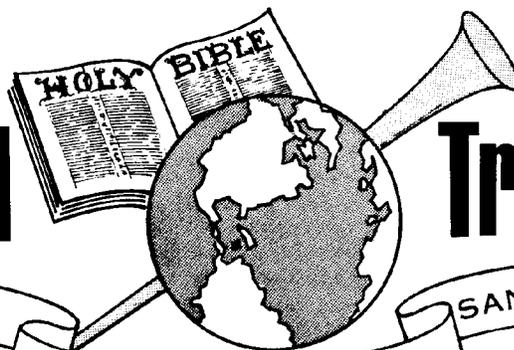


The Gospel



Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

**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. 50 July 2020 No. 7



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

Guest Editorial

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.

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

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

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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

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Vol. 50 July 2020 No. 7

"And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread."

Numbers 21:4-5

DON'T MURMUR OR COMPLAIN

Murmuring and complaining is a serious thing to become involved in. It is greatly distasteful to the Lord. It is a sin in God's sight, and it must be avoided. People who are involved in this condition face drastic consequences. In the Scripture verses above, we find an example that brought retribution to the children of Israel. It is recorded to be a warning and an admonition to all. God showed what happens when people allow this practice to go on unchecked. This must not be allowed to persist in a person's life.

Let us examine this error and see the effect that it had on those of the past. God wonderfully delivered the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. He gloriously provided a way for them to cross the Red Sea and destroyed their enemy before their eyes. The Lord proved Himself faithful to meet every need that arose. When they were in the wilderness, He provided manna to eat and water to drink. However, each time they met with a hardship, a trial, or a lack, they invariably looked on the nega-

tive side of the situation. Instead of Israel trusting in God and His ability to supply the need, they murmured and complained.

Their unbelief lead to accusations toward the Lord and His purpose. The people repeatedly blamed God for bringing them out in the wilderness to die. One would think Israel should have been thankful for the miracles He had already done. His mighty works of the past should have inspired their faith to trust Him and to grow. Unfortunately, unbelief blinded their eyes to each negative trial they encountered.

The Lord had no intention of destroying His people in the wilderness. He had good things in store for them. The promise was given to Abraham of inheriting a good land filled with milk and honey. God had a reason for leading the Israelites in the way that He did. The hardships that befell them were used as a vehicle to prove them. God wanted to know what was in their hearts. He wanted to see if they would truly appreciate His works and serve Him. In Deuteronomy 8:2 we read, "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no."

[continued on page 16]

Holiness



Brother Roger L. Decker

"Be Ye Holy; for I Am Holy"

Holiness is a very controversial subject because many people do not really understand what holiness is. God commands the Christian to live a life of holiness to represent His body, the church. The Bible lets us know that as Jesus walked the shores of Galilee in a fleshly body, He was without sin. Then He ascended to Heaven and is sitting on the right hand of the Father. Who is His body now? His body is the church. He did not switch from a sinless body to a sinful body.

What does the word holiness mean? There are several terms for it in the Hebrew and the

Greek. In the Old Testament, it meant a sacred place, a sacred thing, consecrated, dedicated, hallowed, and a sanctuary. Holiness is used in six different ways in the New Testament, ranging from purification, sanctity, sacredness, godliness, reverence, and piety. God is all these things, and He commands His people to be like Him. God would not ask you to do something that you are incapable of. If you do not believe in holiness, then you do not believe the Scriptures.

Let us see what the Bible says about holiness and about God. There is one strong attribute that stands out about God, and that is, He cannot lie. Titus 1:2 states,

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Numbers 23:19 reads, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" These two Scriptures let you know that God is incapable of lying.

I want you to see what the Bible says about the writers of the Scriptures. We read in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved [or inspired] by the Holy Ghost." Holy men spoke the prophecy, as they were

moved by God Himself, working through His Holy Spirit.

I have established two things so far: that God cannot lie and that He told holy men what to write in the Word of God. He called these men "holy men of God." Therefore, there must have been men who could live up to the standard that God had set.

Holiness in the New Testament was different from holiness in the Old Testament, but both were accepted of God. Sin was not removed under the old covenant, but it was atoned for. Hebrews 10:1-4 reads: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come [and thank God they are here], and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices [of the old covenant] there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Some profess holiness, but when you question them about holiness, they do not want to say for sure that they are living holy. Some may say, "Well, there are some things that I struggle with." Others may say, "We can't be holy like Jesus." Church, Jesus is your example of holiness, not another brother or sister. First Peter 1:15-16 tells us: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [or conduct]; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

God's People Are Different

First John 3:2-10 reads: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know

that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested [or made known] to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. [These Scriptures are very plain. You have to remember that John was back from the isle of Patmos at Ephesus, and apostasy had already set in. He did not go to the depths that the Apostle Paul went to, but he wrote plainly so that anyone could understand it.]

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth [or has missed the mark] from the beginning. For this purpose [or for this reason] the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 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."

Why do you think John started talking about someone not loving his brother? He did so because it is a sign of apostasy when people start to get lean on their love. It is just like problems in a marriage. When love begins to get lean in a marriage, separation and divorce happens. What happens when a lack of love begins to take place? The Apostle John lets you know that the love of many waxes cold.

God's people are different from the average person that dwells on this earth. Yes, we

work and socialize among people, but Deuteronomy 7:6 states, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

First Peter 2:9 tells us, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [or creation]: old things [or the things of the old life] are passed away; behold, all things [not just some things] are become new." All these Scriptures point out that God's people are different. Peter called God's people a chosen generation.

Moses called God's people a special people, or a peculiar treasure. Exodus 19:5-6 states: "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." God chose His people to be above all the people of the earth.

Follow Peace and Holiness

Hebrews 12:14 reads, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The writer was not talking about seeing the Lord at the final Judgment. We know that was not what he was talking about because Revelation 1:7 tells us, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." He was talking about

seeing God in this life.

You cannot literally see God, because God is a Spirit. Jesus Christ was the representation of His Father. John 14:6-9 tells us: "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Again, God is a Spirit, but this was something people could see. Philip was looking at a physical body, not a spirit. When someone looks at you, that person sees your body, not your spirit. How do people see God? They see Him manifested in those who are living holy. Going back to the Scripture in Hebrews 12:14, we read, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The writer pointed out two things that are necessary for people to see God and to see Him in your life: peace and holiness. Both are needed in your life for people to see God. This gets really close.

In essence, Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not seen the Father?" People work in various places, shop at various places, and eat in different restaurants. Can they see the Father in your life? That is the only way others can see God.

You may say: "Okay, I do things, but don't judge me. God knows my heart." God does know your heart, but you were never witnessed to by seeing someone's heart. You saw the outward man, the manifestations of the heart working through a

body. It was a human body that talked to me and invited me to church. It was a congregation of people that I saw when I went to church. It was a preacher that I heard. God worked through a preacher, a human body.

According to the Scriptures, we are to follow peace and holiness. We are to find peace and endeavor to keep peace. There is only one way we can do that, and that is by obeying the Word of God. The Christian has a double duty: He has a duty to God, and he also has a duty to his fellowman. To God, a man must present a clean heart; to men, he must present an upright life. The Christian is to show others the right way to walk by being a personal example of living right and by removing anything from the path that would make him stumble, thereby making the journey easier. That is a Christian's duty. He must offer his heart to God and his service as an example to his fellowman.

Although men live in this world, a man who is holy must always be different and separate from it. Yes, you work and go about your duties here, but you are still separate from the world. As a Christian, your standards are not the world's standards, and your conduct is not the same as the world's conduct. The church sets the example of modest dress. Parents do not set it, and Hollywood does not set it.

Perfecting Holiness

As a Christian parent, you have a real duty to your children. You should know what your children are wearing before they walk out of the house. You should teach your children to look in the mirror when they get dressed to make sure that what they are wearing is modest. When your daughter or your son leaves the house, you should care about what he or she is wearing.

In a Christian home, your child is to represent the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus did not walk around immodestly. A person who is holy is to stand well before God. One who is holy is preparing to stand before the presence of God. The life of a Christian is dominated by the constant memory that his or her greatest aim is to enter the presence of God.

Your soul has to be perfect or you are not going to Heaven. You need to be perfect in your soul, in your heart, and in your spirit or you are not going to be a part of the body of Christ. Now, you will never be free from the possibility of making mistakes in this life, but you must be free from sin. We all are limited in knowledge and understanding. We have pastors, evangelists, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. Many times we learn by making mistakes. Sometimes mistakes can be embarrassing and disappointing, but they are not sin. However, the same mistake made over and over could lead to sin if not corrected.

We know there are many good, moral people in the world, but goodness is not holiness. We thank God for the people who are not saved but are upright citizens. This will not get them into Heaven, but they are much better to dwell with than troublemakers. Although goodness is not holiness, holiness is good. Holiness is not something that a Christian fights against, but rather it is something he desires. Our worship has to be in holiness. I do not understand why some people who claim to be Christians fight against living holy. Some people get in a discourse and argue for the devil against holiness.

I will tell you a little story about the first time I preached on holiness. Before the first time I preached at God's Acres, God was dealing with me about preaching, and evidently our

pastor, Brother Emerson Wilson, knew this, but I did not fully understand it. One day Brother Wilson called me and let me know that he was going away and wanted me to preach a service while he was gone, so I said okay and hung up the phone. It did not really dawn on me what he had asked me to do until I got off the phone. So I got in my automobile and drove to Brother Wilson's house. He was out in the driveway when I arrived. I got out of my vehicle and walked over to him and said, "Brother Wilson, what do I preach on?"

He said, "Preach on what you know best."

I said, "Okay, but how long should I preach?"

He said, "God will show you."

Then I said, "What if I should say something wrong?"

He said, "You can only say what is in your heart," and that put me at ease. I felt that God directed me to preach on holiness.

Holiness Within and Without

Holiness is still a message that people need to hear. People may argue about millenniums, but they cannot argue about what the Bible says about living a holy life. We must have holiness in our worship. Psalm 29:2 tells us, "Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." You dare not enter the sanctuary of God and take part in the services with sin in your heart. God forbid! It might get by the pastor or a Sunday school teacher, but always keep in mind that it will never get past God.

When sin is involved, the beauty of holiness is gone. In the Hebrew it means beautiful garments of holiness, referring to the priests and the Levites putting on their best, clean apparel so that it did not bring dishonor to God.

When you go to the house of God, you should wear your best. If the President of the United States were to invite you to the White House, would you go there with holes in your clothes? Certainly not!

When we speak of holiness, it is about not only the outside but also the inside. Some people judge holiness strictly by the outward appearance. The inside needs to be cleaned up first before you start working on the outside. Some people are bitter and unclean, spiritually speaking, but they dress up the outside to look holy. They dress the part of a Christian, but they have bad attitudes and their actions bring their experience into question. Some are bitter about things that happened years ago. Other people get bitter because someone else is bitter. They were never a part of the problem, but they heard about it and became bitter. People who get in that condition are miserable, and they make the people around them miserable.

Hebrews 12:14-15 reads: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." I have never seen a bitter person keep it to himself.

A person can mess up in life, but he can be restored if he wants to be. One who has been restored should not be looked at in the light of his past. A person can get delivered and get straightened out and go on and live a good life. Have you ever messed up since you have been a Christian? Most people have messed up somewhere along the line. What does God do? He brings restoration and puts people back on their feet. There is forgiveness with God. He is plentiful in mercy. He has storehouse after storehouse full of mercy. He

has enough mercy for every individual in this whole world.

The root of bitterness symbolizes a poisonous plant. When it enters the system, the whole body becomes sick. When bitterness enters a person's heart, he becomes sick, spiritually speaking. He has trouble praying, reading the Bible, getting to Sunday school, attending revivals, and enduring the services.

Moses said in Deuteronomy 29:18, speaking to the children of Israel, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." Bitterness can destroy an individual, a congregation, or a fellowship if allowed to continue. Holiness is required by all those who take part in service.

Purify Yourself

Some individuals are saved one week and are gone the next, and then they come back and get saved, and soon they are gone again. Friend, if that describes your experience, Jesus has more grace for you than that. Some people are up and down in their experience with God because they love themselves more than they love God. They pamper themselves.

Luke 1:74-75 reads: "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." You should live holy and righteously all the days of your life, not just when you feel like it. It is not a part-time job. This is a full-time job. As a Christian, God will deliver you out of the hand of your enemies and from all that hate you. You

do not have to allow sin to have dominion over you or exist in you. You are to worship God and to render Him service and adoration.

Sin has been removed from every child of God. This means you are not to live in sin and practice sin daily. All sin must be gone. John wrote in 1 John 3:3, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Again, I want to reiterate that mistakes are not sin. We all are prone to making mistakes.

Contrary to what some people believe, babies are not born into the world with inherited sin. They are not responsible for what their parents did. Children need to be raised right. When they come to an age of accountability, they choose sin because they have no power to choose differently. Thank God, there is no sin in the church.

Men did not know what God was really like until Jesus came. Until a Christian walks among the world, people do not know what God is like. When a saved young person walks into a classroom, many times that is where other young people get their first glimpse of what God is like. Other students may not go to church or they may be in false religion, but when a true child of God walks into a classroom, other students may get their first glimpse of what God is like. When you go shopping, your attitude, your conduct, the way you present yourself, and the way you dress can give people their first glimpse of God.

When people see a true Christian, they get a glimpse of what God is like if He were there in the flesh. When you go to a restaurant, you should show what Jesus would be like if He were sitting at the table. The Christian dresses how Jesus would dress if He were present. How would Jesus dress if He

were living here among us in our day and age? He would dress modestly.

"Walk in Newness of Life"

Paul wrote to the Romans in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Paul was not talking about water baptism. Water baptism does not change you. You walk in newness of life when you are baptized into the body of Christ.

Again, John wrote in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Dear one, if you are not living holy, you need to be honest about your condition. If you have something sinful in your life, you are not a Christian. I am not talking about struggling over some things, but rather I am talking about sin. If sin is present in your life, you are not in the church, and you are not going to Heaven; but that can change. All of that can be turned around through the blood of Jesus Christ.

If you are struggling to overcome something in your life, God will be right there to help you. Let me give you an example. Suppose you were a heavy smoker. Now, allowances should not be made for smoking, but you should not turn away from your help if you are struggling to get rid of that habit. You should not go back to the world. You need to stay where you can get

help and where people will pray for you. You should stay where you have people concerned about you. You should not turn back to the beggarly elements of the world and battle it.

I once knew a brother that struggled with the tobacco habit. He was in a denominational church, and then he came out and got a good experience with God, but he struggled over the tobacco habit. After awhile, he got complete victory over that habit. If you are struggling, whatever you do, do not let that struggle turn you away from God. It is better to struggle and to make it than to give up and lose out completely.

God has commanded us to live holy. He did not command us to do something that we cannot do. Remember, God cannot lie. He moved on holy men of God, and as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost, they wrote the Scriptures that God inspired them to write. If you are struggling and need someone to pray with you, do not hesitate to call someone to do that. You have not been serving God so long that you will never need help. You are going to need help until you draw your last breath.

You should always be honest with God, because God is honest with you. If something is troubling you or if something has caused you to have a leanness in your soul, you need to do something about it. God is giving you an opportunity to get the problem corrected in your life. If you have a need, won't you mind God?

(Compact Disc TR-2273)

**Holiness is not the way to Christ;
Christ is the way to holiness.**

Psalm 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Are You Allowing God to Direct Your Steps



Brother Abraham Burton

The Possibility of Backsliding

This psalm was King David's prayer after the Prophet Nathan went to him when he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. King David was a man after God's own heart, but he really messed up. It is not so much how a person starts his walk with God, but it is how he finishes. Jesus said in Matthew 10:22, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." There is a possibility of backsliding. We are on a probationary sojourn. As long as you walk in the light and keep in step with the light that God reveals to

you, God will take you on to Glory. You have to obey God. As long as you obey Him, He will keep you.

David should have been out on the battlefield, but he was at home taking it easy. The devil wants to get you where you are not supposed to be. He wants to get you backed into a corner and put something before you that you are unable to take. That is the reason you need to make sure that you are in the place where God wants you to be at all times.

The Word of God says 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." Are you allowing God to direct your path or are you leaning to your own understanding?

The Bible states in Proverbs 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Are you asking God to order your steps? We are living in perilous times, and the devil knows he has only a little time. He is out to get each of us. David was taking it easy on the rooftop looking at something that he had

no business looking at. James 1:14 says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." We all are in a battle, but when you feel that tug of the Holy Spirit, you need to stop resisting Him and start obeying Him.

When you feel enticement, you need to go the other way. If you are saved, you are kept by the power of God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." You cannot take coals of fire into your bosom and not get burned. The devil wants to burn you.

When King David was up on the rooftop, the devil had something for him to see. The devil knows your weakness better than you do. David had many wives and concubines, so you would have thought he would have been happy with them.

You cannot take anything for granted. You have to watch and pray. Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." You cannot let down your guard. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:15-16: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." First Peter 5:8 reads, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." You should not give the devil an opportunity to devour you. You have to fight.

The Downward Spiral of Sin

David was at ease when he should have been with his army. Instead, he was out looking over the rooftops, and the devil had something for him to see. Bathsheba was bathing. The devil knows how to set people up. When you realize you are in a setup, you need to get out quick-

ly. David did not do that. He sent for Bathsheba, and he was overcome by his lust. His sin did not stop there. When sin gets hold of you, it binds you and blinds you. David was bound and blinded by sin, so he thought he would cover up his sin. He sent for Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.

Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Many people make the mistake of thinking they can cover their sins. In Numbers 32:23 we read, "Be sure your sin will find you out." It is just a matter of time, and you will be exposed. Why not be honest? During this time, David was being dishonest. Again, he was blinded by sin. If God, through the mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, does not give you a chance to get back to Him, you will never get back.

David sent for Uriah, but his plan for how he was going to cover his sin did not work. Uriah would not cooperate. Bathsheba was with child, so David wanted Uriah to go home to his wife to cover his sin. In essence, Uriah said: "My fellow soldiers are camped in a field, so I cannot go home to eat and drink and be with my wife when my brethren are out there in harm's way. I will not do that." Uriah slept at the door of the king's house.

David had to think of another plan. That is how sin works when someone gives place to it. The best thing to do is repent, because sin becomes a downward spiral. The longer you stay in sin, the more the devil is going to get you caught up in sin. David said: "I know what I will do. I will have Joab (the captain of David's army) put Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle and then back away from him so that Uriah will die." David added murder to his sin of adultery. He was deceived by the devil.

I stand in godly fear because falling into sin could happen to me. That is the reason I want to be in every service and prayer meeting that I can be in. I am going to pray and keep myself in the love of God. I am going to do everything that I can, because 1 Peter 4:18 tells us, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

God Has a Better Way

David thought he was home free, so to speak, since Uriah was out of the way. He moved Bathsheba into the royal palace with him, but God had his number. He sent a man of God, the Prophet Nathan, to visit David. Nathan told David a parable. Second Samuel 12:1-4 reads: "And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

David's righteous indignation was stirred. Verses 5-6 state: "And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." Nathan told David in verse 7, "Thou

art the man."

God sent the Prophet Samuel to anoint David to be the next king of Israel, but at the time, the Prophet Samuel did not know who he was going to anoint. He looked at all the sons of Jesse and thought that surely one of the big, robust sons would be chosen. However, as he went down the line, God said no to each son presented there. When he had walked by all the sons who were present, Samuel said, "Do you have any more sons?" Jesse said, "I have a ruddy lad out keeping the sheep," so Samuel sent for him. When the Prophet Samuel saw David, God said that he was the one. David was the man after God's own heart.

Did you know that man is the crowning apex of God's creation? God gave man the breath of life and the dominion of all things, but out of all God's creation, man fell the lowest, and God was grieved. In Isaiah 1:4 the Lord told the children of Israel, "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward."

With all God's Truth and with all His love, you do not have to backslide. God is here to encourage, to strengthen, to lift up, and to help. He has given us strong men to bear the infirmity of the weak. Friend, you do not have to stay in sin or go back into sin.

Acknowledging Sin

King David was overcome with grief after the Prophet Nathan pointed out his sin. Some people have gone past their opportunity to get saved because they have shrugged off their sins. They have fought against God. David did not want to be like that. In essence, he said, "God, I acknowledge my transgressions,

and my sin is ever before me." If you are not saved, your sin is ever before you. The Spirit of God is wooing you and dealing with you. How long are you going to put off getting right with God? How long are you going to fight with God? God loves you. He is talking to you because He wants you to give your heart to Him. David realized that he lost the best thing he ever had.

Moses made the right choice when he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. People will tell you, "Oh, I'm having a good time living in sin." Friend, do not be deceived. The pleasure and fun in sin is just for a little season. People have to go back home, and if God is talking to their hearts, they are troubled; they have no peace. If you are not saved, you do not have peace. I am praying that God will strive with your heart, because when God stops talking to you, there is not going to be any help for you.

David did not want to go out of this world the way he was. In Psalm 51:1-4 David said: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."

Some people do not get back to God because they are being dishonest. You have to be honest with God. You have to own your condition, be accountable, and acknowledge your sin. Sometimes people come back, but they do not truly have godly sorrow, and then they wonder why they do not get a genuine experience. It is because they do not have godly sorrow. Second Corinthians 7:10 tells us, "For godly sor-

row worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." When people truly are broken and contrite, they will get a true experience with God.

David did some serious praying. No doubt, he did not want to be like Esau. Esau sought repentance with tears, but he had sold his birthright for a bowl of porridge. He was overcome by the flesh and made a very hasty decision.

"Now Is the Accepted Time"

So many people take God's mercy for granted. The Apostle John wrote in Revelation 20:12, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened." Young and old are going to stand before God. Young person, do not think you have your whole life before you. You never know when God will call you for the last time. One time I got a call about a young person that I knew as a little boy. He was in a club, and he did not know it, but it was his last day on earth. A fight broke out, and he stood by and watched the fight and ended up getting shot dead. (This is one reason you should not stand around and watch fights. You need to go on about your own business.) The young man was twenty-five years of age and he thought he had his whole life before him, but he went in eternity unprepared to meet God. Do you think he was prepared to meet God when he was at a club partying? No, my friend.

The devil wants to trick you and make you think you have plenty of time. The only time you have is now. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:2, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Hebrews 3:15 states, "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." When

the Spirit of God is talking to you, are you resisting? Are you putting off salvation? You may think you have time, but you never know. Do not be deceived by the devil. He wants you to keep procrastinating until you run out of time.

Esau sought his birthright with bitter tears. Although he cried, it was not enough. You ought to value salvation. If you are saved, you had better value what you have. Your worst day in salvation, when all the devils in hell are coming against you, is a better day than living in sin because you still have God. If God be for you, who can be against you?

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "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." You do not have to run from the devil or be afraid of the devil. All you have to do is have a will and a desire to want to stay saved, obey God, and be true to Him. He will give you the power to carry that out.

David did not have to backslide. He should have been in the battle with his men. That is the reason the Scriptures say, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." You have to be on guard, be vigilant, and be sober. You have to watch because the devil does not take time off. He does not take vacation days; he works twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

A Way to Escape

Psalm 51:5-7 reads: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Do you want God to cleanse you?

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him [Jesus Christ] the iniquity of us all." Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

If you do not have Jesus Christ in your life, you are still a sinner. God has made a way for you to escape. If you have been overcome with temptations and you have backslidden, 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 [the sacrifice] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Backslidden friend, you can come back to God. He said that He is married to you. Come back home. You do not fit out in the world.

Where is the fear of God today? Do you fear God? The fear of God is swiftly leaving this world. People think they can throw off conviction. As saints, we should be praying, lifting up the ministry and praying that God will get hold of hearts. We should be praying that God will break down people's stubborn will, that He will break down the devil's strongholds, and that He will loose souls from the bondage of sin.

When Zion (or the church) travails, she will bring forth sons and daughters. Are you travail-ing? Are you praying? You need to ask God for a soul burden. We need a chosen fast to loose the bonds of wickedness. Do you have a burden for souls? God did not just give the commission to the ministry; it is for the church as well.

Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is

baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Are you doing your part for the upbuilding of God's kingdom? Souls are languishing in sin. Are you helping to rescue the perishing? The Bible lets us know that some are saved with fear and others with compassion, making a difference. Are you asking God for wisdom to be a soul winner? It used to be that people wanted to be soul winners. How many souls have you brought in lately? Are you praying? Do you have a soul burden?

Jesus Is Knocking at Your Heart's Door

In Psalm 51:9-12 David continued: "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit."

God wants to hide His face from your sins and blot out all your iniquities. Are you at the point where you can humble yourself and ask Jesus to come into your heart? How long does He have to talk to you and tell you that now is the accepted time, that today is the day of salvation?

Jesus said in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." How long is God going to have to knock on the door of your heart? One song we sing is entitled "Oh, Why Not Tonight?" The chorus reads: "Oh, why not tonight? Oh, why not tonight? Wilt thou be saved? Then why not tonight?"

What better time to give your heart to God than while He is

talking to you, while He is knocking at your heart's door. The devil will make you feel that you cannot do it, but you need to exert your will and say, "I want to get saved now." Revelation 22:17 tells us, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Genesis 6:3 reads, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." I wish I could make the decision to serve God for you, but you have to make that choice. God made you a free, moral agent. All I can do is try to persuade you to come to God.

Jesus said in Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Are you looking back? There is nothing out there. Today it is worse than it was when I got saved, and that was in 1975. I am so glad that I am no longer living in sin. I thank God for Jesus. God gave me grace and faith to get saved.

When I got saved, I had to look away from my friends, my family, and my girlfriend. I realized that when I stood before God, I was going to stand alone. None of those people were more important than standing before God by myself. I would have been without excuse, because He had given me every opportunity to get saved.

Forsaking All Sin

Do not be like King Saul. He was rejected by God for his disobedience. Mercy was offered to him, but he kept on being dishonest. In essence, Saul said: "I have done the will of the Lord. I did all that God told me to do." In essence, the Prophet Samuel said: "Then why do I hear the bleating of sheep and the lowing of the oxen? Why is King Agag over there? I told you that God

said to get rid of everything." Saul blamed the people.

What is your excuse as to why you have not gotten saved? Friend, if you listen to the devil, he will tell you that you are not ready. Do you want to die and be lost? If you were facing death and this was your last day on earth, you would get saved, ready or not.

If a natural disaster were to happen, such as a big tornado, churches would probably be full and there would probably be many calls for prayer. Is that what it is going to take for you to humble yourself? God may sacrifice some people to win others. If God sees that you do not want to get saved, that you do not appreciate His mercy, He might use you to get somebody else's attention. It might be the very person that you have been holding out for. You had better look away from whoever is hindering you from getting saved.

What are you putting before God? Jesus said in Mark 8:36, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What is so important that you do not have time to give your heart to God? When you stand in the Judgment, is it going to be important then? Do not play with God. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." You have to give up all sin to be saved. First John 1:9 tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Are you willing to confess and forsake all sin?

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 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." You have to be willing to give up sin, to forsake all sin.

Take Heed

What is so important that you will not get saved? Psalm 34:8 says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." The goodness of God should lead you to repentance. God has been good. I challenge you to let the rest of your days be your best days.

David wanted to get back to what he had; he wanted God. David said in Psalm 51:10-11: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." You do not want God to withdraw His Spirit from you. No one else is coming after Jesus Christ.

Young person, now is the time to give your heart to God. You may say: "I have time. I am young. I am not ready." Why are you not ready? What can you exchange that is more valuable than your soul? Will you sell your soul for a good time, to be popular, or to chase money? Did you know that when you die, you cannot take any of that with you? You came here with nothing, and you are going out with nothing.

Many people get deceived by the cares of this life and by the desire for riches and material things. Jesus said in Luke 21:34, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

Did you know that you can get drunk on the cares of life, in being busy with the children, the grandchildren, and trying to be cultured and lose your soul? Your soul is the most important thing. Choosing God is the most

important decision that you can ever make in this life. Are you going to make a fatal decision?

God talked to the people in Noah's day. The people had never seen rain. The people were wicked, and God was grieved with that generation. God said that He was going to destroy man, but He warned them through Noah, who preached to them for approximately one hundred twenty years. They still would not repent, even right up to the time that God sent Noah, his family, and the animals into the ark; then God shut the door.

Friend, do not wait until God shuts the door of His mercy on you. There are people who want to get saved, but they keep putting it off. I want you to notice that Noah did not shut the door of the ark. God shut the door, and soon the rain began to come. I believe that the people wanted in the ark then, but it was too late. The rain and the floods came, and it rained and rained until everybody on the earth died, except Noah and his family.

God is not playing. He is not slack concerning His promises. He is going to destroy this world. A bomb will not destroy it. God is going to destroy this world; its destruction is reserved for Him. Do you know what it means to be reserved? No doubt, you have been to a restaurant and had a table reserved. No one else can get that table except you. Nobody is going to destroy this earth but God. The elements are going to melt with fervent heat.

Prepare for Eternity

How long are you going to put off salvation? How long are you going to play with God? David humbled himself when he heard the Truth, and that is the reason he wrote Psalm 51. Dear one, do not go on unsaved. Why not get saved now? God can do

great things. He can turn your life around, make you a new creature, and show you a better way of living. God can give you a peace that passes all understanding. Are you troubled? Are you loaded down with cares and problems? Have you been trying to handle everything by yourself? Why not let Jesus carry your load?

In Psalm 51:13-19 David continued: "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

Jesus paid the price for your salvation on Mount Calvary. He gave His life a ransom for all. The sacrifice the Lord wants is a broken and a contrite heart. Are you tired of sin? Are you sorry

that your life is grieving God? Are you broken? The way of a sinner is hard. You might show a stoic expression, as though you have everything under control, but you do not. When you think about eternity, you are afraid. You do not want to die lost.

One song says, "*Lost, forever! Oh, how sad!*" In eternity there will not be an opportunity to get saved. You might have been told about purgatory or a tribulation, where you will get another chance. Those are ships that will never come in. The Bible says that after death is the Judgment.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Once you die, that is it. After death is the Judgment.

Revelation 22:11 states, "He that . . . is filthy, let him be filthy still . . . and he that is holy, let him be holy still." When you die, where will you spend eternity? Are you prepared for that place? Romans 6:23 reads, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

(Compact Disc TR-2240)

The Best

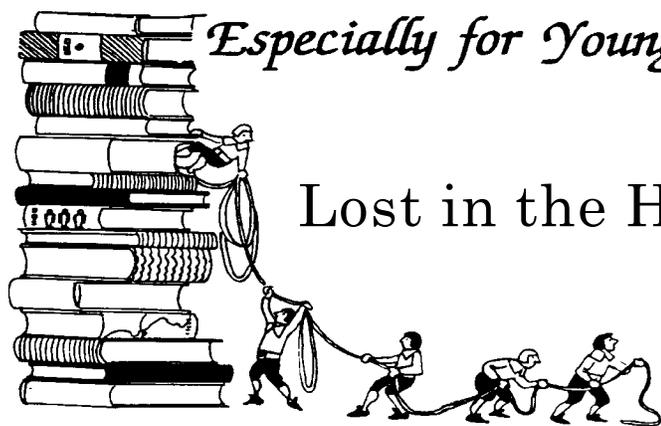
A happy Christian met a peddler and exclaimed, "It's a grand thing to be saved!"

"Yes," said the peddler, "it is, but I know something better than that."

"Better than being saved? What could you possibly know that is better than that?"

"The companionship of the Man who saved me," was the unexpected reply.

Especially for Young People



Lost in the House



Have you ever lost something valuable? We did not have much money growing up, and when I was a child, I had ten dollars in a little change purse that I lost, and I was so upset. I did not find that money. Have you ever gotten lost? One time when I was small, our family went to the state fair, and my brother got distracted when we stopped to look at something. We moved on, and then a few minutes later we realized that he was not with us. My mother later told me of how frightened she was. Eventually they had to have an announcement made over the loud speakers, and he was found.

As I was studying, I thought about the story of Mary and Martha. Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus were good friends with Jesus, and He would come to visit them. In Luke, Chapter 10, you can read that Jesus came to visit, and Mary sat at His feet and heard His Word. She was eager to hear what Jesus had to say.

Martha was busy serving. That was the most important thing to her at that moment, and she got upset with her sister for not helping her. In verse 40 she said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." Martha was concerned with serving, and she was irritated with her sister because she felt that Mary should

have been helping her serve.

What was Jesus' answer to Martha? In verses 41-42 Jesus said: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." Martha was in the same house as the Son of God, yet she was more interested in serving than in hearing what He had to say. Martha was close to Jesus, but she was not hearing His words.

In the story of the prodigal son, the prodigal son and the father are prominent figures, but another figure in the story is the older brother. He lived at home with his father. He was in the house, but he became angry and bitter. He had the wrong attitude, and he was lost in the house.

In Luke, Chapter 15, you can read about the lost coin. A woman had ten pieces of silver, but she lost one. The coin was still in the house, but it was lost. What did she do? She searched diligently for that which was lost until she found it.

In 2 Chronicles, Chapter 34, you will find that something else was lost in the house. King Josiah began to clean up the house of God, and the book of the Law was found. When a priest found it, he gave it to a scribe, who took it to the king and read it to him. When the king heard the teachings, he tore his clothes to show

how upset he was that the words of the Lord had not been kept. This book had been in the house of God all that time, but Israel had not been following it. Therefore, King Josiah was very grieved. Israel was close to the Word, but the people did not know what it said.

This brings me to the point of the lesson. Some young people are lost in the house. Others once came to the house of God, but now they are gone. Many of them had godly parents. They heard the Truth, and they saw miracles. They were in the house, but they were lost. Today they are nowhere to be found. How can a person be so close and yet be lost? Oftentimes they sit unmoved. For some reason, they do not choose to serve the Lord. Many are lost in the house and have made the choice to go their own way and refuse salvation.

The devil does not have to develop new tools because the same ones keep working. You would think people would learn. One tool that he uses is to tell you, if you go out and do whatever you want, even though other people have done that and it has turned out really bad, you will have a different result. Many young people buy that lie over and over.

We have had speakers in the young people's services who went out into sin and messed up their lives. Thank God, they got

another chance and got back to God, and they came and shared their experiences. Sad to say, some young people are still unmoved by the testimonies. Some young people say: "When I turn eighteen, I'm out of here. I'm just biding my time." They are lost in the house. Young person, please do not go down that road.

Going back to Mary and Martha in Luke, Chapter 10, Martha thought it was more important to serve than to hear the words of life. She chose what was most important to her. Sometimes I think about my desire to go to college when I was a young person. Had I let that become the most important thing in my life, where would I be now? My husband, who was my boyfriend at that time, said that he was very concerned about my plan. I had planned to live on campus. He said he did not know if our relationship would have survived. I might not be married to him today had I gone that direction.

Martha thought the most important thing was serving. The prodigal son's brother lived with an amazing, selfless, forgiving father. He had an awesome example of what he should do before him in his home. Before the younger son left home, he asked his father for his inheritance, and it was divided between the two sons. All that the father had left belonged to the older son, but he could only think of himself.

Young person, are you lost in the house? There is no reason for you to be lost. Are you accepting the Gospel or rejecting it? Are you like old Israel? How long has it been since you opened your Bible? Are you like the people of Israel, who lost the Word of God in the house of God? Do you know where your Bible is? Sometimes it is so easy to look at Israel and say, "Oh, they were worshiping idols and kept turning their

backs on God," but are you guilty of those same things today?

Are you like Martha, choosing to do what is most important to you or are you like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His Word intently? In the parable of the prodigal son, are you like the older brother? Maybe life for you has not gone the way you think it should. Life is not always fair, and sometimes when people go through trials, they turn away from serving the Lord because something was unfair.

Sometimes when it seems that life is unfair, you need to be reminded that God has a plan, and He is working it out. What if you decide that life is unfair and you think, "What is God doing?" If you are not careful, you will find things in your life that you will use as a crutch, and then you just might hobble along on that crutch for the rest of your life.

The prodigal son's older brother held on to a wrong attitude, perhaps saying: "Father, you never did this for me. I knew you liked him better than you like me." He was holding those feelings of unfairness while living in the same house with his godly father who was showing the right example of how he should live. He was lost in the house. If you are not careful, you will hold on to things, and soon those feelings will turn to feelings of anger and bitterness in your heart.

Do you know someone who is lost in the house? You may say: "Martha does not sound like me, and I'm not like old Israel. I read my Bible, and I know where it is. Also, I'm not like the older brother in the parable." Maybe you know of someone who sounds like one of them. Perhaps that person is lost in the house or is on the edge, slowly on the way out.

Young person, do you have a cell phone? If you were to lose

your cell phone, how hard would you look for it? Would you look until you found it? You would probably be like the woman in the Bible who had the ten coins and lost one. The Scripture says that she lit a candle, swept the house, and searched diligently for it. If you were to lose your cell phone, undoubtedly you would do whatever you needed to do in order to find it. Sometimes when a young person is slipping away, could you be more diligent in trying to help that individual?

God is working with me on ways that I can reach out to others in a greater way. When a young person makes the wrong choices, it is easy to look down on that one and think, "He (or she) should know better than that." Perhaps that person has started drinking or is trying drugs. You can get a holier-than-thou attitude if you are not careful. The devil works on all of us. Sometimes it is easy to say: "I would never do that. I'm glad I'm not like that." We should not be like the Pharisee in the parable of the publican and the Pharisee, found in Luke, Chapter 18. In essence, he prayed, "Lord, I thank You that I am not like other men are, or even like this publican." If someone is lost in the house or if there is a chance that person might be lost, the Christian should have a more compassionate attitude than the Pharisee.

If holier-than-thou thoughts have come to your mind, that does not mean that you are a bad person. It means the devil is putting thoughts in your mind, and you may think, "I'm the worst person in the world." No, it is only if you let those thoughts take up residence in your mind.

Being lost in the house is much worse than losing money, as I did when I was about ten years of age. It is worse than losing my brother for a time at the

fair. This is more serious than all of that. Mark 8:36 reads, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Are you going to be like Mary or Martha? Do you rejoice when lost souls get saved or do you let wrong attitudes work on you like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son? Are you like old Israel, who lost the Word of God?

I thought of a song that my mother sings that says, "*You can be close to the Cross, but far from the blood.*" Sometimes people come to church and do not seem to be moved. They do not testify, they

do not raise their hand, they do not go to the altar, and they do not sing along with the congregational singing. Sometimes I think, "Please do not leave unmoved."

Do you realize that the people in Noah's day who were near the door of the ark drowned just the same as those who were five miles away? Are you in danger of being lost in the house?

The tool that the devil uses the most is to sell you lies. He is good at it. He can craft it so that you will believe it. You will say, "I am going to go my way and do my own thing, and I am going to have a good life." Sadness, hardship, and ruined lives are so un-

necessary, but if you go your own way, that is what you can expect.

God has a perfect plan for your life. Do you trust Him with your life? Do you trust Him with your dreams? Are you willing to give it all to the Lord and say, "God, I am sure that if I give this to You that it will be so much better than anything that I could have ever planned." If you have a need in your heart, if you feel that you are drifting, won't you seek the Lord and trust Him?

Sister Sheri Strelecky

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

Much can be said regarding the trials that Israel faced and the numerous times they murmured against God and His way. In Numbers, Chapter 21, we see that His anger against Israel's actions and complaints caused Him to send fiery serpents to bite the offenders. Sadly, their sin of murmuring and complaining caused many to die. When the people realized that their behavior was inexcusable, they repented and pleaded for His mercy. Thank God, He turned from His fierce displeasure and showed them undeserved mercy.

History has a way of repeating itself, and conditions have certainly not changed through the ages. As Israel irreverently voiced their objections against God and His chosen leaders in their day, we find that it is the same today. Multitudes are repeating those same grievous actions in our day and time. God does not approve of this behavior. He will not tolerate anyone questioning His way, His Word, or His authority. Trials, problems, irritations, and frustrations will come to all, but each person must be careful to avoid this evil spirit of murmuring and complaining. The misfortunes that come into life are never enjoyable. They are not sent to destroy or to drive a man or a woman

away from God. Instead, their purpose is to draw ones closer to God.

You may not always understand the ways that God leads you through life. However, you can be assured that the Lord has your best interest in mind. Man's greatest challenge is to lean upon the Lord and trust in Him in every adverse situation. Learning to rest on His divine care and providence is of great advantage to you. Sometimes God allows death to come at what you may consider to be an inopportune time. If you are not careful, you will question God's action. You may become irritated with the Lord for allowing this to happen. If you do not bring this feeling into subjection quickly, you may be tempted to charge God foolishly. This action is unwise, and it is unprofitable to you spiritually.

There are times in life when things seem to go sour. Things will break down, things will go wrong, and sometimes problems will start piling up on every side. Possibly a loss of employment may come through no fault of your own. The list of upsetting circumstances may go on and on with no relief in sight. God has a plan and a purpose in view for everything that comes into each individual's pathway. Whatever the dark cloud may be that comes to obscure your blue skies,

you should never arrogantly question or charge the Lord foolishly. In 2 Corinthians 12:7 Paul referred to such misfortune as "a thorn in the flesh." The Lord encouraged him in verse 9 with the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Undesirable situations are only a channel that God permits for the purpose of pruning, proving, and perfecting an individual. If you gladly submit, those things can work for you and not against you, even though it may seem otherwise. Hebrews 10:36 states, "For ye have need of patience." It is extremely important to allow patience to do its perfect work. First Peter 5:10 tells us, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

Dear one, you must not allow yourself to fall into the same condition that old Israel fell into so often. Many times the people of Israel murmured and complained against God and His plan. You can profit spiritually if you will ask God to help you to see the good in the trying times of life. He wants you to grow and mature in spiritual things, and He will help you in every phase of life.

Selected

1 John 1:3 *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

4 *And these things write we*

unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

6 *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness,*

we lie, and do not the truth:

7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Christian Fellowship



Brother Calvin Foster

Walking in the Light

I thank God for Christian fellowship. It begins when a person starts having a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. After you begin your personal relationship with God, you should share it with others who also have this relationship with Him. The joy and the blessings come as you

share your fellowship with one another.

Fellowship is very important to the Christian. As a Christian, you should want to be around the atmosphere of Christian brothers and sisters, hear the Word of God preached, and hear the songs of Zion sung. It is a blessing, and it feeds the soul. Some people do not seem to care whether or not they have fellow-

ship with God's people. I love God's people, and I want to have fellowship with all of His people because we share the same Bible, read from the same Bible, and believe the same things.

Fellowship is broken when a person does not walk in the light that God has revealed to him. You have to walk in the light with God. First John 1:7 tells us, "But if we walk in the light, as he

is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

Not everyone has the same level of understanding, or the same degree of light, but we do not need that to have fellowship because we have the same Spirit. If you rebel and walk in darkness, then you cannot have fellowship because you are rebelling against light and Truth, and you walk in darkness. First John 1:6 says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

John 3:16-21 states: "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." I thank God that we can walk in the light as He is in the light.

Jesus said in John 15:12-15: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made

known unto you." Christ asked His disciples to show their friendship toward Him by keeping His commandments. In other words, Jesus was saying: "I have held back nothing from you. I have told you everything that God told Me to tell you."

The Need of Good Counsel

Nowadays, having a true friend means a lot. I like to think that as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are true, genuine friends. The word *genuine* means "free from hypocrisy; sincere; descended from the original stock; pure in breed." In other words, it is not counterfeit. If you want to give someone money, you ought to give him real money, not counterfeit money. Genuine friends are friends that you can trust. I thank God for good friends. You might have friends that you remember from your childhood, and they may still be your friends. The Scripture says in Proverbs 18:24, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." What a friend we have in Jesus!

In Exodus, Chapter 18, you can read that Moses' father-in-law gave him good counsel and advised him to choose men who feared God and hated covetousness to assist him, and Moses took his advice. We are living in a time when, as Christian brothers and sisters, we need good counsel. We need to solicit our counsel and advice from a knowledgeable and experienced person who is walking the Christian walk. Many times I have seen pastors and seasoned saints go through battles and storms. Those saints are pillars in the church.

Proverbs 13:10 reads, "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom." People's pride will keep

them from accepting good, sound counsel. Also, pride will keep them from getting blessed. Many Scriptures remind us to surround ourselves with counselors that will offer their experience and wisdom to us. You must be careful that you do not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

The church must also teach all the counsels of God. Paul was instructing in Acts 20:26-30: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

God puts a watchman on the wall, a man for every congregation. Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:1-5: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

The Preaching of the Gospel

You should want to hear all the counsel of God, which is

good for your soul. You must be watchful and stay with the Truth. The Bible says to buy the Truth and sell it not. The church is a place where the Gospel is preached. The Gospel will convict and encourage. I thank God for the Gospel!

In Acts, Chapter 2, Peter was preaching, and he said in verses 36-38: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

The preaching of the Gospel pricked their hearts. Only the Gospel can prick men's hearts. This is not my idea, my opinion, or how I feel. Preaching the Word pricks people's hearts. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It gets down into the soul of man. Only God can save people and keep them saved. They asked, "What shall we do?" and Peter told them to repent. God worked with them.

Jeremiah 6:16 states, "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein." God said, "Stand ye in the ways, and see." You should not be influenced or affected by others who are not standing for God.

We are living in a time when God is depending on and is looking for people who will stand for what is right. God is seeking such to worship Him in spirit and in Truth. Will you stand for what is right? Will you tell it like it is? If

something is wrong, you need to say that it is wrong. If it is right, then you need to say it is right. Do not call right wrong and wrong right. That is the kind of individuals that God is looking for. Do not allow yourself to be influenced or affected by others who are not standing for what is right.

There is a great need in the world for people to stand for what is right. You need to understand and see why you need to stand for what is right and understand the reasons why you should stand. You need to know where the old path is. That is the path that Jesus trod. It is the old path that the older saints trod. Isaiah 35:8 says it is the highway of holiness.

"Keep the Door of My Lips"

You need to walk in the old paths of the highway of holiness where brothers and sisters have respect for one another. They do not want to hurt their Christian brother or sister. I want to talk right and to be an example to the saints. Even the young people can be godly examples. You should want to dress right and talk right. You should not want to do anything to cause your brother or sister to fall, to stumble, or to make them weak.

It is all right to follow the saints of old to an extent, but you should never replace Christ with the old saints. Some people only want to focus on the older saints, the fifth- and sixth-seal brethren. History is wonderful, but do not replace Christ with them. You need to keep your mind and your eyes on Christ.

The things a minister says can stay in people's memory for many years. I can remember messages that I heard preached thirty years ago. You need to guard what you say to people, because words can hurt as well as build relationships. Words can

bring peace and harmony to the church, to your family, and to the workplace. Some people may not forget the things that you have said. Words are important.

David's prayer is a good prayer to start your day with. Psalm 141:1-3 reads: "LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."

In the Book of James, James talked about how the tongue can be deadly. He said it can set on fire the course of nature. The Psalmist David asked the Lord to set a watch and to keep the door of his lips. As Christian brothers and sisters, we do not want to hurt one another or to take one another for granted. We should always want to be a strength and a help to build up one another. Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Texting is wonderful, but if you use one word wrong, it can be taken the wrong way. I like to call and talk to a person. That way they can hear the tone in my voice. Many times I have texted and have had to correct it because I did not mean it the way my text came across. Do not get me wrong. I am not always having trouble over texting, but I noticed that if you are not really careful, some words can come across in more than one way.

Evil Surmisings

We have to be careful of misunderstanding one another. Perhaps you know the story in Genesis where Jacob tricked Esau out of his birthright. When Esau found out what had been done, he vowed to kill Jacob. Jacob ran off to live with some of his relatives. When Jacob came back, he

thought that Esau would still be angry with him, so Jacob separated his family to protect them. He imagined a threat, but there was no real threat.

Genesis 33:1-4 reads: "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept." It was an imaginary threat. You have to be careful that you do not misinterpret a situation or imagine evil of another person.

Proverbs 28:1 states, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." I can remember hearing about a man who saw the police coming in a building, so he ran and jumped out a second floor window. He thought they were coming to get him, so he jumped and broke both of his feet. He found out later they were not even looking for him. They were after someone else. So the wicked flee when no man is pursuing.

First Timothy 6:3-4 says: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings."

Evil surmisings are evil suspicions. An example of this would be: "I heard you say you were saved, but there is just something about you, the way

you look. I do not believe it." That is evil surmising. Evil surmising will cause you to distrust someone without sufficient evidence or proof; it is guessing. For example, you may say, "I have a feeling that you are not telling the truth." That is not fair. Just because someone does not sound like you thought he should have sounded, you do not believe him. Sometimes a child may not sound as if he is telling the truth, but when you check it out, you learn that he was telling the truth.

Unforgiveness Hurts Unity

Another thing you want to have as a Christian is forgiveness. The Bible says the Lord taught His disciples to pray. Matthew 6:9-15 states: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

If you will not forgive your brother or sister, God said He cannot forgive you. Some people find that hard to believe, but it is true. You have to forgive and let it go. I thank God that I have been forgiven and that my sins have been cast into the sea of forgetfulness. God does not remember them anymore. You should not hold anybody. You need to let it go. The devil hates harmony and unity. Unforgiveness hurts unity and fellowship. I love being a Christian, and I

love Christian fellowship. I love the saints from the depths of my heart. The devil hates harmony and unity, and he does not want God's people to stick together.

Psalms 133:1-2 says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." Oh, how good unity is for brethren! We have the same Father. We have been born by the same blood. We are human beings, and because we are human, we do not see everything exactly alike. Every congregation has a different administration; therefore, we do things differently. Nevertheless, we need one another in this wicked time. I need your prayers and your encouragement.

The devil's nature is to kill, to steal, and to destroy. John 10:10 reads, "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." God does not care if you are wealthy or if you prosper with material gain, but you should not let it choke out the Word of God. Do not let material things cause you to desert your family.

Your children need you. Father, your children need you. You should get down on the floor and wrestle with them, love them, and kiss them. Let them jump on you, and give them a "horseback" ride. Then when they get old enough, you should teach them how to use a screwdriver and other tools.

"Follow Thou Me"

The devil can cause you to have destructive behavior. One song asks, "Are you building up or tearing down the Church of God?" It is as simple as that. The old devil is like a roaring lion.

First Peter 5:8 states, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The devil does not care about you. He does not care anything about how long you have been saved or how long I have been preaching. The devil is walking around, seeking whom he may devour, and he will try to devour you and mess up your life.

The Bible says in James 4:7-8: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." If you are a sinner, may God help you to get saved before it is everlastingly too late.

In John 21:18-22 we read: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

"Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Jesus told him, "Follow thou me." What was Peter doing looking at the other brethren and saying, "What is this man going to do?" In so many words, Jesus said: "What is that to you? Mind your own business. I told you to follow Me, so do what I am telling you to do. Do not look at your brother." Sometimes you

may look at others and judge them instead of doing what God is telling you to do. God is saying, "Follow Me."

"What is my wife going to do?"

"What is that to you? I spoke to you." Is your wife going to stand before God at the Judgment for you? No, you are going to stand alone.

Suppose your wife were to say: "I do not feel like going to church this morning. Do you want to stay home with me?" You should say: "I will see you when I get back. I'm going to church."

The Great Commission

I want to close this message with some sobering thoughts to encourage you. I love the Gospel, and I love what it has done for my life and for other people's lives. Luke 4:18-19 reads: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

We have a great commission. We all cannot go to a foreign land, but we can help others to go to different places. We read in Matthew 28:18-19: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Jesus said to do that. Some people get confused and say Peter did not do it that way. Peter did it as Jesus said. Peter preached in the authority of the name of Jesus. When we baptize in the Church of God, we say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28:20 states, "Teaching them to observe

all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

God's timing is always perfect. I remember when I first moved to Arkansas. I had a job but I got laid off. Long story short, I had to go on unemployment, but as soon as my unemployment ran out, another place called and I got the job. I worked there for eighteen years. That was God's timing. God has a plan for your life, and His timing is always perfect. Sinner friend, do not play with God. It would be better to play with dynamite than to play with God. When God gives you a wake-up call, you had better answer. He might allow you to get really sick or to be flipped over in a car to give you a wake-up call. You had better answer it.

Luke 15:21 says, "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The father, who is symbolic of our God, sent for the best robe, put a ring on his hand, put shoes on his feet, and killed the fatted calf. Verses 23-24 read: "And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." If you are a backslider, you need to come back to God. If you are not saved, you need to come to God before it is everlastingly too late. May God bless you.

(Compact Disc TR-2130)

**Life is short
Death is sure
Sin the cause
Christ the cure**

1 Samuel 17:39 And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

40 And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the

Philistine.

41 And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him.

42 And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.

43 And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philis-

tine cursed David by his gods.

44 And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.



Brother Brandon Gonzalez

"The Measure of Faith"

When I was a child, I was badly burned in an accident and was flown from Nebraska to Wichita, Kansas. I was in the hospital for many weeks. I had many surgeries because I suffered second and third degree burns. I remember my great-grandmother came to the hospital to sit with me. There was always something different about her, but I never realized what it was as a youth. She was a true saint of God. I knew that I could trust her and go to her, and she would always give me a clear answer.

As she sat with me in the

hospital, one day she said, "Brandon, there is a God, and if you will believe in Him, He will help you." All of a sudden, it was like a light bulb turned on in my head, and I had a real revelation that there really is a God. I realized that He is real and that all I had to do was ask Him and He would help me.

I love what it says in the Bible about faith not being of yourself and it is dealt to every man. Over the years, as God cultivates, perfects, and prunes us, faith deepens from experience. Let us not forget our beginnings.

Romans 12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you,

not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." On that day in the hospital, God scooped up a little faith and some kind words from a godly woman and gave me a means to believe there is a God, but it did not stop there. My great-grandmother asked, "Would you like to go to church with me?" Without hesitation I said, "Yes, I want to go."

When the time came and I was able to go, I remember that preacher was on fire when he started preaching. Suddenly my mind was an illuminated with the things that I had done that

were not right. It was a great sense of understanding that in the very eyes of God, something was wrong in my life. I could not tell you what that was as a child, but I felt sorrowful.

At the end of the service, there was an altar call, and I felt the Holy Spirit moving within me, convicting me, and letting me know that I needed to apologize and change the way that I was living. The preacher said, "If you feel the Holy Ghost moving within you, we have an altar where you can kneel and pray. Will you come and pray and ask God to forgive you?" God was kind to me.

Next, the pastor said: "Everyone close your eyes and don't look around. If you know the Spirit has been moving on you, raise your hand." I was still a little unsure, but all of a sudden a hand went up somewhere and I heard the pastor say, "I thank you for your honesty." Then another hand went up, and another. These were honest souls that God was speaking to. After they raised their hands, I thought, "Surely I need to," so I put up my hand. I knew God was calling on me. Then the pastor said: "All right, everyone open your eyes. If you had your hand up, God is trying to work in your life, and you need to get saved." I did not really know what that meant, but I knew that it was time for me to move, so I went to the altar. That was a glorious experience!

The Power of God

I gave my heart to God at a very young age, and everything in my life changed. I had a great love for the Scriptures. I was hungry for the Word, just as a baby wants milk. I could not get enough of God's Word, and I loved all of it. It was such joy. I also remember the times at night that I would think about my lost family. I had a heavy burden for

them, and I would cry and ask God to save them.

As time passed, I allowed the world to come in and get the best of me, and I stepped away from God. Later on, I came back to God for a short time. I was still a very young man, about fifteen or sixteen years of age, but once again I turned away from God. I was lost for many years, and I was running from the Lord. After I graduated from high school, I was working, but I was just kind of loafing around.

My mother said, "Have you ever thought about joining the military?"

I said, "No, I have never really thought about that." As I thought on that, I decided to join, but at the same time, a voice, which was smaller than, let me know that was not what God wanted me to do.

We read in 1 Samuel 17:46-49: "This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth."

There are giants out there that need to be taken down. It is not what you have accumulated throughout your life that is important, such as skills, abilities, or talents. If you are going to

sling down that old devil, it is going to take the Spirit of God and the mighty power of God working through you. God is living inside His people.

You have to be careful of neglect. You can neglect little things and think you are doing well, similar to Samson. When Samson woke up in Delilah's lap the last time, he thought that he was still strong and that he would do as he had always done. However, when he got up, he did not realize that he did not have any power.

Intimacy With God

You might have a good understanding of doctrine, but are you putting forth enough effort in serving God? Are you attending Sunday school? Are you studying the Word of God? There is a difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible. Are you digging deep? When you dig deep, you want to understand all you can.

Ephesians 5:16 tells us, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." We are living in evil days; therefore, we need to redeem the time. God is not looking at what you are going to do with your free time. He is asking, "How are you going to take more time for Me?" How are you really going to know if you love Him?

God is asking, "Are you willing to set aside your time and give Me your reasonable service?" If you cannot make time for God in your life, how are you going to make time to help God with someone else? There has to be a greater intimacy with God.

Do you take God for granted? My friend, God is very patient, but the Bible says in Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." God wants your time, and He wants a real relationship with you. The intimacy that you have with God reflects toward the love that you have for others.

How can you express to the world how joyful you are if you do not even spend time with God?

It is amazing the things that can get in the way of your intimacy with God. How would you feel if every night after a long day of not seeing your spouse, he came home and sat with the newspaper open the whole evening and would not talk to you or let you talk?

Other things can get in a person's life to hinder intimacy with God. Do you spend time with God daily? Does your time spent with God fill you with great joy? Does it uplift you? It is not always easy to lay aside the time, but if you make the effort, God will do the rest. One song says, *"When you have done your best, Let Jesus do the rest, And keep your eyes upon the goal."* If you will put forth the effort and ask God for help, even in those times when you feel weary, He will help you. There are no lazy people in the body of Christ.

As a child of God, you have a responsibility, not just to yourself, but to the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:1 states, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit of God within you, and you have a job to do. It says in Ephesians 4:11, "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Thank God for each of them, but do not think they are the only ones that are supposed to be doing the work.

Are You Lacking Necessities?

Ephesians 4:13-16 reads: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the

stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." Where is that love established on a daily basis? This is the relationship that you have with God before it can radiate out to the rest of the world.

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus said, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

God wants you to be a light to others. Even a little candle in a dark room will give off light. We have a dark world out there, but what good is a candle if it has gone out or if it is being smothered? Are there things in your life that are smothering the light? Have you ever had a candle and put a jar over it? When you cut off the oxygen, it slowly goes out. If you are not careful, that is how your spiritual life can be. It can be a light that is only slightly burning. It lacks the necessities of what it needs to continue to burn, so it slowly dies out. It does not have to be that way.

There is so much to ponder, but sometimes you need to pause and take in what God is really trying to tell you. Unless there is intimacy with God in your individual life, merely professing to know Christ will not do you any good. You can have the mightiest armor and a mighty sword, but you cannot just put it on a shelf

and say: "Is that not beautiful? Look at what I have collected." God says you have to put on the whole armor. It will not do you any good to have it and not wear it. I can go to my Bible case and pull out a wealth of knowledge. I have little tracts and study papers. It is like a little library, but what good would it do if I was not actually wearing the armor that it brings about? It would just be an extra load to carry around, and it would not do me any good.

You would not see a SWAT team running with all their armor in their hands; they have it on. A football player would undoubtedly get injured if he removed his helmet during a game. By the same token, you will not do well spiritually if you do not take the time to put on the whole armor of God, not just some of the armor. Ephesians 6:13-14 states: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." The verses go on to show you why you need to have it on. It is not just to be in possession of it, but to equip yourself so that you can quench all the fiery darts of the enemy.

What Is Holding You Back?

You should not get too caught up in the physical things of this world. You need to keep in mind that God is not asking what you can do with what you do not have. He is asking, "What are you doing with what I have given you?" That is enough to get the job done. If you are not utilizing what you have, it will not matter if you get any more.

You need to take a really good look inside and ask yourself, "Have I become too caught

up in everything else?" Have you forgotten your first love? Maybe you have done good things, but God is saying: "You have lost your love for Me. I want that love to be fiery again." Hebrews 10:25 reads, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Verse 24 tells us, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." One day we are going to be in a permanent assembly unto the perfect man. That is what we are working toward. What are you doing with what you have? Perhaps you need to redeem the time by giving up a little extra sleep. You may say, "I cannot give up any more sleep," but could you give up a couple of hours of YouTube or Facebook? Would you be willing to trim off a little time there so that you can have more of God?

You need to dig deep. Is something holding you back? Maybe you cannot see that what is holding you back is the same thing your pastor told you in counsel or over the pulpit, but then you say, "I am getting a second opinion." You might get another opinion, but that opinion may lead you wrong.

Maybe you need to get rid of something in your life, but you are unwilling to get rid of it. Because you are unwilling to let it go, you cannot get victory. Have you really allowed the Spirit of God to operate on you or have you drawn back when it might require you to give up a little more than you are willing to give up? The Bible talks about your reasonable service.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:29 that if your right eye offends you, pluck it out. He was not talking about the physical eye. He was talking about things that are attractive to the flesh but hinder

you spiritually. Are you willing to allow that to be cut off? It is a war against the flesh in the spiritual realm. The Apostle Paul let us know that he crucified his flesh daily and brought it into subjection. How do you think he did it? Was it by his own power? No, it was by the grace of God.

Too many people cannot get the victory over problems in their lives. One of the greatest problems that some people cannot get rid of is bitterness. That can be a really deep-seated problem. Unforgiveness can destroy you.

Preparing for Eternity

Do you lack faith? God is willing to deal out a measure of faith to everyone. Where does the lack of faith come from? Maybe you are not asking for it. Are you not asking for it because you are complacent with where you are? My friend, are you bearing fruit? God wants to purge you and remove any undesirable characteristics so that you can bear more fruit.

Have you ever planted tomato plants? I like to use that plant as an illustration. Some tomato plants are classified as vines. If you have grown tomato plants, you know that little side shoots grow on them, and those shoots do not produce any fruit. You need to remove them so that less energy is wasted on foliage and more energy can go toward bearing fruit. God is interested in the fruit that you produce, so He wants you to get rid of the side shoots.

You may say: "That side shoot is important to me. I do not want it to be removed." God wants you to bear more fruit, but He is not going to force you.

God wants you to be much closer to Him. Jesus said in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her

chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Saint, God has a desire for you to be a brighter light. If there are things in your life that you have not allowed Him to cut off, you need to apologize and say: "God, I am sorry that I did not take care of this when You first spoke to me about it. Please help me to lay this thing aside so that I can be a better witness for You." God is merciful, but you have to humble yourself before Him and confess. Some people are too proud to do that.

Wrong is wrong. If you are in the wrong, you need to get it squared away with God while He is being merciful. He is giving you the time in this present world to prepare for eternity. If you allow pride to get in the way, God will resist you. The Bible tells us in James 4:6, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Where do you stand in God's eyes? In the Book of Revelation, you can read that the church of Laodicea thought they were doing fine. They thought they were righteous and had need of nothing. On the contrary, they were spiritually naked, wretched, poor, miserable, and blind. How does God see you?

If you have some measuring up to do, now is a wonderful opportunity. You have to be humble, and you have to allow God to help you. Is God letting you know that you need to let go of something? If something is standing between you and God, one day He is going to say, "I let you know exactly what you needed to let go of, but you were unwilling to let it go, and that is the reason I do not know you now. You turned Me down." My friend, won't you turn to God while He is being merciful?

(Compact Disc TR-2309)

July Camp Meetings

July 8-12

Ninth Street Church of God

Central Friends' Campground

5601 E County Road 650 S, Muncie, Indiana 47302

The first service begins Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m.

Two services Thursday-Saturday 9:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Sunday Worship Service 9:30 a.m. only.

Lodging is available on the campground, but please bring your own bedding & towels.

Campers/tents welcome.

For lodging reservations contact: Sister Michelle Gingerich @ 765-808-8705

For further information contact: Pastor Allen Polston @ 765-521-8284

CANCELED DUE TO STATE RESTRICTIONS

July 20-26

Canby, Oregon Church of God

The first service begins Monday evening at 7:00 p.m.

Two services daily 10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.

For further information & for reservations contact:

Pastor E. David Stegmeier @ 503-266-9297

(Please make all reservations in advance, if possible)



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