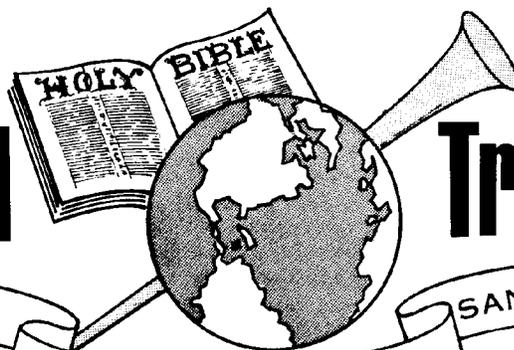


The Gospel



Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 50 September 2020 No. 9



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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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

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Vol. 50 September 2020 No. 9

*"For as we have many members
in one body, and all members have
not the same office."*

Romans 12:4

*"But now hath God set the
members every one of them in the
body, as it hath pleased him."*

1 Corinthians 12:18

GOD PLACES THE MEMBERS

In the beginning everyone was created perfectly by the Lord. David said in Psalm 139:14 that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made." He realized that all God's works are marvelous. Every part of the human body is beautifully constructed of many members and placed together to make up a complete unit. All members are not the same; each one is different and has a specific function to perform. Some members are more visibly seen, such as the head, the face, the eyes, and the hands; yet they are in the same body. Many organs in the body are unseen, such as the lungs, the heart, the liver, and so on. The seen and the unseen are designed to perform their own special work in the body. Each member is important as they work together in harmony, enabling the body to operate efficiently.

The individual members do not operate independently of one another. Should one member of the body suffer injury, the entire body suffers pain and

works to help relieve the hurt. Not one part is ever considered to be unwanted or unneeded. If any member fails to function properly or becomes missing, the body does not work to its fullest capacity. God wonderfully designed the physical body of man.

God has miraculously constructed His spiritual body in the same manner. This spiritual body that God has made is known as the body of Christ, the Church of God. It is divinely made up of men and women who have repented, confessed, and forsaken all known sin. God perfectly fits and places each member in the body as it pleases Him. Some spiritual members are more noticeable than others. These members fill positions such as pastors, ministers, evangelists, singers, and teachers. There are also those who are less noticeable, such as prayer warriors, card senders, and others who do whatever is needed. Nevertheless, each member in Christ's spiritual body is extremely important. No member is considered to be unneeded or unprofitable. All members are to work together in unity and harmony so the lost world can visibly see the living body of Christ.

Some people think that because they cannot preach, teach Sunday school, sing, or fill other positions, they are of little value. This is not true,

[continued on page 8]

1 John 2:1 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:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in

him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the

darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

Do You Truly Know God?



Brother Roger L. Decker

Knowing God Personally

Do you know Jesus as your own personal Savior? In the verses of our Scripture text, John said much about knowing God. You need to know for sure that God is present in your life. Undoubtedly you know plenty of things for

certain, but do you know for sure that you are saved? Do you know that you are ready to meet God? Knowing that is important. This is a question that many might not be so quick to answer. No doubt, some would have to stop and ponder this question. Friend, you need to know for sure that you

are saved, and you *can* know for sure.

John made it plain that you can know for sure that you are God's child. He brought up the thought of knowing God and abiding in Him. Abiding in God and having fellowship with Him has always been the desire of the

human spirit. Deep down in the soul of every man and woman is the desire to know God. There was something about each of us when we were in sin that reached out to our Creator. There is something about us that keeps searching until we find Him. Augustine once said, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

If you will study, you will find that in the centuries before Christ, the Greeks believed that the way to God was through intellect and debate, or argument. However, knowing God through intellect would leave some destitute of getting to know Him. On the other hand, some of the great thinkers of early years were very immoral men as far as holiness was concerned.

Some people are quite willing to let you know that they are well-versed in the Scriptures, but that does not mean they truly know God personally. Many people have a head knowledge of Christ, but that cannot remove the sin from their lives. Others have joined denominational churches and have been convinced that they know God through that particular knowledge. Some preachers have convinced people that all they need to do is join a church and they will be all right, but that is contrary to what the Word of God says. You cannot join the Church of God; you must be born into her. When you are born again, you become a member of God's church.

Denominational churches invite people to sign a membership card, reach out to them with the right hand of fellowship, invite them to be baptized, and so on to become a member of their particular organization. However, those things do not mean that you know God personally. In God's church you must know Him personally.

People may argue different points of doctrine, but they cannot argue with the Scriptures. Some rely on emotions as a witness to their salvation. They say that it is not so much in knowing God as in feeling God. The Jews felt that they knew God by God revealing Himself to them.

God Has Spoken in Various Ways

God spoke to men in Old Testament times in a variety of ways. You can read that God appeared to Moses in Exodus, Chapter 3. Verses 1-6 read: "Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

"And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Here God appeared to Moses out of a burning bush and spoke in an audible voice.

Genesis 12:7 states, "And the LORD, appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him."

Judges 6:11-12 tells us: "And there came an angel of the LORD,

and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Here the Lord appeared through an angel unto Gideon.

First Samuel 3:1-10 reads: "And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, [Why? He did not recognize God's voice.] and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And the Lord called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again.

"Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth."

The Development of the Conscience

In these instances, God revealed Himself through angels, a burning bush, a priesthood or a high priest, and speaking to the individual audibly. How does God appear to you and me? More than likely, it is not in an audible voice, but He speaks through the Word of God, through the preaching of the Gospel, and through the conscience. God put within each of us a conscience.

The word conscience is a term that describes an aspect of a human being's self-awareness. It is an audience room for the voice of God or the devil. It will witness for the good and against the bad. For example, when I was growing up, I knew better than to smoke cigarettes, and I especially knew better than to steal them from my dad's carton, but I over-rode that. My conscience spoke to me and said, "No, that is wrong," but I did not listen.

When I was little, God helped form my conscience through the instructions that I received from my parents at home. That is the reason it is needful to train up a child in the way he should go. As a parent, you should train a child to have a tender conscience toward God. I remember many things that we were taught in the home.

I can remember just like it was yesterday my mother saying to me: "Roger, leave that alone. That does not belong to you." Sometimes I would either take my brother's jacket or my dad's jacket. At one point, we all wore about the same size, and my mother would get after me about wearing their jackets. I started saying bad words and swearing at a young age, so my mother would get after me about that. Also, she would always say: "You need to be kind to your brother and your sister. You need

to treat them right." As you were growing up, did you ever hear that in your home?

Your conscience was being developed as you matured and grew up. Your conscience was taking you toward doing what was right through your parents. Parents, it is necessary to teach your children the right things. You ought to teach your children how to pray, teach them to tithe, and teach them how necessary it is to get to the house of God. The best way to teach them is by being there yourself. This is how the conscience is formed.

If you are fortunate enough to be raised in the Truth, then your conscience is developed more quickly. A child who is raised in a godly home develops a good conscience. He understands that he needs Christ at an early age. Being raised in different avenues of life has a lot to do with the development of the conscience.

The Apostle Paul stated in Romans 7:7, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." What was Paul saying? Paul's testimony was that he was very covetous. Previously he had no knowledge that he was, but the Law spoke to him and stirred up his conscience. It had such a hold upon him, and he saw that he could not overcome it. Then sin became alive in his life and he died, spiritually speaking. The Apostle Paul grew up as a Hebrew. Being a Jew, he was probably warned of covetousness, but his conscience was not awakened except through the Law.

A Call to a Better Life

What awakens the conscience? It is the preaching of God's Word. I always wanted to go to church when I was younger. Maybe you always wanted

to be a Christian, but you were unaware of how to go about that. Maybe you did not know whether to join a church or what to do. You knew there was a long list of churches, but you did not know exactly how to go about serving God. Personally, I did not know what church to choose, but I had a desire to know God.

How do you get to know God? God will reveal Himself to you and will call you to a better life. He will call you to a life of holiness. God is a holy God; therefore, His people must be holy. If God is your Father and He is holy, how does that leave the children? They are of the same bloodline, so it leaves them holy.

First Thessalonians 4:7 states, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." When God calls you, the Word of God awakens your conscience. There are things in life that you have to part with that you cannot hold on to any longer and still please God. They may be different things in each individual's life. For example, God might call a person who is living with somebody wrongfully. The Word of God might awaken someone else who is an alcoholic. Perhaps another does not want to work for a living. God calls people to a better life, a life of holiness.

When God calls you, that is where the choice comes in. Do you hang on to what you have or do you let it go and come to a better life of holiness? I know exactly what took place in my life. I knew there were things that I could not do and yet be a Christian.

I am not proud of this, but before I was saved, after work I did not go home. I went from bar to bar, and I was involved in vices such as gambling and other things. I knew that if I came to Christ, those things would have to go. The first nine years of marriage were unpleasant. My wife

was not saved, and I was not saved. Our home was not a home conducive to Christianity, and we were ready to call it quits.

To know God, John pointed out there must be obedience. You cannot know God and disobey Him. John made this so plain in our Scripture text. Knowing God can only be proven by obedience. You may say that you love your mother and father, but do you obey them? That is how parents know their children love them. Do you obey them or do you continually rebel in the home? Do you merely have a head knowledge? Some cry when they hear the story of the crucifixion or an emotional song, but that does not mean they are saved. The only way you can know God is by obeying Him. Many people wish there was another way, but there is not. You must obey Him.

Keeping God's Commandments

Verses 3-6 of our Scripture text read: "And hereby we do know that we know him, [How?] if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."

How does a person know that he knows God? It is by keeping His commandments, by obedience. It is not by intellect or by emotion, but rather John said it is by obedience. Today some say they know God because they are Biblical scholars or because they speak in tongues, but I am going to stand on the Word of God by saying that you do not know Him if you are not obeying Him.

Again, 1 John 2:3-4 reads: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his com-

mandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

We read in John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Do you know Him? Some people have switched over to what the Bible calls a form of godliness, but they deny the power of God and they do not live holy. It is wonderful to know the Truth, but hearing and knowing the Truth is dangerous if you do not obey it.

Most people do not have any trouble obeying God while they are in worship. The problem comes about when people are out in the world going about their daily routines, such as attending school, being at work, going shopping, or being among friends. That is where the testimony of knowing God really stands out. Do you obey God outside the worship services? Can people in the world know that you know God by the way you live? Just having a knowledge of God or going through some emotional high can still leave you bound by sin.

To know God there has to be a starting place, and the starting place is through repentance. As simple as repentance and getting saved is, you would think everybody would want to do it. You do not have to go through a great ritual, a prolonged study, or be a theologian. Why do more people not get saved? All people have to do to be saved is repent, yet most people will not do it.

Repentance is a command in God's Word. When the Apostle Paul stood on Mars' Hill and saw all the superstitions that prevailed at Athens, Greece, he said in Acts 17:30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men

every where to repent." All men everywhere do not repent, but that is the command. One writer said this: "The days of groping in ignorance are past. As long as men had to search in the shadows, they could not know God, and He excused their follies and their mistakes; but now in Christ the full blaze of the knowledge of God has come, and the day of excuses is past."

What was the message heralded by John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ, and then by Jesus? They did not say that one had to study the Law or the Talmud or go through Hebrew training. They simply said to repent. Jesus said in Mark 1:15, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

True Repentance

Mark 6:7-12 reads: "And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent."

Why is it that more people do not repent? God is not asking them to do some great thing. He is not asking them to study and take a test, to study Greek and

Hebrew, or to make sure that they can recite all of that. He merely asks people to humble themselves and repent. Some people would rather go through a theology class and take a test than to repent. Why is that? Doing that would not call for any changes in their lives. Repentance calls for changes in people's lifestyles.

How does a person repent? To truly repent, the sorrow that a person has should be because he hurt God. All sin is against God. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." There is a big difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of this world. For example, suppose a person is in jail for writing bad checks. That person might cry and be sorrowful because he is in jail, but he is not sorry that he wrote bad checks or that he sinned. He does not want to repent. He just wants someone to bail him out. He did not learn a lesson by ending up in jail. When he gets out, he will do it again. That is worldly sorrow.

If you were to drive down the highway and exceed the lawful speed limit and get pulled over by a law enforcement officer, what hits you? You might become sorrowful because you got pulled over, but that is not godly sorrow. That is worldly sorrow because you got caught. If you had not gotten caught, you would have continued to speed down the highway.

Godly sorrow works differently in your life. You are sorrowful because you hurt God and you do not want to do it again; you want to quit sinning. In my own life, even though I drank and was hurting myself, I was also hurting God. Eventually I came to the place that I did not want to do that anymore.

Now, there is another step.

Godly sorrow leads to repentance, but that is not repentance. You have to do more than confess your sins. When you kneel at an altar of prayer and tell God that you are sorry, you need to be sorry enough to quit. If you are not sorry enough to stop, then you are going to deceive yourself. God looks upon the heart, but man looks on the outside.

Sometimes you may look at a person and say he really got through to God, but God sees the heart. How do you know that the individual really got saved? That person obeys God. He comes back to church and sits under the Word of God and begins to grow spiritually.

According to the Word of God, when you confess your sins, you do not go to a priest or a preacher. A true man of God may pray with you, but you do not have to confess your sins to him. You must confess your sins to God because He is the One you hurt.

"Make Straight Paths for Your Feet"

There is only one God and one mediator between God and men, and that is the man Christ Jesus. You must come to Jesus Christ. Do you know what a mediator is? Unions and companies have them. When I worked at a factory, I was in supervision, and whenever an employee had a grievance, he had a process that he could take to resolve it. He went through the general foreman first, and if that did not resolve the problem, he went through a committee. He could go through the committee two or three times, but if the grievance still could not be resolved, then he could bring in a mediator.

The mediator would come in to make the final decision, and both the union and the company had to abide by it. Also, that

decision became the rule for all other grievances like that. Likewise, you have a go-between for you and God, and that is Jesus Christ. In 1 John 2:6 John said, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk [he gave us the role model to follow in our walk], even as he walked." We should be imitators of Jesus Christ. John said the proof is in the walk, not just in the talk.

If you are not walking as the Hebrew writer said, then you do not know God. Hebrews 12:13-14 reads: "And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Do you really know God for yourself? When a family serves God, it is wonderful, but when an individual gets saved, he cannot get saved on a family plan. Salvation is an individual calling. When I first got saved, I came home and sat on the couch, and my wife said, "What happened to you?"

I said, "I don't really know."

She said, "What did you do?"

I said, "I prayed, and I believe I got saved." I acted different, I looked different, and that put a desire in her heart to do the same thing, so she got saved. In time we both backslid, and then the next time she came back to God first. I was a real rascal in the home, but the day came when I was standing in the back of the church under conviction. I did not want to walk down to the altar in front of people and repent. I wanted to wait until another time. I wrestled this in my mind. I knew that I needed to get back to God. Of course, my wife was praying. I did not want to move, but then I felt a hand on my shoulder, and that is when this old boy headed to the altar, and I have been saved since that day.

It does not take a lot of words to get right with God. You do not have to kneel down and pray a long prayer to get salvation. I prayed a short prayer. I said, "Lord, I don't know what I need, but whatever it is, please give it to me," and He gave it to me.

God sees the desires of your heart. He knows whether you really mean business or if you are playing around. Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Some have a difficult time confessing before men, but it is before men that they have to live it.

John said the darkness is past

and the true light now shines. He stated in 1 John 2:9-11: "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, [Why would John mention that? One of the first signs of an apostasy is when people start turning on one another. John had come back to Ephesus, and the condition that he saw there was not like it was when he left. He saw something working. He talked to people and could feel animosity and strife working among the people of God. An apostasy was forming and setting in, so John said this.] is in darkness even until now.

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. [You cannot have something against your brother or sister and be saved; it is impossible. John was saying that if you do,

you are not in the light, but you are in darkness.] But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." He may think he is saved, but he is not.

Do you know that you are saved without a doubt? Are you ready to meet your Creator? Do you know Him personally? If not, God wants you to humble your heart before Him and get saved. If you are not sure whether or not you are saved, you need to make sure that you really know Him. The most important thing that you can know in your whole life is that you know God. Do you know Him?

(Compact Disc TR-2214)

Since Christ is the way, why waste time traveling some other way?

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

because God's church is made up of many members, each one having a place and a work to do. Some are called to greater positions than others, but each person has a place. It is not how great the job one has to do that counts the most, but it is how faithful he is in doing it. In the parable of the talents, Jesus let us see that the one who had been faithful would hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23). It requires each one to do his or her part wholeheartedly to enable the spiritual body to function efficiently.

As individuals, we do not have the privilege of choosing our place in the body. Having the right to select the position we desire could prove to be

dangerous. There is always the possibility of one's motive being distorted or guided by a lustful appetite. For instance, someone may want to preach when that is not truly God's purpose for that person; therefore, pursuing that could bring great hurt to the individual or the Lord's work. On the other hand, an individual may desire a lesser place than what God knows he is capable of or that He desires for him. The Church of God belongs to God, and it would be best to let Him direct, call, and place each member as He sees fit.

There is always a need for more workers and helpers in a local congregation. God needs those who will consecrate their lives to work. If you desire to work for the Lord, you need to

seek God in prayer and let Him know that you are available and willing to be used wherever He sees fit. Then you should consult your pastor, if you have one, and tell him of your desire and take his counsel. There are many ways and many places where God's people can be used. It could be working on the buildings, improving or keeping the grounds, or preparing food for the sick or for those who have lost a loved one. All these jobs are needful. There is a place for you in the body and a work for you to do. Regardless of how great or how small the task you have been given, there are rich blessings to be received from the Lord.

Selected

1 2 Chronicles 20:1 It came to pass after this also, that the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them other beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

2 Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar, which is Engedi.

3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and

proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask help of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee.

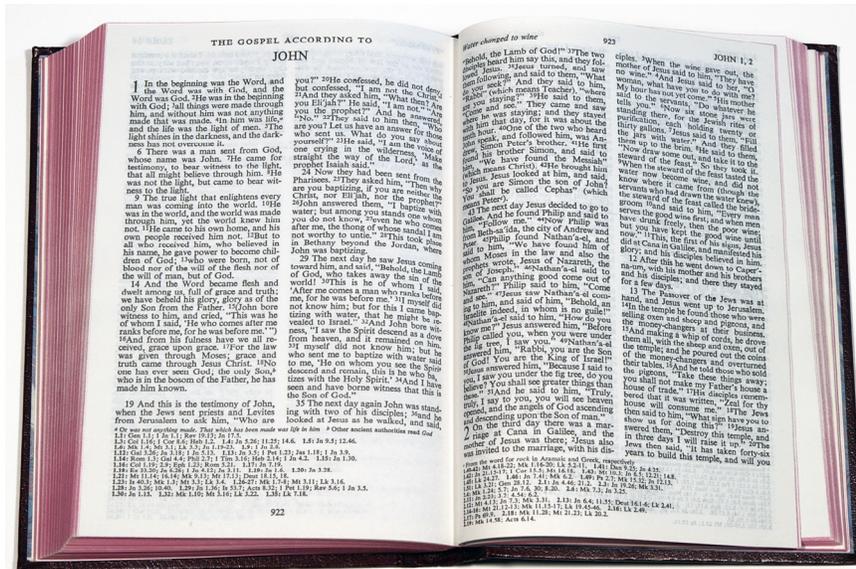
13 And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their

wives, and their children.

14 Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation;

15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

We Have Victory When We Obey



Brother Richard Talbot

A Spiritual Conflict

In our Scripture text, we read about a great incident in Jehoshaphat's life. The enemy came to cause trouble and engage in a conflict. In our lives as Christians, we will be confronted with many things by the enemy. The devil is going to battle against us.

We are engaged in a spiritual warfare. Being saved does not guarantee you an easy road to Heaven.

Too many times in the midst of battles and strife against the enemy, you may find yourself gazing intently at the trial, or the problem. You may fixate your attention on your difficulty, and

this is human nature. However, by the power of God and the Spirit of God, you can learn to turn your gaze into a glance. Just give it a light glance, and then set your focus upon the Lord. Let Him be the very center of all your living. You need to get your eyes off the conflict and keep your eyes on the Lord.

It is easy for somebody to tell you, "Remember, this battle is not yours; it is God's." That person is not the one in the battle, and the battle to you may be severe. It is a very real event in your life.

Another person cannot feel your pain. You may say, "My back is hurting so much that I can hardly bear it." Someone may respond: "Well, the Lord bless you. I will pray for you," but that person cannot really feel that pain. He or she has no idea what you are going through and may walk away and forget all about it because that person is not feeling the pain. It is hurting you. When you are going through a battle, when you are in pain and suffering, or when you are in a conflict and your spiritual experience is being tested to the limit, you are the one who needs to hear from God.

The message came to Jehoshaphat through a man of God, and this is what the man of God told him in 2 Chronicles 20:16-17: "To morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: [God said this, and He was specific about this battle. Every battle is not the same, so He has different strategies for different types of conflicts. In this battle Jehoshaphat was not going to have to fight.] set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you."

Following Instructions

Some people cannot follow the simplest instructions. A lady applied for a job. During her interview, she was instructed to answer a question with only one word. The question was, "What

do you feel you have to offer our company?" She wrote: "I have many attributes that I can bring to this company." She did not get the job. She wrote eleven words instead of one.

When the Israelites marched around Jericho six days in a row, one trip each day, thousands of people were marching around the walls of Jericho. God told them to keep quiet and not to say a word. I can hardly imagine those orders being obeyed today. I can hardly comprehend thousands of people marching through the dust in the heat of the day, probably thirsty and exhausted. You would think that surely someone would have voiced a complaint such as, "I don't know why we have to do this every day, six days in a row, and then do it seven times on the seventh day." In Joshua's day they were not supposed to say a word until they heard the trumpet sound, and then they were to let loose with shouts and praise.

How would you survive that? I know I would have been in trouble from the first day on. There was always something in me when I was a youngster that, when I was told to be quiet and not to say a word, I had to say something. My mother would say, "I don't want to hear another word out of your mouth!"

"But, but . . ." I always wanted to get the last word in, and she knew that.

King Saul was told to go to Gilgal and wait. He would not obey that simple instruction. Naaman just about lost his healing because he did not want to follow a simple instruction. God told Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:17, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD."

If God were to tell some people that today in the face of difficulties in life, they would wonder how it was going to

work. For example, someone may say: "I don't know if I can do this. I don't understand it." Can't you just obey God? Can't you simply obey the pastor? Can't you take the Word of God as it is preached and believe it? Surely that is the answer to many difficulties in life, but often people like to have their own thoughts.

You may say, "I know God said this and I know my pastor preaches this, but I think . . ." In essence, Naaman said the same thing, did he not? In so many words, he said: "I thought Elisha would come outside and make a big to-do over me. After all, I am not just anybody; I am Naaman, the captain of the host of the king of Syria." The Prophet Elisha sent out his servant to tell Naaman what to do. Elisha was not impressed by Naaman, and he was not touched by his gifts that he had to offer. Naaman almost lost his healing because of his own thoughts.

Praising and Worshiping God

Things are not always going to go according to your thoughts, your reasoning, or your understanding. Consider what Jehoshaphat did in 2 Chronicles 20:18-19: "And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high."

Jehoshaphat's army did not have the victory yet, but they were praising God for it because they had God's Word. They had the assurance of God being with them. They were obeying the will of God, so they could shout ahead of time. They praised and worshiped God, but they did not have the answer yet.

You need to take hold of that

and rejoice in what God said. You may say, "Well, I'm still in a battle." What did God say? He said: "I will take care of you and bring you through. I will be with you." What should you do? You should bow your head, worship the Lord, praise His name, and let Him know, "God, I am glad that You are in charge of this battle in my life." God will not fail you. He will not let you down.

Second Chronicles 20:20-22 continues: "And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten."

You can read through the rest of the verses about that fight and find out how great a victory they had. They had victory because they obeyed the voice of God. They did not get the victory because of their strength, their wisdom, their character, or their position in the church. I repeat, they got the victory because they obeyed the Lord.

If you are going to have victory in your life, you must explicitly obey what the Lord says. You must not argue against it. You must not allow your human reasoning to enter the picture. You cannot see things altogether through your eyes, but you have to submit yourself to

the will of God, trust Him, and believe in Him.

The Wheelbarrow of Faith

My mind went to a story about a man walking on a cable across Niagara Falls. He walked back and forth on that cable, and the crowd cheered and got really excited about that. Next, he asked the crowd if they thought he could push a wheelbarrow across, and they all yelled, "Yeah, we believe you can do that!" So he pushed the wheelbarrow across the cable above Niagara Falls and back.

Then the man asked the crowd, "How many of you think I could push a person in the wheelbarrow across the cable?"

"Yeah, we believe you can."

"All right, who is going to volunteer? Come on up and get in this wheelbarrow." Not one person acted on what they all said they believed. What if Jesus was holding the handles of that wheelbarrow? Would you get in it then? Jesus never fails. He cannot fail, because He is God. It makes a difference who is pushing the wheelbarrow. Jesus holds the handles of your wheelbarrow of faith. He is waiting for you to climb aboard and trust Him.

Everyone cannot control a loaded wheelbarrow. I am talking about a wheelbarrow with only one wheel. Back when I was growing up, that was a man's wheelbarrow. Now they have wheelbarrows with two wheels, but you cannot tilt them as easily, and they will not upset too easily. A loaded wheelbarrow with one wheel is not easy to handle. On a construction site, you might have to balance it on a plank that is wet and messy. You have to hold that wheelbarrow steady and dump the contents where they need to go.

A wheelbarrow is used to transport things from one area to another. In a spiritual sense, God

uses a wheelbarrow to carry you over your trials and to carry you through situations of life. He only wants you to get on board. He will take care of keeping it well-balanced, and He will guide it through the difficult and slippery places and never spill you out. When my children were little, they liked to ride in a wheelbarrow. They thought it was lots of fun when I spilled them out, and they got a big kick out of that. God does not spill you out, but He takes you through safely.

Daniel's Daily Habit

This experience that Jehoshaphat had in dealing with the enemy of Judah is a lesson in how you need to face your difficulties today. First of all, it was a battle that Jehoshaphat did not ask for or bring upon himself. He was not the aggressor. He was not responsible in any way for stirring up the massive force that had come against him. Jehoshaphat was not belligerent.

In this Christian life, many saints bring trouble upon themselves by not using wisdom as they should. They fail to be cautious and careful, wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove. Sometimes some people can be guilty of stirring up unnecessary problems in their own lives simply by being overly aggressive, getting ahead of the Lord, doing things to bring trouble upon themselves, being belligerent, or being antagonistic. It is possible to bring a lot of difficulties into your own life and into your own family.

I thought about Daniel as I was studying. When he heard the king's decree, that no one was to ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, except for the king, the Scripture says that he went inside, opened his windows toward Jerusalem, and knelt under that window as he had done aforetime. That was Daniel's

daily habit. He was not being belligerent, antagonistic, or trying to cause a problem, but he had always done this.

Some people, if a king were to make such a decree, would throw open the window in belligerence and bow down and make a scene of praying just to see what would happen. They might have been eaten by the lions. Daniel did this out of the humility of his heart as he had always done. He was being faithful to God. This is one reason that you need to establish good, proper, godly conduct on a daily basis. Every day the world around you should know that you are steadfast, stable, and faithful. You should not try to stir up trouble or antagonize others. You are to be a light, a witness, and a testimony.

Verse 1 tells us that these forces came against Jehoshaphat to battle. They were dwelling in the land of Canaan. You must realize when you are saved from sin that you are dwelling in the land that God has provided, a land of holiness, godliness, and righteousness. As a Christian, you are wearing the white robes of righteousness and living for God. You are in the world, but not of it. You are a part of society, but not tied to the things that make the world go. You are a citizen of another country.

How to Properly Handle Fear

We find that Jehoshaphat had some fear. Many times I have feared. Have you ever been afraid in a spiritual conflict? Some people testify that they have never been afraid of anything. I have been afraid of lots of things. Some people have testified that they have never shook or trembled. I cannot say that. However, I can say that the Rock I am standing on has never trembled or shook. God is solid and steadfast, because He is God.

Nothing is big enough to scare Him. You may get frightened at your own shadow, but God cannot be frightened by a force of any kind, and He is never surprised by anything that happens.

Jehoshaphat feared, but I want to point out that he allowed his fear to direct him properly. He did not let his fear get the best of him, but his fear drove him to prayer. His fear did not cause him to sit down and wonder what he was going to do, but he went to God in prayer and proclaimed a fast throughout all the land. He gathered the people together, and they began to seek the Lord.

A lot of victories depend upon how you handle your fear. Fear can rob you and damage your outlook. Fear can affect your expectations and eat away at your confidence. Being afraid to make a bold move for God can rob you of victory. Fear can be deadly. Jehoshaphat feared, but he set himself to seek the Lord; he prayed. He strengthened himself in his prayer. How did he do that? He reminded God of all His promises. He reminded God of how He brought the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and of the things He had done in the past, and thereby encouraged his own heart.

In God's hand there is power and might so that none is able to withstand Him. Jehoshaphat did not feel that way when he first got the news of a great army out there ready to come at him, but while he was praying, he began to feel encouraged. He said, "In God's hand there is power and might so that none is able to withstand God."

Today you can be assured that if God does not intervene the way you hope He will, He will give you grace to cope. God may not always answer prayer the way you hope, but He will make you able to cope. He will enable you to handle things as you go

through situations. God does not always change your circumstance, but He can change your attitude toward it. Sometimes He will enlighten your mind to things that you never thought of before and give you instructions with different types of problems in your life. God knows all these things.

In 2 Chronicles 20:7 Jehoshaphat brought that to God's mind in prayer. He said, "Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?" You must allow your fears to direct you in the right way.

God Can Bring You Through

If you are a child of God, Satan is going to come against you as a roaring lion. He is out to devour every child of God. He wants to bring about your downfall. He will try to eat away at your experience with God. Do not feel that you are going to get through without much conflict. If you are really living godly, living holy, living righteously, and drawing close to God, you are the enemy's target. Satan is after you, and he wants to drive a wedge between you and the precious experience that you have with the Lord.

Young person, you must always keep in mind that you do not have it made just because you are in a Church of God congregation or from a Church of God family and have a godly mother and father. Remember, this is an individual battle, and you are going to learn as you grow older that the battle is fought individually. You have to win this battle for yourself. You are in a battle as well as your mother, your father, and the older saints. The devil is after every one of us.

In 2 Chronicles 20:11 you will

find that the enemy will come against you to cast (or to drive) you out of your possession. No matter how long you have been saved and living for God or how close to the Lord you are, that is no protection against the enemy in waging a warfare against you. He is going to try to destroy your soul. That is his business.

Second Chronicles 20:9 says, "If, when evil cometh upon us. . . ." You need to get into the presence of God and cry to Him in your distress. God will hear you and send help to you. Evil can come upon you in many forms. It can involve oppression, trial, illness, long-standing difficulty, tragedy, heartbreak, or heartache. There is no end to the things that the enemy can bring against you. The devil can turn even ordinary problems in life into a conflict with your soul.

Verse 12 lets you know that any opposition of evil is more than you can handle. Do not feel that you can handle the least little wrong that the enemy brings against you. Do not feel that you can handle Satan in the smallest things that he tries. You need to take it to God in prayer; lean on the Lord. Remember, He is holding the handles of that wheelbarrow, so you can climb in and be safe. He will not dump you. He will take you through.

An affliction, a tragic situation, the loss of prosperity, the loss of health, or the loss of your security may happen to you. Many things can come against you as a child of God, but you must learn that even what appears to be a small evil is far too powerful for you to deal with. You need to live in the presence of God.

In Luke 22:31 Jesus told Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." If Satan desired to sift Peter as wheat, he desires to sift you also. That sifting is to determine whether

you are chaff or wheat. He is still sifting. When the results are in, will you find yourself still standing with God or will you be on the sidelines? The decision is always yours. Will you be wheat when the sifter is done sifting and the chaff is blown away? If you have a true experience with God in your soul, you will still be standing.

Hearing God's Voice

In the midst of fear came some encouraging words to Jehoshaphat. Verse 13 of our Scripture text states, "And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children." They were waiting and wondering, and then God moved and spoke. One songwriter wrote, "His voice makes the difference." God spoke in the midst of Jehoshaphat's trial, in the midst of that uncertain time, by the mouth of a prophet. God spoke to one so that He could speak to all. God could have spoken to every one of them with a voice of a trumpet, but God had His own way of operation.

Many times God will speak through the pastor. Some people get a little touchy. I do not know why, but there is something about human nature that does not really like another human counseling them. Someone may say: "Who do you think you are? You don't know my situation." A pastor is a man of God, and he has the Word of God. He is not merely a neighbor, a friend, or someone who is a lay member of the congregation; he is God's mouthpiece. A true man of God is there to speak for your soul's benefit. Submission to a pastor is something that is falling by the wayside in this day and age in a great way. If you want spiritual victory, you have to do things God's way.

I want you to realize that God

is holding the handles of the wheelbarrow that can take you across the cable of your trouble, your trial, or your hardship, but you must trust Him and get in the wheelbarrow. In our day so many people are Gospel hardened and so far removed from real faith. No doubt, people did not see this in Jehoshaphat's day. When the prophet gave the Word of the Lord, everybody held to it, bowed down, and worshiped the Lord. They gave due reverence to God, and He honored them with complete victory, greater than they could have ever imagined. They had a tremendous victory, and they never had to engage in battle.

Dear one, God will take care of you. As you think about the many dark and stormy times of life, Jesus appears with the wheelbarrow and asks you to climb in. Jesus is saying: "Climb in, child. Get on board, and I will take you through if you will trust Me. We will get through this together." God will carry you through, over, or around the difficulties of life. He will be with you all the way.

Conquering Discouragement

Is it more important to have your way or to submit to God's way? You can live in the midst of tragedy, hardship, and difficulty if you have a sweet spirit saturated by the love of God, submissive to the Lord. It is important to trust Him.

So many times people's emotions are down because all they can see on the horizon is trouble, sickness, battles, temptations, and trials. You need to lift up your head to the hills, from whence comes all your help. Psalm 3:3 states that the Lord is the lifter up of your head. Sometimes your head will hang down. At times, I have gotten downcast and a little discouraged. Have you ever been discouraged?

Even preachers can get discouraged. We may get discouraged, but we must not stay discouraged. We cannot let discouragement rule us. We have to conquer it, defeat it, climb on top of it, and put it behind us. If you are discouraged, you need to tell the Lord, "I need You to lift up my head." God will come to your rescue and lift up your head.

So many times I have knelt at the feet of Jesus in prayer in the secret closet and poured out my heart to the Lord. When I came out of that prayer closet, I could feel the strength of God in my soul again and my spirit was lifted. God is still with me. Glory to God! I know He will never fail me. Dear one, you do not have to be afraid.

I trust that God will help you to put your trust and faith in Him, because He knows what He

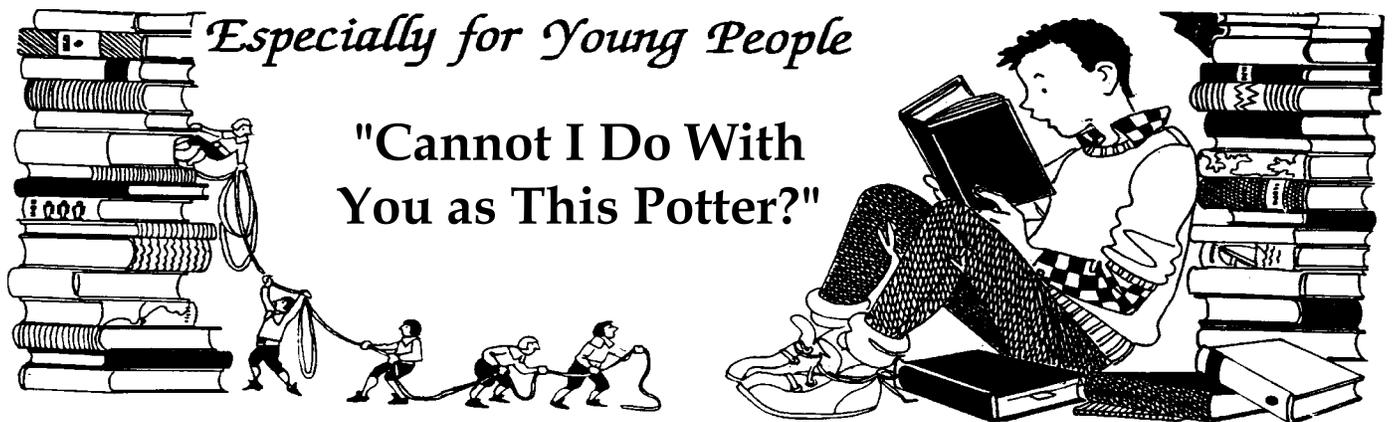
is doing. He is God. He is more than sufficient to go with you and to take you through. Maybe you are going through some hard times. Possibly you feel that your emotions are drained. Perhaps you have been discouraged and cast down. Has fear taken hold of you? When you are not sure of what is going to happen tomorrow and you focus on tomorrow, facing tomorrow can be scary. You need to focus on the present. God offers strength, help, hope, and encouragement. Do not be ashamed to take your troubles to the Lord.

Do not let the devil get his foot in your life. The devil likes to put thoughts in your mind. If you dwell on them, it will not be long until you are going to be worthless for the Lord. Also, you will become discouraged, cast down, and possibly out of order.

When I go to the house of God, I expect good things from the saints. We should be a help to one another, but if you are out of order, you are not helping anybody else, and you are not helping yourself.

You need to be what God wants you to be. God knows everything about you, and He cares about you. He wants you to lift up your head, and He wants to encourage your heart. Do you need help from the Lord? You need to get in that wheelbarrow and trust the Lord. He will not fail you. Sometimes He might shake the wheelbarrow a little. The Lord is saying: "Just hold steady. I am still in control." Are you where God wants you to be?

(Compact Disc TR-2209)



Jeremiah 18:1-6 reads: "The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O

house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."

This is a common salvation, and we can get help from one another. The thought on my mind comes from verse 6, "Cannot I do with you as this potter?" Can He form you as a potter does the clay and make you what He wants you to be? Sometimes as you go through difficult things, you may wonder why, and then

God has to ask you, "Can I do a work in you?" God wants to make every piece of your life fit together perfectly.

Verse 2 reads, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words." It is important to understand who represents the potter and who represents the clay. Verse 6 says, "As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand." This verse lets you know that God is the potter and you are the clay. Why is it so

important to understand this? Have you ever seen a lump of clay make itself into a vessel? It does not work that way. The lump of clay represents you. If you try to form yourself, that will not work. You cannot make yourself what God intends you to be. You have to understand your role as the clay, both physically and spiritually speaking.

God made us from the dust of the earth. As I was studying, I thought of the blind man whom Jesus came across. You can read in John, Chapter 9, that Jesus spit in the dirt and made mud and rubbed it on the blind man's eyes, and then Jesus told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. When the blind man did what Jesus told him to do, he could see. God is in control of everything, yet many people try to form themselves. Jesus took mud and made a man see who was blind from birth.

Jeremiah 1:5 reads, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee." Think about that thought. Before you even knew of your existence, God knew who you were and who He wanted you to be. Jeremiah 29:11 states, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD." God has thoughts and plans for you, and He has good for you. Sometimes people think they know better than God. They think they know how they need to make themselves and what they need to be. Sometimes you need to step back and remember who the Potter is.

Again, Jeremiah 18:4 reads, "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." Do you really think you have the authority to challenge God? The Bible warns time and time again against this kind of attitude. Romans 9:20 tells us, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest

against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

Sometimes young people become discontented with who they are, but God has made them what He wants them to be. If you follow Him, He will form you into exactly what He wants you to be. Isaiah 45:9 reads, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands?" You should not strive with God, because He is the Potter. He said, "Cannot I do with you as this potter?" In other words, the Lord was saying, "Can't I make you what I think is best?"

The Scripture in Jeremiah, Chapter 18, talks about going down to the potter's house and how he wrought a work on the wheels. As clay hardens, it becomes very difficult to work with. I think sometimes people get stiff-necked, stubborn, and prideful to the degree that God cannot form them into His own image, or into what He wants them to be.

Psalms 32:9 says, "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." No doubt, you have probably seen a bit and bridle and halter for horses. Some horses can be stubborn, so you might have difficulty getting them to go where you want them to go. God does not want you to be that way.

As I was studying, I thought about the importance of cultivating a tender conscience toward God and following His leading. He does not want to have to yank you by a bridle, so to speak, to get you to move. He wants to speak softly to you, and He wants you to follow Him. You should not be like a stubborn horse, but you should allow the

Holy Spirit to guide you.

I work a lot around concrete, and it is similar to clay in the sense that, as it hardens, it becomes more difficult to work with. One time I took a class and got an opportunity to work on a potter's wheel. I thought it was kind of difficult.

One main point the instructor tried to get through to those in the class was that whenever you work the clay on the wheel, you have to make sure that the lump of clay is in the center of the wheel. If it is off center just a little, when the wheel spins, the clay will get lopsided quickly. Spiritually speaking, you need to make sure that you are in the center of God's will, because if you deviate a little to the left or to the right, you will lose track of where you are; then before you know it, you will be completely out of God's will. Proverbs 3:5-6 reads: "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."

Jeremiah said the vessel was marred. He did not mention in what way it was marred, but for some reason it was not what the potter intended it to be. Therefore, the potter made another vessel as seemed good to him. One thing we do know is that the potter still saw potential in it. He saw that he could start over and make a completely new vessel that would fit whatever need the potter had for it.

Do you feel that you are no longer pliable and that you are not the way that God intended you to be, or that you are out of the will of God? God can make you a completely new vessel. He can start over on you and make you a new creature. He can make you what you ought to be. If you try to figure it out yourself, you will get off track.

Brother TJ Foster

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we

know that it is the last time.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

The Last Time



Brother Jim Presley

Everything Has a Last Time

If you were to ask people, "Who wants to go to hell?" I doubt that anyone would say, "I want to go to hell." Yet many people are living in a way that will take them to hell. I want you to think about that. It is sad that, although no one really wants to go to hell, they do not want to do what it takes to get to Heaven. Is it always going to be easy to do what is necessary to make Heaven your home? No, the devil will fight you the whole way. The devil will always be working to draw you back.

I want to draw your attention to verse 18 of our Scripture text,

which reads, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." The time is coming when this world will come to an end. I want you to read a poem entitled "The Last Time." This poem is not talking about spiritual things but about families, but it portrays the thought of the message so well. It reads:

*From the moment you hold your
baby in your arms, you will
never be the same.*

*You might long for the person you
were before,*

*When you had freedom and time,
And nothing in particular to worry
about.*

*You will know tiredness like you
never knew it before,
And days will run into days that
are exactly the same,
Full of feedings and burping,
Nappy changes and crying,
Whining and fighting,
Naps or a lack of naps,
It might seem like a never-ending
cycle.*

*But don't forget . . .
There is a last time for everything.
There will come a time when you
will feed your baby for the very
last time.*

*They will fall asleep on you after a long day
And it will be the last time you ever hold your sleeping child.*

*One day you will carry them on your hip then set them down,
And never pick them up that way again.
You will scrub their hair in the bath one night
And from that day on they will want to bathe alone.
They will hold your hand to cross the road,
Then never reach for it again.
They will creep into your room at midnight for cuddles,
And it will be the last night you ever wake to this.*

*One afternoon you will sing "the wheels on the bus" and do all the actions,
Then never sing them that song again.
They will kiss you goodbye at the school gate,
The next day they will ask to walk to the gate alone.
You will read a final bedtime story and wipe your last dirty face.
They will run to you with arms raised for the very last time.*

*The thing is, you won't even know it's the last time
Until there are no more times.
And even then, it will take you a while to realize.*

*So while you are living in these times,
Remember there are only so many of them
And when they are gone, you will yearn
For just one more day of them.
For one last time.*

Although this is a sad poem, parents understand this; it happens. There will be a last time for everything. Jobs will end. You will retire one day if you live long enough. Young person, school will end one day. You

may not like school, but it will end one day, and you will never go back to school again. Life will end one day.

God's Long-Suffering

The poem says you will not know when something is the last time until there are no more times, and even then it will take you a while to realize it. While you are living in these times, remember there are only so many of them, and then they are gone. You will yearn for one more time, one more day.

Every parent can relate to that poem. We all would give anything to go back in time. I thought about how it used to be when our children were younger. We had five children under six years of age at one time. Sometimes it was difficult for my wife when I was at work, but later we wished that we could go back to those days. Nevertheless, time marches on and things change. There are no more chances for those things to happen again.

If you have little ones, you need to take time to enjoy them. Do not worry if your house is not exactly the way you want it to be. You need to take time to play with your children and enjoy them. Yes, you are supposed to keep your house clean and take care of things, but do not bypass an opportunity to spend time with your children. Time goes by so swiftly. At times it is difficult with children, and they may get on your last nerve, so to speak, but step back and think, "One day I am going to miss this."

Husband, wife, your companion may irritate you from time to time and get on your nerves. We all are different, but nothing is worth fighting and fussing over. You need to step back and think about the possibility that this could be the last day you get to see your companion. What if you had an argument before your

husband went to work? You would have to live with that for the rest of your life if something happened to him. You need to think about things like this. You will not always agree, but remember, there will be a last time, and you may not get to make things right.

As I read that poem, the first thing that came to my mind was the long-suffering of God. He has been so long-suffering with every one of us. If you are not saved, He is being long-suffering with you. If you are not doing well spiritually, He is being patient with you. He is working with you, talking to your heart, and trying to draw you to get saved. If you are a professing Christian, God wants you to get closer to Him. He is long-suffering, but one day His mercy will run out. There will be a last time for God's long-suffering. You need to think about that.

When God Says Enough Is Enough

Genesis 6:3 reads, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man." There will come a time when God will say: "Enough is enough. You have gone far enough." On Judgment Day many people are going to awaken to the fact that they are unprepared to make Heaven their home.

In Luke 16:22-23 Jesus said: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom."

I believe when that rich man opened his eyes in hell, he was sadly awakened to his reality. He had great expectations in this world. He had money, and he had wealth. No doubt, he could do anything he wanted to do in

that then-known world, but when he died, he was not ready to meet the Lord. Oh, the fear that must have come upon him!

How is it going to be for you? This is for the saint and the sinner alike. Saint of God, are you where you should be for the Lord? Are you where you need to be in the will of God? If you are a sinner, are you willing to turn around so that God can help you through your life and take you to Heaven? Will you be like Lazarus, comforted in the bosom of Abraham or like the rich man in the torments of hell? There will be a last time that God will speak to your heart. There will be a last time that He will try to get you to turn your life around. There will be a last time that He will try to work with you to get you to give up the sinful habits that you have. If you have gotten saved, perhaps God wants you to change your life. He will work with you, but there will be a last time.

Sinner friend, this could be the last time that God will ever deal with your soul. You may think, "I am young, so I have plenty of time." Young people die too. That is the reason it is important for young people to stay close to God.

If you are not saved, this could be your last opportunity to get right with God. Think of that rich man in hell. If you die and go to hell, you will remember the last time God dealt with you. You will think: "Why didn't I make the move to get saved? God gave me one more opportunity to be saved. Why didn't I take it?"

I remember a story that one brother told in one of his messages years ago. An evangelist preached an evangelical message, and God dealt with souls. In the back of the church, a young lady held to the seats shaking. During the altar call, the preacher pleaded and pleaded as

verse after verse of the invitation song was sung. Eventually the preacher went to talk to the young lady and tried to convince her to give her life to God. She refused to make a move. Finally, the preacher closed the service, and that young lady left in her car. Not far down the road, she was in a horrific accident. Her car caught fire, and she was burned to death. Witnesses heard her scream as she was burning, "Quick, go get the preacher!" No doubt, her mind went back to the preacher standing next to her pleading with her to give her life to God. That was her last chance to make Heaven her home. God said, "Enough is enough."

Are You Willing to Give Up Everything to God?

What are you going to hear if you die today and go to hell? You never know how or when you will die. How terrible it would have been to be the girl in that car on fire, thinking about when she had a chance to get saved but turned down God's offer of mercy! She will be thinking about that throughout eternity. She had her last chance, but she refused. Sinner friend, have you felt the wooing of God to save your soul? You know how you stand with God. You know what you need to do to make Heaven your home, yet you refuse. Why did that young lady who died in the accident refuse to get saved when she had the opportunity? She still wanted to hold on to something. She was not willing to give up everything for God.

God may point out something in your life that you do not want to give up. It can affect the young people a lot. God does not ask you to give up anything that is good for you. It could be a boyfriend or a girlfriend. If He asks you to give up someone or something, then He has something

better for you. He has a plan for your life. God has something good for you, whether you are young or old. You may not want to give that thing up now, but one day you will have to give it up. You cannot carry what you are holding into eternity with you. You will have to give it up when you cross the portals of death.

Once death overtakes you, you will not be able to enjoy the sin that you are enjoying now. It would be better to give it up now. You may like the cigarettes or the alcohol, but if you go to hell, they will not be there, yet the desire for those things will be there. It is best to give up sinful things now. Let God help you to get rid of those desires. I used to drink. I know what that desire is like. I am so glad that I do not have to go to hell and fight sinful desires for eternity.

God wants you to yield to Him. Sinner friend, one day God's wooing is going to stop. Today could be the last time that God ever speaks to you. God is giving you one last opportunity to make things right with Him. The Bible says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God. How fearful that would be to know that you have no more time to get right with God! The scary thing is, as the poem says, you will not even know it is the last time until there are no more times.

God Does Not Overlook Wrongdoing

You might go to church, and God will deal and deal with you, and all of a sudden, there will be no more times. Perhaps from that day forward, you will go to church and feel comfortable even though you are not right with God. You may go to church and laugh and enjoy your friends, but could it be that God will not deal with you anymore? Are you

willing to take that chance, sinner friend? That young lady took a chance, and just minutes down the road, she was facing death without God. She gambled with her soul and lost.

Sinner friend, are you willing to take a chance that God will have mercy on you one more time down the road? Christian friend, God knows exactly how you stand before Him. He knows whether you are serious about serving Him or if you are putting on a front. Are you doing the things you need to do to stay spiritual and follow His will? Do you grumble when it is church time or are you enthusiastic about church? God knows. You cannot fool God. Is there something that you are lacking? Maybe there is something you need to give up. Maybe there is something you have been meaning to do, such as telling someone you are sorry. Perhaps you need to call someone and confess something.

Young person, do not think that God is going to overlook wrongdoing in your life. He will not look away when you are not living right. He sees how you talk to others, and He sees the wrong attitudes and the bitterness. He sees how you treat your parents. Today could be the last time you ever see your parents. You need to think about that. Would you want your parents to die knowing that you lied to them, knowing that you tried to deceive them? You would never be able to make that right, and you would have to live with that for the rest of your life. Would you want to live with those regrets?

God knows how you behave when no one is around. He knows what you are doing on the computer. How about when you are out in public? Do you act right? God is watching your every move and listening to your every word. He hears everything

you say on the telephone. He knows whether or not it is gossip. You should never make fun of a man of God. You can read in the Old Testament that some children made fun of the Prophet Elisha one time, and do you know what happened to them? They were attacked by bears.

We read in 2 Kings 2:24, "And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." You have to be careful of what you say about a man of God. If you disagree with him, maybe you should talk to him. He will talk with you and pray with you. You should not run him down and question everything he does.

God Expects Honesty

You have to be careful of what you say, not just about the preacher, but about anyone. The Bible says to treat others as you would want to be treated. You would not want someone to run you down and talk about you, so you need to be careful of what you say about others. Do you need to make things right or are you going to wait and see if you get by with what you have said or done?

Young person, this may be the last chance you have to get things straightened out with God. It could be your last opportunity to make something right with your parents. Your parents are looking out for your best interests. They are going to make some mistakes, but they care about you. If you have saved parents, you are blessed and need to thank the Lord. You ought to love your parents and treat them right. Have you been totally honest with your parents or are there some things that you have not told them? Have you hidden some things from them?

God expects you to be honest with Him and honest with others.

The best test for honesty is when something happens and you might get in trouble. I remember one time when some fellow workers and I were playing around at work. The office had a glass window in it with a hole to speak through and an opening to pass money or papers through. One guy was horsing around and stuck his hand through that hole, and not thinking, I grabbed his hand and pulled, and it shattered the glass. This guy suggested that we say that a cart hit the glass and broke it. I said, "No, I'm going to be honest about it."

He said, "We could lose our jobs!"

I said, "I am still going to be honest."

I wrote a letter and told the boss what happened. I requested the replacement cost for the glass and said that we would pay for it. I received a bill for the cost and paid it and never heard anything more about it. Honesty is the best policy. Had we lied about what happened and they would have learned the truth later on, we probably would have lost our jobs. Lies will come back to get you.

You have to be careful of how you portray things. Some people tend to twist the truth so it does not bring any repercussions upon them, but lying is lying in God's eyes. Revelation 21:8 says, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers [those who practice witchcraft], and idolaters [those who worship false gods], and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." God puts liars in a very bad crowd. If you are guilty of lying to someone, you need to repent. You need to ask God to forgive you, but it does not stop

there. You must go back and make it right with that individual. If you have deceived someone, you need to clean it up and make it right. It may be difficult and humbling, but it is the right thing to do. If you have lies that you have not fixed or if you have a habit of lying, God wants you to get victory over that.

Your Last Opportunity

This might be the last opportunity that you have to make things right with God and with your fellowman. Christian friend, do you love others the way you should or do you avoid certain individuals? If you try to avoid someone, you need more of God. God loves everyone. If you are right with God, He loves you. God even loves those who are not saved.

You may say: "I don't want to go around that person. He said some bad things about me." How are you going to help that person if you do not show him love? How are you going to be a witness to him if you do not show that you care?

Sinner friend, today could be the last time you have to make things right. You do not know what tomorrow will bring. You might live another twenty years, but God may never speak to you again. This could be the last time He speaks to you. It could be the last time you have an opportunity to be saved and to get your soul straightened out with God. The God of Heaven may never speak to your heart again, and you could be separated from Him for eternity. I do not know about you, but I want God to speak to me. If I am in the wrong, I want Him to show me. If I should have something that I need to make right, I want to obey Him so that I can make Heaven my home. That should be the desire of every man and woman. Whether you are a saint

or a sinner, you should want God to speak to you.

Second Peter 2:5 tells us, "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly." Noah preached to the people of that day, and they refused to hear him. I wonder how many people today refuse to hear what God has to say to them? Eventually God closed the door to the ark with Noah and his family on the inside. One day it was the last time. Those people had plenty of time to get things right. They could have been safe in the ark with Noah.

In the New Testament you can read that Felix thought he would have another chance. Acts 24:25 tells us that Felix said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." We do not read of there ever being a convenient season for Felix. Why did Felix tell Paul that he would call for him? He saw the Truth when Paul was preaching to him. He saw what his need was, but he was not willing to let go of something.

Do you see what God has for you, sinner friend? God has something good for you. Are you willing to let go of the world? Are you willing to say, "I am going to get saved no matter what"? This might be your last opportunity to make Heaven your home.

"Prove All Things"

I do not know what was in the world back in Noah's day. They did not have electronic gadgets, shopping malls, or fancy stuff, but they were hanging on to something that was worthless. Whatever Felix was clinging to was worthless. Friend, whatever you are refusing to give up is worthless compared to Heaven.

Maybe it is pride, money, or a boyfriend or girlfriend. If it is keeping you from serving God, it is worthless. A lot of young people say: "I want to get married before I get saved. I have to find someone special." It never ceases to amaze me how someone can get saved and start serving God and then someone of the opposite sex draws that person away and they are never seen again.

Young person, if you are saved, God has the right companion for you in the Church of God. Young man, no young lady out in the world is worth losing your soul for. Young lady, no young man out there is worth giving up your salvation. He may be strong and muscular, but a young man who fears the Lord is worth so much more. A woman who fears the Lord is worth far more. If you are saved, you should not look to the world for a companion. You should not get online to search for someone to make you happy when you can have someone right in the Church of God.

Young person, you need to pray for God to send you the right companion. You should not pick just anyone. On the other hand, you should not choose someone because he or she is Church of God. You may say, "Oh, he's cute, so I want to start dating him." No, you need to pray. It is better to reach out to God and say, "God, direct me to the right companion." If you get the right companion, life will be beautiful. You will have someone who can help you if you fall, someone who will encourage you to press on when you are discouraged. You should be a help to each other.

The world has nothing to offer you. When you are searching for a companion, young person, remember this Scripture in 1 Thessalonians 5:21, which reads, "Prove all things; hold fast

that which is good." A young man or a young lady may come in from the world and get saved and may want to date you, but you need to let that person prove himself or herself first. You could say, "I have feelings for you, and I think you are nice looking, but you have some proving to do first." When one does that, then perhaps you can get to know each other better. It amazes me when I see someone get saved and two weeks later that person is dating someone. That does not make sense to me. God has the right companion for you, young person. You do not have to search for someone out in the world.

Being a Godly Example

As saints of God, we have a great responsibility. We have things that God wants us to do. We are an army for the Lord, and an army has battles. Are you working for the Lord and talking to others about God or are you always busy with your own life? When was the last time you invited someone to church? You may get turned down repeatedly, but you need to keep asking. God is more than able to talk to hearts. If you are getting turned down constantly, maybe you need to check yourself. Are you acting right when you are around that person? Out in the religious world, I was acquainted with one individual who said he was a preacher, but he smoked cigarettes and told dirty jokes. What a bad witness he was!

When you go to a restaurant, what happens when you do not get your food the way you ordered it? How do you talk to the server? The way you interact with people is important. People should feel the love of God from your heart when you talk to them. You have a great responsibility to lead a godly example before the world, before your

family, before your friends, and before one another. Is God seeing that you are truly a godly example? You are no more spiritual in public than you are in the home.

Are you battling something in your life? Is something hindering you from going further for the Lord? Maybe you are struggling in your Christian experience. God has greater victory for you if you truly want it. Has the devil led you into something that you do not know how to get out of on your own? Are you as spiritual as you once were? You should be growing stronger spiritually. The devil has many devices to draw you away from walking the strait and narrow way. He will try to put a wedge between you and someone else. That is the reason you need to be careful of what you say to others. It is up to you to make sure you fix it and get it right between you and another. If you are doing things that are not pleasing to God or if you need to draw closer to God, this could be your last chance. You do not know what tomorrow will hold.

Humble Yourself Before God

The devil loves to work on you when you are alone. He knows your weakness, and you know your weakness. You need to be honest with yourself and answer some questions: What is your weakness? Do you have full victory over your weakness? Have you given place to the devil along the line of that weakness? Do you have the victory that you once had over it? If you have been struggling, God has victory for you. You just have to ask Him for it.

If you are not careful, going to church will become merely a routine. If that is the case with you, you need to humble yourself before God and let Him know your need. Just knowing

you need to change will not change anything. Whether it is failing to pray or read the Bible or whatever it may be, you need to make a change in your life. You need to ask God to help you.

In John 15:5 Jesus said, "For without me ye can do nothing." You cannot do anything without God's help. No matter how long you have been saved or how spiritual you think you are, you need God to help you. Sometimes it takes humbling yourself to get the help you need to live holy and sinless. If you fail, you have to go back to God and make it right.

One day you are going to humble yourself before the Lord. The Bible says every knee shall bow. Why not do it now? You cannot imagine how terrible it would be to be separated from God for eternity. If you have sin in your life, you need to get straightened out. Sinner friend, if you want to make Heaven your home, you need to repent and change your life completely. You need to allow God to work in your life.

Isaiah 1:18 reads, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You need to do whatever is necessary to make Heaven your home. God knows how you are living. Sinner friend, He knows that you need to be saved. If you are struggling spiritually, the Lord wants to strengthen you and help you. Are you willing to commit yourself to Him? One day it is going to be the last time you will ever have an opportunity to make things right with God. Let today be the day that you get things straightened around. Won't you make today the day that you get saved?

(Compact Disc TR-2031)

Isaiah 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the

LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people,

make mention that his name is exalted.

5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

DO YOU STILL HAVE JOY?



Brother Garrett Haylock

Abiding in the Lord

It is a wonderful thing to have salvation, to know that you are saved and that you are living for God. In verse 3 of our Scripture text, the writer said that it is with joy that you draw water out of the wells of salvation. I believe that the one thing the devil has targeted most is the joy that the Christian has. You see, you can always have a profession. Brother Esau Brooks always used to tell us that God did not give you a profession, but He gave you salvation. You can lose salvation and still have a profession.

You have to watch that you do not lose the joy out of your soul. The joy bells in your soul are supposed to be ringing all the time. As a Christian, you are supposed to be joyous about everything you do in the service of the Lord, but it starts with godly living. It starts with the thrill of knowing Jesus for yourself and with knowing the good things of God. I thought of the song that we sing entitled "Abiding and Confiding." The songwriter wrote in the first half of verse 1, "I have learned the wondrous secret of abiding in the Lord; I have found the strength and sweetness of confiding in his Word."

Once you get saved, you are supposed to find pleasure in the things of God and find a thrill in doing the things that pertain to God. You can allow yourself to go through the mechanics of it, but you have to realize that God gives you joy. Salvation brings joy. There is joy to reap and benefit from in the presence of God as you experience salvation. In everything you do for the Lord, you should to be happy, glad, and excited about it. I love to hear when people get excited about living for God and doing things for God. It is a wonderful thing!

Again, the song says, "I have

learned the wondrous secret of abiding in the Lord." Nothing compares to the joy of time spent alone with God in His Word. Prayer with God is also wonderful. You should be very intimate with God. I love what the Psalmist David said in Psalm 5:3. He wrote, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." That is a wonderful thing. He said, "My voice shalt thou hear." What David was declaring was that no matter what other commitments or obligations he had, nothing was going to crowd out his time of prayer and calling upon God.

It is wonderful to know that in God there is a pleasure, a thrill, and a joy that you can keep drawing. The more joyful you get in this way, the more reasons you have to stay and find more thrilling joy in the Word.

Sinking Into God

The songwriter went on to say in verse 1, "*I have tasted life's pure fountain, I am drinking of His blood, I have lost myself in Jesus, I am sinking into God.*" In other words, anytime anything is sinking, it is getting deeper and deeper.

Banana suckers, or planting suckers, are offshoots that grow at the base of a banana plant. They have one crop, and then you cut the sucker down. After you reap a bunch of bananas, that tree will never bear fruit again. Therefore, you cut it down, but there are always young ones coming up. After awhile, that banana tree may have six or seven suckers in different sizes. As you cut out the main one, the next ones in line keep coming up, and others are there waiting until the last one is cut down.

I have noticed that as one sucker bears out of that, another comes to the surface. They are

not like a tree that sends down deep roots and really anchors itself. Those suckers grow out of the ground, and by the time the third or fourth sucker bears, sometimes a moderate wind will blow the whole plant over. In contrast, most tree roots grow deeper with age, sending roots down deeper and spreading out. They are able to stabilize themselves in the wind.

The Christian should be sinking into God. You should not become more shallow in your experience with God. You should always become deeper in your experience because that is what is going to sustain you in this life. You ought to get deeper into the things of God. The first part of verse 3 of the same song reads, "*All my cares I cast upon Him, And He bears them all away; All my fears and griefs I tell Him, All my needs from day to day.*"

Though you might have a friend and a relationship, you can find joy in talking to the Lord. You can find joy in giving your problems over to Him and talking to Him as your God. You can pray: "This is too big for me. This is too heavy for me. Lord, I really need Your help. I need Your grace."

The songwriter was saying that is what he found in Jesus. That is the secret of abiding and confiding in the Lord. There is nothing so precious or so dear that you cannot go to the Lord and tell Him. You can tell Him your heart's greatest secrets. You can talk to Him, because He is your friend.

Our Scripture text says in verse 3 that with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. Salvation will meet the need of your soul; it is sufficient. There is no failure in God. He is right for everything and anything that is wrong in your life. No matter what it is, He can meet your need.

Verse 3 of the song continues,

"All my strength I draw from Jesus, By His breath I live and move; E'en His very mind He gives me, And His faith, and life, and love." The fourth verse has really been a blessing to me. It reads, "*For my words I take His wisdom, [The Bible tells us in James 1:5, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.'] For my works His Spirit's pow'r, For my ways his gracious presence Guards and guides me ev'ry hour, Of my heart He is the Portion, Of my joy the ceaseless Spring, Savior, Sanctifier, Keeper, Glorious Lord and loving King."*

The Joy of the Lord Gives Strength

As long as you have Christ in your life, you have a well of water springing up within you, spiritually speaking. There is a difference between a water well and a cistern. A good artesian well will continually spring forth fresh, clean water. Too many times, individuals become stagnated in their walk with God, and they lose the precious secret of living for God successfully. When you really find Jesus, you will find this secret: the joy that you find when you step out to serve God. Do you have as much or more joy than when you first got saved or is your joy diminishing? Maybe you are still doing certain things, but you have mechanically learned to do them. The joy and the thrill that people used to see on your face is gone.

I have watched young people from year to year, and you can see them growing. It is wonderful to see them busy in the work of God and to be laboring with joy. It is wonderful to maintain your experience with God and continue to have joy. Joy is a wonderful thing.

Nehemiah said in Nehemiah 8:10, "For the joy of the LORD is your strength." The joy of the

Lord gives strength for your very existence. As long as you are doing what you enjoy doing, you do not want to quit. That is the reason sinners have to become sick of living in sin, sick of having the cords of sin wrapped around them. As long as they enjoy sin, they do not want to quit. The Bible lets you know in Hebrews 11:25 there is pleasure in sin for a season. As long as an individual is having pleasure in sin, he is not ready to give it up.

The world needs to see the Christian's joy. The world needs to see that you have something worthwhile, and then they will want to trade what they have for salvation. You see, people do not want to give up pleasure for boredom. The Christian needs to show the world there is joy in the service of the Master. Since I have given my heart to Jesus, I am so grateful. The only regret I have is that I wish I had done it earlier.

Sometimes I think about the many things that I was spared from by getting saved at the age of twenty-one. Even though I got saved at the age of twenty-one, once I had an experience of getting drunk. I remember saying to God that Saturday morning when I woke up and felt so badly, "Lord, if You will help me get over this, You will not have any more trouble with me drinking." I never got drunk again. I did not like the feeling of getting drunk and not knowing how I got home. I do not know how people can do that for so many years. It is so addictive.

God saved me and supplied grace, and He has kept the joy bells ringing in my heart. I want to let others know that what He has done for me, He can do for them. There are people who say, "You do not know what it is to be hooked on drugs" or "You do not know what it is to be an alcoholic or a habitual drinker." I tell them, "No, I do not, but I know people

who were bound by those vices that are saved today and have victory over them." Some were really deep into those things. It is the same old devil that binds people. He is the same here, there, and everywhere.

Standing Against the Enemy's Attacks

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:10, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Then Paul went on to say in that chapter how you need to put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand. I repeat, the joy of the Lord is your strength.

I was reminded of a documentary which declared that in the year 1940, the British people came under serious attack by Hitler as he was taking over and domineering Europe. With England being an island, he could not drive his forces in, so he had to send an air invasion force. Hitler tried to break down their resistance through air raids and bombings. The Germans had the British outnumbered.

Hitler sent hundreds of bombers to attack England with the armament that he had at his disposal. Every time the Germans came, the British were waiting for them. In raid after raid, Hitler would change the approach of the bombers from one end of the island to the other. However, when they arrived there, those little Spitfire planes were waiting for them. Eventually, the German commander said the British people had to have a secret. The British were always where they needed to be. When the Germans investigated it, they found that England had radar towers strategically located.

In 1940 the British discovered radar. With their small forces it provided a way so that England

did not have to spread out. The British sent everything they had wherever the attack was coming in, and they were taking the Germans down. The Germans soon decided that they would have to send in a large invading force. When the enemy found out that England was using radar towers to detect the position of the German bombers, they decided that they would send hundreds of bombers to take out England's radars in every area where they had them.

Several bombers got through and attacked them and broke some of them down. The main task for England was to get those radar towers back up. They used all the resources they had to keep the radar towers up because that was the secret to their defense. That was what helped England to wage the war the way they did against Hitler. When the Germans found out what their secret was, those towers became the enemy's target. They were the strength of England.

Joy is the strength of our existence as Christians. We are a happy people, but we have to exercise joy. Now, you will not be happy all the time. The Bible states in Ecclesiastes 3:1-2: "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die." The writer let you know that in life, there are going to be changes in your condition and circumstances.

Verse 4 says there is a time to weep and a time to mourn. Nevertheless, joy is the secret to your strength. You have to maintain that because that is your existence. That is what is going to help you to keep going in the face of the enemy. You need to stay close to God and keep the joy bells ringing in your soul and live so that the world will have to take note. Even though England was so much smaller and so much less prepared, because they

had that radar, they were able to stand against the attacks of the enemy.

Joy Comes With Salvation

The Christian needs joy. If you lose your joy, you will lose the thrill of living for God, doing that which is right, and speaking to others. Joy comes with salvation, and you want to see your mother, your father, your sister, your brother, and everyone possible saved. If you get among others who are cooling off, the next thing you know, your praise and jubilation will diminish if you are not careful. You have to maintain it. It is your strength.

The Psalmist David wrote in Psalm 30:5 that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." It is such a wonderful thing to know that while weeping may endure for the night, joy comes in the morning. One thing this verse is saying is that you are not to be sad for too long. Often I encourage others with Psalm 30:4-5, which reads: "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Times will come in life when you have to weep, but once you pass through your night, you should come out with joy in the morning. God does have a plan. Romans 8:28 assures us that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

In the times of life when you must weep, such as when you lose a member of your family or when a serious sickness comes upon you or a family member, there is a time for weeping and praying and concern. Sometimes death comes and you grieve. It is a time to mourn, but then, like the Bible says about Jacob, "Rachel died. . . . And Israel jour-

neyed" (Genesis 35:19, 21). He marked her grave, and then he journeyed.

Everything that happens to you in this life, besides salvation, is supposed to be temporary. Sadness will come, but you must deal with that and then move on. The joy in your soul will raise you up, and then you can go forward. You must maintain joy or you will go down, because the devil knows that the joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength. The devil will spend most of his energy attacking your joy.

In everything that happens to you, by the help of God, you need to see something good in it. That is the reason the Scripture says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." There are some things that you dare not thank God for. For example, if you have a broken arm or a broken leg, you would not thank God for that, but you can thank God that it was not your neck or your back.

One time I visited a young man in the hospital, and he showed me a picture of his car. He was all upset about his car. When I looked at the picture, I said, "I have seen cars with less damage than this one, and everyone inside was dead." The Bible says that you should give thanks in all things. Before I left that room, he said, "I never thought of it like that, but I have seen cars like that too that hardly looked like anything had happened, but the driver and the passenger were killed." I told him that he had a lot to be thankful for. As things happen in life, you need to keep the joy bells ringing in your soul. Yes, there can be temporary setbacks, but you should not allow a setback to rob you of your joy for too long. That is something for you to really think about.

Encourage Yourself in the Lord

The Bible tells us in Job 2:9-10 how Job was holding on to his integrity even though he had lost all he had. He lost his ten children and all his livestock. He lost everything except his wife.

When Job's wife saw how well Job was taking it, she said: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job realized that while he was living for God, he was not expecting to receive good only, because even in what you call bad times, God has your best interest at heart. He has you covered.

Many times the devil comes at you, because he knows it is the joy of the Lord that is your strength, and he attacks you. He attacks from this way and that way, but his real aim is your joy. He knows that if you lose your joy, you will be run over. Therefore, in everything you must give God thanks. You must give Him the glory. If you do not lose your joy, you will maintain your soul as well. Jesus said in Luke 21:19, "In your patience possess ye your souls."

You have to keep going. You have to keep encouraging yourself. Sometimes you may be like the Scripture says about David when some of his men wanted to stone him. They lost their wives and their children and so on. David and his men went down to Ziklag and took over the people. The Bible tells us in 1 Samuel 30:6 that "David encouraged himself in the LORD." Many times you have to encourage yourself in the Lord. When it does not seem like there is anything to be happy or excited about, you need to remember that the joy of the Lord is your strength.

God promised in Hebrews

13:5-6: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The devil wants you to fear, and to be honest, sometimes fear will come upon you. The devil will do anything to rob you of your joy and to upset your joy. It is joy that gives you zeal to go forward, because something worthwhile is ahead of you, but you have to keep the joy bells ringing or you will lose hope.

I thought of when David committed that terrible sin with Bathsheba. In his repenting the Bible gives a clear account of what took place in Psalm, Chapter 51. David cried out in verse 1, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." He said in verses 10-13: "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. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

David knew that he had overstepped his bounds. He knew he had sinned and done wrong and he knew that without the joy of his salvation, he was not going to be able to convince sinners that God's way was a better way. People may not see the joy of salvation when things are going smoothly for you, but they can see it when you have problems and disappointments in life. We all will have those times, but it is important how you handle them. If you have the joy of salvation in your soul, it will help you to handle those problems in such a manner that the world says, "There is something different about that

person."

When things are going smoothly, it is easy to be happy and to have joy, but when the tough times come, that is when you need to have it. David said, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." He could have gone on with a profession. In fact, he tried that until God sent the Prophet Nathan and pointed it out to him. The Bible states in Proverbs 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

You cannot cover your sins and get by, but David tried to cover his wrongdoings. He took one man's little ewe lamb (Uriah's wife), and then set it up so that Uriah would be killed. You can read in 2 Samuel, Chapter 12, that God sent the Prophet Nathan to him and said, "Thou art the man."

You need to maintain the joy of salvation throughout life. You need to continue to have that joy whatever happens to you. You will not make it without that joy. Sometimes when you think of joy, you automatically say, "I know what joy is." The dictionary says it is "delight, happiness, gladness, and a source of pleasure."

"Serve the Lord With Gladness"

Do you still find delight in serving God? Delight is something that no one has to force upon you. No one has to twist your arm for you to do what needs to be done because you delight in doing it. Do you delight in doing what you are supposed to do or in what you are expected to do? Is attending the church services becoming a drudgery for you, but you are healthy enough to go other places? Do you choose to go other places when it is church time? Do you remember when you used to delight to go to the

church services? Now do you say, "Oh, church again tonight"?

You should have joy. The psalmist hit the nail right on the head, so to speak, when he said in Psalm 100:1-4: "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."

Coming together with the saints to give God thanks should be a delight. The Psalmist David said in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." It is so easy and so good to delight to do God's will in this life, and not just in the good times.

I thought about Habakkuk, where the Bible says he would praise the Lord even though the vines had no fruit and there was no herd in the stalls (Habakkuk 3:17). The vines were barren and the olive trees were not giving their increase, but Habakkuk wrote in Habakkuk 3:18, "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

You have to realize there are going to be times when you are going to receive evil, as Job said, but the joy of the Lord is your strength. When you have strength, the devil comes "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

As I was studying, my mind went to Samson. In Judges, Chapter 16, you can read that he fell in love with a woman of Sorek named Delilah. The Philistines told her to entice Samson to find the secret of his great strength. Delilah openly told Samson that she wanted to know this to afflict him. The devil knows that your great strength is in your joy, so he is going to come against you with every-

thing he has, just as Hitler did with the British. The joy of the Lord is your defense.

The devil will come at you with everything he possibly can. He will turn friends into enemies. Proverbs 16:28 says that "a whisperer separateth chief friends." He will turn friend against friend, brother against brother, and sister against sister. He will work through the spreading of rumors. Tale bearing has destroyed the joy of many sincere Christians. Some people spread things, and the further they spread, the more little pieces are added. When individuals hear the source of it, they struggle, but they make it. When David heard something one time, he said had it been a stranger, he could have taken it, but it is hard when it comes from one who goes to the house of God.

A New Song

The devil will use you if you allow him, and he will cause you to kill the joy of a precious brother or sister. Do not give him that opportunity. You cannot afford it. We need one another. Every one of us is needed of each other,

so you should not allow yourself to hurt another. Proverbs 6:16-19 states: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he [or she] that soweth discord among brethren." God hates these things. They are an abomination to Him. You have to watch, lest you wound an innocent heart.

God is such a great God, and He has supplied us with joy and so many wonderful things. The Bible tells us in Psalm 40:1-3: "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." If you wait patiently, God will raise you up. Oftentimes we use this Scripture to signify how God will bring someone out of the miry clay of sin. However, sometimes you may be going

through deep places, or to some degree, depression because of what has been said, what is being said, and how you have been treated. The enemy is striving to destroy your joy. You are going to feel it, but if you lose the joy, then all you can dwell on is the negativity of it, and you are going to hurt yourself more than the one who is hurting you.

You need to keep the joy bells ringing in your heart and live for God. If you are saved, the Lord put a new song in your heart. When difficult times come, you need to sing that new song. The Lord put it there for you to sing it. You need to sing praises to God. That is the reason He put a new song in your heart, so that you could keep the joy bells ringing. If you will just hold on to God and keep your joy intact, you will be able to bear just about anything. The Bible says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." May God help you to realize that through it all, you need to keep your joy intact.

(Compact Disc TR-2315)

Announcements

Medina, OH

The **Annual Labor Day Meeting** held at the Church of God in Medina, Ohio, which was scheduled for September 7th, has been canceled.

Mt. Pleasant, PA Oct. 12-18

Revival: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, Mississippi
Service times: Mon.-Sat. 7:00 p.m. Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 1:30 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey, Telephone: 724-547-2151

Summersville, WV Oct. 26-Nov. 1

Revival: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV
Evangelist: Brother Richard E. Talbot, Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania
Service times: Mon.-Fri. 7 p.m., Sat. 6 p.m., and Sun. 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
For more information contact Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047
Visit our website: www.ChurchofGodSummersvilleWV

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