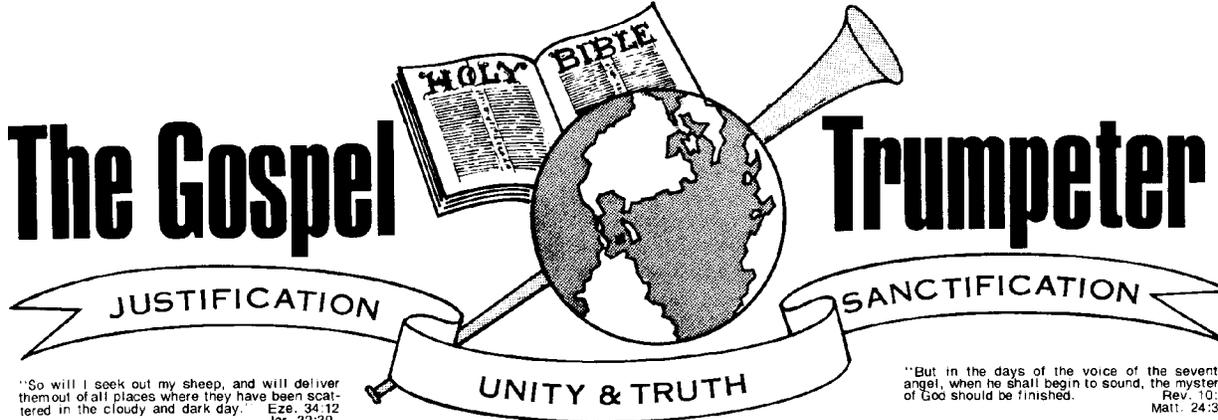


# The Gospel Trumpeter



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. 51 December 2021 No. 12



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

*Psalm 122:1*

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS  
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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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. 51 December 2021 No. 12

# Guest Editorial

*"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the later times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."*

*1 Timothy 4:1*

*"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."*

*Hebrews 10:23*

## Holding Fast to Our Faith

It is certainly visible that we are living in troublesome times. These are days that are full of uncertainty and turmoil. Satan is diligently striving to disrupt and destroy the Christian's peace and faith in God. Everywhere we look, we see some kind of trouble, strife, or contention. This is bringing fear and tension to hearts, making them sick.

The picture surely looks dark and is becoming more frightening as we travel on each day. However, we must remember that God is still in control of all that is taking place. Dear one, it appears that things are out of hand. Sin and wickedness are on the upsurge. We must be reminded and assured that nothing will go any further than God allows. Saints must not let their hearts fail because of fear. Believers are instructed to hold fast to their faith in Christ and never let go of His hand.

Too often people get their eyes fixed on the surrounding circumstances instead of placing their trust in Christ who never fails. The lack of faith in God has caused many to turn from

the paths of righteousness. This world and the church is in a shaking time. This is a time for the people of God to take a tighter grip on God's unchanging hand. It is not the time to give up the battle or to become faint in the race.

Joel proclaimed that "the Lord will be the hope of his people" (Joel 3:16). What encouragement this ought to bring to our hearts and minds! Many things in life are beyond our control, things that we may not be able to change physically or handle, but God is still the Master of this universe. He is the only One who can change things. He holds the power to bring the church through with viry. We should not become overly concerned about the things going on around us. Doing so will only bring restlessness to the heart, rob us of peace, and mar the hope that we have in Christ.

David said in Psalm 42:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God." Now, as never before, the

*[continued on page 23]*

1 *Thessalonians 2:1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain:*

2 *But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.*

3 *For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:*

4 *But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel,*

*even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.*

5 *For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:*

6 *Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.*

7 *But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:*

8 *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.*

9 *For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.*

10 *Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.*

# The Need to Live Right



*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **False Charges Against Paul**

Verse 2 of our Scripture text reads, "But even after we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." The Apostle Paul was referring to a time when he was imprisoned and the abuse he had received at Philippi. You can read all of what took place in Acts 16:16-40, which talks about when Paul was cast into prison and beaten wrongfully. It was there

at Philippi that both Paul and Silas were cast into prison, charged by the Jews with starting an uproar in that city.

No doubt, some people in Thessalonica thought Paul was little more than a common criminal and that he should not have been preaching the Gospel. They advocated that no one should listen to a man like that, a man who had just gotten out of prison, who was beaten and charged as a criminal. Some probably thought, "Why would anyone want to listen to a man with a record such as that?"

In verse 3 of our Scripture reading, we see there were at least three charges leveled against Paul. However, Paul said his exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile. People in Thessalonica were saying that Paul's preaching came from sheer delusion, as someone who had zeal and a burden but could be considered mad in his preaching. Once Festus accused Paul of being mad. Acts 26:24 reads, "And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning

doth make thee mad."

In Mark, Chapter 3, you can read that Jesus' friends came and tried to take Him home because they thought He was beside Himself, or mad. Verse 21 tells us, "And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself."

The people in the city of Thessalonica were saying that Paul's preaching sprang from impure motives. People in the city made all kinds of charges against the Apostle Paul. They said that Paul's preaching was aimed at deceiving others. Our Scripture text in verse 4 suggests that Paul was seeking to please men rather than God. Verses 5 and 9 indicate there were those who said Paul was in the business of preaching the Gospel for what he could get out of it; in other words, they said he was preaching for gain. In fact, they accused him of using "flattering words," which describes motives for gain. Verse 6 lets us know that Paul was accused of taking personal prestige and self-glory. Paul was also charged with being somewhat of a dictator.

When the Apostle Paul visited Thessalonica, they were waiting on him, but his gentleness was like that of a wise father. Paul exhibited love, yet he knew how to be firm. Christian love was no easy, sentimental thing to Paul. He knew that those men needed discipline, not for punishment, but for the good of their souls. Verse 10 of our Scripture text reads, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." When Paul went to Thessalonica, he knew the only way he could level their charges was to live right, not by sitting at a bargaining table and trying to disprove them, but by living in opposition to the charges.

## Judging Others

There are some things that, as Christians, we have to live down. You can disprove false charges. How can you do that? You must live them down. There are some things that you cannot disprove at a bargaining table. Even if you do disprove them, the charges often remain out there. There is no other way to convince people than to live holy, justly, and unblameably. Church of God, that is where we are, and that is where the church needs to be, living holy, justly, and unblameably. Lots of things out in the world will challenge that, but the proof is in how we live.

I am concerned that too many people are coming up short in this area of their lives. There is a lot of judgment living where people put judgment on everyone else when they themselves are guilty. God has blessed us, and we talk about how blessed we are, but let us not get so overcome with being blessed that we leave off living holy, justly, and unblameably. Romans 2:1-3 tells us: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?"

It is obvious that in these verses of Scripture, Paul was really addressing the Jews. If you will read the latter part of Romans, Chapter 1, you will see that the Apostle Paul categorized some very vile sins. These were sins of the heathen world, and he let them know that those who were involved in those sins were under the condemnation of God.

With all of that condemnation the Jews totally agreed, but they never thought they were under the same condemnation, even if they were involved in it. Their thinking was that they occupied a special position before God and they were privileged. However, you need to keep this in mind: the people out in the world are condemned for what they do, but we are double, triple, or quadruple condemned if we do the same things when we know better. We have light and understanding, and that is where the Jews stood.

They agreed that those who were involved in sins such as man after man, woman after woman, treason, haters of God, and all those things were under condemnation. However, they never felt they were guilty, even though they were involved in the same things.

## No One Is Exempt From the Judgments of God

In the first few verses of Romans, Chapter 2, Paul asked, in essence, "Do you think you are inexcusable, you that judge, when you are involved in the same things?" You should not get caught up in things that are inexcusable, things that you judge against other people. The Jews thought that they occupied a very special position before God and that they were privileged. They agreed that God was angry with the heathen and the sinner, but they thought they were exempt from such judgment. In the Scripture text, Paul pointed out that they were going to be judged, not on their heritage but rather on the lives they lived. Most Jews believed that everyone was heading for judgment except for themselves, not because of any special holiness, but simply because they were Jews.

Paul reminded the Jews of four things, and it would be well

if we took note of these things. First, in verse 4 they were treading on the mercy of God and using His mercy as an invitation to sin rather than allowing it to lead them to repentance. Paul let them know they were no longer favorites because of genealogy. God is going to judge each person according to his deeds. Do you take the Truth for granted? We have been blessed with it and can easily testify of it, but I am concerned that some are losing their love for it. Yes, many testify of it and quote it, and some were raised in it as a child. My concern is that they have lost their love for it. You should always ask God to keep you hot for the Truth. You should never want to lose your love for Truth, because having a love for Truth is what is going to get you into Heaven.

The Jews had a difficult time accepting anyone but a Jew. They were God's chosen people. There is no doubt about that in the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament, Jesus came to His own first. They had special privileges, and it was hard for them to believe that God had anything for the Gentiles, the Samaritans, or the heathens. Everything catered to the Jews. They were not about to accept the Samaritans or the Gentiles. Rather than the Jews reaching out to other nations, they rejoiced as God poured out judgment on them. We, too, could end up wrongfully judging others. May God help us to have patience and not to be guilty of the same things that the Jewish nation was guilty of.

There is a need to live holy, righteously, and godly in this present world. That is a strong witness. You may say, "I am too timid to speak to others," but you are not too timid to live right. You may say that you are not bold enough to speak up and witness, but God can help you

with that. You are not so timid that you cannot live right.

### Living Holy

Titus 2:11-12 reads: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The grace of God is a teacher, not a cloak for sin. If you really have what you say you have, then you ought to be living a holy life to back it up.

The Bible tells us in John 13:17 (Jesus was speaking about feet washing), "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." That is not always the attitude that people have today. The thinking of some people is more like, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do not do them."

There used to be a time when men would call off work to be in an ordinance service. Some miss it now and do not even give it a second thought. I am not talking about those who had a vacation planned or those who are sick and unable to be there. Some could make a little adjustment in their schedules and be there. A lot of things are going on all the time, but I am talking about putting forth a little more effort to put the things of God first. It is so easy to let the slightest thing keep you away. If you do not apply yourself to Truth, you can be moved into a mode of complacency.

You have to apply yourself to live holy and righteously. It is necessary to live right. When Paul arrived at Thessalonica, many charges were brought against him. He did not go there to dispute with the people, and he did not go there to sit down at a table and let them level charges against him. He lived right—holy, justly, and unblameably,

and that showed people that he had the power of God in his life.

One time a brother said to a minister who had things being said against him, "How are you able to go on when slander is being said about you?" He said, "Well, when you know those things are not true, you can go right on and live right." If you are living right, the power of God and the grace of God are in your life, and you have the power to stand up as a man and overcome those things.

We live in a religious world where the thought of living holy is often thought of as a joke. When someone even mentions living holy, that person is labeled as a religious fanatic. Nevertheless, to see the inside of Heaven, you must be holy within and without. Yes, there is a human part of us that we have to keep under. We must be submissive to the will of God.

We must not willfully sin, or presumptuously sin. Psalm 19:13 tells us, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."

Presumptuous sinning is sin committed, not through frailty, but on purpose and deliberately. It is sin against judgment, against light, and against conscience. For example, take the standard of dress. Suppose you insist on dressing worldly and immodestly, even when your conscience tells you not to. Truth and teaching oppose it, yet you go on and do it anyway; that is presumptuous sinning. Some say they are not bound with worldliness, but often their actions give them away. Many times schools have let down on their standards and they allow students to wear almost anything. That should not be, and it definitely should not happen where God meets with His people. We should look the

very best we can and wear our best clothes to the house of God.

Parents ought to step up to the issue of seeing that their children dress modestly. Daughters need a mother who checks them over. If they are wearing clothing that is too revealing, a godly mother should send them back to their room to dress right.

### **Being the Right Example**

False charges were made against the Apostle Paul, but instead of trying to prove that he was right, he lived right. That is the biggest proof that God is in you. You must live right on the job and everywhere you go. The Church of God still has a standard of living right.

Paul saw the need of living right. At Thessalonica the church was made up of believers. Young person, when you go out to a restaurant with others, you are supposed to be different from other young people gathered at that restaurant. The owners and the servers should not have to hang their heads and say: "I thought they were really strict on holiness. That is a rowdy bunch!" When it comes to working and paying your debts, the church ought to have the best records of paying their debts. If you owe someone and you are out of work, you are duty bound to at

least acknowledge the debt if you cannot pay it.

The Apostle Paul labored at a job as well as preached the Gospel when he was at Thessalonica. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." You should not keep company with people who have bad reputations. For example, if you are saved, there is no sense in running around with a bank robber. I was saved from alcohol, so it would have made no sense for me to keep company with a drunk, because soon others would not have believed that I was saved. If you are saved, you should not keep company with someone who is given over to drugs, because others will think you are passing drugs or consuming drugs.

Verses 7-13: "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow

us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all [in other words, being lazy], but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." Laziness often goes along with gossiping.

In Hebrews 10:33 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used." The word *gazingstock* means "a spectacle." As a Christian, you must live right, walk straight, and put forth the effort to live as God has set forth in His Word. You must be the right example of what a Christian should be. As spiritual darkness covers this world, the light of a Christian ought to shine brighter and brighter. The Christian must live holy, justly, and unblameably. If you are not a Christian and you would like to be, here is an invitation for you.

*(Compact Disc TR-2141)*

**Nothing will determine your destiny  
more than your ability  
to hear His still, small voice.**

Luke 15:1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man received sinners, and eateth with them.

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 What man of you, having an

hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them,

Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.



# God's Compassion for You

*Brother Abraham Burton*

## **Seek the Lord While He May Be Found**

God loves all of us, and it was in His mind before the creation of the world that He would have a holy people who would walk before Him in love. God has a purpose for your life. He said in Jeremiah 31:3, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto

me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." If you are not saved, God is drawing you.

Merely having a religious profession is not going to help you. You should not feel secure because you are doing good deeds, living a moral life, doing the best you can, and getting on

your knees each night and asking God to forgive you. It is going to take more than that to make it to Heaven. Some religious leaders are pompous and self-righteous, but the saints of God are a humble people and have a burden for souls. We do not think we are better than others. However, we are better off, but only by the grace of God.

In our Scripture text, Jesus saw the Pharisees' hearts, and He wanted them to understand what having compassion for souls was about. He said in verses 4-5: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." I was like that sheep one day. I was that one out of a hundred who was lost. You may say, "Well, you have the ninety-nine," but a good shepherd wants to protect all the sheep. He wants all the sheep in safety because he loves them.

Sinner friend, Jesus loves you, and He is concerned about you. You are without a shepherd and overburdened, and He wants to find you because you are lost. He searches for you in the night. Why do you not come to the Lord? You may think you are having fun, but there is no true joy or lasting happiness in sin. It is just a momentary pleasure, and you are backfilling that void and that emptiness in a life of sin.

The Good Shepherd is looking for the lost sheep. Are you a lost sheep? Why not seek the Lord while He may be found? He wants you to call upon Him. God has been talking to many people over and over, and many just push it off. How long are you going to shrug off the convicting power of the Holy Spirit? You do not want God to withdraw His Holy Spirit from you. You do not want to be like some who were almost persuaded and said, "I will hear you at a more convenient season." Friend, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). The day you hear His voice, you should not harden your heart. God has burdened my heart for the lost.

Luke 15:8-10 reads: "Either

what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

### **Abraham's Burden for Souls**

Jesus compared a lost soul with a lost sheep, one out of one hundred. He also compared a lost soul with a lost coin, one out of ten. Abraham prayed for souls. He had a burden for others. He lived close to God, and God told him that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham began to intercede on behalf of those cities by saying in Genesis 18:24, "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?" Then he went from fifty to forty-five, to forty, to thirty, to twenty, and on down to ten; but there were not even ten righteous souls there. The fear of God is leaving this world. Sin hardens people's hearts. Some have had their consciences "seared with a hot iron," according to 1 Timothy 4:2. You do not want to be in that condition.

Abraham had a burden for souls, so he prayed, not just for his nephew Lot and his family, but he had a burden for souls in that city; however, only a few escaped. The angels took Lot to his children's home, but they did not want to leave Sodom. God pronounced judgment on Sodom. It was going to be destroyed, but Lot's family did not believe him. Sin will blind you, deceive you, and cause you to think that you have a whole lot of time on your

hands. Little did they know that they had only a few hours to escape and save their souls. The angels had to literally grab Lot, his wife, and his two daughters who lived at home. He pull them out of the city because they lingered. Although Lot's wife left the city, her heart had not left, and she looked back even though the angels warned her to not look back.

Thank God, when God saves you, you do not have to look back. I thank God for what He delivered me from. I do not want the life of sin anymore. The devil promises you this and that. You may think that having joy is in a man, in popularity, in material things, or in wealth, but you are still left with a thirsty heart and a longing for something better. Man without God is like a fish out of water. The things of this world cannot satisfy you. Abraham had a burden.

Sometimes our children want us to solve their problems, but they do not want the Problem Solver, Jesus Christ. Why do you not get saved? That is what you need. Your problem is sin. You need salvation. Why not give the Problem Solver a chance? Have you ever lost something of value that meant something to you? Maybe it had sentimental value to you. God values your soul above the world and all its gain. He values one soul, because He said in Mark 8:36, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" That is how important you are. Jesus used this comparison to help people to understand and to comprehend the mercy, the compassion, and the love of God that He has for one soul. The Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9 that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Proverbs 13:15 states, "But the way of transgressors is hard." A heavy load comes with sin.

## The Love of God

Luke 15:11-24 reads: "And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."

This father had two sons. God's Spirit will not always talk to a person. The mercy of God will not always be available. You

need to move while the Spirit of God is dealing with your heart. There is no time to delay. He gives us a more thorough examination of the compassion and the love of God our Savior has toward mankind. He helps us to understand that God looks past people's faults and wrecked lives. He is about fixing lives, not condemning them. Such were some of us. We were wretched sinners. Some were drunkards, thieves, and liars, but God saved us.

In the wicked city of Chicago where I grew up, God saved prostitutes, drug addicts, and pimps. I have seen many lives transformed. Nothing is too hard for God. God saved Paul, who was called Saul. He persecuted the church. He held the coats of others as they stoned Stephen. He hauled the saints of God off to jail. If God could save him, He can save you. You may think, "Well, I am just too messed up" or "I have waited too long." No, if God is still talking to your heart, there is still a chance of salvation. What are you going to do with the opportunity that God is presenting to you? He is showing you that He loves you. He gave His only Son because He loves you so much. Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

### A Wasted Life

The prodigal son decided that he was going to leave home, and he wanted his share of his inheritance. His father was not even dead, yet he wanted his inheritance. Is that not the way sin is? It is all about "me, myself, and I." His father said, in essence, "Okay, son" and he gave it to him. What did the son do? He wasted it. God gave you talents, abilities, health, and strength,

and what are you doing? You are wasting these things in sin. How many years does it take to waste away? When are you going to come back to the Lord? He is looking and saying: "I do not care how wasted you are. I will take you and fix you up." Just like the potter, He will make you over if you come to Him.

The prodigal son went to a far country. Sin is a far country. When you are living in sin, you are far from God, but you are not so far away that God cannot reach you. He can reach into the gutter and save you to the uttermost if you will meet His conditions. If you are tired of sin, if you are tired of a life of false promises, if you are tired of chasing things, if you are tired of not having any peace, come to the Lord. You cannot get peace of mind or peace of heart until you give your heart to God. He is the Prince of peace. Sin will rob you of your sleep at night, and sin is the reason that you are troubled. God is dealing with your heart. Are you fighting Him?

This young man took his inheritance and left home. When you have money, you will have a lot of company. The prodigal son had a lot of friends when he was doing well. That is the way sin is. You might have many friends in sin, but many of them are fake friends, because it is about what they can get out of you. I am not saying that you cannot have true friends, but they are very few and far between. The young man wasted his substance in partying and having a good time. You may say, "I don't party," but you are wasting the life that God has given you.

The Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 6:20, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." He paid a great price to ransom you. What are you doing with the life that God gave you? Solomon

wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." You were made to love the Lord God, to serve Him, and to dedicate your life to Him. The devil wants to corrupt and desecrate everything that God has made.

The prodigal son traveled to a far country and wasted his money with wasteful extravagance, freely and recklessly. He did not think about the consequences of sin or the consequences of his decisions. Some people out in sin are having free love, but they do not think about the babies that come outside of wedlock. They do not think of the lives that are messed up and put on hold. They do not think about how hard it is to struggle as a single parent. They do not think about lost opportunities. One song says: "*Wasted years, wasted years, oh, how foolish.*" Sinner friend, you do not have to continue to do that. God loves you. He is searching for you. He is longing to have fellowship with you. He wants to have you embrace His arms of love and care. He wants to take the heavy load of sin from you. He is saying, "Take my yoke upon you, because the devil's yoke is hard." Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." God has a better way for you to live.

### **Living the Best Life**

The devil deceived the prodigal son. Jesus said in Luke 15:14-15: "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." Sin will take you to a place you thought

you would never go. Have you ever said, "I will never do such and such" and found yourself doing it? This young man was Jewish. He did not have any business handling swine, but sin will destroy your life and have you out there doing stuff you thought you would never do.

Luke 15:16 says, "And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him." All the devil has for you is slop. If you are not saved, you are living beneath your privilege. You can have a better life. You can have more promise in your life, your children can be better off, and your husband can be better off. What are you waiting on?

You could be the reason that your whole family changes. You need to stop waiting on someone else to get saved. It is wonderful when a husband and wife get saved at the same time, but that is very rare. Why not be the one to give God a chance for your family, for your children? You may say, "I have heard this all my life." "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8). Why not truly taste by meeting God's conditions and getting a real experience in knowing God? You need to stop going off your parents' experience.

When I turned to God, I was at home. I did not know anything about the Church of God or about salvation, other than knowing that the Spirit of God was dealing with me. I repented of all my sins. God proved to be more than I could ever know. That was when I was seventeen years of age, and I do not regret that decision. This is the best life. Hallelujah to God! Psalm 84:10 says that "a day in thy courts is better than a thousand [in sin]." This is the best life. Some people use the cliché, "I'm living the dream." When Jesus came into my heart, I began living the

dream of eternal life, the dream of peace, and the dream of love and joy. I was not trying to please people. All I wanted to do was please God. I do not know about you, but I have been living the dream of a better hope and a better life. Before I was saved, I did not have a hope. I had nothing to look forward to but misery and pain, but I thank God that I tried Him. God is so good!

God is concerned about you, and He wants you to cast "all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). It is wonderful that we can give all our problems to God. By faith, we can trust Him to fix them. We are not trying to fix things ourselves any more and making them worse.

### **Trusting in the Lord**

You can trust God and live by faith, hope, and confidence in Him. I thank God for the Christian life. Praise God! You can put your hope in man if you want to, but the Bible says in Jeremiah 17:5, "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD." You do not want to trust in man. Many people have put someone in the place of God in their lives, and that individual ended up disappointing them. Have you allowed someone to be in the place of God in your life? What is so important that you cannot get saved right now? What are you holding on to? What is so hard to give up? What does the world have that is causing you not to get rid of the troubling conviction and the feeling of dissatisfaction? All the world has for you is a lack of love. You are not happy. There is dissatisfaction in your life, and something is missing.

Going back to the story of the prodigal son, Luke 15:16 tells us that "no man gave unto him." He

had misplaced his trust. His friends were there only while the going was good. They could not help him because they could not help themselves. Those drug addicts that hang out with you will use up all your money on drugs, and then they will go on and find the next person to mooch from. They really do not care anything about you. They will tell you, "Man, I love you; you're my best buddy." As long as you have booze and will lend them money and help them, they will be your friend. I have been there and done that.

It is a blessing when people love you for who you are. When I came to the Church of God, I had never experienced anything like that in my life. The love was genuine. I could hardly comprehend the peace, because all I had witnessed was hypocrisy at the church I had attended. You cannot save yourself. There is no other name under Heaven given among men, whereby a man can be saved but the name of Jesus Christ.

Why are you waiting to be saved? Are you going to have to get to your lowest point? Some people are unable to be reached. They just go lower and lower. So many young people commit suicide. Some people try to find their hope in a bottle of alcohol or in drugs. Others shop and spend money in an effort to find satisfaction. I was like that. I was searching for something, but I did not know what I was searching for. I was longing for something, but I did not know what I was longing for. I did not know that I needed Jesus.

The prodigal son thought about his situation and came to himself. When are you going to come to yourself? When are you going to wake up? The Bible tells us in Romans 13:12, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the

armour of light." When are you going to wake up and make the right decision for your soul?

### **A False Sense of Security**

Jonah turned his back on God because he thought he knew better than God. God gave Jonah instructions, but he did not want to follow them. The Bible tells us in Jonah 1:1-7: "Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

"But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah."

Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. If you are not saved, you are running from God. How long are you going to run? I hope you do not outrun God, because then you are going to be lost forever. Next, we read that he went and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and boarded the

ship, but the Lord sent a great wind that caused a mighty tempest. The mariners were afraid and every man cried to his god and cast forth the cargo to lighten the ship, but Jonah had gone down into the ship and was sleeping.

That is what the devil wants to do to you. He wants to tighten his grip on you and take you down. He wants to entangle you and bind you so that you will never get free. That is the reason you need to come to God while He is holding back the powers of darkness. When He is talking to you and dealing with you, He is holding the devil back so you can run for your life. If you continue to run away from God, you are going to go down.

While Jonah was sleeping, the people on board the ship feared for their lives, but where was Jonah? He was down in the side of the ship asleep. He did not realize how dangerous the times were. That is the way souls are today. Jesus could come any day, yet many are asleep. The captain decided that he was going to awaken the sleeper. God is trying to rouse you. He is trying to stir you. Maybe your friend is dying, your mother has died, and your brother has died. What is it going to take to get your attention? Awake, O sleeper! You have been lulled into a false sense of security, not knowing that danger is all around you. Who says you are going to return when you leave home to go to work? Who says that when you do your job that you will not fall dead? When I worked at General Motors, often people died on the job from a heart attack or a stroke.

### **"Awake, O Sleeper!"**

One man who was a fisherman went fishing often. One time he was excited to go on vacation and go fishing, but he drowned, yet this man could swim. You

may say, "Oh, that will never happen to me." You do not know that. You could get entangled in something under water, and that could take you out. You do not know when death is going to call on you. God has not promised you tomorrow. The only thing you have is today. When you lie down at night, you hope that you will get up in the morning, but you do not know.

What are you going to do with this opportunity that God has given you to make your wrongs right with Him? The Pharisees were at the baptism of John, and God gave John the Baptist discernment. He said in Matthew 3:9, "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." You must be willing to forsake sin. You have to be willing to repent of all sin and turn away from that life. You must humble yourself before God with a broken and a contrite heart.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 55:6-7: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, [Who is the wicked person? He is talking about a sinner. Who is the evil person? He is a sinner.] and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Awake, O sleeper! God is trying to get your attention.

Romans 10:14-18 reads: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and

bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

Romans 10:8-10 states: "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

All you have to do is believe. People have more confidence in the utilities than in God. We go into a room and flip a switch and expect the lights to come on. All you have to do is ask God in faith with nothing wavering. God gave Jesus Christ's life as a ransom. He shed His blood to wash away all your sins. If you believe in your heart, God will forgive you for all your sins and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. How long are you going to sleep spiritually?

### **He Leads Beside Still Waters**

When Jonah was on the ship to Tarshish, the other people onboard wanted to know what was going on and why the storm had come upon them suddenly. They were a superstitious people, and when they cast lots, the lot fell on Jonah. So he told them that the only way to calm the storm would be to throw him overboard. They did not want to do that. They tried to get the ship to land, but they were unable to do so. They did not know what else to do, so they threw Jonah

overboard, and there was a great calm.

When you get rid of sin in your life and let Jesus come in, peace will follow. You will no longer thirst for life's pleasures. Jesus will satisfy that longing down in your soul. After I got saved, I thank God that I did not want to smoke cigarettes or marijuana anymore. I did not need any rehabilitation program to help me quit. Jesus delivered me from all those addictions. No matter what your problem is, it is not too hard for God if you believe. The devil does not want you to believe.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:1-6: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

That is what God has done for every saint of God. We are saved only by the grace of God. We would be out there waddling in a miserable life of sin and shame had it not been for Jesus and had we not opened our hearts and let Jesus come in. Our manner of living in times past was to fulfill the lusts of the flesh and mind. By nature, we were the children of wrath.

If you are not saved, you are the devil's servant, and the lust of the devil you are going to do.

Now, God can deliver you and give you power so that you can say, "No, Mister Devil, I am done with you." You can get rid of that hard taskmaster. You can let Jesus come into your heart. You need to let the Shepherd lead you beside still waters, comfort you, feed you, and care for you.

David said in Psalm 23:1-3: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." God wants to do that for you. God can restore you. He can save and deliver you from the life of sin and a life of wasted talents. In essence, the prodigal son said: "I am going home. My father's servants live better than I am living."

Friend, you are living beneath your privilege if you are not saved. When that young man decided to go home, his father was waiting for him with outstretched arms. The father ran to meet him and enfolded him in his arms of love. The father was glad that his son had come to himself. He said in Luke 15:24, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." Praise God! The father was rejoicing. God will be rejoicing when you come home. Why not come home? There is so much love and so much support waiting for you. God has great things for you.

### **Salvation Has Appeared to All Men**

The prodigal son asked his father if he could come home and be a servant. Luke 15:21 tells us the son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The son showed humility, godly sorrow,

brokenness, and contrition. He humbled himself, and he was able to be restored. The father told the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." God wants to give you the robe of righteousness. He wants to give you beauty for ashes and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. God has better things for you.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." God has good things for you, and all you have to do is come to Him. You will be surprised. He will solve your problems. He may not do it right away, but He will work on them if you trust Him and believe Him. He will help you, deliver you, and give you a peace that will pass all understanding and will keep your heart and mind.

Titus 2:11-15 tells us: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. We are going to be without excuse when we stand before God, because this salvation has appeared to everyone. God would be unjust not to show you that He can save you. You can have a better life if you repent.

When the tower of Siloam fell and many other tragedies happened, Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "I tell you, Nay: except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Those people died and were lost.

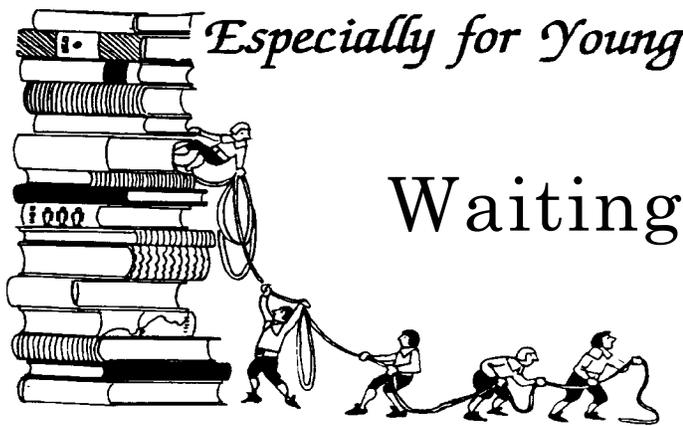
Do you want to die and be lost forever, not having an opportunity to give your heart to God? Do you want to be lost forever, unable to see your loved ones who have gone before you? Do you want to see your loved ones in paradise? Do you want to be caught up with the church when we all go to Heaven together? We all are going to get a new body for Heaven. All you have to do is stay saved. If you are not saved, you will get a body that will enable you to endure the pains of hell, where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. Friend, hell is real. If you had a vision of hell, it would scare you.

When I was working as a substance abuse counselor, the stories those drug addicts told were scary. Some related how they saw the devil. What is it going to take to awaken you? Perhaps God has sent you dreams. Maybe you have been in a near fatal accident. Possibly you almost died from a sickness. What is it going to take to rouse you, O sleeper? Are you going to continue to sleep?

*(Compact Disc TR-2241)*

**Learn to say  
kind words;  
nobody  
resents them.**

*Especially for Young People*



## Waiting

Psalm 119:123 states, "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness." The International Children's Bible reads, "My eyes are tired from looking for your salvation and for your good promise." Another version says, "My eyes are straining and they grow weary."

Who likes to wait? For instance, perhaps your sixteenth birthday is coming up. That usually means you get to drive. When I was growing up, it meant that I finally got to go on my first date. I had been waiting for two years. Who cannot wait for a birthday to come? It is so exciting. You are going to do something special. Maybe it is another special birthday, like your eighteenth birthday.

What about waiting for a vacation? Suppose your family has a big vacation planned and you are counting the days. We did not have much money growing up, but once a year my dad would buy reduced tickets to Cedar Point and would take our family there. He always made a big deal out of it. Mom and Dad had a camper, and we would drive there and camp and then go to Cedar Point all day. I remember being so excited as a child. I could hardly wait! My siblings and I would discuss what rides we wanted to ride. The excitement would build up, and we could hardly wait for that day to come.

What about waiting in line at

a gourmet coffee shop? When the line is super long, do you groan? None of us is excited about waiting. What about waiting for an answer? You may ask your parents about something and have to wait for an answer. We do not like to wait. What about sitting at a traffic light? When you are in a hurry, are you anxious for the traffic light to turn green? Sometimes it seems as though the light stays red for a long time. Maybe the cars in front of you move very slowly and you have to wait even longer.

With each child that I was expecting, those nine months seemed so long that I would think, "This baby is never going to get here." The waiting seemed like forever, but then the waiting was eventually over, and I did not have to wait anymore.

Who likes to wait for their prayers to be answered? You may say, "I need this money, and I cannot wait any longer" or "I really need this job." When you pray and have to wait, you want that prayer answered right away. No one likes to wait. Waiting tries your patience. You may think, "Why is this taking so long?" The thought of waiting reminds me of the "Where's Waldo" books. You look and look, and your eyes strain to find Waldo in the busy pictures.

There are stories in the Bible about waiting. It might be good for you to read these when you

have to wait a long time. At the age of seventy-five, Abraham was told by God that he and Sarah were going to have a son, yet Abraham had to wait another twenty-five years to have a child with his wife Sarah. Have you ever prayed for something for twenty-five years? Jacob met the love of his life, whose name was Rachel, and he had to work and wait seven years to marry her. My husband and I waited five and a half years to get married, and we thought that was a long time. Jacob had to wait seven years for the love of his life. Commentators state that he was an older man, possibly in his forties.

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and God promised that He was going to send a deliverer. The entire time they were in slavery in Egypt, they had this promise to hold on to. However, it was four hundred years from the time God said He would deliver them from slavery until Moses led them out of Egypt. The Israelites might have thought, "We must have misheard that message from the Lord."

The same thing happened later in the Bible. In the middle of your Bible, there is a division, where the Old Testament stops and the New Testament begins. Between the two testaments, there was a period of about four hundred years. Throughout the Old Testament, you can read that a Savior and Redeemer was coming

and people would be set free from sin. Yet, by the end of Malachi, Christ had not come, and Israel waited four hundred more years. In addition, during that four hundred years, God did not speak to His people because of their sins.

There are many more Bible examples of waiting. The next time you are frustrated because of waiting, think about the twenty-five years that Abraham waited, the seven years of waiting for Jacob, and the four hundred years that the children of Israel waited.

I was thinking about this Scripture in Psalm 119:123 that speaks of the eyes straining and needing to wait. When I was working in my garden, I noticed some small tomatoes growing. I did not look at those tomatoes and say, "I am going to pick these, slice them, and put them on my sandwich." Why? Because there is a growing season that had to take place first. Before those tomatoes were ready, before they met their full potential, there was a growing season.

We understand the waiting throughout the growing season when it comes to nature. None of us wonders why the tomatoes are not ready soon after we plant them. However, sometimes we fail to realize that in our personal development and in our walk with Christ. There is a growing season and a necessity of waiting. Ecclesiastes 3:1 tells us, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." When it might seem that you are waiting a very long time, perhaps it is a waiting season. God might be looking at you like I looked at the tomatoes on the tomato plant, saying, "You are not ready yet."

What do we learn by waiting? What good can come from waiting? First, you are going to have a greater appreciation for what you are waiting for. What if every time you wanted or needed something, it was right there and you re-

ceived it as soon as you asked? Would you appreciate it as you should? As children growing up, we did not eat out very often. Once in a while, my mother would go to McDonald's and buy a bag of hamburgers, and we were so excited. We appreciated that more because it was a treat that we did not have very often.

We can also learn to be more thankful in our waiting. How thankful are you for things that you do not have to wait for? For instance, have you ever thanked God for the air you breathe? You would thank God if you did not have it for a while and then it came back. We take having air to breath for granted, even though it is vital and we would die without it. How about your shoes? Did you thank the Lord for the shoes that you put on? No doubt, you have many pairs of shoes in your closet. More than likely, you did not thank the Lord for them today. You took them for granted.

Did you thank the Lord for the car that gets you where you need to go? Did you have to walk to school, to work, or to church today? When the weather gets cold, are you thankful for a heated car? What about the mattress that you sleep on? Did you have to sleep on the floor last night with no pillows or blankets? Did you have to pray for any of those things? Did you get up this morning and say, "Lord, please make sure that I have enough air to breathe today" or "Lord, please make sure that I have shoes to wear"? It would be very uncomfortable if you had to go barefoot, and it may look a little odd. Did you get up and say, "Thank You, Lord, that I was not sleeping on the floor last night and that I have a very comfortable mattress to sleep on"? If you were to go without them for a little while, I am sure that you would notice. When you do not have to wait or pray for certain things, you cannot fully appreciate them, and you

cannot be as thankful for them as you should.

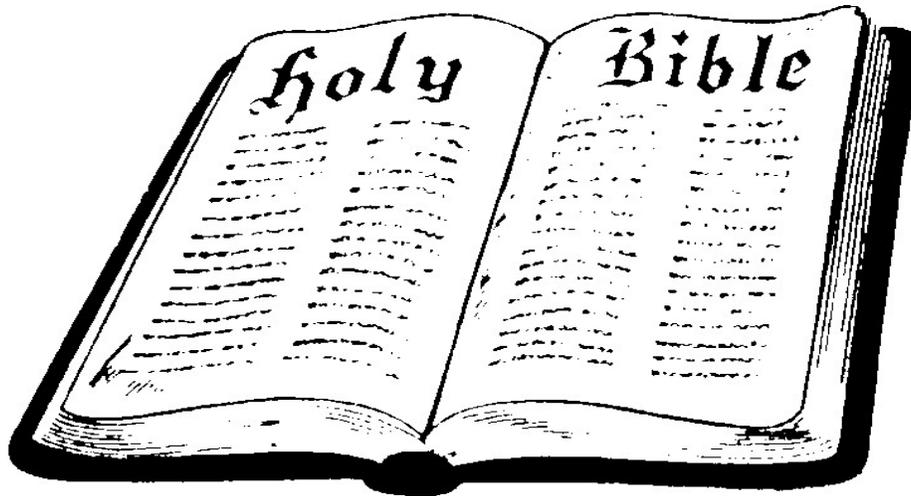
What about learning to have more patience? Patience is developed through waiting. One of the songs that I would sing to my children says, "*Patience is a good thing every Christian should possess . . . have patience, although to wait is hard to do.*" This little chorus is so true. Patience is a good thing, but you were not born with it. None of our four children had patience from day one. When a small child wants to eat, he wants it right now. One minute he is happy and smiling, and suddenly he goes from smiling to fussing in a very short time. A young child has very little patience, so waiting for things helps a child to develop patience.

God has a reason for having you wait. There are things in your life that God is trying to accomplish through your waiting. God's ways are much higher than ours. Isaiah 55:9 reads, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God's understanding is higher than ours and His ways are better than anything that we could ever think of. When you are tired of waiting, when your eyes are strained from trying to see the answer, remember this. Galatians 6:9 tells us, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

The next time you are in a season of waiting, I hope you will remember this lesson. God is trying to do something in your time of waiting. Your eyes might grow tired, strained, and fail, but hold steady. God is doing something that is higher and much greater than what you can comprehend or understand right now.

Sister Sheri Strelecky

# Four Small But Exceedingly Wise Things



*Brother E. David Stegmeier*

## **Lessons From Nature**

We can derive many lessons from the world of nature, and this one comes from Proverbs, Chapter 30, that King Solomon wrote. He was the wisest man, except Christ, because he asked God for wisdom. He was very noble when God asked him what he wanted. Solomon requested wisdom to direct and guide the great people over which he ruled. It so pleased God that He gave Solomon that plus a lot of extra things, but in the end Solomon faltered. The Bible says Solomon loved many strange women, and they stole his heart away from God. This was a very sad ending.

You can be saved today, but you need to be faithful and stay saved. Proverbs 20:6 asks, "A faithful man who can find?" Let

us consider some little but wise things. I want to talk to you about four little creatures to see what they can teach us. They are small but exceedingly wise. Proverbs 30:25-26 tells us: "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." The cony is a very close relative to the rabbit.

Verse 27 reads, "The locusts have no king [or director] yet they go forth all of them by bands. Judges 21:25 states, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Because ants are grouped together in great numbers, ants are called "a people." There is strength in numbers. We teach unity. Martin Luther taught, "The just shall live by faith." The

Wesley brothers taught living a holy life. Then along came Church of God brethren preaching unity, or being one people. The devil would like to destroy unity. We have to work at it.

Proverbs 6:6 states, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." The *International Children's Bible* says, "Go watch the ants, you lazy person. Watch what they do and be wise." Verses 7-8 read: "Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest."

How do the ants do that? There is something within the nest that directs them. I believe that God wants to direct you and me, and He can do that. Often I ask Him: "Will you please direct me? I want to know where I should be, what I should be

doing, and what I should be saying. Give me opportunities to labor for you."

Ants are small and weak in power. Can we relate to that? In our own strength we are small, weak, and insignificant, but in Christ we can be strong. My son Reggie wrote a song that the children sing in our congregation, entitled "I Can Do Anything With God's Help." Ants are small and weak in power and strength, but great in wisdom and foresight. The Bible tells us that without a vision the people perish. I like to bring it two ways: not only will the lost perish, but if we do not have a vision, cabin fever can plague us. In other words, we could start working on one another. The field is the world. A pastor's job is to work on the church, and the individual members are to work with others.

### **Ants Prepare Ahead**

One great philosopher said the ant has not only a sense but also a mind, reasoning ability, and a memory. Ants prepare their meat in the summer when they can obtain lots of it and store it up.

The appropriate time to work is while it is day, because when night comes, no man can work. In John 9:4 Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." Therefore, while we have opportunity, let us take advantage of it. The word "night" represents death and the grave; no one is working there to convert. Ants gather their food for the winter during the summer months, demonstrating their wisdom.

A children's story tells about a frog as fall was coming. All the frogs burrowed down into the mud in the pond, but one foolish frog said, "I want to stay one more day."

The other frogs warned, "You had better be careful." They all got down in the pond, and the next day the sun came up.

The frog said: "I am so happy! I am out here and the sun is up and warming my back." A fly went by, and the frog stuck out its tongue and gathered that fly and thought: "I'm so smart that I stayed out. I think I'll stay out one more night." That night he shivered and shook. Suddenly, little white things started falling on his nose. The frog thought he had better go in the pond, so he went to the pond and tried to jump in. Splat! Oh, no—ice! The farmer came by and saw that foolish frog splattered on the ice, and he was dead. The moral to the story is that while we have the opportunity, we need to be wise and get in while we still have time. The ant gathers its food for the winter during the summer months, demonstrating wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 states, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Paul wrote in Colossians 3:23, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

God's people are industrious, diligent, hard-working people, both spiritually and physically. There is joy in working for the Lord. We are laying up treasures in Heaven, our eternal home. However, you need to do what God wants you to do.

We are going to sum up the ant. First, harvest ants are busy at the appropriate time. Second, ants are seemingly helpless insects; however, they are industrious and carry loads much greater than their own weight. They are known for carrying heavy loads, and the saints of God do have heavy loads. We are living in the last days, so we

want to get right in there and carry the load.

Ants give proof to their great wisdom. As God's people, we should be the wisest people on earth because of the Truth imparted to us. Our labor and activities should be proof of our wisdom. Jesus said in John 6:27, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life [sometimes people labor more for the meat that perishes than for the spiritual meat], which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed."

Ants can be used as an object lesson. King Solomon used them to teach certain lessons. People asked him to use it as an object lesson for industry, not in spiritual endeavors. King Solomon, Jesus, and others referred to nature for lessons.

### **Learning From the Conies**

Proverbs 30:26 reads, "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." What can we learn from the conies? Today we associate the cony with the rabbit. However, it is now called "rock hyrax." This little animal is found in Africa and the Middle East. Knowing how vulnerable they are, conies make their home high up on rocky cliffs and in crevices in the mountains. You and I are vulnerable too.

One time at the zoo in Portland, Oregon, some high school students were at the cage of a big, old lion lying in his pen. It looked as though he was sleeping, so the boys dared one another and said, "Reach in and touch his paw."

One boy said, "You do it."

Another said, "No, you do it."

One young man said, "I'll do it." When he put his arm in the cage, that lion woke up and shredded his arm. Similarly, you

may think the devil is sleeping, but he is not. You should not go someplace and tempt the Lord.

Knowing how vulnerable they are, conies make their home high up in the rocky cliffs in mountains. Many have heard about the young men who were applying for the job of a stagecoach driver out in the wild west. One company needed a stagecoach driver, so the owner put an advertisement in the Denver Gazette. Three young men showed up. The owner of the stagecoach company said they would go down the road and around the mountain bend where there was a curve in the road, and down below was a deep ravine. The owner asked, "How close do you think you can drive?" The first man said, "I think I can get within a foot of the edge." They went around that bend, and he got within about a foot of the edge. "Whew!" the owner said. "That was really something! You scared me, but you did it!"

The second young man got up on the seat and the owner asked, "How close can you get to the edge?"

The young man said, "I can get within an inch of that."

The owner was sweating, but the stagecoach driver was excited, but he got the stagecoach within about an inch of the edge. The old man said, "Oh, I don't know about this!"

The third young man got up on the seat, and the owner said, "How close do you think you can get to the edge?"

The young man said, "Sir, if you don't mind, I'm going to hug the inside."

The owner said: "I'll hire you. You are the one I want." So it is with the devil. You need to stay as far away from the devil as you can. Do not play around.

Knowing how vulnerable they are, the conies make their homes high on the rocky cliffs in the crevices on the mountain.

Where do they go to eat? Now, this is important. They do not wander far from their homes. Young person, the best place for you after you get out of high school is to choose a college close to you and stay at home. Many young people have come up through our congregation in the past fifty years, and you can count on the fact that if they go to school away from their home, they lose their experience with God. They compromise the standard of the church. They are far better off to stay home and remain spiritual. They are better off to stay at home and get their academic degrees from local colleges.

### Watch for Danger

Young person, these are lessons that you can learn from these four little beasts or insects. While they go out to eat, they do not wander far from their homes; they stay close. We sing a song that says, "I've wandered far away from God, Now I'm coming home." It is a beautiful song. The conies are always watching for danger, and we need to be wary as well. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8, "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

I have been around the church and saved for more than seventy years, and I have never regretted it. It has been a wonderful life. You need to watch for danger because the devil has something out there to trick you and to get you off course. I have come to many crossroads, and had I gone a different direction, it could have destroyed me, my family, and my congregation.

As I said previously, the conies are always watching for danger. If they spot an eagle or another enemy, they take cover quickly. That is good admonition for us as well. Again, Peter wrote

in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Lions usually hunt their prey at night. That is a lesson for us to stay home at night.

My mother always said that it is the devil's hour after midnight. When people are at church, I like for them to be sober. We are there to learn. It is a serious place, especially during an altar service. I like to see people serious, praying earnestly, looking to God for help.

David wrote in Psalm 61:2, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." We need to stay high. God wants us to be far above the world. We sing a song that says:

*Far away the noise of strife  
upon my ear is falling,  
Then I know the sins of earth beset  
on every hand;  
Doubt and fear and things of earth  
in vain to me are calling,  
None of these shall move me from  
Beulah Land.*

*Far below the storm of doubt upon  
the world is beating,  
Sons of men in battle long the  
enemy withstand;  
Safe am I within the castle of God's  
word retreating,  
Nothing then can reach me,  
'tis Beulah Land.*

*Let the stormy breezes blow, their  
cry cannot alarm me,  
I am safely sheltered here, protected  
by God's hand;  
Here the sun is always shining,  
here there's naught can harm  
me,  
I am safe forever in Beulah Land.*

*Viewing here the works of God,  
I sink in contemplation,  
Hearing now His blessed voice,  
I see the way is planned;*

*Dwelling in the spirit, here I learn  
of full salvation,  
Gladly will I tarry in Beulah Land.*

*I'm living on the mountain,  
underneath a cloudless sky,  
I'm drinking at the fountain that  
never shall run dry;  
O yes, I'm feasting on the manna  
from a bountiful supply,  
For I am dwelling in Beulah Land.*

### **Locusts Band Together**

We talked about the ants and the conies. There are two more that I want to speak to you about. The conies make their homes high up in the mountains. As God's people, we are elevated. He placed us above the world. We need to stay above the world, yet we have to go into the world.

The locusts, which are much like the grasshoppers, are also small but exceedingly wise creatures. Proverbs 30:27 states, "The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands." What lesson do we learn from them? The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:9, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour." It is nice to have a brother or a sister labor with you.

Exodus 10:15, speaking of locusts, says, "For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt."

What can we learn from the locusts? First, locusts do not work alone; they work in bands. The Bible calls them an army, so there were many of them. Locusts do not work alone but together. They can do great things by working together. These are lessons that we can learn from these insects. There is strength in numbers.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:16, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." It is amazing how every child is different. Each of your children are different. When our second boy was little, he always liked to take toys apart to see what they were made of. As he got older, if a neighbor was building something, he went to spend time with him. If another neighbor was repairing a car, he watched him repair it. Each of us has a special gift. The body of Christ is fitly joined together and compacted.

### **The Wisdom of the Spider**

Last of all, we are going to consider the spider. What about the spider should we consider? A spider's web is a real work of art. There is beauty in a spider's web. One commentator said: "Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their web with a finesse, exact such as no artist can pretend to come near. They spin a fine thread out of their own bowels with a great art in a poor man's cottage and in a king's palace as well."

You could say that Joseph was like a spider in that he brought beauty to his surroundings. He is a Bible example of one whose inner beauty brightened and brought hope to others and their surroundings. Joseph brought hope to his entire family. He brightened the area where he was. As Christians, each of us should emit a sweet aroma, or savor. We should leave a good-smelling savor with our influence. In the Old Testament, Joseph did that. In the New Testament, Paul did that as well.

The beauty of integrity and godliness beautify every realm,

the hubbles of the poor and the mansions of the rich. Now the beauty of love and forgiveness beautifies the realms of hatred and strife. Matthew 5:9 reads, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Why is the spider considered wise? Spiders are found all around. I think it is good for Christians, no matter where we are, to brighten up the area where we are. Let us be a positive note. Ants, conies, locusts, and spiders, where wisdom is out of proportion to their size. Their wisdom far surpasses their size.

Now, while you have an opportunity, you should be busy working for the Lord. Every true child of God should be a soul winner. The Bible lets us know that every follower of Christ should be a soul winner. I want to close with the song entitled "Work, for the Night Is Coming."

*Work, for the night is coming;  
Work through the morning hours;  
Work while the dew is sparkling;  
Work mid springing flowers;  
Work when the day grows brighter;  
Work in the glowing sun;  
Work, for the night is coming,  
When man's work is done.*

*Work, for the night is coming;  
Work through the sunny noon;  
Fill brightest hours with labor;  
Rest comes sure and soon.  
Give every flying minute  
Something to keep in store;  
Work, for the night is coming,  
When man works no more.*

*Work, for the night is coming,  
Under the sunset skies;  
While their bright tints are glowing,  
Work, for daylight flies.  
Work till the last beam fadeth,  
Fadeth to shine no more;  
Work, while the night is darkening,  
When man's work is o'er.*

(Compact Disc TR-2283)

1 *Chronicles 13:1* And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.

2 And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:

3 And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.

4 And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right

in the eyes of all the people.

5 So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim.

6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it.

7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart.

8 And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalte-

ries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

9 And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

10 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

11 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day.

12 And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?



# Bad Choices Bring Regrets

*Brother Garrett Haylock*

## Acknowledging God

I want to deal along the line of prayer. Prayer is so very essential. 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." Our paths need to be directed. God has designed it to be that way. Luke 18:1 says that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Solomon said to trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. You are to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, and He will direct your paths. David was a good, godly king. In the Scripture text,

you can see that even good men can make bad choices. No man should try to supersede God in importance. David consulted with his military men (he was the captain of thousands). He invited the priests to come, and all the dignitaries were involved.

The Scripture states that if you acknowledge Him in all your ways, He will direct your paths. Many times when calamity strikes, people do not even pray or acknowledge God. Even as Christians, bad choices still bring regrets. The Bible says every disobedience and every transgression shall receive a just recompense of reward. Having good people, good leaders, good pastors, good deacons, and good

elders around us is wonderful. Acknowledging God on matters is very important. I want to know what God says. Sometimes I say, "If it is a Biblical question, the Bible can answer it." I believe that we ought to search God's Word. It is supposed to be our rule of faith and our guide. God set His Word before us to guide us along the way.

David was a good man, and he wanted to do a good thing. David had a good idea, and he consulted with many for their support, but even good ideas still need God's approval. Many times it is like the situation with Naaman. When the Prophet Elijah's servant told Naaman to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River and he would

be cured of his leprosy, he became angry because the rivers back home in Syria were better than that. Also, he thought Elijah would have come out and waved his hand over him and would have done a miraculous work to cure his leprosy. He went away in a rage. One of his soldiers tried to reason with him: "If the man of God had told you to do something great, wouldn't you have done it? So why not at least try what he said." When he did what the man of God told him to do, he was healed. When God prescribes something for you, you need to pay attention to it.

David had a good idea, and Proverbs 11:14 reads, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." There is safety only if the counselors have been in contact with God. You have to be careful. You see, your spiritual walk is a personal walk with you and God, and it is going to end with you and God. At the end of the day, you must stand before God to give an account of your life and the deeds that you have done in this life, whether they have been good or bad. No one is going to be able to put in a good word for you.

### **Following God's Instructions**

You must acknowledge God in all your ways if you want Him to direct your paths. David, with all his good intentions, made a bad choice. We read in 1 Chronicles 13:12, "And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?" That was the first question he should have asked, but instead it was the last question he asked. Verse 3 says, "And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul."

Although something may sound like a good idea, you should make sure that God is in favor of it and that you are doing it the way God wants you to do it. It was not

that bringing home the ark was a bad idea, but the fact was that David did not acknowledge God. God had it recorded in His Word how it was supposed to be done. David was king, and he knew those things. Sometimes even as a leader, you have to be careful because at the end of the day, you will be held accountable for whatever you do or say to or for the people. Therefore, you have to make sure that what you say is backed by the Word of God and His favor. You need to realize that living for God is a personal walk.

David was asking how he should bring the ark of God home, but he was not following God's instruction. You see, the heathen people took the ark away on a cart, but that was not the way that God had designed it to be carried. Anything that man is directly in charge of is not going to line up with the will of God, and somewhere down the road it is going to shake and tremble because it is not ordained of God.

No doubt, David made some inquiries and did some research after Uzza died. First Chronicles 15:1-2 reads: "And David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever." God had designed that was the way and no one could change it. No matter how many people feel this is outdated, whatever God has designed still needs to be followed today. God's Word is forever settled in Heaven. Second Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable."

First Chronicles 15:11-13 reads: "And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab, And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the

Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." God designed only one way for the ark to be carried, and that was by the Levites. When David decided that was the due order for it to go, David safely got the ark back to the place that he had prepared for it.

### **Prayer Is Essential**

You may say, "I have made too many mistakes, and I have regrets." Sometimes even as Christians, we make mistakes. Sinners are outside the will of God. Many times they make bad choices, and those bad choices definitely end with serious regrets. Prayer is the key to spiritual existence. If you are going to survive spiritually, you are going to have to pray, but not just once in a while. If you are going to acknowledge God in all your ways and allow Him to direct your paths, you must maintain contact with Him through prayer and Bible study. You may feel: "Well, this thing is so small. I've got this, so I do not even have to ask God about it." That little thing that you thought you had might give you the biggest regret. You see, the Bible says in James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Some people may seem to be getting away with something because they may not know better, but you and I that know better need to act and conduct ourselves accordingly.

Prayer is so very essential in each of our lives. I know for sure that prayer has helped me. Prayer could have avoided the whole ordeal that Israel went through when they moved the ark. If David had asked God first, He would have directed him concerning how to bring the ark back, and then Uzza would not have died. Romans 6:23

says, "The wages of sin is death." Proverbs 16:25 tells us, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." That way seems right, so you do not even question it. When the king said it, they simply concluded that it was all right, but it was not of God. They assumed that it was of God because it seemed like a good idea. This is the reason you need to find out from God first through prayer.

David was a person who brought much comfort and challenge to the people's hearts and lives. These things were not written just to take up space. Why were they written? Romans 15:4 states, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Why would God have this recorded? David encouraged many hearts hundreds of times in the Book of Psalms. I believe that some things that he used as an encouragement were lessons that he learned the hard way. You should not be making the same mistake repeatedly. If you keep forgetting to acknowledge God, you will make bad choices, and bad choices will always end with regrets.

### **Numbering the People**

In 2 Samuel we find a similar incident. Second Samuel 24:1-2 reads: "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people." I do not believe anybody needs to know or can really know the number of God's people, but back then apparently there were times when the children of Israel were numbered.

The devil will come in ways

and cause you to make bad choices. That is the reason the higher up the ladder you go spiritually, the more you need to pray and the more humble you need to be, because you become a target for the enemy. In Luke 22:31 Jesus said to Peter before He went to the Cross, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat."

In the morning church, when they killed James, Herod saw that the people were making a big to-do about it, showing how happy they were that Herod pursued Peter. The leadership of the Church of God is always a target for Satan. When you pray, you need to pray for your pastor and your leaders, because Satan desires to have them.

God moved on David to number the people. He sent Joab to do that. Joab was a very ruthless man. He killed people in cold blood, or without remorse. He had no scruples when it came to killing. Joab had a command, and he went and made heads roll, so to speak. Along with his brother Abishai, they were a force to be reckoned with. At some stages, David himself said the sons of Zuriah were too strong for him. Joab, who had no scruples about taking out people on the king's command, stood up and argued with this good man.

Second Samuel 24:3-4 reads: "And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host. And Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel."

Verses 8-10 continue: "So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king:

and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men. And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. [Why do people have regrets after doing certain things? The Scriptures tell us that he who does wrong will suffer for the wrongs that he has done. God is no respecter of persons. Prayer will keep you from taking actions that would cause you to have regrets.] And David said unto thee LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly."

### **Avoiding Regrets**

David said, "And now I beseech thee. . . ." Why did David not beseech the Lord before he did this thing? We see David coming back in these two instances and acknowledging that he had done wrong. He was acknowledging that he was wrong in this late stage of regrets. He acknowledged that what he had done was foolish. Let us pray that God will help us to acknowledge Him in all our ways. You do not need to have regrets if the Lord directs you. He is the one who directs you. God knows what is out ahead of you. If you acknowledge Him, He will direct your paths. Let us learn from David. Let us see how we can avoid making similar mistakes.

Exodus 30:11-12 states: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them."

David wanted to know the number of the people in the kingdom. It was not the time to take a census. That was not the reason that God gave for numbering the

people.

Every minute detail of God's plan must be followed. A preacher asked a congregation, "What is the meaning of *all*?" It was a simple question. One little boy put up his hand, and the preacher said: "Tell the people what the meaning of *all* is."

The boy said, "Pastor, *all* means *all*, and that is *all*." The Scripture says in Proverbs 3:6, "In *all* thy ways acknowledge him," in big ways and in small ways. You must acknowledge what God tells you because whatever He tells you is right. At the wedding at Cana, Mary told the servants to do what-

ever Jesus told them to do when they ran out of wine. Jesus told Mary that His time had not yet come. That is still sound and wise. Whatever Jesus says to you, do it, but you need to make sure that it is really Jesus who is speaking to you.

Although people can help you, remember that you are saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, and you must answer to God. The Scripture says to come boldly to the throne of grace where you can obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need. No matter how simply you may think: "I just got saved recently. I don't even know how to pray a good prayer." You

can talk to God as you would talk to a friend, and just keep doing that each day. When you are going to make choices at school, at work, or in the home, you need to call on the Lord to help you.

Bad choices bring regrets, but if you acknowledge God in all your ways, these regrets can be avoided. Romans 15:4 says, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." God bless you is my prayer.

*(Compact Disc TR-2420)*

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*[Guest Editorial—continued from p. 2]*

people of God need to hold fast to their profession of faith. We must refuse to be moved by the things that go on around us.

The secret to having victory lies in staying true to God, living obediently to His Word, and trusting in Him no matter how things look. An old song tells us to "hold to God's unchanging hand." Child of God, we must keep our faith and confidence securely fixed in the Savior. He is the only One who can see us through these troublesome times. Men may fail and nations may fall, but there is victory in the Lord! Psalm 91:7 tells us, "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it will not come nigh thee." Why will it not come nigh you? When you have your hand placed firmly in God's hand, you are dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. Being in Christ is the only safe haven for the soul of man. When you hold fast to Him, He will hold fast to you.

The Apostle Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." What was he saying? We may be handicapped in many ways,

but we are not beyond the point of receiving help and relief. We may lack understanding or be puzzled about certain matters, but we are never driven to a place of despair or hopelessness. No matter how dark the picture may be or how great the burden, God is still on His throne and greatly cares for us.

In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul told Timothy that some would depart from the faith by giving heed to seducing spirits. These spirits work through ungodly men who are out to move the Christian away from a solid position in Christ. They attempt to introduce ideas or theories that are contrary to sound Bible principals. In many cases these seducers will speak evil of and even mock the righteous standards prescribed in the Gospel. If possible, they will try to convince the saints that holiness of heart and life is antiquated, unnecessary, or out of date. God's Word has never changed. It is the same today as it has always been.

In Jude's letter to the church, he warned all to be on guard of individuals who would pervert the way of Christianity. They creep in unnoticed, appearing upright outwardly. However, their purpose is to defile and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Often they consider themselves to possess a higher

intellect than others possess. With this advanced wisdom and insight they believe God has given them greater light and understanding. This greater light allows them more liberty and freedom to do as they please. However, the evidence of this theory reveals that yielding to a more worldly way of living has occurred. Beware, saint, with greater light and understanding also comes greater responsibility. Increased light is bestowed to draw the child of God closer to the Savior, never closer to the world.

In Jude's letter he was also attempting to stir and challenge the people of God to earnestly contend for the faith that they had once received. He was concerned that the falling away was affecting too many. Instead of succumbing to these apostate conditions, he encouraged them to fight the good fight of faith. In verse 20 he told them to build themselves up in the most holy faith and pray. We can win in this lukewarm and apostate age if we will hold fast to the precious things that God has entrusted us with. Who knows how much longer it will be before the Lord comes to lift His bride up to Glory? Let us be faithful and hold fast.

Selected

*Acts 9:24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.  
25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.*



*Brother Mike Wilks*

### **What Is Your Position Toward God?**

Paul was in a very dangerous position, because some people had taken a vow that they were not going to eat or drink until they had killed him. This became known to Paul, so the disciples let him down the wall in a basket at night. There are two sides to a dangerous position. If you are going to serve God, you are in a dangerous position because of the way the world responds to Christians. The other dangerous position is, if you turn your back on God, you are in a more perilous position because He is the One who provides eternal life throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity.

The question is, What is your

position toward God? If every time I talked to you, I were to turn my back or my side toward you, you might think that I was strange. Some people like to talk to God that way. They want to engage Him, but they do not want to go all the way with Him. They want to slip back and forth, but you are either for Him or against Him. There is no middle ground.

We interact with things every day, and some things are dangerous. How people react to that danger says a lot. Some people know the risks, yet they perform dangerous jobs anyway, and others choose not to. If you are not right with God, you are in a very dangerous position.

Friend, if you are not right with God, you have no hope. You

are most miserable without any hope, yet many people continue in that condition, not thinking anything about it. Why is that? Is it because they think they can wait until the very end of life to get saved or wait until they are on their deathbeds? I believe that a lot of people think that. They say: "I need to get right with God someday, but I'm going to try to time it so I will be on my deathbed. Why miss out on living a blessed life in the meantime?" How can you honor God by waiting until you are on your deathbed? Thank God for deathbed salvation when it happens, but that is not the plan of God. God wants people to serve Him from their youth on. That is where the honor comes in. A Christian's highest aim should be to honor

God in all things. It should feel awful to displease God when He has saved you from all sin. All He wants is your life. What is your position toward God?

We live in a materialistic society, and it can rub off on you if you are not careful. You need to remember what is really important. I have children, and I will be influencing them for the Lord. I want them to know the Truth and to know that we love God. Someone has to carry the Gospel torch to this world as long as time is standing. Do you want others in your family to carry that torch? I am not living in fear, thinking they might go out into sin later. It is possible, but for right now, they are being taught about God. Whatever happens when they get to that point is going to be on them.

### **How Is Your Influence?**

We have to remember what is important. It is the Word and this life. There is an interaction going on every day, and you that have children must think about your interactions and your influence. If your children are in school, an influence is being exerted. In this world right now, people need to see someone who really loves God, not someone who just talks about Him. There are a lot of people who talk about God, but I am speaking of living right, or living holy. God brings you face to face with the Gospel. How do you respond to it? Are you skeptical? Sometimes people watch so-called Christians who do ungodly things. A sinner will tell you quickly if you are wrong. They may not go to church, but if you do something out of step, you will hear about it from them. Everyone has a sense of right and wrong, and they are checking you.

As a Christian, you are an epistle to all people, and you are being read. What does your life

say? Is it saying something convincing or is it saying something retracting that confidence? It takes a long time to build up confidence in people's minds. This is your job, because you are the hands and the feet of Jesus, and it is your responsibility to use them for the Lord. You need to be careful of how you are using your faculties.

We live in a dog-eat-dog world, so to speak, and a lot of people are into getting, getting, and getting. At the Church of God, we tithe. We have a responsibility to care for one another as needs arise. If someone has a need, there is nothing better than to help others. That is a blessing.

The world has a pull to it. More people are striving to get bigger houses, more cars, and larger bank accounts. We should realize that we can only be truly rich in one area. We are either going to be rich by the world's standards or rich by God's standards. There is not time for both.

God called someone a fool in the Word of God. Luke 12:20 says, "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" At any time, young or old, God could call you home; therefore, you need to be ready.

What is your anchor in life? Is it your bank account? That bank account can go really fast. As I was studying, I thought of Bernie Madoff. He was part of a big Ponzi scheme. (A Ponzi scheme is a form of fraud that lures investors and pays profits to earlier investors with funds from more recent investors.) What a terrible story! He scammed people out of billions of dollars. He got caught and served time in a federal prison until his death. One of his sons committed suicide, and his other son died of cancer. Is that what you want your heritage to be?

It all comes down to your position. Is it a dangerous position that you are taking? Do you respect the Word of God? It may look like any other book to you, but it is divine. I enjoy hearing the Word of God preached. I have not found anything better.

### **Interacting With God**

It is awesome to have a God that can make you better. If you are always running late, God can help you with that. There are things that you can focus on in prayer and say, "Lord, I need help in this area." You may say, "I have some real weaknesses in my life." Are you asking God to help you with those areas? He wants you to call on Him for help. The only way you are going to accomplish anything is through Him.

Not one of God's promises have failed. First Kings 8:56 reads, "Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant."

Have you ever been on a rickety bridge? It makes you nervous that you might fall through. I read God's Word daily. It is a rock to me, and it can be a rock to you. I can go into any work environment as long as I am where I need to be and say: "God, I need Your help today. You know where my heart is. If someone asks me a question, help me to be bold." These are things that you have to continually ask for. Salvation is not a lump sum business; it is an ongoing work. You have to get in and dig and ask the Lord for help. When you get weak in a certain area, do you know what has happened? You have not been asking along that line, and God will just pull back the reins and help you to realize it. You need to say: "Lord, I need

You. I am sorry that I neglected that area of my life. I want to get back on track." He wants you to ask for His help.

Eternal life is hanging in the balance, and it depends upon eternal interaction. If you want to make it to Heaven, you must interact with God every day until He calls you home. There can be no letting up.

Not long after I had been saved, I had preached a couple of messages, and fear started creeping in on me. The devil said: "You cannot keep this up. This is too high and too hard." I said: "Lord, I cannot do it. I need You." I cannot make it in my own strength, but I can make it in His. That is the way the plan of salvation is set up. God hates pride. You can get used to being saved and get comfortable in it and forget who you really are without Him. That is a dangerous position. There are benefits to salvation, but it is up to you to obey the Word to receive those benefits. God wants you to realize how weak you are without Him.

### **You Are Nothing Without God**

Let us read about King Nebuchadnezzar. He was getting very proud of all the things that he had built, and he was warned about pride by Daniel, yet he failed to heed the warning. Daniel 4:29-34 reads: "At the end of the twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth [God knows our thoughts afar off], there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

"And they shall drive thee

from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen and his body was wet with dew of the heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me."

God wants you to recognize that your soundness of mind is because of Him. Whether you are saved or unsaved, it is by the grace of God that you are who you are. God pulled back King Nebuchadnezzar's reasoning ability, and the king was out in the field eating grass. We are nothing without God. Some people are worse than animals. You must realize that without grace and without God, you are going down a path toward being a reprobate. If you become a reprobate, that would mean that God is finished with you. The longer that one turns his back on God, the more danger he is in. In Romans, Chapter 1, Paul was writing to the vanity fair of the then-known world. That society was much like ours. The people were very cosmopolitan.

I had the privilege of visiting Mount Vesuvius and the ruins of the ancient city of Pompeii near Naples, Italy. I walked in that town where they uncovered all that rubble. It is amazing how well those people lived back then. They had streets, mosaic floors, kitchens, and the original paint on the walls of their homes. Being able to step back two thousand years and see how they lived was absolutely fascinating.

It was part of the Roman Empire.

### **Becoming a Reprobate**

The great Apostle Paul wrote to the cosmopolitans in the age of the Romans. I want you to notice how he started out in Romans 1:25-27: "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet."

You see, this was a process. They were worshiping the creature more than God, whom they knew. Therefore, God turned them over to vile affections. Their affections were so vile that you do not even see it in nature. If you do not honor God, He can turn the same thing back on you, and you can dishonor yourself. When you are caught up in that sin, you are dishonoring yourself and your body because that is not what nature intended. Yet there is still hope for those who are involved in those sins, because God is not finished. If they continue in those sins and continue to neglect God, the end result will not be good.

Verses 28-29 read: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge [in other words, they continued in their sins], God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: Being filled with all unrighteousness." What a terrible testimony! A reprobate has an undiscerning mind. God is finished with such a person, and the only thing

holding him back from hell is a natural life. His mind cannot discern the things of God anymore, because God has rejected him. That is the scariest word in the Bible.

No other word touches the word "reprobate." It is used four times in the Scriptures: once in the Old Testament and three times in the New. If you become a reprobate, it is over for you as far as salvation is concerned. It starts by how you approach the Word and the knowledge that you possess. Once you become a reprobate, God is finished with you. There is no hope for you if

God has turned you over to a reprobate mind. It all starts by rejecting what you know is right. This is a serious matter. You must realize what is really important.

If you are without God, it is time to get into the ark. God does not allow you to make an appointment with physical death because you would never make it. That is the reason God calls for you in physical death. It is an appointment that is made by God. When God calls you to get saved, you had better respond to Him.

If you are a Christian, are you

getting lax in your experience? How is your love toward the things of God? Is your love for God where it needs to be? I want to be engaged with God. I always want to look straight ahead at Him. I read Bible stories to my children at night, and I think I get far more inspiration out of it than they do.

What is your position toward God? You know exactly where you stand. Your position toward the Truth has everything to do with where you will spend eternity.

*(Compact Disc TR-1837)*

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