

The Gospel Trumpeter

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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 January 2018 No. 1



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in
Newark, Ohio 43055.
POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER
675 N. Cedar Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

**This periodical carries no subscription price;
however, it is partially maintained through the gifts
and offerings of its readers, with the balance of the
expenses being paid by the local congregation.**

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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Vol. 48 January 2018 No. 1

Guest Editorial

*"Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him
while he is near."*

Isaiah 55:6

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Hebrews 2:3

PROCRASTINATION

The Lord graciously gives every man and woman an allotted time to make their decision in preparation for eternity. Think about it: eternity is time without end. It is unfortunate, but many have put off their opportunity to gain a real experience with God. Through procrastination, men and women have allowed deliverance from sin to slip away.

Time is precious, but when spent, it can never be regained. God has given many people opportunities, but it has been to no avail. No one knows how much time he or she will be given to make peace with God. Therefore, every individual should act quickly. Death comes to the young, the middle aged, and the elderly. It can come suddenly without warning. On the other hand, it can come as a result of a prolonged illness. The time of death is not the most important issue, but rather it is the condition of a person's soul when it comes.

The younger generation often entertains the thought that they have plenty of time to decide their eternal destiny. At present, their lives seem to be going well, but they do not realize that death could be very near. The middle-aged man and woman may feel they are in the prime of life. They may be cumbered about with getting and having more. Their health is good, they have good jobs,

and they enjoy life's many benefits and pleasures. They are engrossed in the affairs of living and the thought of death rarely crosses their minds. Then there are the elderly who have wasted all their good years on self, and now they feel that they have nothing to offer God but a ruined and worn out body.

It is important to take advantage of the time while it is available. For this reason, those who are truly wise ought to quickly grasp God's offer of deliverance from sin and ruin. Procrastination is a serious matter and can end with disastrous consequences. Hebrews 4:7 tells us, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." In 2 Corinthians 6:2 we read these words of admonition: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." There are millions in a lost eternity today simply because they put off taking heed to God's call to repentance.

May we remind you that as we live in the midst of life, we also live in the midst of death? Just because all seems to be well and good today does not mean that it will always stay that way. Situations and circumstances can come about which can drastically alter life in a very short period of time. Freak accidents have often occurred without any warning. An accident can take one

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*1 Timothy 2:3 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;
4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*

What God's Word Says About Antichrist



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Key to Understanding the Scriptures

Some people take Scriptures and build doctrines to prop up their prophecies concerning the Kingdom of God. There are a lot of misconceptions when it comes to the doctrine set forth in the New Testament, especially those teachings that have to do with the kingdom. Doctrine is necessary, and it is through doctrine that people can see the Church of God in her beauty.

Acts 2:41-42 says: "Then they

that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The people who had just gotten saved were not turned loose to go out in the world and do the best that they could. They had to be taught, instructed, and prepared to face a hostile world.

There are teachings of millenniums, raptures, antichrist, pur-

gatory, and the list goes on and on, seemingly exhaustlessly. Too many times the reason these teachings prevail is that many preachers have become silent on these doctrines, often with the thought that preaching on these doctrines has become offensive. If preaching the truth offends people, then the one who is in error is the one who does not receive it.

Jesus said in John 7:17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of

myself." Lots of books have been written and are being written concerning the kingdom, tribulation, raptures, millenniums, and so on. Many of these books were written by people who have not experienced the new birth. Oh, they have theology in their minds. They have been to school and know some Scriptures, but they have not been born again. You cannot preach or teach on the kingdom until you can see the kingdom. That is the reason there is so much falsity. Too many are trying to teach doctrine when they are outside the will of God.

Sometimes doctrine can be upsetting. Matthew 22:33 reads, "And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine." How do you know whether or not someone standing in the pulpit is telling the truth? You must follow in your Bible and ask God to reveal the truth to you and give you understanding.

When I study for messages, I always ask God to open my understanding of the Scriptures. You can be familiar with the Scriptures, but there is greater depth that you can attain. I remind people from the pulpit to bring their Bibles to the services, follow along in the messages, take notes, and study the Scriptures.

First John 2:20 says, "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." The word *unction* means "anointing." You have an anointing from the Holy One. First John 2:27 reads, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." This Scripture in no way does away with pastors, evangelists, teachers, or any other functions of the

ministry. What John was saying was that you do not need any man to teach you what you have heard from the beginning.

First John 2:24 reads, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." You do not need any man to teach you that which you have heard from the beginning. The expression "from the beginning" is used nine times in 1 John and two times in 2 John. From the beginning, what did they hear? They heard about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What they heard was not tradition or hearsay, but factual.

It is Truth that sets you free. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Truth is no more than Jesus Christ. Again, John said in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

The Deceptive Nature of Antichrists

What does the Word of God have to say about antichrist? What does that word mean? *Anti-* is a prefix that means "against." An antichrist is an opponent of the Messiah. In the book entitled *Armageddon: Appointment With Destiny*, the subject of antichrist was mentioned. The author mentioned that the antichrist would be a world leader and would force the Jews to stop their sacrifices in the rebuilt temple. The book says antichrist will set up an idol of himself called "the abomination" in that temple, and it is to be worshiped

as a god until he is destroyed at the end of the seven years, supposedly when Jesus returns. Now, to those of us who know the Truth, this sounds far-fetched, but what about those who do not know the Truth? Many times error gets sown among bits of truth.

Let us look closely at these Scriptures. A person can take a Scripture and build a theology, or a doctrine. He can find another Scripture and prop it up to make it sound like the old and the new go together, that they correspond together. Thus, they cause people to think that surely this is the right doctrine. Many times when people read a Scripture, they have a habit of reading it at face value, so to speak. We need to ask God. Sometimes there are some really deep things in the Scriptures that some have overlooked.

First John 2:18 reads, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists [plural]; whereby we know that it is the last time." Just looking at that Scripture at face value, we know that antichrists were to come. John said, ". . . ye have heard that antichrist shall come." This verse is the first time the word antichrist is used in the Bible. What did Jesus call antichrists? He called them false prophets, or false Christs. Matthew 24:24 says, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

John said there were many antichrists. I want you to notice that this word is plural. The word *antichrists* is mentioned four times, and the word *antichrist* is mentioned one time, all by the same writer. Many names have been attached to the long list of supposed antichrists,

such as Hitler, Stalin, Khrushchev, Mussolini, Castro, and so on. However, antichrists are not world leaders or political figures. Antichrists are not atheists or communists. Who are the antichrists? According to the Bible, they are apostates. Apostates are those who have defected from the Truth. They are involved in a falling away.

Beware of Seducing Spirits

First Timothy 4:1-5 reads: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly [or clearly], that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." You can defect from the Truth.

First Corinthians 9:27 says, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." That testimony does not sound like the testimony of someone who could not lose out with God. Who was speaking? It was the Apostle Paul. He let us know that it was possible for him to defect or fall away and become a castaway. The word *castaway* means "thrown away or cast off." Paul was concerned that he could get off the track by following a seducing spirit and lose out with God, and many have done just that.

You should be careful of people who run down the pastor. If someone separates you from

the pastor, you will get in a position where you cannot receive any help. People who run down others may go from the pastor to somebody who sings or has a position in the church, or they may branch out to leaders in the congregation. If that begins to happen, you need to get away from that person as fast as you can, because he or she will seduce your soul. If someone can get you to lose a little confidence in the pastor, then you will not receive the Word of God as the engrafted Word any more. You will receive it as his own idea, or his own thoughts. The next thing you know, you will start questioning everything that takes place.

Antichrists were present in John's day, even before the world leaders that I mentioned were born. Again, John said in 1 John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." You need to understand that First, Second, and Third John were written at a time when there was a falling away. Apostasy had set in, and some were defecting from the Truth and losing out with God. Seducing spirits had come in. False Christs and false prophets rose up and brought out different theologies and different doctrines.

Falling Away From the Truth

Second Thessalonians 2:7 says, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way." Paul called iniquity a mystery. Why? Something that is a mystery is working undercover. It is hidden and deceptive. That is the reason it is called a mystery. An apostasy was taking place. People were falling away from Truth,

and it had already affected the church of the morning time.

When the spirit of apostasy hits, many are touched by the long tentacles of Satan. It can destroy family, friends, or a congregation. Their spiritual strength slowly drains until people are confused, misled, and ensnared in the devil's grasp. Who were antichrists? They were comfortable, professed Christians who were neither hot nor cold but lukewarm.

We read in Revelation 2:1, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." John stated in verse 4, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This was in the morning-time church, and it was a falling away that caused people to leave their first love. They did not retain that strong and fervent affection for God and the sacred things that they had when they first walked in the knowledge of Truth. They did not maintain the fervency they once had. When you were first saved, do you remember the fervency that you had? You wanted everybody to be saved. You loved God supremely for what He had done.

What did John the Revelator say? They no longer *loved* the Truth but left it. He did not say they did not know the Truth or that they did not know where it was, but that they left it. If you do not have a love for the Truth, now is the time to get it. If you have lost that fervent love for the Truth, do not be a hypocrite and profess over it; get it back. This is the only way you can finish your course successfully.

Second Thessalonians 2:10-13 states: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth,

that they might be saved. And for this cause [or for this reason] God shall send them strong delusion [that word means deceit], that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Verse 10 does not say they did not have the Truth. They *knew* the Truth, but when people lose that fervency, they lose the love for the Truth. They prefer systems of error and delusion to the simple and pure Gospel by which they might be saved. You see, it is not difficult to be saved. No one asks people to go through any kind of ceremony or any great event like Naaman expected when he was healed. It is really very simple. All one has to do is become sick of sin. Are you tired of sin and willing to give it over to Jesus Christ?

"They Went Out From Us"

When people want to fuss over the standard, God lets them have their way. Oh, yes, He does! I have seen it. People have fussed over different parts of the standard. The one thing about serving God that you need to understand is that God knows more about how the body should be put together than we do. He knows what color your eyes should be and what color your hair should be to match your complexion.

Antichrist is a spirit that opposes the Truth. That spirit is working on all of us. John said even then, which was approximately A.D. 96, antichrists (plural) were present. Let us find out where these antichrists came from. First John 2:19 reads, "They

went out from us, [Was he talking about the government or a political race? Who is the 'us' that John was talking about when he said the antichrists went out from us?] but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." The "us" were the people of God he was talking to.

Why did they go out from them, or leave them? They wanted it known that they were not of "us," or the people of God. John said had they been of them, no doubt they would have stayed. Division affected the church of the morning time. Why is that antichrist? It is antichrist because it portrays a divided Christ, and Christ is not divided. Your anchor is secure as long as it is in Jesus Christ. The devil is powerless as long as you remain with the Truth.

First John 2:21-22 tells us: "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." They denied the Father and the Son. How did they do that? They would not let that which they had heard from the beginning abide. John was not talking about infidels, atheists, or those who denied the existence of the Father and the Son, but he was talking about people who did not let that abide which they heard from the beginning—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was speaking of those who talk the talk but do not walk the walk. Their works betrayed their walk. You cannot know the Father and the Son and yet be in disobedience.

First John 3:6 says, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen

him, neither known him." Matthew 7:22 speaks of those who will go to the Judgment and say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" What did Jesus say? "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (verse 23).

First John 3:10 says, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." This is how apostasy works. When the love of God begins to wax cold, brethren go against brethren and sisters go against sisters. How do people deny the Lord? They do so by denying His Word.

There are many antichrists in the world. Today we may call them by names other than antichrist, but John said they were antichrists. One earmark of antichrists is that they despise dominion. Let me explain. Jude 1:7-8 reads: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise [hate] dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

Luke 19:12-14 tells us: "He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us."

Who were the antichrists that John was speaking of? They were

religious people who would not line up with the Truth. You need to be on your guard or you could be seduced. First John 2:26 reads, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you." Seducing spirits are out there. Many times they dress up in sheep's clothing, but you need

to watch out for their tracks. Sheep make different tracks than wolves make.

Who were the antichrists? John said they went out from us, the church. They got to the place where they would not take Truth any more. They got to the place of denying the Father and the

Son, living in disobedience. No world leaders or anyone out in the future is going to restore the temple. The old temple will never be restored. Why? Because God's people represent the temple of God now.

(Compact Disc TR-1843)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

out of this life without any chance to pray or make amends. It is also possible that tragedy can leave us in a mentally incapable state where we cannot reason soundly. There are times some may be stricken with a sudden illness that quickly leads them to the grave. These issues are not mentioned as scare tactics, but to awaken you to a reality that could face anyone at any time. The adversary is doing his best to blind the minds of men and women to their need of real salvation and the finality there is in death.

There are two devices that Satan effectively uses on a man or a woman in preventing that person from becoming a Christian. These deceitful mechanisms are procrastination and neglect. He knows that if he can convince a soul to be passive about his or her soul and procrastinate, it will be too late to respond. Therefore, he strives to occupy the

mind with less important things so that no attention will be given to spiritual needs. Even when a soul begins to consider his need of God, Satan will be there to try to get the individual to put it off until some other time.

Neglecting to humble your heart before God, repenting of sin, and taking faith in Christ's call is a very serious matter. Refusing to receive Him and His pardoning love would be committing a grave injustice against the remedy. Christ came to earth, lived a righteous example, and willingly gave His life to save us from sin's awful penalty and consequence. It is man's responsibility to come when God calls and not just when he gets ready or feels like it.

Our Scripture text states that you are to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to call upon Him while He is near. The admonition is to seek Him while He can be found, or whenever He is speaking. Too

often many people have felt that they can get saved whenever they get ready. This thinking is surely unwise. In John 6:44 Jesus tells us, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." It is the Lord who invites a man or a woman to come to Him and be saved. It is His Holy Spirit that calls one to forsake the life of sin and walk with Him in holiness and victory. If His Spirit does not speak and bring conviction and awakening, then your own efforts alone will be futile.

Dear reader, do you feel the precious Spirit of God working with you, striving to draw you to Him? Do you long for real peace of mind and soul? God has just what you are desiring and looking for, but you must not procrastinate or refuse His invitation.

Selected

If thou wouldst live long,
live well, because
folly and wickedness
shorten life.

1 *Corinthians 10:11* Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*

13 *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will*

not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Can God Use You After a Failure?



Brother Allen Borders

The Victories of Samson

The Scriptures in our text let you know that God is not going to put on you any more than you can bear. This is a common salvation. We all face things every day. This is not something new. We do not face anything that God is unaware of. The temptations may come, but God will make a way of escape.

First John 2:1 reads, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." God's perfect will is for you not to sin or to fall. He is not standing over you with a club, ready to beat you while you are down. No, Jesus is your advocate. The word *advocate* is an old English word for lawyer,

which means that Jesus pleads your case to His Father.

I want you to consider a few examples in the Bible of people who failed to see their end. The first person that I want you to look at is Samson. He was a mighty man who was born in Israel. He was the son of Manoah. Manoah's wife had been barren for many years, so Samson was a son of promise. He

was a special gift from the Lord.

Judges 13:24-25 reads: "And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol." Samson received great physical strength from the Lord and was able to deliver the Israelites from their enemies many times. The Book of Judges contains many of Samson's victories that I want to mention. In Judges 14:1-9 you can read some of Samson's victories. Judges 14:19 tells us that Sampson slew thirty men of Ashkelon.

Judges 15:4-5 reads: "And Samson went and caught three hundred foxes, and took firebrands, and turned tail to tail, and put a firebrand in the midst between two tails. And when he had set the brands on fire, he let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives." That was an amazing feat! It is hard to catch a dog, let alone a fox. He did not catch just one fox, but he caught three hundred of them, kept them all together, tied their tails together, and set brands of fire between them. This lets you know that in just one instance, something was special about him.

Judges 15:14-15 states: "And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jawbone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith."

Samson's Weakness

Samson was a mighty man. He did amazing things for the children of Israel, but Samson had a major fault. He could not get victory over fleshly lust. You can read in Judges, Chapter 16, that he met a woman named Delilah. The Philistine lords came to her and asked her to entice Samson to find the source of his strength.

Judges 16:4-18 reads: "And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

"Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known. And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new

ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man.

"Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread. [As you can see, Delilah was trying to discover the secret of Samson's strength. The first time she bound him, he should have fled. As many do today, Samson thought he could handle the situation. Maybe he thought, 'I have limits and know where to stop.' I have heard that from some young people and from some adults. Maybe this was what Samson was thinking. Many times the devil lets you think that you have everything under control. That is when you need the Lord the most. A lot of times people say, 'I would never go that far.' Samson kept going further and further.]

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web. And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. [Samson was getting closer to his secret. This is the way the devil likes to work. He will work on you to give in a little, and before you know it, you have given in completely.]

"And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand."

Samson's Last Entanglement

Judges 16:19-21 tells us: "And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. [Samson finally gave in, and the result was the loss of his power. If you give in to the devil, you are going to lose power every time. Samson's strength was not in his hair; his strength was in his obedience to God. Likewise, your spiritual strength is in your obedience to God. If you do not obey God, you are going to lose your power with God, just as Samson did. The best way not to fall is to stay far away from sin — as far as you possibly can. You cannot flirt with the devil and hope to keep the faith. It should not be your goal to see how close you can get to the edge and still survive. The devil will tempt you. He likes to make it seem as though all kinds of wonderful things are out in the world.

Getting as close to the edge as possible is not the way a Christian's life should be. You must stay as far away as possible.]

"And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. [That is scary. Samson did not even know that the Lord had left him. That is what happens to a lot of people today. They get too entangled in the things of life. The things of the world get them bound up so quickly and so thoroughly that they think that everything is fine when it is not. Samson thought he was going to go out just as before; he did not even realize that his strength was gone.] But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."

I want you to notice that the first thing the Philistines did was bind Samson. That is what the devil does to people who disobey God today. If you fall, the first thing the devil will do is take away your freedom to serve the Lord, and then he will put out your eyes, spiritually speaking. He wants to blind you to your true condition so that he can have complete control over you.

The Philistines took Samson down to the prison house and put him to work. The devil is a hard taskmaster. A man who was greatly used of God became a prisoner and was blinded, but that is not the end of the story.

Samson Overcame His Failure

Judges 16:25-30 states: "And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call

for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars. And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.

"And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

Samson prayed, and the Lord renewed his strength. He killed more of his enemies in his death than he did in his life. Failure does not have to be the end. Samson could have resigned himself to the fact that he was blind, he was a prisoner, and there was nothing he could do. The devil likes to get hold of a person when he is discouraged, feeling miserable, feeling like a failure, and feeling like God cannot use him. If he would turn to God and pray like Samson prayed, God would hear his

prayers. All he has to do is repent. Samson was greatly used after his huge failure.

David's Sin

Another example of one who failed God is King David. David was greatly used of God to lead Israel for many years. David had many victories, starting with the slaying of a lion and a bear, and then Goliath. David was in King Saul's army and was very successful in battle. In 2 Samuel we read of King David's fall, and there are many places in this text where things could have changed. Second Samuel 11:1-17 reads: "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

"And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

"And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of

him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house?

"And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing [it sounds as though he had more loyalty than King David had]. And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to day also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

"And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. And the men of the city went

out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also."

The Downward Spiral of Sin

When King David fell, he made many errors, and in these errors he could have stopped at any time, but he did not. First, King David was supposed to be at war, so he was not where he should have been. My dad has a saying, "If you are where you are supposed to be, doing what you are supposed to be doing, God will take care of you." When you are not in your place, and you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing, the devil will take that opportunity to tempt you.

Second, King David took a walk on the rooftop and saw a woman bathing. Verse 2 tells us that she was very beautiful to look upon, which means he did not just glance and see her, but he looked upon her. One time I remember hearing in a message that you cannot help what comes before your eyes, but you do not have to drive back around the block to see it again.

King David could have just glanced and saw something inappropriate and turned away, but he did not do that. He took time to look upon her. He should have stopped himself at the very first glance, and then he should have gone back inside. Had he done so, all the events that followed regarding this matter could have been avoided. Instead, David took the time to look upon her.

Third, King David inquired of her and found that she was married. That is another place where he made the wrong choice. He chose to continue in-

stead of stopping. Fourth, King David brought her to his house, which was another bad choice. This would still be a bad choice today. Next, we read that they conceived a child. After all these bad choices, King David realized that his sin was going to be very difficult to cover, so he came up with a scheme to try to conceal his sin. Although David had many opportunities to stop in this situation, like many today, King David pushed past his knowledge of right and wrong. God gives everyone a conscience, and that conscience tells a person right from wrong, even if he has never been taught. One gets a feeling from God because God is faithful.

All of this led to a big cover-up, including the killing of Uriah, Bath-sheba's husband. After Uriah was killed, King David took her as his own wife. King David lusted, coveted, committed adultery, and committed murder. One wrong always leads to another. These were terrible sins. After King David's failure, the Prophet Nathan came to him and told him a little story.

In 2 Samuel, Chapter 12, the prophet told him about someone taking a neighbor's only lamb. The prophet said this was a wealthy man who owned many flocks and herds, yet he took the poor man's one little lamb. This story made King David really upset, and Nathan told him, "Thou art the man" (verse 7). When Nathan said that, King David did acknowledge his sin. This is one thing that many people will not do today. They blame their sin on this person or that person. If they do not own it, they are never going to get victory over it. If they cannot take responsibility for the things they have done, they will never get

past it.

King David repented and the Lord spared him, but he still had to face some serious consequences. The child that was conceived died, and the sword was on David's house from that point on. David went through many adverse circumstances because of his sins, but failure was not his end. When you are faced with your sin or your failure and you repent, God can use you.

Romans 6:1-2 states: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" David saw his need and repented. After his failure, he penned many, many more psalms, and his son Solomon, whose mother was Bath-sheba, became the next king. David even made it into the "Who's Who of Faith" in Hebrews, Chapter 11.

In Matthew 1:6 King David is listed in the lineage of Jesus on Joseph's side, and in Luke 3:31 King David is also listed in the lineage of Jesus. Just because you have had a failure in your Christian life does not mean that you are doomed forever.

Peter's Denial and Repentance

Another example of failure in the Bible is a man named Peter. Peter was a disciple of Jesus who followed Him throughout His entire ministry. Peter is the one who said he would go with Jesus even to the death. Matthew 26:33-35 reads: "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him,

Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." When it was time for Peter to stand up for Christ, he failed miserably.

Verses 69-75 state: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."

Here Peter was asked, not by soldiers, but by a damsel, or a girl, if he was with Jesus. Peter denied it, saying, "I know not what thou sayest." Was he afraid that if they knew he was with the Lord that he would be captured also? The Scriptures do not say. Previously, he said he was ready to die with Christ, but not when it came right down to it.

Another maiden said, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth," and Peter denied with an oath that he even knew Christ. His denial got stronger each time. If you deny Christ, you will get harder and harder. It does not take much to start slipping backward. It can happen very quickly.

The third time Peter denied Christ, he was with a crowd, and

one said, "Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee." What did Peter do? "Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man." What an awful response!

This lets you know that when you let sin into your life, you do not know how far you are going to go. A lot of people think, "I would never say or do anything like that," but if you let the devil take control, who knows what you will say or do? Fortunately, failure was not the end of Peter. He went out and wept bitterly. He was brokenhearted because he failed. That is how sorrowful you need to be if you fail the Lord.

What should you do if you fail the Lord? You need to go to Him with a contrite heart and say: "God, I am so sorry!" The end of Peter was greater than the beginning. He began to be mightily used of God. Peter was the one whom God used on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:14 reads, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words." God used Peter after his failure. He went on to be an Apostle after he had openly denied Christ.

He preached to several thousand people on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:41 tells us, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Do you think the Lord is going to use a dirty vessel? No, God will not use a dirty vessel. God was able to use Peter after he had failed because he repented. He went out and wept bitterly.

Salvation Is for Everyone

If you fail God, you need to face your failure, repent, and go on and live for God. When you repent and ask God for forgiveness, you need to forsake sin. You should not go back to that sin. If I were to come up to you and stomp on your foot and say I was sorry, and then walk by you the next day and stomp on your foot again and say I was sorry, you probably would not think that I was sincere in my apology. That is the same way it is with Christ. When you ask for His forgiveness, you ought to stop whatever you are doing that is wrong. That is one of the biggest things that some people fail to do.

We live in a day when many people hear, "I sin, you sin, and we all sin; we cannot live above sin." This is a false message that is preached in pulpits all over this land. My children have come home from school and told me about other students who said, "You can't be living right." On the contrary, you can live right. If it was not possible, Jesus would not have commanded it. The Bible says you can. First John 2:1a says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."

In Acts, Chapter 10, we can read about an amazing thing that the Lord did with Peter, a man who had failed Him, a man who had denied Him in public. Someone may say: "I brought reproach on the church, so there is no way that I can do anything for God any more. I embarrassed myself, my family, and the church." Peter denied Christ openly in front of a crowd of people, but God still used him after he repented.

Acts 10:11-22 says (this is the vision that God gave to Peter):

"And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

"Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

"And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee." God was using a vision to let Peter know that salvation was for everyone, even for the Gentiles, not just for the Jews. I want you to notice that the sheet was let down three times. How

many times did Peter deny Christ? Do you think that was a coincidence? Peter was given this vision so that he would know that God was no respecter of persons, that all could come to repentance if they accepted Christ.

Is Failure the End?

Acts 10:23-24 reads: "Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends." Peter went down with the men to preach to Cornelius.

Verses 33-45 state: "Immediately therefore I sent to thee [Cornelius was speaking]; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

"And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusa-

lem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

This was an interesting situation. Peter was the man who had just failed God, yet God used him to go out and be the one to preach to the Gentiles. This was a man who was prejudiced. He thought only the Jews could be saved, but when God got hold of his heart after a large failure, he was able to be used mightily. Peter preached Christ at Cornelius' house and was greatly used to preach to all of the Gentiles. All of this happened after his denial of Christ.

I have mentioned three different examples, but there were many more who went on to do great things for the Lord after failure. God can use anyone who is a willing vessel. In Numbers, Chapter 22, you can read about the donkey that saw the angel standing in the way with a sword drawn. God used the donkey to speak to Balaam. This shows you that God can use anyone or anything. God can use anyone, anywhere, anytime if he

is living right. Failure does not have to be the end. Failure is not a person; failure is an event. You can only fall as far as you want to fall. My dad always told me, "If you fall, only fall as far as your knees." You need to get on your knees and ask God for forgiveness. Let Jesus plead your case; He is the Advocate. First John 1:9 reads, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

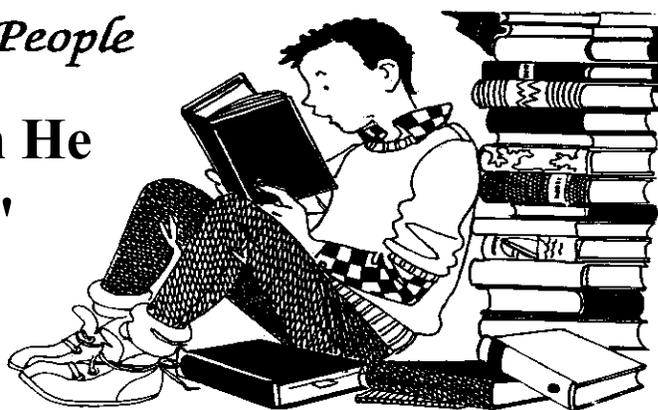
Can God use you after failure? Yes, He can. Is failure the end? Absolutely not! It is only the end if you let it be the end. The devil will do everything he can to burden you down and make you feel that you cannot make it. He is right in the sense that you cannot make it without God, but with God all things are possible. He can use you in any way if you are a willing obedient vessel. You do not need to let failure be the end.

(Compact Disc TR-1799)

**Study the Bible
to be wise;
believe it to be
safe; practice it
to be holy.**

Especially for Young People

"Seeking Whom He May Devour"



When working as a missionary in Africa, we knew there were lions around, but I felt fairly safe on my big 500 c.c. motorcycle. My African Christian friend was riding on the seat behind me, and I was driving the motorcycle as best I could over the rough dirt road in the half darkness of the early morning.

We had left our station before the sun rose so we would not have to travel in the fierce heat of the dry-season day. My friend and I often traveled together to preach the Gospel to people who were serving false gods and living in sin. We wanted to tell them about Jesus and let them know how much He loved them and to tell them that He died on the Cross for them.

One day as we traveled along, kicking up dust behind us, I remembered the day when my wife and I saw five lions coming toward us as we rounded the bend. Only this time we were not riding the motorcycle; we were walking! We looked around for trees to climb, but there were not any. We could not turn and run because they would have jumped on us at once. We had no guns. We prayed quietly for God's protection. They kept coming closer. The only thing we could do was to walk toward them, and then they stopped. God must have spoken to them, because suddenly they bounded off to the side of the road and stood there roaring at us. As we walked by, it was as if some unseen hand was holding them back.

While I was thinking of that frightening experience, my African friend and I had been riding down a

steep, rocky hill. I had to slow down so that we would not slide in the loose stones. Suddenly, I felt my friend's knuckles dig into my sides and heard him gasp in my ear. I saw four eyes gleaming in the light of the headlamp. I jammed on the brake as I saw the outline of two full-grown lions. They were standing only fifteen yards away, right in the middle of the road. The first rays of the sun were lighting the sky, and I could see that one was a hungry-looking female and the other one was a big male. His collar of fur bristled fiercely around his head.

My friend hung on tight to me as we put our feet down on the road to steady the motorcycle, which I kept running. What should we do? I prayed that God would show us.

The male lion decided to act. He disappeared silently into the tall grass beside the road. "That's bad," I thought. "The male lion always stalks the prey, chasing it toward the female, who does the killing. He is probably coming up behind us."

If we had turned around, the lioness would have jumped on our backs. If she had missed the first leap, we still could not have gotten away up the steep hill in time. I moved a little closer, but she did not budge. I blew the horn, raced the engine, and flicked the headlamp dimmer switch up and down, but she stood her ground. I did not know how close her mate was behind us by now. Next, she put her head close to the road and switched her tail back and forth like a cat watching a mouse. I knew she was getting ready to spring on us.

I breathed a prayer, "O God, help us now!" I quickly opened the throttle wide and headed the motorcycle straight at the lioness. For a second she watched us; then suddenly she turned around and ran down the road. I knew I had to keep right after her or she might turn on us, and maybe her mate was following us. The lioness kept running down the road, almost like a galloping donkey, with us roaring behind her for all we were worth. Then she wheeled off into the grass and disappeared. We kept moving right on, thankful for the Lord's deliverance.

When we finally stopped for a rest, I told my friend, "This reminds me of a couple of Bible verses. The first one is found in 1 Peter 5:8, which warns us, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The second one is found in James 4:7. It says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

The devil, as a roaring lion, is after you, young person, but if you will call upon the Lord, He will not fail to deliver you. The next time you are tempted to sin, remember to call upon the Lord and resist the devil. God will deliver you, just as He literally delivered us from the roaring lions.

Selected

Psalm 119:169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

171 My lips shall utter praise,

when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

174 I have longed for thy

salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

Have You Gone Astray?



Brother Garrett Haylock

The Need of Repentance

God gave man a wonderful start. He has done everything He possibly could have done to give man a proper start, yet the Scripture text lets us know that man went astray. The Psalmist David said he had gone astray like a lost sheep. He made it very personal when he said, "I have gone astray" (Psalm 119:176).

There is nothing that God is more pleased with than when you step out to serve Him and faithfully execute that to the best of your ability and to the best of your knowledge. If you go astray, you surely will be the first to know it. You need to be honest with the Lord if you have gone astray. If you are outside the fold of God, you have gone astray. God made a straight path

for your feet, and He has given you the perfect start.

Some people hide behind a profession, and others hide behind the fact that they are not so bad. If you have strayed a little, then you need to get back on course. Only one way leads to Heaven, and it is through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and by being obedient to Him as you step out to serve Him.

God, through the Holy Scriptures, has helped man to see his true condition. When someone acknowledges that he is not saved, God the Father then reveals to that man that by going astray, he is lost. Many times people stray from the Lord, and it seems like it does not even bother them. Some people seem to be satisfied in being astray from God. That is not a good position to be in, because the Bible says to him that knows to do good and does it not, to him or to her it is sin. To become comfortable in sin is to set yourself up for a really big disappointment. Worst of all, if you do not turn around before you reach the end, you will enter a lost eternity.

Acknowledging, as the psalmist did, that you have gone astray is commendable, but it does not have to happen. The Scripture lets you know that Christ is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His Father with exceeding joy. That is what would give God pleasure. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for every one of us. No matter how far away you are or how far you have gone astray, if you will get saved, a place will be prepared in Heaven for you. Sinner friend, you need to acknowledge, as the psalmist did, "I have gone astray." God did not start you out that way. God put you on a straight path and gave you a very good start.

If you have not asked Christ into your life, you are away from God. If you die in that condition, you will go to hell, no matter who your mom or your dad is. Jesus said except you repent, you will likewise perish, even though He is not willing that any should perish. His desire is that all might come to repentance. Friend, if you do not repent, you will perish.

John 10:10 tells us, "The thief

cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The Lamb of God is come to seek and to save those who are lost. From the time you realize God's Holy Spirit is pointing out your lost condition and starts to draw you to Him, the Bible says if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart.

Turning to Your Own Way

The Psalmist David acknowledged, "I have gone astray." He said in verses 173-175 of our Scripture text: "Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me."

Many people talk about what God *used* to do for them. Instead of having the praises of God on their lips and His love in their hearts, they have gone astray, and they are the last to really admit it. People can see that they are not where they used to be, that they are not really on fire for God as they used to be. Sometimes pride hinders them from really doing business with God. If they are honest with God, He will surely be faithful to them.

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray. . . ." This verse lets us know that sheep really need to have a shepherd, because if there is a ditch and one falls into it, unlike other animals that would notice the danger and move away, sheep will just keep tumbling in. Many times we, as humans, are just like that. We see what happens to our friends or maybe another young brother or sister, yet we just keep falling into the same ditch. It is not God's will that any should perish,

but that all should come to repentance.

Again, the Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." If there is ever anything that will mess up a life, it is turning to one's own way. When you turn to your own way, you have to turn away from God. This is something to really think about. It might seem pleasurable, but anytime you turn to your own way, you are looking for big trouble.

We all need God to help us in this life. Without God we will wreck the ship of life and never get the best out of life. If you will seek God and His righteousness first, and walk that path even in your youth, God will be with you. We all struggle over some things, but the Bible says we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. You need to be true and faithful to your own soul and acknowledge if you go astray, even after having a good start. You need to acknowledge to the Lord that you need help. We all need His help along life's journey.

In Psalm 119:59 the Psalmist David said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." As you consider your ways and think about the turn that you made, was it profitable? Was it a good turn? Did it render good or evil in your life? When you turn to your own ways, all you can expect is trouble. You cannot manage this life. The Prophet Jeremiah said in Jeremiah 10:23, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." The sooner you realize that, the better off your life will be. No matter how intelligent you are, you are no match for the devil. As sure as you turn away from God, you are going to be easy prey for the devil.

Lean Not to Your Own Understanding

God said your ways are not like His ways. If you look at God's ways and look at the consistency of God, you will see that He never fails and He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. One songwriter wrote, *"In summer and winter, in sunshine and rain, His love and affection are always the same."* If anything is changing, it is people. Many times people turn from God's way to their own ways, and then they see what happened by making that turn. The psalmist said, "I thought on my ways, and I turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

If you are astray from God, the best thing that you can possibly do for your life is get back to God and get back to His testimonies. You need to let His Word guide you. Psalm 119 is such a beautiful psalm. It is long, but it has so many profound verses. Psalm 119:9 says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." God's testimonies are His Word. You need to turn from your ways and get back to His testimonies and allow them to lead you.

The Scripture tells us in Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." You need to know that God cares that you get back on track, and you ought to care as well. God cares if you go astray, and He is constantly seeking you.

The Bible tells us in Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Sometimes even though no one likes afflictions, unless some hard places come into your life, you will not get

back to the place where you ought to be. The Psalmist David said before he was afflicted, he went astray. You see, when things are going really well in life, people feel that they can handle it. However, when afflictions and hardships come, the first thing that people do is cry out for the Lord to have mercy and to help them through.

Sometimes people have made vows and said, "Lord, if You will help me through this, You will have no more trouble with me going astray." So God, in His faithfulness, reached down and came to their rescue. Sad to say, many of those people were not faithful and true to their word. The Bible lets us know that it is better not to make a vow than to make a vow and not keep it. You should want God to help you, but you have to consider your ways and turn to the Lord.

The Bible lets us know that God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. What man is constantly seeking is how he can get along successfully without acknowledging God, trying to invent his own way. The Bible tells us throughout the Scriptures how man made a fool of himself.

Acknowledge God in All Your Ways

In the Book of Romans, Chapter 1, the Bible says the people did not like to retain God in their thoughts, so He gave them over to vile affections. Verses 22-28 read: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies be-

tween themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

The writer spoke of men desiring men and women desiring women. They thought they could get along without God. They tried to bring Him down to the level of four-footed beasts. Today we have a huge mess. People are still trying to find a way to get to Heaven without God's help by turning to their own ways.

Genesis 1:31a tells us, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." God gave man a very good start, but man has gone astray. Why is man in this condition? The answer for that is, his desire to have his own way caused him to yield to temptation and turn from God's way to his own way. In the awful tragedy of man's first sin, what did man get compared to what he lost? It was such a poor bargain. He moved away from eternal life to certain death. What a bad choice!

People make bad choices when they steer away from God. If you do not have God to direct you, you will make bad choices in this life. Again, in Proverbs 3:6 the wise man said to acknowledge Him in all your ways, and

He will direct your paths.

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." That is a beautiful Scripture! Jesus promised that if you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things that are necessary in life will be provided. I have found that to be true in my life. He has provided all the things that I needed. All I can say is, God took nothing and made something out of my life. When I came to God, I did not have anything. He helped me, and He has really blessed me.

I sought God early in my life. I was twenty-one years of age. When God saved me, the one thing that I really had to my credit was playing soccer. I was planning to make a living as a soccer player. When God brought me into the fold, one of the first things He did was help me to learn a trade. Next, He gave me a wonderful wife. From there, God just filled in the pieces until the day the puzzle was together. I am a lot better off than I used to be. I have all the necessary things. I needed a trade. I used to work as a common laborer, and someone asked me one day, "Do you want to learn a trade?" I said, "Of course!" He took an interest in me and taught me his trade, and by the time I got married in 1985, I was a licensed plumber. It is something that I never dreamed I would even have an opportunity to do. I am grateful for the many things that God has added to my life.

If you are wondering if God can take care of you, I am telling you, God can take care of every one of us. He has committed Himself to supplying our needs. He has supplied every need that I have had in my life. People worry about so many things, but God has committed Himself to

supplying our needs. God has always been faithful. You can trust God.

Choose God's Way

The enemy wants you to go astray from God, because once you stray from God, you leave the city of refuge for your soul. In the Old Testament, you can read about cities of refuge that people could flee to. They could stay in those cities and be safe as long as they stayed within the city. However, if they strayed outside the city walls, an avenger of blood could be lurking around those gates, and those who sought safety there were no longer protected. The people inside those cities had no control over what went on outside the walls of their cities.

If you are not serving God, you can trust Him. Friend, He can take care of you. He can and He will do exactly what He has said He would do. I want you to realize that you do not have to go astray.

In the Book of Genesis, you can read about Isaac. At a time when everybody was going down to Egypt, God told Isaac not to go down there, but to stay where he was. He let Isaac know that if he sowed in the first year, he would reap a hundredfold. I can imagine him plowing and people laughing at him because the soil was so dry, but God told him to stay and He would bless him. The first year he reaped a hundredfold. Then the next year the Bible says he sowed again. Isaac went from being great to being very great, and the people started to envy him. You do not have to leave the church to be successful. If you stay with the church, God will bless you. Going astray and leaning to one's own understanding will destroy the very best of people. You need to be careful that you do not turn from God's way to your

own way.

The Bible teaches that you must turn from sin and your own way by choice, but you need God's help to return. The Psalmist David said, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." He wanted the Lord to show mercy on him one more time and seek him out. In essence, he was saying, "I have gone into this thing on my own, but Lord, I realize that I need Your help to get back out of it." That is the truth of the matter. You can easily get into trouble, but you need God to get you out of that trouble. You need His help because God can do all things. Your own way leads to sin and destruction.

Ezekiel 18:30b says, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." If you are outside the fold of God, why not turn away from your own way? Why not choose God's way, lest iniquity be your ruin? Sin ruins people's lives. I am sure that you can look around and notice that sin has destroyed somebody that you personally know. Sin will ruin you, friend.

Young person, sin will ruin your character. It will ruin your hopes and chances of a good education. It will ruin your chances in life of getting a good job. You need to realize that it will ruin many privileges. God wants you to realize that He cares about you. You need to turn from your own way back to God, lest iniquity should be your ruin. God is a loving God, and He cares about you. He knows all about you, and He loves you. So He is saying, "Turn, so that iniquity does not ruin you and ruin your hopes."

Finding Rest for Your Soul

I love to see young people living consistently for God. I am

telling you, that is the safest place that you can be any time in your life, but especially when you are young and reckless. You need God's divine direction. Isaiah 55:7-9 says: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Again, God loves you, and He knows all about you, whether you were once saved or never saved. In conclusion, we read in Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

God is a loving and caring God, but you need the call to come to Him. God is not going to hit you over the head and tell you, "I told you so." He is not here for anything like that, but He lovingly says: "Come and let us reason together. You see, child, I am your friend. I gave you a good start, but you turned away from it. Now I am giving you an opportunity to return."

Dear one, you may walk away from a job and never get a second chance. You may not get them to say, "Well, I will reconsider." Many times when you walk away from something, it is forever. There are no second chances. Even though you have wandered far from God, He is saying to you, "Come now, let us reason together." You can tell God your reasons why you feel like you have failed, or why you did what you did. You can talk to God, but guess what? He already knows. He just wants you to acknowledge that He is

right and you are wrong.

God wants to reinstate you if you have been saved and you have backslidden. He wants to bring you back into the fold and continue what He started. If He has not had an opportunity to save you, then He is saying: "Come, I want you to see how good it is to be saved." Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Won't you come now to God and reason with Him? One Scripture says that Israel destroyed themselves, but help is in God. He wants to help you, so why not give Him a chance to work in your life by returning to Him and reasoning with Him?

(Compact Disc TR-1864)

Don't Level All the Rough Edges

Recently while finishing some play equipment for our toddlers room in our new church building I was reminded: "Be sure to sand off all the rough edges. The kiddies might get hurt!"

Aside from the fact that a public institution should not knowingly have any dangerous toys for children, I sometimes wonder whether we parents are not going a bit too far in trying to smooth out everything in life for our children?

We want to bring them up with no heartaches, no troubles, no wants, no delay in having the things we did not have as children, and when they get married—no delay in getting all the expensive gadgets we parents had to save and scrim years

to acquire.

In our love we want to save them the bumps and falls which are, or should be, a part of growing up. Our hearts go out to them as they struggle, so we try to save them the pain, and also the joy, of struggle. How quickly can parental love, misdirected, become a harmful thing!

By our insistence on automatic devices in our homes, we Americans have taken out not only inconveniences for ourselves but many of the household and backyard chores which once were automatic instruments of discipline and character training for our children, and we have done all this in the name of love.

In church life also, we are taking

out too many of the rough edges. In place of sharp demands that face children and youth, decisions as to what they shall do with their lives, we have substituted a gradual, yet somewhat too comforting, process of Christian education, which gives a vast amount of information, and even inspiration, yet leaves the child undisturbed and unchallenged, especially in the adolescent years when youth yearns to devote all to something or somebody. Many modern Christian educators would go so far as to say of Jesus' demands of the rich young ruler who chose his wealth against discipleship: "We cannot blame the young man. He was a product of his environment."

[continued on page 25]

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faith-

ful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a

way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

GOD CAN BE DEPENDED ON



Brother Larry Dishman

God Will Never Forsake You

This passage of Scripture says that God is faithful; in other words, He can be depended on. The young people sing a song that says, "*He can be depended on, He can be trusted.*" I am glad that we are serving a God who can be depended on and trusted. We can depend on Him for many things. I cannot mention them all, but I will mention some things for which you can depend on God. According to our Scripture text, you can depend on God when you are tempted, because it states, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are

able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Dear one, God can be depended on to give sufficient grace for every situation that you face. No matter what the situation is, He can be depended on to give you the grace that you stand in need of, because the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

God can be depended on never to leave or forsake you. When you are down in the valley, the devil will try to convince you that God has

forsaken you. The latter part of Hebrews 13:5 says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." You can forsake God, but He will not forsake you.

God can be depended on not to forsake you, even when you get old. When you get up in years, the devil may tell you that you are not good for anything, that you are not good for anyone, or that you are not good for God. The psalmist said in Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." You can depend on God even when you get up in years.

God can be depended on never to forget you. Friend, when you are going through a hard place, praying

and seeking the face of God, and it seems that you cannot find Him, you can count on the fact that God is not going to forget you, because Isaiah 49:15-16 says: "Can a woman forget her sucking child [there is a bond between a mother and her baby], that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget [it is not likely, but it is a possibility], yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me." God will never forget you in any situation.

God can be depended on to direct your paths. Every promise in the Word of God has a condition, and I cannot deal with all the conditions in this message, but I want to deal with the promises. Proverbs 3:5-6 says: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Friend, God can be depended on to always love you. At times, you may not be able to feel the love of God, but He loves you. You may think that no one loves you, but you can depend on God never to quit loving you, because the Bible says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Bible makes it clear that He loved you even when you were dead in trespasses and sins. He can be depended on to deliver you from every evil work, because 2 Timothy 4:18 states, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work [not only that, this verse lets you know that He can be depended on to preserve you; God preserves His people], and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

God Will Hear Your Cry

God can be depended on not to allow any weapon that is formed

against you to prosper. The Bible says in Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Have you ever needed help? He can be depended on to be your helper. Hebrews 13:6 reads, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." I am glad that the Lord is my helper, and He will be your helper if you will call upon Him.

God can be depended on when you are going through rough situations of life. Isaiah 43:2 says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers [you will have to cross some rivers in this life], they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

God can be depended on to do the impossible when it is necessary. Do you know that God can do the impossible? The Bible says in Luke 1:37, "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Praise God! Lots of things are impossible. I cannot do certain things, and you cannot do certain things, but with God nothing is impossible. He can be depended on to supply every need that you have. The Bible tells us in Philipians 4:19, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

God can be depended on to give you the desires of your heart. He knows what you need even before you ask. Psalm 37:4 admonishes, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." He can be depended on to be with you when two or three gather together in His name. He has promised to be in the midst according to Matthew 18:20, where Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

God can be depended on to answer your prayers if you meet the conditions. Jesus said in John 15:7, "If ye abide in me [that is a condition, but that is not all], and my

words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." You cannot live like the devil and expect God to hear and answer your prayers. The psalmist said in Psalm 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me." The Bible says in James 5:16b, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." That has not changed. Even today the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man will avail much.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 3:12, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." God can be depended on to hear your cry. Have you ever cried out to God? He might not send the answer *when* you think He should, and He may not answer the *way* you think He should, but the Bible says in Psalm 40:1, "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."

God can be depended on never to slumber or sleep. Sometimes it is kind of annoying when you need to talk to someone right away and the person who answers the phone tells you that So-and-So is there, but he is resting. Friend, you do not have to worry about that when it comes to God. He will not be sleeping or resting when you call upon Him. The psalmist said in Psalm 121:3-4: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." Thank God, you can call upon Him and get an answer.

God can be depended on to go far beyond what you might ask Him to do. Ephesians 3:20 says, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." He can be depended on to keep the promises in His Book. The Bible is filled with divine promises. As you read the promises in the Word of God, you do not have to wonder in the back of your mind, "Is God really going to do this?"

Friend, He is going to do it. If He said it, He will do it.

Sometimes people cannot keep their promises. They mean well, but sometimes circumstances beyond their control can prevent them from doing so. That is not the way it is with God, because He is in control. Nothing surprises Him. You might be surprised when things do not work out the way you think they should, but when it comes to God, nothing can stand in His way. He is God and He is sovereign. He will not say, "Well, I know I promised you this, but something else came up." He knows what is going to take place, because He knows the end from the beginning. He is God, and you can count on the promises in the Word of God.

The Bible says in 1 Kings 8:56, "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant." Praise God! All those promises He fulfilled, not one word failed. God has done everything that God said He would do. Thank God, He came through every time, and He is just the same today. Friend, we are serving the same God. The same God who made promises to Moses has made us a lot of promises in this covenant. Today it is just the same as it was with Moses. God's Word is true, and it is forever settled in Heaven. He can be depended on never to alter the words that have gone out of His mouth.

Men are printing new versions of the Bible all the time to try to change the Word of God and water it down. They can write all the new versions they want to, but God's Word is forever settled in Heaven. Psalm 89:34 says, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." God said it and it is settled, whether you believe it or not. You may refuse to believe it, but it is still settled, and He is not going to change it or rearrange it. I do not want Him to

change it. I love it just the way it is. He can be depended on never to lie. God does not lie. The Bible says in Hebrews 6:18, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

God can be depended on to deliver you out of your afflictions. The psalmist said in Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." God can be depended on never to allow you to be moved. He has the power to save you, and He can plant you in a place where you will never be moved. Psalm 55:22 says, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Thank God, we have a God in Heaven who saves and sustains us.

The Apostle Paul found that God sustained him in his life. He went through all kinds of situations. They beat him, and he went through shipwreck, hunger, and thirst. Paul suffered much persecution. Do you know what he was able to say? In Acts 20:24 he said, "But none of these things move me." I believe he held on to the promise in Psalm 55:22, which states, "He shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Praise God forever!

God Gives Peace and Power

God can be depended on to save you out of all your troubles. Psalm 34:6 reads, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." God can be depended on to make you more than a conqueror. Do you know what that means? You can be more than a conqueror. You can be more than a winner. Paul said in Romans 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

God can be depended on to take all the things that happen to you and

work them together for good, according to Romans 8:28. Paul wrote in that verse, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." He can be depended on to give you peace in the midst of troubles. The Bible says in Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Then it says in Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." God can keep you in perfect peace.

God can be depended on to bring you joy in the morning. Sometimes the nights are so long, spiritually speaking, that it seems as though they will last forever. God knew those times would come, so He had the psalmist write some encouraging words in Psalm 30:5. It reads, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Don't you love it when the joy comes after you have wept throughout the night? Thank God, He promised to send joy in the morning.

God can be depended on to keep your heart and your mind, according to Philippians 4:6-7. Paul wrote: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." He can be depended on to enable you to do all things, because the Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Friend, you do not have to go around saying, "I would like to quit that, but I can't quit" or "I know I ought to be doing this, but I can't" or "I ought to give this up, and I would like to give it up, but I can't." Friend, you can stand right beside the Apostle Paul and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

God can be depended on to give you the power that you stand in need

of. Someone may say, "I would like to be a Christian, but I just don't think I can do it." You can do it if you truly get saved and receive the Holy Spirit, because John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." You see, a greater One is on the inside than he that is in the world.

God can be depended on to revive you if you will meet the conditions. If there was ever a time when we needed a revival, it is now. Conditions have gotten so bad in the world that some people are confused about what restroom they should use. If you do not know which one you are supposed to use, just get a good dose of salvation, and you will know exactly which restroom you are supposed to go in.

Our country needs revival, and God can do that too. The Bible says in Psalm 138:7, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me." We are living in a day when there is trouble on every hand. I have never seen a day like this; nevertheless, the Word of God still stands true. Second Chronicles 7:14 says, "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." That promise shall not fail. When the people of God meet His conditions, revival will take place.

God Will Never Change

God can be depended on to give you the victory. Friend, it is God that gives the victory! We have nothing to boast in but the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." God is not going to fail you. You may fail God, but He is not going to fail you, because Joshua 1:5 states, "There shall not any man be able to stand before

thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

God can be depended on not to change, thank God. Men are changing, but God never changes. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." God can be depended on never to allow the gates of hell to prevail against His church. That is the one I am in. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He can be depended on to keep you safe. Proverbs 18:10 says, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

God can be depended on to give you comfort when your heart is heavy and burdened. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:4, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." He can be depended on. One of these days, as soon as we lay these bodies down, we will be present with the Lord. Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." As soon as we are absent from this body, we are going to be present with the Lord. We can be confident about that. He can be depended on to bring it to pass.

The world is getting worse and worse, but God can be depended on to come for His church on the last day. Do you know what Jesus is going to do one of these days? He is coming to get His church. He is not coming down here to set up anything. We are going to meet Him in the air. First Thessalonians 4:16-18 says: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [No secret thing will take place; no one is going to sleep through this. The trumpet is

going to sound, and He is going to come with the voice of the archangel.] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

You may say, "I am really going through a difficult time." Well, God can be depended on to give you rest for your weary soul. Matthew 11:28 says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Do you need rest? Do you need forgiveness? He can be depended on to forgive you if you have sin in your life. If you are a sinner, He can be depended on, because 1 John 2:1-2 reads: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Friend, this is a promise in the Word of God.

God Saves and Keeps

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." You may say, "I would like to be saved, but I have been a really bad person." God can be depended on to remove your sins as far as the east is from the west, because it says in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." He can be depended on never to remember your sins again. Isn't that wonderful! He puts them in the sea of God's forgetfulness. The Bible says in Hebrews 8:12, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." He can be depended on to save you if you will ask Him. Romans 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You can depend on that. If you meet the con-

ditions, God will do His part.

God can be depended on to save you if you repent. Luke 13:3 says, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He can be depended on to save you if you will believe. Acts 16:30 asks, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Verse 31 answers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

You can depend on God to keep you once you are saved. Jude said in verse 24, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Whatever your need is, God is dependable. God is 100 percent dependable, 100 percent of the time. You cannot say that about anyone else.

Perhaps you have been saved, but it feels as though God is so far away. That reminds me of the story

of a small boy who was flying his kite. Perhaps you have heard the story. It was a good day and the kite went up higher and higher until it went out of sight. It went behind a cloud. A passerby came by and said, "What are you doing?"

The boy answered, "I'm flying a kite."

The passerby said, "I don't see any kite."

The boy replied, "I don't either."

"Well, how do you know it is up there?" said the passerby.

The boy said, "Because every once in a while I feel a tug on the string."

You may not always be able to feel God or see God, but thank God, you can be confident that He has not forsaken you. He is right where He has been all along. Although the clouds may obscure your view, you will feel the tug on the line. Just stay true to God and take heart, child of

God. Just because you cannot see Him does not mean that He is not there.

I encourage you to keep holding on to the Lord. He is faithful. Even when you cannot feel His presence, hang on and, sooner or later, you will feel that tug on the line once again, because every word He says is true. He will keep every promise. Every trial has a purpose. You need to ask the Lord to teach you when you cannot see. You must hold on to the rope of faith until you can feel the tug from Heaven that tells you that He is still there. He can fulfill whatever your need is. If you are not a Christian, won't you seek Him? If you are a child of God and you are going through a hard trial, you need to talk to God about it.

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[Don't Level All . . .—continued from p. 20]

Jesus knew of his environment, yet He made the sharpest demand he could think of—give up your money and all that goes with it.

How long has it been since any clarion call was made in your church or Sunday school to the young people to commit themselves to Christ? Today many people think this is a disturbing and upsetting demand. To be asked to give up your life, to put yourself second, to yield your own interests to another's—this is tough business.

In many churches and church schools, this demanding quality of Christianity is either glossed over or omitted. People want their children to have happy years, playful years, years of smooth contentment and pleasure.

So while the socialists and communists are demanding and getting supreme loyalty from millions of youth, too many are content, in the name of love for our children, to leave them half-committed or uncommitted to Christ.

Sigmund Freud once said,

"Throw nature out with a pitchfork and she'll come right back every time." We cannot omit this sharp edge of commitment without serious jeopardy and final judgment. To raise a generation without commitment is to raise a morally flabby and indecisive leadership, for the adage applies to our children as well as to adults.

It is a great tragedy to see millions of fine American youth grow up today in the hot house environment of city culture with no primary experiences of either joy or pain.

Instead, they expose them to the apparent kindness but final cruelty of overstuffed reclining chairs to watch endless television programs which involve no effort but a fastened, hypnotized eye; no demands except physical presence. We give our children overstuffed furniture, even at the dining room table. We let or make them ride to school where they sit in overheated classrooms. At public expense, we pay professional recreation directors to teach them in small play areas instead of leaving vacant space where boys can play and quarrel by

themselves, but develop on their own.

In all this process, they are being hurt in the name of love. Leave some sharp edges, parents and teachers! Where they have all been taken out in the guise of affection, restore a few, so that when adulthood comes, pain will not be something novel, but an old friend and dear teacher.

"It must needs be that the Son of Man be crucified. . . ." So spake the Master.

It must needs be that our children undergo experiences, thoughts, demands, and teachers which will jolt, hurt, or agonize at the moment of enduring but which will make them finer, stronger, and less selfish. Let's not level all the rough edges.

Selected

**He who is born of God
should grow to
resemble his Father.**

A Closer Walk With God

During the interval between Christ's crucifixion and the Day of Pentecost, Christ's disciples were bewildered, filled with doubt and skepticism. They hid behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. Some of them left the high calling of fishing for men to return to their former vocation of ordinary fishermen.

After Pentecost these same disciples were changed men. When we think of their heroic spirit, their zeal, and the amazing events which happened, then we realize that something tremendous had happened to these disciples.

Although external circumstances had not changed, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, and fearing neither man nor devil, they moved out to change the world. An honest appraisal of facts forces us to see that the nominal churches of our day resemble the band of bewildered, fearful, inactive disciples before Pentecost more than the disciples after Pentecost.

Indeed, the churches of our day seem to be paralyzed into inactivity by the same doubts, skepticism, and fears which paralyzed the disciples before the Day of Pentecost. There is but one remedy—a new upsurge of spiritual power, a fresh outpouring of the fullness of Christ's living presence in people's individual lives, a new invasion of the supernatural into every department of modern life.

The thing that many Christians need so much is a fresh in filling of the Holy Spirit and a closer walk with God. Paul described it in the Roman letter as

the "life in the Spirit." James uses the phrase, "Drawing near to God." For years true men of God have emphasized this experience. It includes such necessary ingredients as a keener awareness of spiritual realities, a greater sense of God's presence in every day life, growth in Christlikeness, a more dedicated life, and a more meaningful prayer life.

How does one go about achieving such goals? What can the church or individual Christian do to live more closely to God?

The first step is to feel a hunger for such an experience. God so respects your freedom of choice that He will not give you anything that you do not really want or seek for. However, once you sense your own needs and start seeking, God's wonderful promises will be fulfilled.

A few of these wonderful promises are found in the Book of Matthew. Matthew 5:6 tells us, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Matthew 7:7-8 instructs us: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Jesus concluded this promise in verse 11 by saying, "If ye then, being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

One indication of spiritual life is a recurring hunger for more of God, for a closer fellowship with Him, a greater likeness to Him. The genuine disciple of Jesus Christ is never dissatisfied with God, but always unsatisfied with

himself.

It is through this hunger for God and His power and presence in your life that you grow as a Christian, replenish your exhausted spiritual reserves, and maintain your spiritual vigor. However, you must go beyond this stage of hungering for a closer walk with God to the point that you are willing to pay the price for an upsurge of spiritual power. God does not grant this desire willy-nilly.

God never gives you anything of real value on a silver platter. Every blessing has a price, and the price of this greatest of all blessings is self-discipline. In Luke 14:27 Jesus said, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple." He said in Matthew 16:25, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it."

For example, to live close to God means to live apart from sin and evil. You cannot love God and the world at the same time. To love God in an age in which sin and evil are brought right in the living rooms in increasingly enticing ways requires a discipline of a rare order. Jesus graphically illustrated just how severe, binding, and strong this discipline must be in Matthew 5:29-30 when He said: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee."

Selected

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TOMORROW never comes.
God places the emphasis
upon the NOW of TODAY.

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December 26-30

*We hope you will plan your
vacation time so that you can join us
in these old-fashioned camp meet-
ings.*

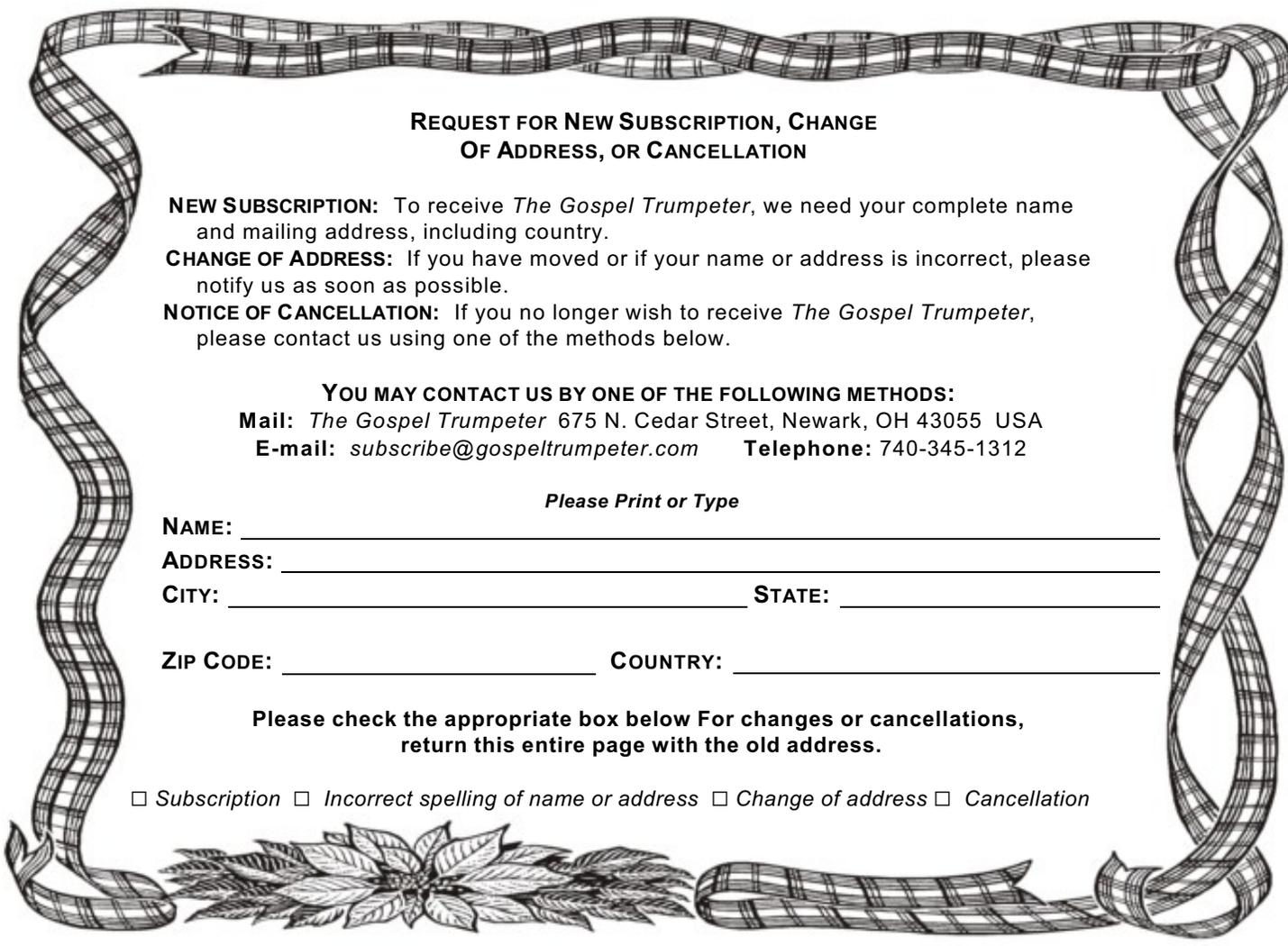


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