe between the two groups that talking to the leaders would be completely out of the question, yet every one of them stood under the name of religion. In too many cases, that is exactly what we have today. Many groups cannot get along together, but do not try to unchristianize any of them. All of them claim to be God's people, and all of them claim to be getting their direction and their blessings from God. This was the religious climate Jesus was born into and grew up in. How was He going to get these groups together? I do not believe that the way people choose to go about it works, but the way God went about it does work.

First Corinthians 1:19-29 states: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things

which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence." Romans 11:33 states, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Israel was divided, and it started with Solomon because of his idolatry. It went through his sons, and separated the northern kingdom (Israel) from the southern kingdom (Judah). There was no way for God to get the people together until there was a sacrifice for sin. The sin had to be removed. No doubt, some of the same Jews who stood in Pilate's judgment hall and hollered, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" were present on the Day of Pentecost.

How Was God Going to Get People Together?

God was not going to make several groups, but He was going to make one body. He was not going to bless this group, that group, and another group, and then divide Heaven. Jesus did not deal with men's groups getting together. What did Jesus deal with? He dealt with the making of new creatures.

Ephesians 2:1 states, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:10-15 reads: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without

God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." The only way God could accomplish what He accomplished was through men having a change of heart. That is still the need today. It may be hard for you to think that people, even ministers, could get out of the will of God and into the flesh, but if they did in the days of Jesus, why could they not do it yet today? There has to be a heart change before men and women can get along in one body.

Some people quote Amos 3:3, which says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" They disagree along certain lines with others, so they let them know they cannot walk with them anymore. That is misusing the Scripture. You see, it is not about agreeing with one another, but it is you agreeing with God and me agreeing with God. There are diversities. There are differences of light and understanding. One individual might have been saved for thirty years, but he could walk together with a person who was saved five minutes ago as long as they both agree with God. I repeat, there has to be a heart change before men and women can get along together in one body.

God was going to make a new Israel. God's people are a spiritual people. There is no need for a tribulation, a millennium, a rapture, or an antichrist. Why? In every one of those teachings, there is room for old Israel. All those teachings are centered around Israel of old.

Who Is the Israel Today?

To understand who Israel is today, Romans 9:1-6 tells us: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants [all of that came to them first], and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel."

What is this speaking of? They were not all Church of God that attended there. Likewise, not all who attend Church of God congregations are Church of God. That was what the writer was talking about. What made the difference on who was an Israelite and who was not an Israelite? Paul was surrounded by Israelites. He was surrounded by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and all the different groups, but he said, "Not all are Israel, which are of Israel."

What made the difference? The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18: "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ.

"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon

their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

What caused the Israelites' minds to be blinded? Not all were of Israel. That was a visual. What caused the veil to be on their hearts? The rejection of Jesus Christ, and that is the same cause yet today. We are spiritual Israel today, but not all are spiritual Israel. Why? It depends on your attitude toward Jesus Christ. When is the veil lifted? Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:16, "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away."

"All Israel Shall Be Saved"

Romans 11:16-27 reads: "For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches [the Jews], take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness [this Scripture goes against the 'once in grace, always in grace' doctrine], if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also

shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.

"For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

Verse 26 is the Scripture that hangs them up. It reads, "And so all Israel shall be saved." What do they do? They come in with the tribulation, with the rapture, with the millennium, and with an antichrist. Why? They do so to allow room for old Israel to accept Jesus Christ. Now, to say that all Israel shall be saved is a true statement. All Israel is saved today.

How does Israel get saved? When the Deliverer comes out of Zion, under the new covenant, He shall take away their sins. Old Israel was not saved by bringing up Moses or Abraham, and they certainly were not saved by quoting the commandments. They were saved only when they turned to Jesus Christ. That is the same way yet today with you and me. You are an Israelite when you are saved, when you accept the Deliverer out of Zion.

The Spiritual Israel

Under the new covenant, we no longer have literal Israel, but rather spiritual Israel. Every one who is saved is a spiritual Jew.

When a Jew gets married, he should marry a Jew. If you are looking for a companion, you need to get a spiritual Jew. You should go to your Father's house and get one who is spiritual. Today Israel represents the Kingdom of God. You have to turn to the Lord to be an Israelite. You have to be saved to be a New Testament Jew.

Romans 2:28-29 states: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly [you are not Church of God just because you dress right]; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

What was the writer saying? You are a Jew, or a child of God, if you have been changed on the inside. You may change your demeanor and measure to the outward standard, but you are not a Jew if you have not been changed on the inside. That is what the writer was talking about.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 6:15-16: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, [What rule was he talking about? He was speaking of becoming a new creature.] peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." Nowhere in the Bible does it say that God has anything for literal Israel in the future. If God did, that would make Him a respecter of persons. The literal Jew has to enter the Kingdom of God the same way you got in if you are saved.

There was a man who came to Jesus named Nicodemus. He had some good credentials. He was a ruler of the Jews and a member of the Sanhedrin, but he was interested in the teachings of

Christ. He came by night, for whatever reason he came. The statement he received is the way all of us gain access to the Kingdom of God: you must be born again. That is not possible if you do not believe in the Messiah. That is the reason not all Israel was of Israel. Why? Not all believed in the Messiah. You talk about blaspheming the Holy Ghost! People could actually walk with Christ, touch Him, shake His hand, and at the same time miss the fact that He was the Messiah. Why? They had rejected the things of God and the commandments of God, and they were in idolatry for so long that they could not even recognize Him. As the Bible says, they did not know the day of their visitation. Some people around the Church of God who sit under Church of God messages fail to yield. They get so used to it that God cannot stir them.

God's Plan for a New Israel

Jesus Christ was rejected by the Jewish nation as a whole at the first advent, but that did not stop God's plan for having a new Israel. God's time clock did not stop and then restart again; it never stopped. Those who had the veil of blindness lifted had it lifted because they turned to the Lord. Now, God does not have two or three different ways to get Israel to turn around. The way into the kingdom is the same way laid out before you and me. Israel had the advantage that many of the Gentiles did not have.

Many of the Israelites had gotten away from God. The half-breeds did not have the same advantage that the Orthodox Jew did. When Jesus came, they had the Scriptures of what they had studied. They had read that Messiah would come. Israel had the advantage over the rest of the world at the coming of Jesus Christ. Romans 3:1-2 says:

"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God [or the Word of God]."

Israel has no more right to the Kingdom of God than the vilest of sinners today. God has an Israel today, and it is those who have been born of the Spirit of God. Today we have an Israel, but it is a spiritual Israel. It is not Israel after the flesh. God is not going to perform some great work in the future for those who are of unbelief. He is not going to do that for them or anyone else. If you are in unbelief, there is only one way out of that, and that is to believe the Gospel.

When you come to Jesus Christ, you must have godly sorrow for your sins. Too often that is lacking today. When I got saved, I was not interested in anything but getting rid of sin. When you really have godly sorrow, you want to get rid of your

sin bad enough that you will quit. While you are praying and asking God to save you, God is looking right down in the recesses of your heart. He sees whether or not you are going to turn. If you are not going to turn, you are not going to get anywhere with God.

When I got saved, I was quite a sinner. We had backslidden, and my wife had gotten back to the Lord ahead of me, and she kept asking me to come to revival, so I went. I sat as far back as I could get. When Brother Emerson Wilson brought the message, it stirred me, but during the invitation, I planted my feet, so to speak, and I made up my mind that I was not about to move. Soon Brother Wilson came off the pulpit and started walking up the aisle, and I knew that he was coming back to me. He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Brother Decker, is God dealing with you?"

I said, "Yes, but I'm not ready

yet."

He said, "You never will be; it is when God is ready." Down the aisle I went and knelt at the altar. I can even remember what I prayed. I was not used to talking to God, but I told Him, "I don't know what I need, but whatever it is, would You give it to me?" He did just that. When I came away from the altar, I came up one new man, a new creature.

That is exactly what Jesus came to do with the Israelites and all those different groups. Why? He wanted to make one new man. All those who did accept Jesus Christ are the Israelites today. All of those who accept Jesus Christ are spiritual Jews. If you do not like being called a Jew, I am sorry; that is what you are if you are saved. If you do not like being called a Jew, you are probably not saved.

(Compact Disc TR-1901)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

In addition to hearing the precious Word of God, there are other blessings to going to camp meeting. It is a time to share burdens and problems with other saints of God. Hearing testimonies of praise of victories won through God's grace that is always uplifting. One trick Satan uses is that of trying to convince ones that their situation is unique. He endeavors to persuade individuals that they are the only one who ever had a

circumstance like theirs. However, when you are privileged to learn of the trials that others have had and how they have overcome, you will find that this is a common salvation. You are not alone and your problem in life is not unique.

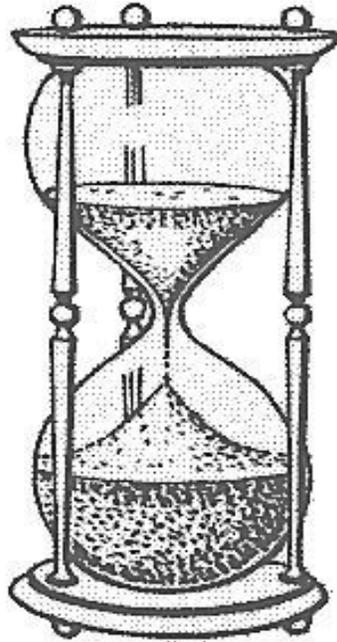
Pastor Roger Decker extends an invitation for you to join us and others at this camp meeting. We are looking for a time of fellowship and feasting. The Lord desires to renew your hope and

increase your faith. It will be worth all the effort that you put forth to attend. Last but not least, we ask that you pray earnestly for lost souls and for the success of the meeting. God's direction and presence is certainly coveted in every service. Having Him in our midst as the Honored Guest is of utmost importance. He is the only hope of redemption for those who are lost.

**You have never tested God's resources until
you have attempted the impossible.**

*Ephesians 5:15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

We Are Running Out of Time



Brother Larry Dishman

Living Unwisely

Our Scripture text says to see that you "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time." Our greatest danger is letting secular things crowd out the divine things. Too often people live by life's demands instead of God's priorities. Remember, life is too short to do everything that you want to do, but it is long enough to do everything that God wants you to do. Someone once said this: "Yesterday is a cancelled check. Tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is the only cash you have—so spend it wisely." A poem entitled "Just a Minute" by Dr. Benjamin E. Mays reads:

*I've only just a minute.
Only sixty seconds in it.*

*Forced upon me, can't refuse it.
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it.
But it is up to me to use it.
I must suffer if I lose it,
Give an account if I abuse it.
Just a tiny little minute,
But eternity is in it.*

A survey asked, "What do you live for?" to which 94 percent of those surveyed answered that they are enduring today and living for tomorrow. That is living unwisely! Too many people worry about tomorrow, and they face the future out of breath because they try to fight tomorrow's battles today. Wisdom is taking every opportunity to fully use the time granted to you. Instead of killing time, God wants you to redeem the time. Instead of counting the days, He wants you to make your days count.

The Psalmist David wrote in Psalm 107:2, "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so." Possibly Paul would have said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord *do* so." You need to redeem the time in the power of the Spirit and for the glory of God.

As the people of God, we should redeem the time, because we have been redeemed. Some opportunities knock only one time. When we have the opportunity, we ought to take advantage of it. Time is a strange commodity. We cannot save it, retrieve it, relive it, stretch it, borrow it, loan it, stop it, or store it. We can only use it or lose it. We cannot call "time out" in the game of life. Indeed, friend, there is no such thing as a literal instant replay. That appears only on film in the movies or in televised sports.

I want you to read a poem called "Time's Paces" by Henry Twells. These lines are displayed on the front of a clock that hangs in Chester Cathedral. It reads:

*When as a child I laughed and wept,
Time crept.
When as a youth, I waxed more
bold,
Time strolled.
When I became a full-grown man,
Time RAN.
When older still I daily grew,
Time FLEW.
Soon I shall find, in passing on,
Time gone.
O Christ! wilt Thou have saved me
then?
Amen.*

Time will soon be gone. We are running out of time! Though the Lord may not come for many years, we are still running out of time. Job 14:1 says, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." We are here for only a few days, and I fear that too many do not stop to consider that we are running out of time. The Savior said in John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Wasted Opportunities

Paul exhorted the believers in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." In Psalm 90:12 we read, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Yesterday has passed, and it cannot be changed. There is nothing that you can change about your past. Certainly, if you have sinned in the past or if you have failed God, you can receive forgiveness. You can repent and be forgiven of the past. Thank God, tomorrow has not come yet;

therefore, you can make the most of opportunities that God gives today. May God's Spirit help you to seize the day while you may. It takes only a moment to be kind, but the results of that moment of kindness can last forever.

When one door closes, another door opens. Too often people look so long and so regretfully at the door that is closed that they do not see that another door has opened. You need to look for the door that God is opening. Everything is to be done for the glory of God and in the light of eternity. You must remember that we live in a fallen universe. You should not put off until tomorrow what should be done today. Procrastination is a thief of time. You need to remember that even as a Christian, you should not put off until tomorrow what you can do today. One of the greatest tragedies in life is wasted opportunity and not making the most of what God has given you.

How valuable is Truth to you? A worldly and wise man will part with nothing except for its values, yet many foolishly part with time for nothing. As a child of God, if you are going to redeem the time, you must watch for opportunities. For example, you must watch for opportunities to talk to an individual about his soul. You must watch for opportunities to testify and to witness to tell others what Christ has done for you. "Redeeming the time" chances must be sought after. You should not put off saying the right words when God sends you the opportunity. We must go on the principle of "now or never." This will make you eager to embrace opportunities and urge the undecided to embrace Christ at once.

Every act of kindness to the unconverted will help in the end. As a Christian, you should be up and about the Father's business. You may be rich or poor, you

may be financially bankrupt, but none of us is absolutely bankrupt in the precious commodity of time that remains. Paul said to redeem the time. You need to live in such a way that you can get the most out of your time. You should live as if every moment counts, because it does. You can make more money, but you cannot make more time. Once time is gone, it is gone forever. When your time on this earth is over, you will give an account to the One who gave you your allotment of this precious commodity.

Every minute is precious! You should not say, "Brother So-and-So has more time than I do." The difference between people is how they use the time that God has given them. Time is a precious opportunity, so you need to value it every day. Time is life. To waste time is to waste life, and that is a foolish thing. No doubt, you have heard the song entitled "Wasted Years." It is foolish to waste time. Wasted hours add up to wasted days, wasted weeks, and wasted years. My mother was fifty-five years of age when she passed away. Just a couple of days before she passed away, she got my oldest brother in the car with her and sang that song to him.

Procrastination

You should recognize procrastination as a sin and repent of it. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." You ought to cultivate the habit of immediate obedience. So many times people hear the Word of God during a message and God moves upon their hearts; however, during the invitation they think about what God has shown them and say, "I'll pray about it when I get home." As time goes by, they fail to pray about the need. I believe that when God

speaks in a service, it is important to move then and not wait. You should pray while it is fresh on your mind.

Procrastination and disobedience are really a kind of sin. Time cannot be stretched. Only so much is possible in a given day. Time cannot be shared, loaned, or borrowed. You need to stop worrying about tomorrow and stop waiting for tomorrow. You should give God today, and He will take care of tomorrow. Time wasted can never be recovered. No man has ever possessed the same moment twice. Are you wasting your life? Are you wasting time? We number our years, but it is wiser to number our days, because we live one day at a time.

One poet wrote: "*Time that is past, you can never recall. A time to come, you're not sure at all. Only the present is now in your power; Therefore, redeem and improve every hour.*"

Someone in Africa said: "Each morning a gazelle and a lion wake up, and the gazelle knows that if it cannot outrun the fastest lion, it will not make it; it will be dinner. The lion knows that if it cannot outrun the slowest gazelle, it will starve, so both of them wake up running." As a Christian, we have to wake up running, spiritually speaking. There is a race for you to run. Satan, as a roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour. Satan is on your trail and you must not stop, be slothful, or be careless. You must keep up the race until you hear the Master say, "Well done."

One time I read about a snail that started up the trunk of an apple tree, and you know how slowly a snail moves. A worm came out of a crevice and said to the snail, "No need to go up there, because there are no apples up there."

The snail said, "There will be when I get there."

Redeem the Time

Friend, day by day, you need to be faithful, be persistent, and redeem the time. That is what God wants of you. You need to spend today as if there will be no certain tomorrow. You need to be watchful about the little things, especially the brief moments of time. We read in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Friend, death is an appointment that you will not miss, and it is one appointment that you will not be late for. How long will the rest of your life be? If you knew that you had only one month left to live, how would it change your life? You should live each day as though this could be your last day.

Someone once said, "I wasted time, now time wastes me." I would like you to read another poem entitled "Too Busy." It reads:

*Too busy to read the Bible,
Too busy to wait and pray!
Too busy to speak out kindly
To someone by the way!*

*Too busy to care and struggle,
To think of the life to come!
Too busy building mansions,
To plan for the heavenly home.*

*Too busy to help a brother
Who faces the winter blast!
Too busy to share his burden
When self in the balance is cast.*

*Too busy for all that is holy
On earth beneath the sky;
Too busy to serve the Master,
But – not too busy to die.*

One person stated it right when he said, "We have time for pleasure, and we have time for this and for that, but no time for God." We need to learn from yesterday, live for today, and hope for tomorrow. Eternity will be appreciated only in the measure

that you have rightly handled time. How are you handling your time? You must work the works of Him that sent you while it is day. Night comes when no one works. Time is what we want the most but utilize the worst. Are you redeeming the time? It is too late to redeem the time that is past, but it is not too late to redeem the time that is passing.

Some ways to redeem the time are to look for opportunities to witness, to look for opportunities to slip in kind words, and to look for opportunities to tell what Jesus has done for you. Yesterday is past and cannot be changed, and tomorrow may not come; therefore, you ought to make the most of your opportunities that God gives you today. May God's Spirit enable you to seize the day while you may.

When you get one of those irritating calls asking for this or for that, why not turn it into an opportunity to ask your caller if he or she knows the Lord Jesus Christ? The first principle of time management is recognizing the value of time and redeeming it. Wisdom is taking every opportunity to fully use the time that has been granted to you. Friend, you ought to be constantly moved to further advance the cause of Christ by each tick of the clock, because the passing time should stir you to remove yourself from a life of slothfulness.

Each tick of the clock should be a sharp reminder to rouse you from sleep. It is not only the time that you have but also the time that you lose. If you lose time, then you fail to be the steward that God has called you to be. God wants you to redeem the time. There is one thing that you will not be able to do after you get to Heaven. You will not be able to bring any souls to Jesus. When you get to Heaven, you cannot win souls to Christ. When you get to Heaven, you cannot bring your family to Jesus. It will

be too late. Your heart must be set aflame for the lost now. You must be up and about your Father's business now.

Live With Eternity in View

Another truth that should drive you out of your easy chair is that Jesus is coming, and He said to occupy until He comes. As a child of God, you need to live in such a way that you are redeeming the time, so that on that great and final day, He will be able to say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." If an individual wastes his time and fails to redeem the time, will he truly hear the Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant"? Redeeming the time means that you are constantly alert to spiritual opportunities that God brings your way so that you grab them as a wise merchant grabs a bargain. The reason that you are alert to these opportunities is that you are living wisely with eternity in view.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." You need to learn to live in the eternal realm now. Today is the only day that you have to redeem the time. If you miss this seasonable opportunity, you will miss the eternal harvest associated with that spiritual opportunity. You need to stop saying, "If only I had time" and start taking the time to do God's will. The greatest danger in life is permitting urgent things to crowd out the most important things. The things of God are the most important things. Dear friend, may God, by His Holy Spirit, cause you to so order your steps that when that great day comes, you will hear the glorious words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Friend, time is running out for you to set your house in order. Christian, time is running out for you to get your loved ones in. Time is running out for you to redeem the time and get souls saved. To the sinner, time is running out for you to get saved. You may say, "I feel that I am fairly healthy." Though your blood is fresh in your veins and your bones are full of marrow, you do not know how short time may be for you.

In the parable of the rich man in Luke, Chapter 12, he was not sick before he died. In verse 19 he said, "Soul, . . . take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." However, that very night death terminated his life. We do not read that he had any physical problems. He was boasting and bragging about what he was going to do in the future. Verse 20 reads, "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." This rich man ran out of time.

"Now Is the Day of Salvation"

You can read of another rich man in Luke, Chapter 16. He died, and verse 23 states, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." What happened to him? He ran out of time, and it runs out for thousands of people every day. Hell is the place of torments, and there is no oil of mercy to ease the torments of the wicked. There is no incense of prayer to appease God's wrath.

Sinner friend, you need to break away from your iniquities. What has become of your life and your soul? What would you change if this were your last day? You should treat every day as if it is your very last day, because one of these mornings, you are going to get up and it will be your last morning. You are going to face the Judgment. Time is the seed of eternity, and tomorrow is time nowhere but on a fool's calendar.

It is time to stop saying, "Tomorrow I will get saved." Proverbs 27:1 says, "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

To make your life count for eternity, you must be wise about how you spend your time. I ask you, my friend, what will be your eternal harvest? You need to cut loose from the past, bury your failure in the sea of God's forgetfulness, and let Him give you a brand-new day. If you have not repented and placed your faith in the Son of God, now is the time.

The Scripture says in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"

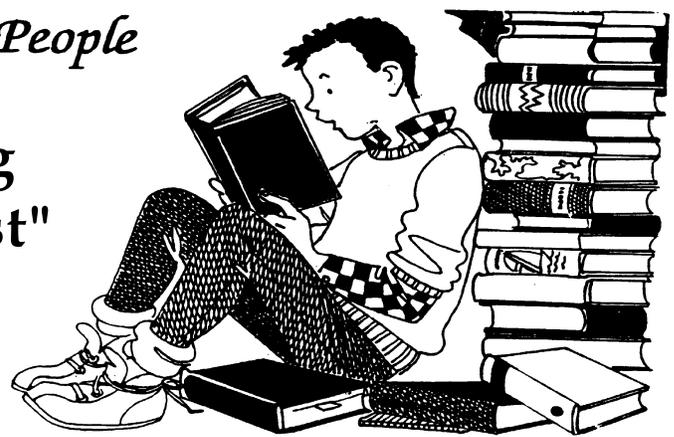
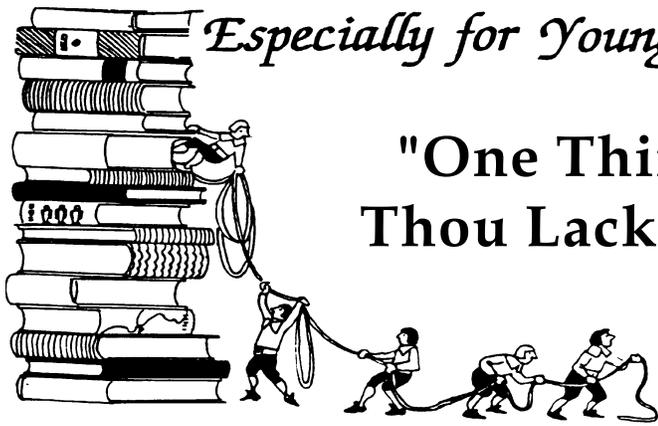
The clock of life is only wound once. No one knows when the hand will stop, at an early or a late hour. Now is the only time you own to do the precious will of God. Do not wait until tomorrow, because the clock of life may be standing still by this time tomorrow for you, my friend. You need to think about it.

While the door of mercy is still open, while the blood of Jesus still avails, this is the time to get the need met in your heart and life. Maybe you feel that you have not been redeeming the time as you should. The devil has been cheating you out of your time. You ought to repent of that. Friend, if the devil can cheat you out of your time, he can cheat you out of your soul. That is what he is trying to do. Do not allow the devil to cheat you out of your soul.

(Compact Disc TR-1792)

Especially for Young People

"One Thing Thou Lackest"



Mark 10:17-22 reads: "And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

Luke 18:18-23 states: "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet

lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich."

What caught my attention as I was reading this was that Jesus presented this rich, young man with a remedy for his problem. He was lacking one thing in his life. Jesus pointed out that he was to sell all and give to the poor so that he could have eternal life and follow Him. Many times people are presented with a remedy for something that is lacking in their lives, but what do they do with it? Often, as noted in both of these accounts, they go away grieved, or sorrowfully, but it does not have to be that way with you, young person.

By all accounts, this young ruler seemed to live a good, moral life, because he said he had kept all the commandments from his youth. Nevertheless, Jesus told him that he lacked one thing. You see, living a good, moral life is not going to get you into Heaven. It is going to take more than living a good, moral life. The Bible does not state that this young ruler had done anything bad. It seems that he lived his life to the letter of the Law. However, Jesus let him know that he lacked in one area of his life.

The definition of the word *lack* is, "to be deficient, to be

short, or to stand in need of something." This young ruler was standing in need of something, and the answer was right in front of him, yet he went away sorrowfully and grieved. This young ruler let one thing stand in his way of following Jesus.

One song says, "*More than anything in my life, I've got to make it.*" Whatever it takes, I do not want to let one thing stand in my way of making Heaven my home. Rather than one thing standing in your way, you should have a desire to make it to Heaven at all cost.

Suppose you were to meet God at the Judgment bar tonight, and He were to say: "You went to church all your life. You read the Bible and prayed every day, you kept the dress standard, you sang in the choir, you visited the nursing homes and the sick, you worked with the youth and in the service of God, you helped on church work days, and you witnessed to others. All those things were good, but you lacked one thing."

How sad it would be to spend all your life doing these good things, which are needful in the work of God, and then hear God say, "You lacked one thing." Just as Jesus pointed out to this young man, no matter how much you think you have obeyed His commands and led a godly life, you can still miss the mark if you allow something besides God to

take first place in your life. Just like this young ruler, you can make the mistake of thinking that you are all right with God when you are lacking.

I wonder how many people sit in church every week, thinking they have followed God's commands from their youth, thinking they are good people, yet they are missing the mark. Something is between them and God, and they refuse to give it over to Him. They hang on to that one thing, but it is going to keep them from making Heaven their home someday.

God is faithful to point out needs in individual lives, yet many walk away without getting those needs met, just as this young ruler walked away without his need being met. I believe Christ looked into the face of that young man, reading his life and searching his character. The Bible says Christ loved this young man, just as He loves each and every one of us. Christ desired to give him peace and joy that would change his life. Jesus said in Mark 10:21, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."

Christ was drawn to this young man. He found this young man to be sincere. Although a person is sincere, he could be sincerely wrong or sincerely misguided. This young man was sincere in what he was doing, and when he said, "All these have I kept from my youth up," Christ gave him a test, just as we each are tested. As God brings things your way and shows you things, He is testing you. He called upon this young ruler to choose between the heavenly treasures and worldly treasures.

Many times you will be presented with choices. You can go the way of the world or you can go God's way and follow

Him and take up your cross. How many times have you failed the test because you wanted to hang on to that one thing that you put first in your life? Are you allowing something to take first place rather than God? Again, this young man was sincere. The heavenly treasure was assured if he would have followed Christ and laid aside the earthly treasures that he had and had given the money to the poor. Self must yield. This young man's will, just like yours, must be given to Christ's control.

Sometimes God will send things your way to break your will. God corrects every child of God because He loves and cares for us. He wants to see us do well, just as godly parents want to see their children do well.

The rich, young man had a strong will, and all he had to do was to give it over to Christ. As a Christian, you have to give your will over to Christ if you are going to be successful in your Christian walk. In many cases, individuals have yielded everything but self. Many times self stands in the way of having victory over things in their lives.

Christ longed to see the young man in our lesson have a humble and contrite heart, conscious of God's supreme love, given to God in the perfection of Christ. Christ saw in this young man someone who could have been a great worker for God if only he would have let go of that one thing. Today many people cling to the one thing that hinders them in the work of God and in living for God.

Christ saw potential in this young man. All he had to do was place himself under Christ's guidance, and he would have been a power for good. He possessed qualifications that, if united with the Savior, would have enabled him to become a divine force among men. Christ loved him, and love for Christ

was awakened in this young ruler's heart. Love begets love. Jesus longed to see him as a coworker with Him. He longed to make him like Himself, just as He wants to do with you. He wants to mold you into His image, just as He wanted to do with this young ruler. He wanted to develop the excellence of his character and sanctify it to the Master's use. If he had made the choice to give up self, how different his future would have been! Christ read the young man's heart, just as He reads your heart. The young man lacked only one thing, but that was a vital principle. He needed the love of God in his soul. If you do not make the right choices and do not go the way Christ would have you go, it will prove eternally fatal for you.

By indulgence, selfishness will strengthen. In order for one to receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered. You have to let go of self. One song says, "*Let self be slain, let Jesus reign Within my heart alway.*" Your heart has to become His throne, and He has to reign in your life in order for you to be what God wants you to be.

When it comes to lacking something, one might say that all a dead man lacks is life, all a beggar lacks is money to make him rich, or all a sick man lacks is his health to make him feel well. When it comes to lacking one thing in living for God, then one lacks everything. It would do you well to pause daily to check and see if you lack anything in your life.

Only one defective o-ring on the space shuttle Challenger in 1986 proved to be fatal for all aboard. I want you to think about that. Only one thing was wrong. Only seventy-three seconds after liftoff, the space shuttle exploded. In foreign affairs, one wrong step may lead to a remediless disaster. One error in trade may make a

person bankrupt. For the lack of one anchor, a vessel could be lost. When it comes to spiritual matters, lacking one thing in your life could prove eternally fatal.

In the Biblical accounts of the young ruler, we find that he loved his great possessions more than he loved his soul. What is it that you love more than your soul? What is the one thing that you are clinging to that you find more precious than your never-dying soul? It may be an appetite for something, and that could be a wide range of things. It could be one ambition, it could be companionship, it could be one pleasure, or it could be one errant decision. Everyone is called to choose between influences that help or hinder full commitment to God. Just as Jesus looked upon this young ruler in love, God

loves you and wants you to live in such a manner that pleases Him in every way. Unfortunately, there are ones who will hear on the Day of Judgment, "One thing thou lackest," and have to turn away sorrowfully and grieved. Friend, the story does not have to end that way.

The story of the young ruler did not have to end as it did. Is Jesus saying to you, "One thing thou lackest"? If you are lacking in some area of your life, you do not have to walk away sorrowfully, as this young man did. You can walk away joyfully when you obey and take care of the one thing that you lack. There is joy in obedience, and you can go away joyfully if you will be obedient to what God is telling you.

One day I want to hear God say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). Is that what you want to hear? The difference between that rich, young ruler walking away joyfully or sorrowfully and grieved was subject to his obedience to what Jesus was asking him to do. Sad to say, he walked away because he held on to that one thing that he cherished more than his eternal soul. You should not walk away with that one thing in exchange for your soul. God has victory for you if you will obey Him.

Brother Steve Strelecky



Winter Bible School

December 27 - 29, 2018

2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Grades: K-6 (including 12 year olds)

Story Crafts Games

**The Church of God
675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055
GodsAcres.org**



Exodus 32:1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their

ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD.

6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

7 And the LORD said unto

Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:

8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people.

A Fool's Paradise



Brother Mike Wilks

Consider Your Ways

The subject of the message is a serious one, and my intention is to help you to consider your ways. A fool is a silly or stupid person, or a simpleton. *Strong's Concordance* defines a fool as a person who is heedless, senseless, dull, and tasteless. No man would take pride in being called a fool. Suppose your boss at work

were to call you in and say that he had a promotion for you, and with excitement you rush to the office. Suppose he had a nice office for you, but on the desk was your title: Fool. It would make you feel terrible, and you would not like that.

People do not wear shirts that say "Fool" on the back, but when you ignore the things of God, you are being a fool. I am not talking

about people who do not know any better, but rather I am talking about those who know the Gospel and who know better than to do what they are doing. Proverbs 3:35 reads, "The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools." You should never want to wear that title. Many times children are asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" No child ever says

he wants to grow up to be a fool. As children begin to get older, sometimes they become careless. When was the last time you did something foolish? What was the root of it? It might have been carelessness or laziness.

Someone may drink alcohol and drive under the influence, and that is foolish because he knows better. He knows that when he gets in that car, if he gets pulled over, he could lose his license and possibly end up in jail, but he does it anyway. That is foolishness, which is what I am speaking of.

A person does not get up one day and say he wants his name to be in the newspaper in connection with something terrible. However, one foolish act could get his name in the newspaper. Once a person's name is there, a stigma comes with it. When you get into sin, you are gambling on the fact that a stigma will be put on you. When you walk into a restaurant in town, people may say, "I know who *that* is," but they will not say it for the right reason.

A person is not born as a fool. You cannot help where you were born; you had nothing to do with that. You cannot change your skin color. There are a lot of things that you cannot change, but you were not born a fool. God does not make fools. God makes everything good. When you get away from God, the world will give you free range. Actually, it will exalt fools and make a big show of them. What about good people who are out there? Those are the people that I want to be around.

Most Hollywood actors and actresses and their far out ideas keep getting further and further away from the things of God. If you were to climb out on a tree limb, it might break, and you would fall. When the restraint of a pastor is lifted off a person, he will go astray, just as when Mo-

ses left the children of Israel for a while to go up in the mountain to talk to God. Aaron gave in to the people when they begged him to make an idol to worship instead of worshiping the true God. Aaron did not obey God; he listened to the people. That will get a person in trouble every time.

I want to be in a church that obeys God, and that is the reason I am in the Church of God. My soul is the most valuable thing that I possess, and I am not going to let just any man fill it with ideas. I want to know that somebody is feeding me Truth. People seemingly walk into any church, learn that the minister has a degree in theology, see that it is a nice building and has nice people, and think that it must be okay. Have you looked into the Word of God to learn what God demands of you?

Casting Cargo Overboard

One time I was speaking to a man who was an English major in college who had never opened the Bible, and that really shocked me. I said: "How are you an English major, yet you have never opened the Bible? Shame on you! You should not get your degree until you have read the Bible."

Some humans act like animals, just as the fathers and mothers who have left their little babies in a hot car. My little children mean everything to me, and they are helpless. They totally depend on their mother and me. I cannot imagine leaving my helpless little children to die in a hot car because I had some selfish desire. That is what some parents are doing today. Because of their selfish desires, they let their children perish. They might not perish in the back of a car, but they are going to perish. Shame on such parents! Perhaps they need to be put in the back of a car to experience a little of what it feels like to have the hot sun roast

them. Fools are lighthearted, thoughtless, and selfish.

You need to be careful of what you say to others. Young person, you need to be very careful of what you say to one another, especially if it could be hurtful. Someone might leave the congregation and lose his soul because of something you said. Therefore, you need to watch what you say to people, and you need to be kind. Jesus can humble you. No matter how macho you may think you are, Jesus can bring you down very quickly. Even though you might have been joking, you had better be careful, because even joking can hurt. There are some things you should not joke about. You may get away with it, but it might hurt someone, and that person may never tell you. I do not want to give place for the devil to work through me. An unkind word is all it takes, and the devil can begin to work.

A fool finds God's way heavy, intrusive, and restrictive. That is how some people view the Word of God. They ignore the commandments. I did the same exact thing. I began throwing the commandments of God overboard. I wanted to lighten my ship. I got tired of the rules. I was in a Christian school for a long time, and my grandpa would preach every Tuesday. I can remember dreading that day each week. The altar call would come, and God would talk to me every time. I would sit there and resist with all I had. Do you know what? There came a time when God let me go my own way. Young person, you should not resist Him. There are benefits in serving God.

Acts 27:17-19 reads: "Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they

lightened the ship; And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship." Those aboard the ship were in trouble due to the storm, so they started casting cargo overboard. When the Word of God begins to weigh heavily on people, that is what they often do. They begin to cast the commandments overboard. Why? Because they do not want that weight on them any longer.

Often when young people turn eighteen years of age, they say: "I am out of here. I do not want to be under this yoke anymore." Young person, you should take advantage of being able to live at home. You should get a job and save your money. You should not waste your time and money before you get on your feet. You should stay at home and be wise. Your parents love you. Many young people want to get away from counsel that is sensible. They want to surround themselves with friends that make them feel good. They say, "Let's go out and have a big time." The next day they talk about doing it again. They do not realize they may be turning into an alcoholic or possibly a drug addict.

Cutting Off Your Only Source of Help

Proverbs 1:22 states, "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" Many people know the things of God, yet they disregard them. They do not like to go to church because they do not like any restrictions, so they just disregard them. Friend, if you do that, you are walking in your own woe. Some people do not like to brush their teeth, but we recommend it. They may refuse to do it, but it will become very evident shortly.

Someone once commented,

"Motivation does not last forever, and neither does bathing, but we recommend it daily." There are some things that Christians have to do. Being a child of God takes work, but there is great reward with it. God does not have lazy Christians. When the world looks on you and sees someone who is busy, it impresses them. One of the worst stigmas a person can have is being lazy. We are leaving a trail behind that people are noticing. If Jesus should come right now, would you be lost eternally? Careless living will break down that spiritual connection that God has given you, and you will begin to lose power. The devil will be glad to fill you with something else. He would love to fill that void. God's people need to be careful of losing their power.

I am talking about a fool's paradise. Matthew 22:4-5 reads: "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." It is amazing to me how some people destroy their spiritual hearing. I have never heard anybody say he wants to lose his natural hearing, yet people are destroying their spiritual hearing. They do not want to hear the things of God because they are too heavy, so they disregard them.

The Truth is strong. Jesus said in Mark 4:9, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." In Mark 8:18 He said, "Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" Jesus was saying, "You have ears, but you are not listening." Why? They destroyed their spiritual ears by refusing to listen; therefore, they cut God off. In doing so, they cut off their only source

of help.

Many people like to hear messages that tickle their ears, and that is what false religion does. It makes little promises that appeal to the flesh, such as: "Come on in and make yourself at home. We have coffee and donuts in the back." What about your soul? I do not want to go to some church and hear a rock concert. I want to hear the Gospel. I was talking with a man who says he has a ministry through music. I told him that I go to the Church of God. I go to hear the Word preached. I thank God for inspiring music, but it is the Word of God that sets men and women free.

False religions make big promises. Some say, "Once saved, always saved." I know of someone who went to a church and got saved, but he went back out into sin, and he fell back into drug addiction and died in that condition. Do you know what they put in the obituary and on the memorial pamphlet that you get at the funeral home? They said he wrote in his Bible, "I got saved on such and such date." They took confidence in that even though he died a drug addict. My friend, false religion is a plague. I am not trying to hurt anybody, but I am telling you the truth.

False Religion Is Corrupt

Isaiah 32:9 states, "Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech." Amos 6:1 tells us, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." Luke 12:19-20 reads: "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" The Bible uses the word *fool* fairly often. God is truly

honest with every individual, yet many people go their own way and resist what they know is right. False religion seeks an easy way. The Gospel is Truth in action.

A well-known doctor speaking on nutrition may recommend a certain food supplement to make people healthy, but that supplement will not do them much good unless they improve their diet. Often people do not want to talk about improving their diet. All they want to talk about is that supplement. That is the way false religion works. It is just a spiritual pill without life changes.

Friend, the Truth requires every member of your body. The Church of God is not going to have "drive-thru" services where you can sit in your car in your pajamas and listen to a message. You need to get up, get dressed, brush your teeth, comb your hair, and be in church.

I want to be around people who have a real experience with God. I once read something that talked about the outward works of a hypocrite trying to make up for the deficiencies of what is in the heart. That is exactly what people do when they are big talkers, yet there is a big void down in their hearts. What are they doing? They are trying to make up for the emptiness in their souls by talking big.

Some people say they love God, but they fail to attend the church services regularly. If you really love God, you are not going to stay home to watch a movie. You will get to church and listen to the Word of God.

I can remember a large youth conference near where I grew up. A man went out on the stage with a long ponytail down his back. What a disgrace! Nature tells you that it is not right for a man to have long hair, much less somebody who says he is a Christian. What an absolute mockery

of Jesus Christ! The Bible says it is a shame for men to have long hair. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" My little niece was getting confused because in the Bible story, they portrayed Jesus with long hair, and she asked, "Why is Jesus a girl?" Nature was telling that little girl that Jesus did not have long hair.

"Hear What the Spirit Saith"

Proverbs 15:2 tells us, "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." How long are people going to continue to think that God cannot touch them? If you are lost, how long do you think that God will allow you to go on as you are? One day God is going to call your number. When God makes that decision, you cannot say, "What doest thou?" It is going to be done, whether you like it or not. When God says it is your time to pass on, no power can stop that from happening. When God says something, it is going to be done.

If every Christian was as a little child, great things could be accomplished. If every Christian was as you are, what could God do? Could He build up the kingdom? Would it be a kingdom with power or would it be a kingdom with loose living? Sinner friend, if every sinner was as you are, what kind of world would this be?

I thank God that I became a new man when God got hold of my heart. He wants to get hold of you too. Most people do not want the Holy Spirit to govern them. The Holy Spirit is a governor. He will tell you what to do whether it suits you or not. Who are you allowing to govern you? Is the devil your buddy? The devil will appear to be your friend. He will be glad to get you into more

trouble.

What desires are you creating to take with you for the rest of your days? Almost everyone is born with the taste for sweet things. You do not have to work at it to like it. However, to have a taste for the things of God, you must be born again. Otherwise, the things of God will be far too difficult for you, and you are going to fall out of the race. It is only through the power of God that you can stand for Christ.

Revelation 2:7 reads, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

I want to make it to the paradise of God. I think about the one thief on the cross who asked for mercy and what a good decision he made. The other thief was mocking Jesus, but one said, in essence: "Let him alone. Do you not fear God? This just Man did no wrong. We are on a cross because we deserve it." Then he said, "Lord, remember me," and Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43).

When God calls you, He expects an answer. When I was a little boy playing in the woods and my mother called me, I was expected to respond, not two hours later, but immediately. When God calls you, He wants an answer. Do you not want to be at peace with God? I can truthfully say the greatest experience I have ever felt is to have peace with God. Christ can wash away all those sins that haunt you. His blood goes deeper than the stain of sin has gone. There is still power in the blood of Jesus Christ. He wants to save you.

(Compact Disc TR-1377)

What Are You Holding On To?



Brother James Presley

Denying Self

Some saints, sinners, and backsliders hold on to things, and it causes them problems spiritually. It affects their souls in a negative way. You may say, "But it is just a little thing." If you hold on to something long enough, it is going to create some pain in your life. One day you will have to give an answer to God for your life at the Judgment. If you hold on to negative feelings, you are going to be in bad shape. Maybe you do not think you can let go, but you must let it go to make Heaven your eternal home.

Are you going to obey the Word of God as He speaks to you or are you going to refuse Him? You are either going to deny yourself or you are going to deny God; it is one or the other. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 12:1,

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

I am concerned that some are going to miss Heaven because of some small thing. It does not have to be a big thing. It could be a little wrong attitude, a little bitterness, a little hatred, or a little envy. Dear one, any one of these things could cost you your soul. Now, God is a fair God, but you are a free, moral agent. You do not have to do as the Lord wants you to do. You have a choice. I suggest choosing to obey Him. You should not say no to God when He speaks to your heart, but He will give you that privilege. When you turn God down, you are telling Him that

you do not want to hear what He has to say.

There is nothing sadder to me than seeing someone not paying attention during a worship service, because God has something to say. Whether you are a Christian or a sinner, God has something to say to your heart. If you refuse God now, you may be refusing Him for all eternity. God is taking note of everything you do. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."

You do not have to make a move for God, but what about your children? Your choice is affecting your family and your loved ones. It is affecting your witness to a lost and dying world. You have an influence, whether you accept it or not. Exodus 34:6-7 reads: "And the LORD passed by before him, and

proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

If you are guilty of something, you are going to be held accountable for it. Every man is accountable for his own sin. If you are not living for the Lord, it is going to affect your children to the third and fourth generation in a negative way. Oh, they might have good morals. They may live good lives, but are they saved? As a parent, you are not here to raise your children to have a good life. You are here to raise them to live as God would have them to live and to make Heaven their home. If you are not doing your part as a mother or as a father to raise them that way, then you are failing and you are going to answer for it one day.

In this world we have two types of people: the unsaved and the saved. The devil wants the sinner to hang on to his sins. He wants the sinner to cling to bitterness and wrong attitudes toward the church. He has all kinds of feelings that he wants you to pick up.

Who Can Be Saved?

I would like to speak to the sinner first. I would not trade what I have right now for anything this world could offer. No matter what kind of property you may own, how much money you may have, or what kind of goods you may obtain, there is nothing better than being saved. The Bible says in Psalm 34:8, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." It is good to be saved. It is

the best life that you could ever live. There is nothing better than pillowing your head at night to sleep and knowing that you will wake up in the morning saved, but if you do not wake up, you are going on to be with Jesus, the One who suffered and died for you.

When you have problems, there is nothing better than knowing that you have Someone to take them to. When people in the world have problems, they have no one to take them to. They have no one to figure out what they should do next. Before I was saved, I used to go to my mom and dad for advice, and they would give me the best advice they could give me, but now I have a greater Father who can give me the exact advice I need, and not only that, He can help me with it. He can give me the strength to overcome things and help me to do the things I need to do.

There is nothing better than salvation, sinner friend, and the reason you are not saved today is that you are holding on to something. You are holding on to sins that you do not want to give up. You need to check yourself. Maybe you think you cannot give up certain things. Maybe you think you cannot quit the sin business. Only God can help you with that. You cannot do that on your own, but with God you can.

Matthew 19:26 reads, "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." What was Jesus replying to here? His disciples asked the question in verse 25, "Who then can be saved?" They thought it was almost impossible. If you read the whole chapter, you will find that He was talking about the rich, young man who came to Him and asked, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" He was looking for a way to Heaven.

First, Jesus told him to keep the commandments.

Matthew 19:20-22 states: "The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. [What was this young man's problem? He had some things in his life that he did not want to give up.] But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."

Counting the Cost

Sinner friend, nothing in this world is worth trading salvation for. This young man had some things that he did not want to give up, so he chose to go the other way. He wanted eternal life. He said he did. How about you? Do you want eternal life? If you are not saved and you really want to be saved, it is going to cost you something. You are going to have to give up whatever God shows you. Are you willing to give up whatever He shows you? It is worth the cost.

I have been in both positions. I have been in sin. I was raised in a sinful atmosphere. I did not get saved until I was twenty-seven years of age. I have been in a backslidden state. I know what it is like to go back. I experienced both of those things, and I do not want to go back ever again. There is nothing out in sin for me. There is nothing this world has for you.

I know what it is like to have things that you do not want to give up. I know what it is like to have things that you do not think you can give up. But guess what? With the help of God you can do it. I am sure that there are things that you might think you cannot get rid of or that are impossible

for you to get over the top of and get the victory, but with God you can. You cannot do it in yourself, sinner friend. God wants to save you and give you victory, and He can if you will let Him.

You can take it from one who knows that when you turn your life over to God, He makes the change. I remember going to work and not cursing. That stood out to me because before I was saved, every other word was a curse word. One fellow asked me, "Did you get saved?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "You talk different."

Christians are supposed to talk differently. There was no way that I could have had victory over that habit when my heart was not right. Once I got my heart right, the words came out differently. I say again, it is well worth anything you have to give up to be saved.

There is nothing better than knowing that my children have an opportunity to go to Heaven. It is important to live a godly life. Sinner friend, do you want to be saved? It is not hard. All you have to do is ask God to forgive you, tell Him you are sorry, and repent of your sins. God will give you the help you need to live right. God will strengthen you through the trials, and He will help you when the devil is tempting you. That is what He is there for. He wants to help you.

What are you holding on to? Are you willing to let go? Suppose you were on a twenty-story building, hanging on to the ledge, and if you fell it would be instant death. Then suppose someone at the top of that railing put his hands out and said, "I am here to save you. Just reach for my hands, and I will pull you up." Would you just continue to hang there? No! You would grab his hands because you would not want to die physically, but how many are willing to die spiritually for something that they are

still hanging on to? That would be like the person saying, "Get away from me; I don't want any help." That would be foolishness. God is offering His hand of mercy so that you can be saved. The question is, Are you willing to let go and grab hold of God's hand?

If you were to hold a little bottle up in the air for a day, it would become painful, but you know that when you set that bottle down, the pain will start to ease and you would get relief. That is what happens when you let go of your sins and let God help you. When God is in control, things do not have to be the way they used to be because of Him.

God's Hand of Mercy Is Reaching Out

God is a very present help in the time of trouble, the Bible tells us. I thank God for that, because I have been in times of trouble several times, and He has always been a very present help. However, you are the one who has to cry out to Him. You have to ask Him to help you. If you are unsaved, you are the one who has to ask Him to forgive you. You are the one who has to tell Him that you need help, and then you must turn your life over to Him. Psalm 34:6 tells us, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." The Lord is able to save you out of your troubles.

If you used to be saved, God wants you to return to Him. I have been there. It is horrible to backslide. It is the worst feeling that you could ever have. You may think: "I have hurt the Lord too much. How is He ever going to forgive me? How is He going to reach His hand down and pick me up out of that miry pit again?" Second Peter 3:9 states, "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."

If you are in a backslidden state, God does not want you to perish. If you are in a lost state and have never been saved, God does not want you to perish. He wants you to be saved. He wants you to turn your life over to Him. He can give you a beautiful life. You need to trust Him. Backslider, you cannot tell me that you are doing better now than you were when you were saved. I know that from my own personal experience.

The Bible tells us that it is better never to have known the ways of righteousness than to be saved and go back. If your life is horrible right now, it is only going to get worse. Why is that? Because you are still holding on to something, and it is getting heavier and heavier. It is going to destroy you spiritually, emotionally, and physically if you do not let go of what you need to let go of and make things right with God. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 13:15, "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard."

I want you to understand this. If you are in a backslidden condition and God is dealing with your heart, He does not owe you one more time. That is the mercy of God reaching His hand down one more time to ask you to be saved and telling you that you need to be saved. He does not owe you one more opportunity. The question is, Are you going to take that chance? I can guarantee you that the odds are against you. You should not take the chance.

The Bible tells us that God is married to the backslider. He is the bridegroom. I thought about that comparison. Suppose a wife were to run off, but the husband still loves her and wants her back. He still wishes that they were together raising the family,

so He pleads with her and begs her to come home, but she refuses. How painful it would be for him! Think of the suffering he would feel. Friend, it is no different with God. God begs, He works, and He pleads with ones. He reaches out His hand of mercy in long-suffering. How painful it must be for God! If you are in a backslidden state, no matter how old or how young you may be, it is hurting the heart of God every time you refuse, but it could be the last time.

No doubt, God felt the same way when Noah preached all those years, yet the people refused. What about it, backslider? You know how you stand with God. He is so faithful. What are you going to do? Are you going to continue in a lost condition? This could be the last time God is going to deal with you. Are you willing to take that chance? I would not risk it.

Answering God's Call

How many people have died and have gone to hell because they refused God that one last time? How many times did God work with them and yet they refused? Then one day that was it. Genesis 6:3 tells us, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man." There comes a time when God says enough is enough. That is a scary thing. I want you to think about that.

It does not matter whether your companion is saved or that your mom or your dad is saved, you can turn down God's mercy only so many times until God stops speaking to you. It is an individual call. When you reach the age of accountability, you ought to answer God's call. The question is, Are you going to let go of what you are holding on to and answer that call? Sinner friend, the only way to make Heaven your home is through

repentance and forgiveness of sins. Backslider, you need to come back to God. The Bible says in Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." You need to repent, get back up, and live for the Lord. You must turn your back on the things that you got yourself involved in; the Lord is more than able to help you.

Saint of God, you have the greatest privilege in this world in living for God. Salvation is the greatest gift afforded to man on this side of eternity. The Lord is faithful. You know if you are holding on to something that you should not be holding on to. If you hold on to those things, they can become destructive to you. It only takes a little fox to spoil the vine. You need to do something about it. What is keeping you from getting further up the road with God? What is keeping you from getting more spiritual with God? If you are holding on to something that you should not be holding on to, you will not go anywhere with God. You are not going to grow more spiritual. Your experience will stagnate and eventually when the weight gets too heavy, you will start going backward. You have to get rid of hindrances.

As a Christian, the devil will try to get hold of you through pride. Pride will keep you from following God closely. Like the people in Revelation, Chapter 3, you will think that you have need of nothing. Pride will keep you from God. When you are too proud, God cannot show you anything in your life because you think you do not need anything. When was the last time God talked to your heart? It is a humble heart that wants to be right with God, that needs to pray, and is willing to reach out to God. Pride will keep you away from an altar of prayer. Pride will make you think you are better

than anyone else. It will cause you to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think. Pride will cause you to think that you know more than the pastor.

Holding Out for Your Own Way

What else does the devil try to get you to hold on to? He tries to get you to hold on to your own way. God knows exactly what you need, and He knows what is best for you. What God wants you to do may not go well with your flesh. He may tell you not to do something that you are wanting to do. There have been times when I have applied for a job and God said no. He wants to guide your life through the good and the bad. He is teaching you to be obedient, and it will help you. If you stay in the center of God's will, you are in a good spot, because the center of God's will is where you ought to be.

Some people do not want to let go of their own ways. Someone may say, "I think it is better this way." The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 5:21, "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!" You may think you know better, but you do not know what you need. You do not know the decisions you need to make, but God does. Without God's help you are going to make some wrong decisions by holding on to your own way. If you are a Christian and you are holding out for your own way, God will give it to you; then you are going to miss out on something that God truly wants for you. Young person, when you start to think about marriage, you need to pray about it. God will give you the right husband or wife. However, if you hold out for your own way, you might miss the right one. You need to think about that. You should not want to hold out for your own way.

Have you read the story of Balaam? The king of Moab sent servants for him to come and curse the people of Israel, so he said, in essence, "Stay here, and I will go and pray about it." Balaam asked God what he should do, and God said, in essence, "You are not to go with these people." So Balaam went down and told them, "I cannot go with you." He did the right thing. He checked with God, and God said no. So he told the people, and they left. Then the king sent other men to speak to Balaam a second time. They were more honorable men. Often that is the way the devil works. He will use something or someone a little more special. Again, they asked Balaam to come with them and curse God's people. Balaam went back to God, and again God said no. The king sent men back a third time. They promised Balaam promotions. What did Balaam do? He went back to God again, and finally God told him to go.

What was Balaam's mistake? He already knew the answer before he went to God again. He did not have to go back the last two times, because he already knew the answer. God had already told him not to go. Those men were not requesting anything new. They were requesting Balaam to come and curse the people of God, and God had already given him the answer. In essence, he said, "You will not go and curse My people."

Balaam kept wanting his own way, and once they sent more honorable men, pride began to work on Balaam. They promised to promote him. Balaam probably thought: "Wow! Something good is going to happen! All I have to do is curse the people. I am going to ask God one more time." He ended up getting a bad lesson taught to him. If you hold out for your own way, God will give it to you, but it will not be for your

good. You should want to be in the center of God's will. What are you holding on to? Are you holding on to your own way?

Unbelief

What else does the devil work on? The devil will try to get you to hold on to unbelief. You may think: "Oh, this is terrible! I don't know how that is going to work out. Dear Lord, help me, but . . ." If you pray and put a "but" in there, something is wrong. If you are praying about something, but you do not even believe that the answer is going to come, unbelief has already gotten hold of you. When you believe, you are supposed to believe that God is going to answer, and then wait for the answer. My mind goes to the disciples when Jesus said to wait for the promise. They went fishing. What were they supposed to be doing? Again, Jesus said to wait for the promise.

When you pray and ask God for something, you need to wait for the answer, because the answer is on its way. It may not be coming as fast as you want it, but it is on the way. Jesus went and visited His people, but the Scripture says He could not do many mighty works. Why was that? It was due to their unbelief. The devil will work on you through unbelief. The more this world continues, the more unbelief will work on you. Unbelief is a real spirit. The Bible says when you pray, believe that you will receive it. You need to think about that. "Dear Lord, I need help with . . ."

"I know. I've got it."

I remember one time a sister testified that she prayed for her husband to be saved. Finally, God said, "I am going to answer your prayer."

She said, "Fine. Thank You, Lord." After that, she just thanked the Lord for saving her husband. What was she doing? She believed that God was going

to save him. God will do what you ask Him to do if it is in His will. When you ask Him to do something, you need to believe it is going to come to pass. Now, that does not mean you should ask for a million dollars. James 4:3 says, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." If you ask things according to His will, God is going to answer. When God answers, you should be ready to praise Him for it.

Jesus could not do many good works because of the people's unbelief. If you have unbelief in your life, God cannot do mighty works in your life either. If you have unbelief working, you are holding on to unbelief, and you are not going to be able to work as you should. How is your faith? Is it getting stronger or weaker? If it is getting weaker, unbelief is working. If it is getting stronger, you are denying that spirit of unbelief. Do you really believe your prayers are being answered when you pray? Do you really believe your prayers are going to be answered? Unbelief can cost you your soul. That is the reason you have to fight it, that is the reason you have to deny it, and that is the reason the devil works on you. You can ask God for victory over unbelief.

Romans 11:17 speaks of some of the branches being broken off. We know the root is Jesus Christ. The branches are Old Testament Israel. It said they were broken off. Who are we? He said we would be grafted in. However, if you are not careful, you can be broken off too. Why were they broken off? Romans 11:20a says, "Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith." The Bible tells us that anything that is not of faith is sin.

Are you holding on to unbelief? Do you need a revitalization of your belief in the power of God? God has an abun-

dant amount of power. Do you really believe that God can do anything that is necessary to help you? He can save souls, heal the body, and raise the sick. He can do anything. God has all power! If you start studying about the power of God, you will find that it is amazing! It is encouraging. It will increase your faith. Are you holding on to unbelief? If so, you need to get hold of God and deny that spirit of unbelief.

Unforgiveness

Lastly, something else that affects you is holding on to unforgiveness. Someone might have done something to you or said something offensive to you. Do you hold on to that? Unforgiveness is like a cancer. It will eat at you and destroy you if you hold on to it. This can really affect young people. They are in an early stage of life, and it is hard to handle. When people say something wrong or are very short with them or maybe hurt their feelings, they find it hard to understand.

As a young person, if you do not learn to forgive from your heart, it is going to be awful in life, because people are going to talk about you, run you down, lie about you, and fabricate stories about you. That can happen on the job. It can happen anywhere you go or even in your family. The hardest to take is from church people. You may ask, "How can that happen?" Not everyone who comes to church is saved, and not everyone who comes to church is on fire for God. Someone is going to say something that is going to hurt your feelings, and you will say, "How can he or she be saved?" That is a good question.

You need to forgive people. If someone hurt your feelings or said something bad about you, maybe something that was not true, you ought to forgive that

person. Whether that person asks for forgiveness or not, you ought to forgive. Why is that? You need to keep your soul right with God. Why should you get down in the gutter when someone is talking bad about you? You need to stay right on top of the mountain and live for the Lord.

How about forgiving yourself? It is sometimes easier to forgive others than it is to forgive yourself. We all have had failures in life. We all have slipped and done things. You may think, "Oh, I wish I would not have done that." Can you forgive yourself? That can be a hang-up. If you cannot forgive yourself, it is no different from not forgiving someone else. It is going to affect you. It is going to eat at you like a cancer. You need to forgive yourself.

Everyone has had failures. Everyone has stumbled. You need to get right back up. The Bible says to forget those things that are behind and press toward the mark. You may say: "I have had a failure over and over again. How can I go on?" You need to pick yourself up, ask forgiveness, forget it ever happened, learn from it, and move on. You must forget it and forgive yourself. I believe this really affects some Christians.

Time to Get Things Right

Now, maybe I did not hit the thing that you are holding on to. The devil works in a wide range of ways. God will tell you what the problem is. He never misses the mark. He is able to help you, He is able to save you, and He is able to keep you. God is more than able to do anything. You might have to go to a brother or a sister and ask for forgiveness. Do not be embarrassed over it; make it right. It is better to be embarrassed just for a few minutes than to be lost for eternity.

Sinner friend, backslider, now

would be a great time to turn your life over to God. Now would be a great time to make everything right. How serious are you about getting saved? All it takes is just a little talk with Jesus. You may say, "Well, I don't know what to say." Just say what is on your heart. You see, it is not the words that you say, it is the heart that those words come out of. The Bible says what is in the heart comes out the mouth. You may stumble over your words, but God will hear your prayer if you really mean it. Jesus told about the publican who only said seven words. Jesus said he went down to his house justified. It is not the length of your prayer that matters; it is the heart it comes out of. Do you need to be saved? Do you want to be saved? Backslider, why have you not come back to God? Why have you not yielded your life to Him again? Why do you keep resisting Him? God has something great for you!

The Lord loves you, dear one. He does not push people down. He lifts them up. He wants to help souls. He wishes none to perish; that takes in everyone. It is time to make it right if you are lost. It is time to make it right again if you are backslidden. It is time to make it right if God has shown you a need in your life. You need to let go of anything that is detrimental to your Christian living. You can have everything that this world offers and yet face hell with the devil if you hang on to one little thing that God said to let go of. You need to think about that. If you hold on to one little wrong attitude long enough, it will take you down. Many people are consumed with wrong attitudes and bitterness. How weighed down are you? Don't you think it is time to let go of things? Don't you think it is time to lay it all aside and get the victory over those things? You may say, "Well, you do not know what someone did to me or said

to me." God wants us all to love one another.

Are you holding on to something? The longer you hold on to it, the more pain and suffering you are going to be in. The longer you hold on to it, the more it is

going to affect you. The question is, Are you willing to let it go? These thoughts should cause you to really search yourself. If God has shown you a need in your life, there is nothing to be ashamed of. You need to make it

right. Ask God to help you get the victory. If you have a need, it is time to make it right. It could be the last time God ever deals with you.

(Compact Disc TR-1976)

Announcements

Newark, OH

December 26-30

WINTER CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055

Service times: Wednesday 7:00 p.m.; Thursday - Sunday 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. Morning prayer services Thursday - Sunday 8:30 a.m. Heated dormitories. Three meals served daily in dining hall, plus the snack stand is open in the dining hall after the evening services.

Bedding is supplied; please bring your own towels.

For lodging reservations contact Brother Dave or Sister Ruby Bush, 725 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055, or call 740-345-1213. Please make reservations in advance, if possible.

For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 87 Decrow Avenue, Newark, Ohio

Telephone: 740-344-2543

2019 Camp Meeting Dates at God's Acres

June 16-23

August 4-11

December 26-29

**Muncie, Indiana Camp Meeting Date
July 10-14, 2019**

**Canby, Oregon Camp Meeting Date
July 22-28, 2019**

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December 26-30, 2018

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

(See page 27 inside for more information.)