

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 51 July 2021 No. 7



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalms 122:4

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

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER

USPS #871620

Periodicals postage paid at the post office in
Newark, Ohio 43055.

POSTMAN, send form 3579 to the printer:

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

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

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reveal the truth of God's Word to all mankind, to expose sin and
error, war against apostasy, and to eradicate the longstanding
traditions of men that have no biblical foundations.

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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Vol. 51 July 2021 No. 7

Guest Editorial

*"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."*

Ephesians 2:3-4

*"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we
were yet sinners, Christ died for us."*

Romans 5:8

God's Love for Lost Mankind

In these verses of Scripture, we can see the great love that the Lord has for the lost. He went to great effort to provide a way for all souls to be redeemed from sin's bondage. Christ paid the supreme price to bring about the plan of redemption. We see that God gave us His only begotten Son to suffer and die for mankind. He saw the terrible depth that souls had fallen in sin. There was no possible way that a human could ever lift himself from sin and bondage. Mankind needed a Higher Power to provide the help he needed. Christ willingly became the sacrifice required to bring salvation to the lost. Christ was the only spotless Lamb that could take away the sins of the world.

Jesus did not come just to forgive sin, but He also completely delivers souls from the bondage and guilt of sin. Under the Mosaic Law, a man could be forgiven for the sins he had committed. After an atonement was made, there was no power or strength for a person to live right. Jesus, being the ultimate sacrifice, put away sin forever.

Man was made free from sin

and able to live pleasing to God. In Luke 1:74-75 we read: "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies [sin, Satan, and the flesh] might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

Mankind was and is unworthy of God's love, mercy, and goodness. Jesus showed us His love by willingly giving His life to redeem us. The Savior's great sacrifice is beyond human comprehension. Paul penned these words describing Christ's love and concern for mankind. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

God places His love in the heart of a man or a woman when the new birth takes place. This great transforming work creates a fire of love burning toward God within the soul. However, it then becomes the responsibility of each one to keep it burning fervently.

[continued on page 16]

First Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.

3 Wherefore I give you to under-

stand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

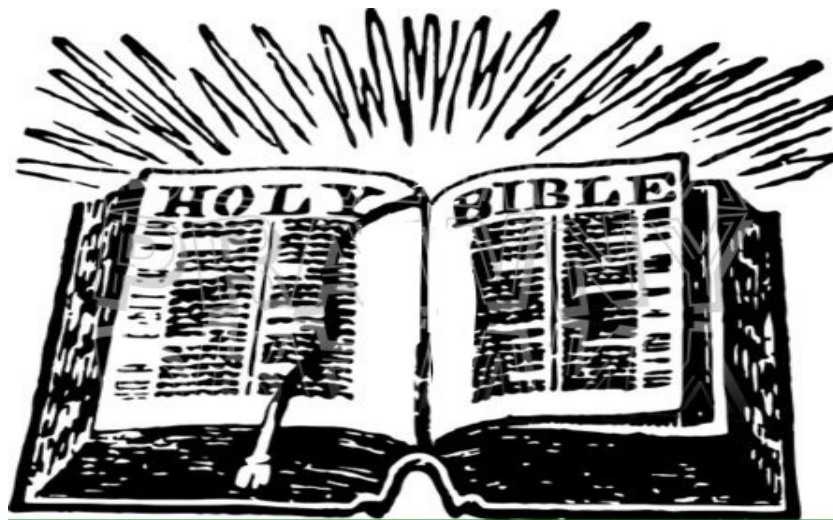
4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of

administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal [or to profit everyone].



THE GIFT OF LANGUAGES

Part 2 of 2

Brother Roger L. Decker

A Wise Master Builder

Verse 7 of our Scripture text from the Amplified Bible reads, "But to each one is given the manifestation of the [Holy] Spirit [the evidence, the spiritual illumination of the Spirit] for good and profit." Everyone likes to make a profit. We want all our services to profit spiritually. Many problems existed at Corinth. There was a lot of spiritual ignorance there. The Apostle Paul started this congregation as a wise master builder, and he wrote in many chapters of things, no doubt, that the leaders of

those congregations had inquired about.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:10, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

The congregation at Corinth was a very diverse congregation that included Jews, ex-soldiers, philosophers, merchants, sailors, freemen, and slaves. I understand from reading the writings of various commentators that it was a large congregation, and the

people had formerly been involved in every type of vice and every sin imaginable going on in that particular day. Paul mentioned some of those sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. He said there were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. They had been washed from their filth, and they had been made new creatures.

Since many had come out of these sinful lifestyles, they were ignorant of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul, through the two

letters that he wrote to the church at Corinth, was trying to teach, build up, and lead this congregation. There was a diversity of people; therefore, many questions were written to the Apostle Paul. They asked him to clarify the different questions they had, and Paul did this in two distinct letters. Those came about due to a church rift, which is common today when men divide into groups.

Contention and division were working within the Corinthian congregation, but it had not gotten to the outside yet. Paul heard about it, and he said in 1 Corinthians 1:11, "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you."

Problems at Corinth

Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 1:10 was, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Paul was saying that they all needed to speak the same thing, and that was, Christ is not divided, because that was what was causing contention. We do not have a man-made headquarters that sends out what our sermons are going to be on Sunday. We preach that there are diversities of administration and diversities of teaching.

Paul said to speak the same thing and to be in the same mind. What was he talking about? The contention was that Christ was divided; in other words, some said they were of Paul, some were of Apollos, and some were of Cephas. The ministers were not divided, but the people were divided. This is a danger yet today. When people get a favorite

preacher and only want to go to church when that preacher is preaching, they are wrong. Why? Christ gave all those gifts to profit withal.

Christ is not divided. God hates division. Men being divided over the ministry stemmed from one reason: they walked as men, they thought as men, they talked as men, and they understood as men. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:3, "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" Proverbs 3:5 instructs you to "lean not unto thine own understanding." If you lean to your own understanding, what happens? You will get in trouble.

The news of what was going on at Corinth was brought to Paul by some of the brethren. You can read in 1 Corinthians 16:17, "I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied." He also received news through a letter. In 1 Corinthians 7:1 Paul said, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me."

Many problems existed at Corinth; therefore, letters were dispatched to help clarify. Division was reported within the congregation, as well as fornication and brother going to law against brother. Also, some people were having problems in their marriages and with separation and things offered to idols. Other problems were that of keeping the body under, ordinances, spiritual gifts, the need of charity, the misuse of languages, Christ's resurrection, and collection for the saints. This brother took his pen in hand and sat down as a wise master builder to help clarify these particular areas where the congregation was having difficulties.

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14,

the Apostle Paul hinted of a major problem. He said in verse 33, "For God is not the author of confusion [it did not originate with God], but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." There was confusion due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. The Apostle Paul used the word ignorant. He meant that they lacked knowledge.

Desiring Spiritual Gifts

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:1-8: "Follow after charity [the word charity is a little stronger than the word love], and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.

"He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues [he was saying he that prophesies edifies the whole church, but he who speaks in an unknown language edifies himself], except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

The Church of God at Corinth

was a very zealous congregation. In 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 Paul wrote: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

Verse 10 from the Amplified Bible reads, "For godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and it never brings regret; but worldly grief (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) is deadly [breeding and ending in death]."

The Misuse of Languages

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:12, "Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church." As I said earlier, many problems existed at Corinth, and Paul highlighted another one, which was the misuse of foreign languages. In this chapter he was not dealing with the gift of tongues, because there was no confusion with tongues. It is a gift. He was dealing with the misuse of foreign languages. How do we know that? Because the congregation was made up of diversities of people who spoke in different dialects and different languages. Therefore, they had confusion in this congregation.

Before we get into this chapter any further, I want to say there were three instances in the Book of Acts where there was no confusion. Everything was understandable, and the Gospel

went forth as God desired. People got saved, and there was no interpreter.

In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14, a problem was going on. The circumstances at Corinth were different from the Day of Pentecost, it was different from what happened at Cornelius' house, and it was much different from what happened at Ephesus where the Samaritans dwelt. This was not the birth of the church at Corinth. It was an established congregation with services of worship already functioning, but there were all kinds of problems going on in that congregation brought about by the misuse of languages.

God does not want those who are definitely impressed left out of worship. Paul was saying that if some want to pray, sing, or bring forth Scripture, then it should be done with order and not with confusion. The difference between the Church of God and Babylon is that the Holy Spirit can change the order of a service at any time, but Babylon sticks to their program. However, God does not want someone to get up and take over a service.

First Corinthians 14:26 reads, "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm [they were a very zealous church], hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying [building up that congregation]." Remember, "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Whatever is done in a congregation should come out on the plus side as a profit to the Kingdom of God.

The problem at Corinth had escalated to the degree that visitors could see that the congregation was out of control. Everyone was doing his own thing. God does not want that. We have shouting and praising God and

walking the aisles, but whenever that happens, we have enough discernment to know that the Holy Spirit has a hand in it. All you have to do is look at the lives of those who are doing it.

The Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 14:23, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues [or languages], and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?"

In this chapter the word "unknown" appears six times. Every time you see that word in the King James Version, you will notice that it is in italics. That means it was added by the translators; it was not in the original Greek. I want you to notice that what happened at Corinth was the complete opposite of what had already taken place on the Day of Pentecost, at Cornelius' house, and at Ephesus with the Samaritans. There was nothing unknown at all of those places where the true Bible gift was given. They heard them speak, they heard them prophesy, and they heard them magnify God. What does that tell you? When the gift was used, they understood what the individual was saying, but that was not so at Corinth.

Life-Giving Sound

Acts 2:14 reads, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words." This was well known. How do we know? Three thousand souls got saved. One thing the Orthodox Jew was against above all was Jesus Christ. Paul preached Jesus to them, and then Jesus appeared to them a little differently than He did in Pilate's judgment hall.

When He appeared to them this time, He pricked their hearts because of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that was present.

There is no gift of unknown tongues or languages. God does not want things unknown; He wants them known. Paul gave an example in 1 Corinthians 14:7-9, which states: "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye [the same with you], except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air."

When I was in the military, I became very familiar with the sound of the bugle. There is a certain sound called reveille, and another sound called taps. Reveille is to signal everyone to get out of bed, and taps are to signal that it is time for the lights to go out. These distinct sounds are known by every soldier.

On the Day of Pentecost, everyone understood what was being said, but at Corinth that was not so. This tells you that something was different after Pentecost. The word "tongues" was used in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14, just as it was used when speaking about Pentecost, but the results were different. When people lean to their own understanding instead of following the Holy Spirit, there is always confusion and chaos. Now the same is true with preaching, singing, playing an instrument, or testifying. God wants a certain sound that can be understood. Everyone may not be able to grasp all the knowledge of it, but God wants people to hear and understand.

The Bible says in Romans 10:14-15: "How shall they hear

without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" God is very particular about His services. He does not want someone to get up and jabber away when no one can understand. He wants one who speaks to do so in the Spirit and with understanding. Verse 17 tells us, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." If people do not know what is being preached, how can they have faith?

Edification Is the Key

As we look in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 14, we find a word that is often used, which is a key word. The Apostle Paul wrote in verses 3-4: "But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church." The word *edification* means "to build up, to instruct, or to teach."

Corinth was like any other congregation when it came to worship. When they came together, some would jump up and claim to have a song or a message or a testimony, but it was in their native tongue (or language). You have to remember that the New Testament was not written yet, so they were reading from the Old Testament.

When the congregation came together at Corinth, possibly some people would read a psalm or have a message or a testimony, but it was not with the gift of tongues. Again, I want to emphasize that it was in their own language. Paul was telling them not to do that because it brought confusion into the assembly and it was not edifying. God understands all languages, but we do not. God puts emphasis on everyone being able to hear and understand. When the Spirit of God moves, there is no

confusion.

Paul stated in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly [clearly], that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." When an individual gives heed to doctrines of devils, always keep in mind that their spirit changes first. They start picking up other teachings. When they have the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is a guide to Truth.

Let us go back to the Day of Pentecost for a moment. Acts 2:8-11 reads: "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretens and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." It was a blessing.

God does not inspire anyone to get up in a worship service and perform publicly in a language that cannot be understood unless someone can interpret. If there is no way to interpret, then the speaker ought to keep still until he can bring it publicly with understanding.

No doubt, Corinth was well acquainted with the gift of languages that took place on the Day of Pentecost, but it gave the devil room to work to try to get the service switched over from spiritual to fleshly. The devil always tries that. The lack of understanding and their zeal for gifts was not building up the Kingdom of God, but just the opposite was taking place.

Speaking With Understanding

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:2, "For he that speaketh in an

unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries." No man understands because he is speaking in mysteries. The word *mystery* means, "Puzzling, strangeness, hidden, or unknown." Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:9, "So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air [to yourself]." Again, Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 14:7, "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?"

There is a reason that God wants people to understand, and that is the reason He wants clarity. God wants you to understand your condition, to understand what He wants, and to understand what He likes and dislikes. Why? So that you will have an opportunity to put those things in place in your life. Paul said in verse 19, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." It has been established by historians and commentators that Paul spoke nine different languages.

Paul said in verse 18, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues [or languages] more than ye all." He had kept the Hebrew tongue. He said in the Philippian letter that he still spoke Hebrew, and a lot of the Jews had gotten away from the Hebrew tongue. Since Paul spoke so many other languages, that is the reason he was so instrumental in raising up the congregation at Corinth. God used him in all that diversity. What did Paul say? He said though he could speak in many different foreign languages, he would rather speak five words so

that others could understand. This tells us that the speaker giving understanding is more necessary than for someone to get up in a congregation and edify himself.

The true Bible gift of tongues was used to preach the Gospel. The birth of the church got its start with the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. Remember, Jesus came to His own first, and three thousand souls got saved and continued to live for God. Not long after that, five thousand more souls got saved. At the birth of the church, it was a very necessary gift used to preach to all those different dialects.

God wanted Peter, a Galilean, to do it. The same gift was used at Cornelius' house and at Ephesus. It should never be used to build a doctrine on. Why? It gives the enemy of souls an opportunity to confuse men and women. Where everyone understands the same language, what would be the use of tongues? It could only be used to edify one's self, not to profit withal, or for the common good, as Paul said it ought to be.

Some have misused the gift of healing. Several television evangelists built their ministries on false healing campaigns. People need to be careful about misusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because they are dealing with God who gives them.

The Story of Balaam

Numbers 22:21-29 reads: "And Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his

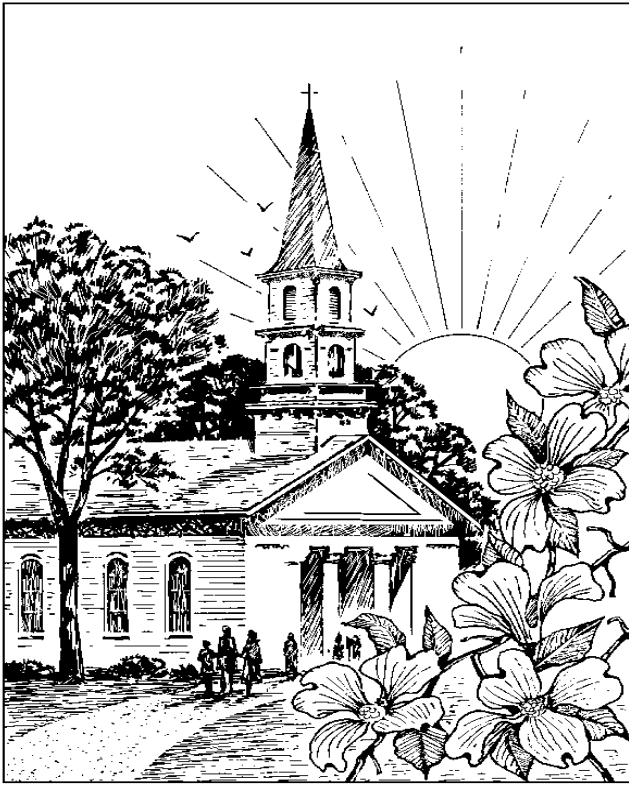
hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

"And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou has smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee." I want you to notice that when God moves, it is understandable. Balaam knew what the donkey was saying.

With all these diversities and problems at Corinth, the Apostle Paul was able to build a great work for God. With all the paganism around him at Corinth, he was able to build up a congregation where souls got saved. God wants the Gospel preached with clarity so even the vilest of sinners can understand. God wants understanding given to every poor soul who needs help. Now, there are some who are building a doctrine on what the Apostle Paul was rebuking, and that is the reason it is false to the core. Is there a Bible gift of tongues? Absolutely, but it is only used where there is a need. It is not used for self-edification. It is only used to profit withal.

(Compact Disc TR-1938)

Amos 6:1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!



False Security

Brother Larry Dishman

The Danger of Making Comparisons

Many folks have a false sense of security. Getting careless when you have a false sense of security is easy. My friend, it seems that everyone wants some kind of hope of Heaven. If you were to ask one hundred people if they are ready for Heaven, ninety-nine of them would probably say, "Yes, I'm ready for Heaven." That is very interesting in the light of what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and nar-

row is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Obviously, a lot of people have a false hope of salvation. Naturally everyone wants to be safe. We all want to be secure. For example, we want protection from home invaders. We want protection from hunger, financial loss, spiraling medical costs, fraud, and so on. We look for security in many different ways. We want to be free from anxiety, doubts, and fears. We want to live without worrying about things, such as something that might harm us or those who are close to us.

Security can lead to feelings of overconfidence and careless-

ness. Sometimes situations change, but the people maintain their old attitudes of security. Sometimes people hold onto false perceptions and take risks. Why do you feel secure? Where do you get your sense of safety? From where do you get your sense of security? What do you rest in? What do you trust in? The Scripture text says, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria."

People do many things to be free from anxiety, but most of those things are merely security screens. By that I mean, some things that they do to feel secure really keep them from experiencing true security. By revealing

some of these security screens, I want you to discover where true security comes from.

Sometimes people seek security by making comparisons, and the Bible talks about this. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 10:12, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." People have been comparing themselves with others for centuries to build up a sense of security. In B.C. 750 an ancient prophet called Amos observed tendencies in the nation of Israel, and he wrote, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria." The people in Amos' day were boasting of their national security and their power. No doubt, they gained a certain level of confidence when they compared themselves with the nations surrounding them.

Almost everyone can find someone smaller or less powerful than they are. At work or around your circle of friends, some people drive less expensive vehicles, live in smaller houses, have lower paying jobs, and have less education. It does not take much to cause one to begin thinking, "I'm better than he is." However, making comparisons either upward or downward cannot secure anyone. It simply reveals a level of insecurity. Nevertheless, people still lull themselves in false security by comparing themselves with other individuals.

The danger of making comparisons is that it can lead to complacency. You may start to think that you are better off than you really are. It may even lead you to become stuck-up, unconcerned, or complacent about the difficulties that other people are facing. On the other hand, you might become discouraged and

resentful if you do not have what other people have. So, you see, comparisons do not make a person secure; they just hinder an individual with unhelpful attitudes.

Having a False Hope

Many people think they have it made, but none of us has it made yet. Amos warned people about that. Sadly, those who have a false hope are more numerous and worse off than people who have no hope. Did you know that having a false hope is worse than having no hope? False security is far worse than no security. Man might find himself in a hopeless situation, and if so, he may be inclined to accept true hope. However, the one who has a false hope must admit that his hope is vain before he will accept another.

False hope or false security seems self-sufficient until times of testing. Many men and women have found their hope was mere vanity when troubles have arisen. I do not think people realize how much false hope and false security is in the world. Those who believe in the doctrine of eternal security, or once saved always saved, believe in a false hope. Some people once believed the truth that an individual can backslide, and then they got involved in a religion that told them that once they are saved, they will always be saved, no matter what they do or how they live. This affected them in a negative way. It is a false security.

I once read about a man who had made a profession in a denominational church that believed that once a person is saved, he is always saved. After he had gone to church for some time and professed Christianity, he went back out into the world and lived a life of deep sin for many years. When he got on his

deathbed, although he had not been to church for many years, he called for the pastor of that denominational church to come and talk to him. When the preacher got there, the dying man did not say, "I want you to pray with me." He said, "Can you assure me that once an individual is saved, he is always saved no matter what happens." The preacher said: "Yes, the Bible teaches that once you are saved, you are always saved. Once you are born again, you can never be unborn, so no matter what, you are still saved. You might lose some of your reward, but you are still saved."

The dying man said, "All right then, I am ready to die because I know I was once in such a state of grace." That is false security. That man was not trusting in Christ. He was trusting in a doctrine, and this doctrine is a false doctrine that gives false security.

There is a false security among Pentecostalism in the charismatic movement. I do not say this disrespectfully, but those who believe that speaking in tongues is evidence that they have the Holy Ghost or evidence that they are right with God are trusting in a false hope. Many have backslidden and have gone back into open sin. They have a false sense of security because they can still speak in an unknown tongue. They believe they are still saved because of that doctrine, yet some of them commit adultery and have all kinds of ungodliness in their lives. They do not have the true gift of tongues. There is a real danger in false security.

Knocking Out False Hope

The Jews had a false hope and a false sense of security. They felt that they were of the seed of Abraham. They said in John 8:33, "We be Abraham's

seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" They relied on their false security of knowledge. They counted on the Law for their hope of everlasting life. The Apostle Paul systematically kicked the false hopes that they had from underneath them. That is what Paul started doing in Romans, Chapter 1, and throughout the Book of Romans.

The Jews had a false hope. Paul understood that a false hope is worse than no hope whatsoever. He knew that those people would never get saved and get right with God until he knocked the false hope out from underneath them. Someone may say, "Wasn't Paul kind of cruel and mean to make people feel uncomfortable?" He was actually doing the most loving thing he could do for those people.

If you bought an insurance policy and spent your life savings on it and then an insurance agent told you: "That policy is a scam. The insurance company on this paperwork does not even exist," how would you react to that information? Would you become angry and say: "Hey, just leave me alone. I was happy before I talked to you, and now I feel flustered and nervous?" No, you would probably say: "Are you sure? Do you have proof of this?" If evidence could be produced that the insurance company was a fraud, you would thank that insurance agent. You would get rid of your false hope and find an insurance company that could help you in the time of trouble.

I thank God for men of God who told me the truth down through the years even when it hurt me. I praise God for men who will stand up and tell it like it is. The Apostle Paul knew that religion could not save anyone, and that is what the Jews had. They had religion without salvation, so he was knocking out the

false hope from underneath their feet. Paul was writing to the Jews so they could seek true hope, which is in Jesus Christ. Again, the Jews relied on the Law for their hope of everlasting life. Were they relying on keeping the Law? No, they were not keeping the Law. They were relying on the fact that they knew the Law and taught the Law.

Paul said in Romans 2:17-18: "Behold, thou art called a Jew [they were not spiritual Jews], and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." Because they were instructed out of the Law, they relied on the Law, they boasted in God and in knowing His will. In all the nations of the world, God gave His Law to the Jews. Therefore, the Jews saw themselves as a special people, a superior people.

The Jews felt that their salvation was secure. By the time the Jewish child was five years of age, he had committed large portions of the Law to memory. That is the reason the Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:15, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Jewish children were instructed in the Law in the synagogue. Their parents learning and understanding God's Law was a major part of the Jewish religion. They even talked the Law.

Dishonoring God

In Romans 2:19-20 the Apostle Paul wrote: "And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the

law." All these things speak, not just of the knowledge of the Law, but of using the Law to instruct others. They used the Law to guide the blind, to shed light on those who were in darkness, to correct those that were foolish, and to teach those who were immature. However, they still broke the Law themselves. It was good that the Jews knew the Law and taught the Law, but the problem was that they broke the Law.

I want you to notice how the Apostle Paul dealt with this in Romans as he went on to say in verse 21, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?" He was asking them a question, and guess what? They were guilty of stealing. The Jews knew the Law. They knew the Ten Commandments, and they knew that the Ten Commandments say, "Thou shalt not steal."

When Jesus drove the money-changers from the temple, He said, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13). How were they stealing? They were charging way too much to change currency that they were using in the temple. They were stealing by charging rates on the sales of the animals that were much more than what was approved.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 2:22, "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" Jesus taught it is not just committing the act of adultery that is wrong, but if a man looks upon a woman and lusts after her, he has committed adultery with her already in his heart. They were guilty of adultery. They taught that one should not commit adultery, yet they were committing adultery.

Paul said in verse 24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." What was the result of their hypocrisy? Romans 1:21 states, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Romans 2:23 reads, "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" Sin dishonors God. If you teach one thing and live another, you are dishonoring and blaspheming God.

One false hope of the Jews was that they knew the Law and taught the Law; however, this was a false hope because they did not keep the Law. Many people are like that today. They are putting their hope of salvation in the fact that they know God's Word. You may say: "I have been raised in the church all my life. I know the doctrines of the church." You can have a lot of doctrine in your head, but just having a knowledge of the Scriptures cannot save you.

Being raised in a congregation of the Church of God does not make you saved. I had wonderful parents. I had a mother and a father who lived holy and righteously, but that did not keep me from falling into sin. I needed to have a personal relationship with God. Perhaps you were taught the Word of God since you were a child. Maybe your mom and dad were Christians, so you have a lot of knowledge of the Word of God. If that is all you have, you have a false hope. You must have a personal relationship with God.

Ritual Without Remedy

The Jews knew the Law and taught the Law, but they did not keep the Law. They felt secure in

their relationship with God because of their knowledge, but sadly, they were deceived. Many professing Christians today are in the same condition. They know the Truth, but they do not live the Truth. The Bible clearly lets us know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The Bible tells us in James 1:22, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." The Pharisees knew the Bible. Saul of Tarsus knew the Scriptures.

The Jews made their hope of everlasting life not only on the knowledge of the Law but also on circumcision. What was the popular Jewish opinion of circumcision? They believed that a circumcised man would never be condemned by God. One rabbi said, "Circumcision saves us from hell." Another rabbi said, "God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised would be sent to hell." He went on to say, "Abraham sits before the gates of hell and never allows any circumcised Israelite to enter."

What was the value of circumcision? Romans 2:25-26 reads: "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" Circumcision was of value in that it was an outward ritual that marked a man as being in the covenant and the community of Israel. It was a visual mark on the body that showed that a man had been separated to God. It would be similar to having a branded cow showing to whom it belongs.

According to the Apostle Paul, if that man did not keep the Law, his circumcision was useless, or worthless. If the man was not truly separated to God, the

symbol of the circumcision was meaningless. Ritual without remedy was a great problem. They had the symbol without the substance. Paul was saying that a Gentile could be included in the covenant of blessings even though he is not circumcised if he keeps the Law. The point is, circumcision is unnecessary. If an individual did not keep the Law, circumcision did not help him.

The real point is obedience. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 7:19, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." I pray that you never make the mistake that the Jews did. They felt secure because of an outward ceremony. You would be surprised by how many people feel secure because they put their name on a church book. Some feel secure because they joined a church. Others feel secure because they were once baptized in water or because they partook of communion.

The Circumcision of the Heart

What is a true Jew? How does a person become a true Jew? Romans 2:28-29 states: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Even in the Old Testament, God spoke about heart circumcision. We read in Deuteronomy 30:6, "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

What was Paul talking about? He was speaking of circumcision of the heart. In other words, he was talking about the new birth,

or regeneration. What happens in the new birth? Ezekiel, Chapter 36, explains it. The Prophet Ezekiel wrote in verses 25-27: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

God is the One who brings about the new birth. It is He who gives an individual a new heart and a new spirit. It is God who removes the heart of stone and gives a person a heart of flesh. It is God who puts His Spirit within a person and causes that one to walk in His statutes and observe the ordinances of the Word of God. I believe this is exactly what the Bible is talking about in Philippians 3:3, which reads, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

I believe that is what Paul was talking about in Galatians 3:7 when he wrote, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." As Christians, we are the children of Abraham. We are the spiritual Jews, because Galatians 3:29 says, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Are you a true Jew? Thank God, if you have had the circumcision of the heart, then you are a true Jew.

Having a Form of Religion

There is a false security in ceremony. There is a big difference between religion and a relationship with God. Many people merely have a form of

religion. They go to churches where there is just a form of religion. They like having a form of religion. I heard a story about a little town where there was a very poor family, and the preacher kept visiting this poor family and inviting them to church. Finally, the father said, "We want to come to your church, but we are afraid that the people will think badly of us, and we don't have any nice clothes."

The preacher said, "Is that all that is keeping you from coming to church, your thinking that people are not going to accept you because of the clothes you have?"

He said, "I will take care of that."

The preacher went back to church and took up a special offering, and then he went out and bought the man a new suit, a shirt and tie, and new shoes. Next, he bought the lady some nice dresses and all the children some new clothes. He delivered all those clothes to the family and said: "Now you don't have any excuse. We will see you on Sunday." He was looking forward to the Sunday service, and guess what? The family did not show up. The preacher was very upset.

The next week he knocked on their door and said: "Hey, what is the problem? You said you did not have clothes, so I bought you clothes. Why didn't you come to church?"

The man said: "Well, this is what happened. We dressed up in our nice Sunday clothes, looked in the mirror, and we looked so nice that we decided to go to the Episcopal Church." They liked going where the people had a mere form of religion.

Many people are only going through a form, but they are not in the faith. They are into going through rituals, but they are not into redemption. They are into

having a profession, but not a possession. They like the ritual part of religion because it makes them feel good about themselves, and they trust in outward evidence.

Are you a Christian? If so, how do you know that you are a Christian? Have you been born again? Being in a home where your family is saved does not mean that you are saved. You may say: "I have been active in the church for years. I sing in the choir, and I am active in other ways." It takes more than that to have a relationship with God. Someone may say: "I have taught Sunday school for years, and I take up the offering. I am busy in the church." A person can do all those things and have a false hope. You can get so busy going to meetings and doing other activities that sometimes you do not really have time for God.

Trusting in a False Hope

In the parable in Luke, Chapter 18, Jesus described an individual who had a false hope. Verses 9-14 read: "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. [This was a false hope. This is where his religion was. This is the way it was with most of the Jewish people.] And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house

justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Pharisees had a false hope. Many people today have a false hope. How about you?

In Matthew, Chapter 7, you can read about two men who decided to build a house. One man was wise and one was foolish. The Bible says the wise man dug deep. In essence, he said, "There is a rock down here somewhere," and he dug down really deep. It was a lot of hard work. He probably had to take a spade or a pick. As he worked hard, the perspiration flowed. He said: "I have to get to the rock. If I want to build a house that will last, I have to build my house on the rock." He did, and the rain and the storms came, and his house stood because it was founded upon a rock. That is the man who heard the Word and was obedient.

The foolish man heard the Word but did not obey it. He did not dig deep. He built his house on the sand, and then the rains and the floods came. He was probably resting and felt secure. He probably thought everything was okay. He had a false hope. The other man's house was nearby, but it was different with him. The foolish man's house fell, and great was the fall of it. He had a false hope. How sad it was.

What about you? How is it in your life? It is not enough to be a church member. One pastor said: "I have here in my hand a computer printout of over nine thousand members of this church. I don't think the FBI could find half the people who were members of this church." Do not think that just because a person is a member of a church that he is saved. Is it not sad that people can make a profession and join a church and get baptized and never enter the door for fifteen or twenty years, but in the obituary

it says he was a member of such-and-such church? Just because someone is a member of a church does not mean that his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Many folks sit at home and rest under a false security. Someone may say: "I am okay because I got baptized," or "I am okay because I am still a member. My name is still on the church book."

What Is Your Hope of Heaven?

Salvation is not joining a church. Salvation is not some affiliation with a denomination or signing a card. Salvation is when you enter a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Have you done that? Do you have a personal, intimate relationship with God? The Jews did not. The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not have a personal relationship with God. They knew the Law, they were circumcised, and they kept the ceremonies of the Law, but they did not have an intimate relationship with God.

If you ask a Jewish man if he has been circumcised, he would answer yes or no. He would never say, "Well, I'm not sure." If somebody asks you, "Are you saved?" you should not say, "I don't know, but I hope so." Friend, you can know that you are saved.

I believe that Jesus was dealing with false hope when He was talking in Matthew 7:22-23: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." He said many would say to Him in that day. All those people who He was talking about had a false hope. These were people who thought they were on their way to Heaven. They thought everything was

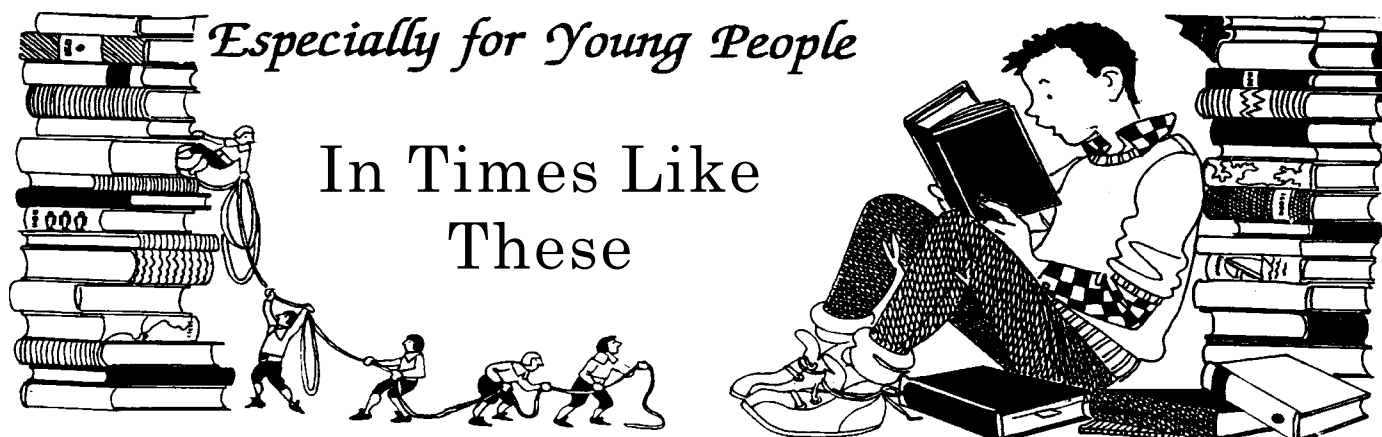
okay, but things were not okay.

Amos was warning people to watch out for security screens, because they are dangerous. They can become a source of pride. My friend, what is your hope of Heaven? Do you expect salvation? Do you expect to go to Heaven because you joined a church or because you know the doctrines of the church? Is your hope in the fact that you were baptized in water? If your hope is in those things, you need to throw your hope away and find a better hope, because those things can never save you. The only true hope of salvation is to be united with the Lord Jesus Christ. You need to repent and be born again.

Many live their lives with a false hope. Someone may say, "I will get saved when I am ready" or "I will get saved later." Those are false hopes. You may say, "I will get saved on my deathbed." That is another false hope. Someone else may say, "I will wait to get saved until I get out of school" or "I will wait until I get married." Those are false hopes. Others may say, "I will get saved when I get older." That is how the devil gets souls to put off salvation.

I believe that most people in hell are there because they had a false hope in some religion. Many today have a false hope. Some say, "I will get saved someday." They really believe it. I do not believe there is a person alive who intends to go to hell. Many feel safe because they are young, but that is a false hope. The chances are, you will not make it to Heaven if you do not turn to Christ while the door of mercy is still open. Are you ready to get rid of your false hopes? There is hope in Jesus Christ, real hope that will work when you are on your dying bed. You can know that all is well with your soul.

(Compact Disc TR-2425)



One of my favorite authors is Corrie ten Boom, who wrote "The Hiding Place." She was sent to a death camp in Germany during the Holocaust. She was released from prison in 1945. When she got out of prison, she traveled all over the world to tell people what God can do. As I was thinking about her, I thought about the missionary work she did and how wonderfully she took the atrocities that she went through. She used them to further the Gospel and to tell people about Jesus. She told people what Jesus can do, no matter how dark life is. He is the Light. My thought was, "Lord, I want to be like her."

I did a little research on the song, "In Times Like These," and I learned that it was written in America at the height of World War II in 1943. The songwriter was a pastor's wife in Pennsylvania. She was drawn to the Scripture found in 2 Timothy 3:1, which reads, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."

What was going on that year to provoke her to write this song? In 1939 the war broke out and included all the great powers, forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis. The Allies fought together against tyrants. The war began with ruthless dictators who attempted world domination.

How was it that America eventually became a part of this

war? On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the American Naval Fleet at Pearl Harbor. The following day, America and Great Britain declared war on Japan, and on December 10, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war against the United States. Some headlines at that time read: "Second World War Breaks Out," "First Ship Torpedoed in North Atlantic," "British Take Offensive in Chinese Cities," "Grocery Stores to Be Closed Today," "Sixty Enemy Planes Reported Off Pacific Coast by the Army," and "Food Dealers Required to List Supplies."

Here are some of the bulletins that were published worldwide. Berlin: "Japanese Warships Bombed Midway" and "Guam Attacked." New York: "The Japanese Flag Is Now Flying Over Guam," which is now United States territory. Washington: "Nazis May Launch Attack on the East Coast."

We need to be anchored. In the earliest days of America's participation in that war, panic and fear gripped the country. If the Japanese military could successfully attack Hawaii and inflict damage on the naval fleet with casualties among innocent civilians, many people wondered what would happen to them. Would a similar assault on the mainland happen? Many people were worried. The Navy made Pearl Harbor a base because it

was too far away from Japan for their planes to fuel up. However, a Japanese Admiral named Yamamoto planned the attack on Pearl Harbor, and he caught them unaware by using suicide bombers.

A documentary film was produced during World War II, and at the end of that film, Japanese Admiral Yamamoto said, "I fear all we have done is awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve," because what pursued afterward was when the United States came together and attacked and went on the offensive. It was not actually proven that he said this, but this was in the film.

America awakened and came together as a country and united to help their fellowman and the welfare of one another. Individuals and communities conducted drives for the collection of scrap metal, aluminum cans, and rubber, all of which were recycled and used to produce armaments. Individuals purchased war bonds to help pay for the high cost of the war. People sacrificed their time and put aside everything else.

During this time, the United States was coming out of a depression, so the situation looked terrible, but it did create jobs. Twelve million soldiers were sent overseas to fight this battle. The whole thing was an atrocity. Approximately seventy-five

million people worldwide lost their lives as a result of this war.

Families were issued ration stamps by the government. Limits were set on the amount of gas, food, and clothing consumers could purchase. Families were issued ration stamps that they used to buy an allotment for meat, sugar, butter, vegetables, fuel, and oil.

America was awakened, and this is the thought that God impressed upon my heart to bring it over into the spiritual aspect of our lives. I believe God would have us take note of the word "awakened." More than anything, the enemy of souls would like to find his opponents sleeping and unaware, and he wants to keep them in that state. Many might say that we are living in a time of adversity, difficulty, and trouble. Words to describe living during WW II were despair, helplessness, panic, and fear. Have you heard those words used nowadays? Today I have heard many grim stories of youth and older people being so discouraged that some feared they might take their own lives. The devil knows what he is doing.

I think most of you have felt, to some extent, the inner thoughts and emotions that have arisen in the times in which we are living. Somewhere along your life, you have encountered something that may make you think: "I want life to go back to normal. I don't like going through this pandemic. This is too hard."

I do not know what the death count is now from the pandemic, but many people have lost their lives. We will not see the extent of it until it is all said and done.

This warfare that we are looking at is not something we are literally fighting. Ephesians 6:12 tells us, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." This is not a time to be sleeping, spiritually speaking.

Do you know how the Japanese could fly straight into Pearl Harbor without any alarm? The United States had put their main base there because they assumed that the Japanese would not hit them there. However, at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. There was a plan behind that. We became an easy target because people were unsuspecting and unaware.

You never want to let down your guard as to what the enemy might do. The Japanese Admiral had spent months planning this attack. The enemy of souls will go to whatever length he can to ensure a victory, even to the place of doing whatever he can to get to your weak spot, and he knows what it is.

There are two points that I want to bring out as we consider the spiritual side. First, in times like these, we need to be anchored in Christ. When we are anchored in Him, we have the reassurance that God has it all under His control. Every time the thoughts flood into me about this or that and I think it is hard, God says, "I have it all under control; just hang on." I have prayed: "Lord, please take this away! Please let us go back to having a normal life." This is something that I feel that God has allowed to awaken people to their need of Him.

God is all powerful and all present. You may become anxious and fearful about what is going on. These things are natural. You may even be panicked at times. Have you ever had a panic attack or felt a little anxiety once in a while? The Word of God is where you must turn to drive out these feelings and thoughts that come into your mind. It has helped me so many times. Paul

wrote in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." God can give you power over the thoughts that enter your mind that cause you to feel overcome with fear. Often what follows fear is defeat and retreat, and this is just what the devil wants you to do. There is power when you are anchored in Christ. When the Word of God comes in, it gives you the power and the hope to go on. God wants to shine through you.

How can you obtain this power? First Peter 5:6-8 reads: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." There is not a better place to be than in God's arms. You do not have to worry about what the devil is doing. You may hear his roar, but God has you. The devil will use any avenue he can find to get to you.

Jeremiah 29:11 reads: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." This Scripture encourages me every time I read it. The Word of God is where you are going to obtain what you need. You cannot get spiritual help from a worldly magazine or a book, but you can get it from God's Holy Word. This is where your strength and power come from, but you have to put forth effort.

God wants His people awake and aware. Sometimes we have to go through hard places to see our great need of Him. Where is your heart? Are you awake and aware? What are you doing with your heart? Where are you

anchored?

Martin Luther King, Jr. said this: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands in times of challenge and controversy." This has caused me to look within myself and say: "What am I doing with the life that God has given me?" God gave you life. What are you doing with it? It is in your hands. Are you sitting back and complaining about what is going on or are you asking God to awaken you so that you can shine forth the Gospel as never before?

These are proving times, and what greater light can people see than in dark times. If you shine a flashlight in the dark, you are

going to see better in the light. Sometimes it takes darkness and hard times to cause our light to shine. The devil knows your potential, and that is the reason he attacks in the ways that he does. He knows what is in you. God has a plan for every one of our lives.

We do not know what God has in store, but there is potential in you. God has a wonderful plan if you will follow it. Sometimes it takes hard times. God can take a hardship that you have been through and use it for good. How wonderful that it is not wasted!

In the Old Testament, you can read about David as a youth. The youth can be used in a great way. I thought of David going to the

battlefield where he was awakened to a need. There was a giant there. David did not have to, but he killed the giant in the name of the Lord, and he became a giant for God.

Have you been spiritually awakened? Have you asked the Lord what you can do to move closer to Him, to know how to face each day? Sometimes God allows adversity to cause you to know your great need of Him, and in return, you will see the great need to be everything He has planned for you to be. He wants you to awaken, to be aware, and to rise to the challenge that He sets before you.

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

[Guest Editorial — continued from page 2]

Failure to nurture His love by the individual will soon cause the fire to die down and go out completely. Love is not automatically kept alive, but it must be continually nourished. Too often it seems that certain ones expect God to do it all. In Jude, verse 21, we read, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." In Proverbs 4:23 Solomon instructed, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The heart is the center of man's affections.

Many things can rob the love of God from the heart if an individual permits it. The issues of life can come in many different forms. The spirit of worldliness will ever attempt to invade the heart of God's child. Looking for or desiring to possess the latest fads and styles will cool one's love for God. Yielding to the temptation of wanting to look, dress, and be like the world has overcome many a soul. Certainly God expects His people to look and dress cleanly and modestly; however, we must avoid the worldly ways, patterns, and fashions.

Another robber of true love for God is a spirit of materialism. This condition causes one to become discontented with his station in life. It causes one to seek after earthly riches instead of heavenly treasures. Materialism leads a person to seek for more worldly possessions and financial wealth. It leaves one in a state of never being satisfied with what God has provided. He feels that he needs to keep up with the neighbors. Oftentimes this spirit and attitude finds one having to work two jobs to satisfy his want for more. A mother may leave the home to go out and work so she can have more material goods. An individual may leave a strong, spiritual congregation to obtain a better paying job or a promotion. A person may become indifferent toward the things of God. Everyone who names the name of Christ must be careful and continually guard against these devilish tricks.

In John 15:10 Jesus said, "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments,

and abide in his love." The secret to a successful Christian life is to consistently abide in Him. You must strive to do those things that please the Lord and earnestly follow Christ's example in all things. Having God's divine love burning in your heart is the key to a successful life. Obedience to His Word will keep you close to the Master.

In John 14:15 we read these words from the Savior: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." In 1 John 5:3 we read, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." You prove the love that He so richly gave is yet working when you continually obey His Word.

Selected

A Christian is free,
but not free to sin.

TAKING GOD'S INSTRUCTION



Brother Irwin Seshier

Being Obedient to God

You should not allow anything in this world to hinder your walk with God. Many things are going on in the world today, but that should not cause you to take your eyes off Christ. As a saint of God, it should give you even more determination to go all the way with Him. This or that may rattle you, but you have to stand firm in the things of God and He will help you in the time of need.

God will give you instruction in every circumstance, but you need to take it with a serious mind. When He instructs you to do something, you need to be serious about it. When applying for a job, an employer asks the potential candidate serious questions. A lot is on the line when somebody interviews for a job.

The employer has much that he has to answer for, and even more so if he should hire the wrong candidate.

Many years ago when I was applying for a teaching job, I had an interview with the school superintendent. I then had to interview with various principals. They asked me some tough questions portraying different types of school scenarios to see how I would handle those situations. That was only fair. Who would want to hire someone who did not know what he was doing? Usually those questions dealt with unruly students, problem parents, and various school policies.

The first year I taught at a small, country, elementary school, five boys ran away from school together. When they did

not come back into the classroom after recess, I asked some students, "Have you seen those boys?" and they said, "Yes, they ran away." All I could think was that I was going to end up with a pink slip in my mailbox, but eventually they rounded them up. They were running around having a good time, not knowing what their teacher was going through at the school.

God will give His children different situations to deal with to see if we will be obedient. He will speak to you to see if you will go His way or your own way. Having your heart and mind tuned in to how He is instructing you is important, saint. It will do you no good if He directs you one way and you want to go another route. Too many people want to go their

own way.

You need to ask yourself: "Am I obedient to the things of God? Am I faithful to the Word of God and to the house of God?" These are serious questions. There are many cases in the Bible where the Lord gave directions to individuals to see what their reactions would be. We want to look at a few of those situations by the help of the Lord.

Following God's Plan

The first person we want to consider is Noah. He listened to the directions that God gave him. Genesis 6:5-7 states: "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

It was very sad that God was sorry that He even made man and was going to destroy him. Saint of God, today we are living in such evil times. Sometimes people say, "Well, it is not any different than it was." It is far worse today than it has ever been. Are you listening to God's instruction? Noah was a faithful servant of God, and he listened to what the Lord intended him to do. Verse 8 goes on to say, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

God had the ark's dimensions all laid out. I am thankful that God has the dimensions for our lives. As Christians, we need to follow God's plan. We must not divert this way or that way. What has worked does not need repair. As the saying goes, "Do not grease the wheel if it doesn't

need it." I am thankful that the Church of God has the Truth. It is the same message that I have heard for years, and I do not want to deviate from it. I thank God for the Truth. We must follow God's plan, and that is exactly what God wanted Noah to do. He even told Noah the type of wood to use when building the ark.

Genesis 6:14 reads, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." Verses 15-16 state that God gave the dimensions of the ark and also told him where to put the window. He did not tell Noah to place it along one side, but He said to put the window up so his eyes would always look toward Heaven where his redemption was coming from.

Not once do we read in the Word of God that Noah said, "Lord, don't You think we should do it this way?" or "Don't You think we may want to go a different route?" God is God, and we should not question Him. God knows exactly what He is doing. Genesis 6:22 says, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." Complete obedience to God is important. That is exactly what Noah did. God was faithful to Noah, and Noah wanted to return that same faithfulness and love toward God. Likewise, God loves each of us. He wants that love returned to Him by you and me.

Let us look at another example. God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 22:2, "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." That would have been very distressing to Abraham for God to tell him to take his only son and offer

him as a sacrifice. God wanted to test Abraham, just as He wants to test you and me. Perhaps Abraham thought, "You want me to slay my only son, God?" I do not read that Abraham questioned, "Are You sure You want me to do that?" Like Noah, Abraham was obedient.

What did Abraham do? Genesis 22:3-4 tells us: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning [that lets you know he did not put it off]. And saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."

As I studied for this message, I wondered what Abraham must have been thinking in the three days that he traveled. Put yourself in Abraham's place. Undoubtedly, you would be thinking: "Does God really want me to kill my only son? Doesn't He know what that would do to me if I killed my own son?" There would have been many things to think about in those three days. Abraham might have thought: "Did I hear God right? Does God really want me to offer my own flesh and blood as a burnt offering?" He was just as human as we are. No doubt, Abraham had some questions in the back of his mind. When God instructs us to do something, sometimes we may question, "Is this really God's will?" In Abraham's case, he was faithful.

We ought to be faithful and obedient when God speaks. When He tells us to do something, we had better do it without hesitation. Abraham rose up early in the morning to get things ready. He was going to sacrifice Isaac. What does God want you to sacrifice for His cause? There might be something that God has put His finger on and said: "I

want you to give this up. You need to stop doing that." He might want you to get rid of something for His name's sake.

Perhaps you need to adjust your attitude. Maybe you have a jealous spirit in your heart. He may want you to sacrifice something for the will of God. Only God knows what is truly in your heart. It could be anything that is robbing you of your time or your finances. It could be your own self-will. Your vacation time might have to be delayed to visit the sick. He may want you to visit a shut-in or someone in the hospital. God does it the right way, and you ought to be in the will of God to do exactly what He wants you to do.

"God Will Provide"

We can read the good ending of this account. Genesis 22:7-13 says: "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering [Abraham knew that God was going to take care of the situation]: so they went both of them together.

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood [Abraham loved Isaac, but Abraham loved God even more]. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy

son, thine only son from me.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram [in the midst of trial, God will provide. He provided the sacrifice for Abraham at the very last second. Right when you think there is no hope or no help for you, God will provide.] caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son."

Friend, when God speaks, you need to take Him seriously. This account of Abraham lets you know that God will still provide. If you will stay true to Him and obey His Word, He will take care of you. These are perilous times, but you can call on Him and depend on Him. He will take care of you in the time of need.

We want to look at another example in the Word of God. Let us consider Naaman. He was a captain of the host of the king of Syria. Naaman was a very honorable and mighty man. He was very well known. However, he had a condition on his body called leprosy. Naaman had a slave girl from Israel, and the young girl mentioned to Naaman's wife that Naaman should go to Israel and see the Prophet Elisha. Perhaps Naaman thought: "Well, the prophet there will certainly heal me. Look who I am. He won't turn me away." Naaman was willing to try anything, like many people who have diseases today.

The Spirit of Pride

Naaman decided to go see Elisha. Second Kings 5:9-10 states: "So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean."

That was not what Naaman wanted to hear. I am sure Naaman thought to himself: "Are you kidding me? I came all this way and Elisha did not even come out to see me? Doesn't he know who I am?" In Elisha's eyes Naaman was just like anybody else. He sent his servant out to tell Naaman what to do. Naaman was swelled up with pride.

You have to watch the spirit of pride. You have to keep the spirit of pride subdued in your life. A lot of people today fail to get the help they need because of pride. Pride is a high or inordinate opinion of one's own dignity, importance, or merit of superiority. Proverbs 8:13 says, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." Proverbs 16:18 reads, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Naaman brought all these things to Elisha's house: the chariots, the horses, and everything to let Elisha know who he really was. Second Kings 5:11-12 reads: "But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. [You might have in your mind how God should move, but that is not always the case. God will move when He desires to move. God will sometimes put things in your pathway to block your view and go a different route.] Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

Elisha wanted him to go and dip seven times in the Jordan River. No doubt, Naaman thought: "What? He wants me to wash in the Jordan? That is a dirty river. I don't want to dip in

the Jordan!" Nevertheless, this is what God wanted Naaman to do. Right when you think you know what you are going to do, God may steer you another way. Naaman had in his own mind: "He is not going to tell me what to do. I want to go where I want to go." Today many times people hear the Word of God, but they do not obey the pastor. They still want to go their own way. God put the pastor in charge of the congregation. A man of God is instructed to lead the flock, and you should be willing to follow the shepherd.

The Importance of Obedience

Thank the Lord for Naaman's servants. His servants were faithful to him. Second Kings 5:13 states, "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" It is not always the big things that God wants His children to do. He wants to see if we are going to be obedient in the little things. After Naaman thought it over, he reconsidered and probably thought: "Maybe I should just go and wash in the Jordan. What do I have to lose? I might as well try it and see what happens."

In 2 Kings 5:14 we read, "Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times [He did not say four, five, or six times, but seven times. When God tells you to do something a certain way, you had better do it that way.] in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." Thank God, he went through with what he was instructed to do to get the help he needed. Obedience and humility are extremely important.

Naaman had to go down to the river himself and dip seven times in the water. His restoration depended upon his individual obedience, not anybody else's. When you get saved, you do not get saved under a universal plan. It is just between you and God. Salvation is not in who you know or in what you know. It is not based on joining a certain church or in how many Scriptures you know. The question is, Are you saved from sin? Each person must repent of his or her own sins. You must be cleansed from sin. There is no substitution for this.

The last example that I want you to consider has a different ending. This is a sad ending. It is found in the account of Achan. Achan was told, along with the other Israelites, that everything in the city of Jericho was to be destroyed. Nothing was to be taken for themselves, but the silver, the gold, and the vessels of brass and iron were to be consecrated and placed in the treasury of the Lord.

Achan knew going into this ordeal what God had commanded. It was not like he could say he did not know. Also, he knew that consequences would come if he disobeyed. Saint of God, you should know what the consequences are if you disobey God. Joshua and the others knew not to take anything other than what God said, but Achan's eyes deceived him. The children of Israel got overconfident. Dear one, you must guard against becoming overconfident in your walk with God. You must stay low and humble.

After the city of Jericho was overthrown, they went to spy out the city of Ai. When the spies returned, they informed Joshua that Ai could be overtaken with two or three thousand men. To Joshua's great surprise, the men of Ai overtook them and thirty-six men lost their lives. God was

in the camp, but what happened? Joshua 7:6-7 tells us: "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!"

The Serious Consequences of Disobedience

Sin will halt your walk with God, and you cannot go forward. God knew that the problem was due to sin in the camp. Joshua 7:10 reads, "And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff." God's wrath was stirred!

After everything was said and done, all the tribes were brought in. Joshua 7:19 says, "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." Achan was under the spotlight. When God points something out in your life, you had better repent of it and take care of it right away.

Achan hid a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight in his tent. Friend, this proves that you cannot hide things from God and prosper. The pastor might not know, the congregation might not know, your best friend might not know, but God knows. They

took Achan, his possessions, his family, and the things that he had hidden and stoned them with stones and burned them with fire.

You may ask, "Why did they take his family?" Achan's family was dear to him. God can take away something dear to you. Parent, you need to be careful of the moves you make, because your children are watching. You must be careful of what you say about church things. Your children are listening. Achan's children had to be stoned. That is a sad ending to a story, but that story was put in the Bible for our admonition and warning. If you know what you should do and disobey God, you will suffer serious consequences.

The Truth is what sets you free. However, if you discard the Truth and say, "I don't want to do that," you might have to face serious consequences. When people disobey God, they suffer, and their family suffers. Sin will cause you to care only about yourself. Sin wants to take everything, and it will take you down. You need to be careful of the moves you make, because it will affect other people.

I hope and pray that these examples express to you the importance of your commitment and obedience to God. As I said at the beginning of this message, we need to take following God's instructions very seriously. We do not know how much longer we have in this world. Things are

wrapping up. We are witnessing great fires, storms, and earthquakes in various places. I think God is trying to awaken people. He is trying to get their attention. Even outright sinners are concerned and are wondering, "What is going on?" They realize that some unusual things are happening. The children of God should know that God is trying to awaken His people to become even brighter witnesses for Him to let others know that God still loves and cares for them. Dear one, you need to take heed and get rid of things in your life that might be hindering your walk with God.

(Compact Disc TR-2528)

The Infidel

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

An evangelist, E. L. Hyde, conducted revival meetings in New Jersey, and in the course of his remarks, said that within ten minutes, he could prove to the satisfaction of any infidel that he was a fool. The next morning while he was walking, a gentleman accosted him very abruptly by saying, "Are you the evangelist preaching up at the church?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I supposed that you were a gentleman."

"I claim to be one."

"Well, I don't think you are one. Didn't you say last night that within ten minutes you could prove to the satisfaction of everyone that all infidels are fools? If you don't prove it to my satisfaction, I will publish you in all the city newspapers as the most consummate liar that ever struck the city."

Seeing there was no possibility of reasoning with the man, Mr. Hyde said, "Where is your infidel?"

"I claim to be one," was the reply, "and I want you to know that I am no fool either. I have studied all phases of the subject and delivered lectures against Christianity for more than twelve years, and I am prepared to say there is nothing in it."

"You are certain there is nothing in it?"

"Yes, sir, there is nothing in it."

"Will you please tell me if a man who will lecture twelve years against nothing is not a fool, what in your judgment would constitute a fool?"

He turned away in a rage. Mr. Hyde, drawing out his watch, insisted he still had six minutes, but the infidel would not hear him, nor was Mr. Hyde published in the city papers.

Colossians 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2 Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.

The Power of a Grateful Heart



Brother Richard Talbot

A Condition of the Heart

The words grateful, gratefulness, and gratitude are not in the Scriptures, but the words thanks, thanksgiving, thankfulness, and giving thanks to the Lord are found there. The word thanks is found many times in the Scriptures. The word *gratitude* means, "the quality of feeling thankful or grateful." The word *thankful* means, "the feeling of expressing gratitude or being appreciative," so these words are related.

Some people have a problem with being truly grateful. Gratefulness is a condition of the heart, while thanksgiving is the out-

ward expression of the gratefulness that is in the heart. It is an emotion or an action that you express to God in worship, in praise, and in all things in your life.

The Bible instructs us to be thankful, but thankfulness has to originate in the heart. The very center of your being must be that of grateful living before God. Philippians 4:6 instructs, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." You do not automatically become thankful just because you are going to pray. Thankfulness

should be a quality of your life every day, all day, all the time. This message is not a reprimand, but I want you to let the Spirit of God look deeply into your heart to help you. There is something about being thankful that connects you to godliness, holiness, and righteousness. You will have a pleasant Christian outlook and a good testimony. There are not many truly thankful people in the world, but in the church, everyone should be saturated with thanksgiving.

A grateful heart gives protection against many evils and sinful traits. It is an antidote for malice, jealousy, ill-will, grum-

bling, and complaining. Can you say that your heart is clear of all these conditions? Do you grumble about the weather? Now, there is a difference between making a statement and complaining.

Some things will affect you from time to time, but you do not want to become a grumbling, unhappy person. That will make life miserable for you, your family, and others around you. Instead of grumbling, you should be thankful and appreciative. You need to seriously consider these things.

I want you to consider the place that gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciativeness play in your spiritual development and the importance they have toward godliness in your life.

Some people do things for others, and they may expect favors in return. Others console themselves because they said the word thanks, but that does not mean they are really thankful. Thankfulness has to come from deep inside the heart. Sometimes it is good to go back to someone and say: "I really appreciate what you did for me, and I want to thank you again." You need to develop a true spirit of thankfulness that exists in the depths of your being.

The Spirit of Complaining

Have you read about the sins of the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness? They murmured and complained, and it affected every aspect of their lives. Their murmuring and complaining cost them the joys that God had set before them. Some professing Christians are missing the deepest joys of godly living because of their grumbling and complaining. Others have a spirit of bitterness and unthankfulness. They are not happy about anything that goes on. The preacher can preach a glorious message, yet they find fault with it. Nearly everyone around them may rejoice and praise God, but they sit

quietly because they do not like it. They find fault with the pastor, and nothing he does makes them happy. They would not think of approaching the pastor and saying, "I really appreciate the message you preached." They dodge out the door. How long has it been since you have approached your pastor and said, "I really appreciate you, pastor"?

The spirit of complaining permeated the hearts and minds of most of the spies whom Moses sent to spy out the land of Canaan. It effectively blocked their minds from remembering the promises of God. Their attitudes soon fed back into the entire Israelite nation. Only Joshua and Caleb were spared. We know that Joshua and Caleb kept their focus on God and the other spies got caught up in the spirit of complaining and were dissatisfied. This event was given as an example in Bible history, and the thing God held over them was this: "Do not forget how I delivered you from Egypt. I brought you out of the bondage of slavery and set you free." The same message is for us today. If God has saved your soul and delivered you from sin, that should be the greatest monument in your life, even if God does not do another thing for you.

When the Israelites got to Canaan, they did not have what they wanted, so they were ready to go back into bondage because they became dissatisfied. Many a person has been saved and then became dissatisfied with God. Perhaps they allowed something to trouble them and cause them to lose their focus. They forgot how they were in sin's bondage and how God saved them. They lost the gratefulness and the thankfulness from their hearts and picked up a spirit of complaining. They became unhappy and dissatisfied, and it vexed them.

Today some people have begun to affect their families in the same way. For example, a husband may be unhappy and

dissatisfied, and if his wife is not strong spiritually, she will soon pick up that same spirit. The same spirit of complaining can affect the children. The children will mimic their father and mother. Eventually the whole family can become estranged from the church with a barrier between them and the pastor and between them and God.

Having a grateful heart is extremely important. As a Christian, you must be thankful and appreciative. First Corinthians 10:6 and 8-12 read: "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. . . . Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Gratitude Leads to Contentment

Consider how ingratitude affected the children of Israel. It seemed as though they could not be grateful and thankful for anything without complaining about lacking something else. An ungrateful heart always leads to other conditions. When God supplied one thing, they wanted something else. You ought to be grateful for your house, and your house should become your home. The wife ought to be grateful, thankful, and appreciative of her husband. Wife, when was the last time you looked your husband in the eyes and said: "Darling, I am so thankful for you. You are the greatest man in the world to me. I really appreciate you." Hus-

band, when was the last time you looked your wife in the eyes and said: "Honey, I cannot get over how wonderful you have been to me. I cannot get over how much I love you." Those words from the heart go a long way toward making the home a happy place. You may say, "Words do not mean anything." Oh, yes they do, especially when they come from the heart.

If you have children, you need to be thankful for each of them. In many homes parents are not thankful for their children. Their children are a nuisance and a bother to them. Some parents abuse their children and try to push them away. Some little children go off into a corner and cry their eyes out, brokenhearted, because their parents do not seem to care or want anything to do with them. It is a sad world out there. As a Christian, you ought to be happy, thankful, and grateful for where you are and for what you have. Having a grateful heart is true power. You can be happy in any situation if you are thankful.

If you are thankful and grateful, you can be content in any circumstance. The Apostle Paul said he learned to be content in whatever state he was in. He never complained about his life. He accepted it as the divine will of God. Remember, this idea of gratefulness and thankfulness sets your attitudes. You can be truly happy, joyful, and content if you are grateful for what you have. You should never allow yourself to become a slave to discontentment. It will bring sickness of the heart and mind to always want what you do not have. You ought to be thankful for what you do have. In 1 Timothy 6:9 Paul said, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare." The desire for riches, more money, or more material things can become a trap and a snare to your heart and life.

True heartfelt gratitude turns what you have into enough.

Gratitude is thankfulness in action. Gratitude is an antidote to negative emotions and a neutralizer of envy, hostility, jealousy, worry, and irritation. It costs nothing to be grateful and thankful. It is a choice that you have to make, just as in a marriage. In the love of a husband and a wife, you have to make that choice. Every day you have to choose to serve God: "I am going to choose to love You, Lord, in every circumstance of life." It is the same way with your companion. You must choose to love each other even when things are rough and you are having a hard time. Even in good, strong marriages, there can be difficult times. You have to refuse to give in to evil and wrong thoughts. A lot of changes can take place in a marriage over the years. The husband or the wife may become ill and it may cause problems, yet they should still love and care for each other. The devil will be right there to say, "Why not do this?" As a Christian, you should say, "No, I would not even think of doing that because I love her."

In Everything Give Thanks

There is power in thankfulness and strength in being grateful. There is also godliness in gratefulness. Psalm 106:24-26 reads: "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word: But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness." What a terrible situation to be in! They were murmuring in their tents.

In this day and age, some people murmur in their homes and fail to listen to the voice of the Lord. You need to have a strong spiritual connection with God so that you can detect if your spouse is going astray. In Acts, Chapter 5, Ananias could have been spared his terrible death had his wife stood against him. He devised a deceitful plan,

and she fell into agreement with him. Had she stood and said: "Ananias, that is not right. I will not have any part of that," perhaps she could have changed his mind. He might have said: "You're right. I got caught up in that and shouldn't have said that. We shouldn't do this. It's not right," and then thanked his companion for helping him.

The wife should not always agree with everything the husband says, and vice versa. If one says something against the Word of God, the other one should say: "Honey, I don't like the complaining attitude that you have picked up. You have been complaining about the pastor, and I am concerned that you are picking up a bad spirit. You should not talk that way. The children are being affected." We do not always know why things happen as they do. You may not understand why the pastor feels the way he does. However, you should be thankful and say: "Lord, I don't understand this, but I'm going to serve You and accept it because I love the Truth."

You must have a spirit of humbleness, meekness, and thankfulness, not a spirit of resistance. How long has it been since you really felt grateful, thankful, and appreciative for all the things in your life? The Word of God teaches that you need to be thankful in all things.

Dear one, do not allow yourself to become one who complains, gripes, or resists. There seems to be a character flaw in some folks that causes complaining to come easy for them. If you have that flaw, it is important that you work to change this by training yourself to be more appreciative in all things. This is commanded of God. Some things are easier said than done. First Thessalonians 5:18 tells us, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This is not just a good idea, but it is the will of God.

Some people have a habit of saying their last words under their breath. Someone going out of church may say, "How did you like that message?" Another may say, "I sure don't agree with it." Some may be afraid to say that aloud, but they mumble it. Someone else may not hear you, but God has good ears.

Unthankfulness Leads to Unholiness

Once people get a complaining spirit, they never seem to be satisfied. They cannot see good in anything. When people get twisted in their minds, no matter what the pastor does, no matter what the congregation does, and no matter what the husband or the wife does, they are never satisfied with what is being done. Their misery soon affects their family. Then it is not long until a clique of unsatisfied people is formed. That is a terrible situation, and it can destroy a congregation and ruin lives. It is not worth it.

You need to do your very best to make yourself satisfied in whatever situation you find yourself. You need to remind yourself that God is the One who directs the affairs of your life. If you are living for Him and consecrated to presenting your life to Him as a living sacrifice, being led by the Holy Spirit and belonging to Him, why not accept what He allows to work in your life for His glory? When your life is wrapped up in Him, everything affects you. I do not believe things are done by chance or coincidence. I believe that God's hand is in charge of everything that happens in life, whether it is good or bad. You need to commit things to God the best you can, submit yourself, live for God, and trust Him to guide you through to the other side. God will not fail!

Becoming ungrateful and unthankful is akin to becoming unholy. Unthankful hearts lead to unholy behavior. Having a

spirit of complaining and an attitude of dissatisfaction in the heart can lead you to sinful decisions. It is a terrible thing to live with an unthankful, ungrateful person. Nothing you do makes them happy. May God help you to have the spirit of joy, thanksgiving, and praise. Do not be sorry if the bottle is half empty. As one man said, "Be glad that it is half full." There is a difference. You should be thankful.

A Christian who walks by faith accepts all circumstances from God. He thanks God when everything goes well and when everything goes bad, and for everything in between. He thanks God whether he feels like it or not. He also gives God praise, honor, and glory. Life without thankfulness is void of love and passion. Hope without thankfulness is lacking in fine perception. Faith without thankfulness lacks strength and fortitude. Every virtue divorced from thankfulness is handicapped and limps along the spiritual road.

A visiting farmer stopped at a city restaurant to eat lunch. When he was served his food, he bowed his head and gave thanks to the Lord. Some rough guys sitting at a nearby table noticed the farmer praying. When he was done praying over his food, they shouted to him: "Hey, Pops, back where you come from, does everyone pray before they eat?" Their laughter was silenced when the unmoved farmer said, "Everyone but the pigs." How necessary a grateful heart is!

Paul admonished in Ephesians 5:19-20: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Expressing Appreciation

How long has it been since you exercised a thankful attitude, and put it to work in your living?

How long has it been since you complimented other saints? Sometimes in a congregation little cliques may develop. Let us break up the cliques and mix and mingle with all the saints. You might have your own special group and hardly ever talk to anyone else. God's church is a body, and we all are in this together. I like to shake hands with everyone.

I enjoy the fellowship of the saints, and I enjoy being a part of the great Church of God. I love the work of God, and I love the saints of God. I really appreciate the privilege of gathering together with God's people. I enjoy the camp meetings every year. I know it is a task and an expense on congregations, but there are so many benefits. God pours out what could never be received in any other way. We have a rich heritage. Let us be thankful for it.

If you have a spirit of unthankfulness, you are hindering the work of God. You should not be ungrateful or fail to express appreciation for the work of God, for the ministry, or for the preaching.

One thing stood out in my mind concerning Samuel Morris, who is credited with inventing the telegraph. He said he did not invent it, but he says God invented it. His testimony was that he had reached a dead end in his electronic experiments, so he prayed for more light. God gave this humble inventor the answer to his electrical problems. It was as if God wanted the world to have the telegraph at that specific time in 1844.

Samuel Morris later said that was the reason he never felt he deserved the honor. He made a valuable application of the use of electrical power, but it was all through God's help. He said that it was not because he was superior to other scientists. No wonder the inventor's first message over the telegraph was, "What hath God wrought?" He thanked God for using his mind to bring a technical blessing to the world.

Samuel Morris thanked God and gave all the credit to God.

In whatever you do, you need to be thankful and give credit for your success in life to God. If you have a successful marriage, it is God. As a pastor, if you have a growing and thriving congregation, it is God. If you have a godly man as your pastor, it is God. If you have saints to fellowship with, it is all because of God. God is in this! You must be careful that you never allow a wrong attitude to get hold of you. It can make you unthankful, ungrateful, and cause you to lack in your thanks and praise to God for what He is doing. It offends God, and He gets terribly upset with a murmuring, grumbling attitude. You may mumble under

your breath, but remember, God hears you.

We all have characteristics that people can find fault with if they look for them, but you should not search for them. We ought to appreciate one another, love one another, and stay together. The work of God is far too important for anyone to cause a problem because he did not get his way. No one should think he is so important that he can disrupt the body of Christ because things did not go the way he thought they ought to go. I have been around for a long time, and lots of things did not go my way, but I did not cause any disruption.

Do not let things destroy you, because it will take down your

family. It may cause your children to be lost. It is not that important. I am not talking about sinful things or things against the Scriptures. I am talking about administration, things that a pastor has a right to do. You need to remember that you are just one little person, or one little spoke in the wheel. God can get along without you, but you cannot get along without Him. I cannot get along without the saints of God. I need the fellowship of the saints. We all are a part of the body of Christ. If you have a need in your heart, won't you let God have His way?

(Compact Disc TR-2393)

Pride Rebuked

The life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ are a standard rebuke to every form of pride.

Pride of birth: "Is not this the carpenter's son?"

Pride of wealth: "The Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Pride of personal appearance: "He hath no form nor comeliness."

Pride of reputation: "Made himself of no reputation."

Pride of superiority: "I am . . . as he that serveth."

Pride of ability: "I can of mine own self do nothing."

Pride of will: "I seek not mine own will."

Pride of resentment: "Father, forgive them."

Meeting Announcements

MUNCIE, IN

July 7-11

Camp Meeting: Ninth Street Church of God, 125 S 9th Street, New Castle, IN 47362

The camp meeting will be held at the Central Friends' Campground, 5601 E County Road 650 S, Muncie, Indiana. Service times: The first service begins Wednesday evening at 7:15 p.m.; Thursday-Friday 9:35 a.m. & 7:15 p.m.; Saturday 9:35 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.; Sunday 9:35 a.m. For lodging/camping reservations, please contact Sis. Michelle Gingerich @ 765-808-8705 For more information contact: Pastor Allen Polston Telephone: 765-521-8284

CANBY, OR

July 19-25

Camp Meeting: Church of God, 522 NW 2nd Avenue, Canby, OR 97013

The first service begins Monday at 7:00 p.m. Two services daily: 10:30 a.m. & 7:00 p.m. Please make reservations in advance, if possible. For more information contact: Pastor E. David Stegmeier Telephone: 503-266-9297

NEWARK, OH

August 1-8

Camp Meeting: Church of God, 675 N. Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055

The first service begins Sunday 10:00 a.m. Three services daily: 10:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m. & 7:00 p.m. Please make reservations in advance, if possible. For lodging/camper reservations, please contact Brother or Sister Bush at 740-345-1213. For more information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker Telephone: 740-344-2543

Practical Christianity

A story is told of an older minister who was exhorting his congregation to give freely to the church. He was interrupted by someone who rose up and said: "Pastor, you told us that salvation is free, as free as the air we breathe and as free as the water in the rivers. If that is true, how come you are asking for money?"

The preacher adjusted his spectacles and solemnly replied: "Brother Jones, you are right. Salvation is free—like the air is free and the water is free—but if you want water in your kitchen, you must have water pipes, and someone has to pay for the plumbing."

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