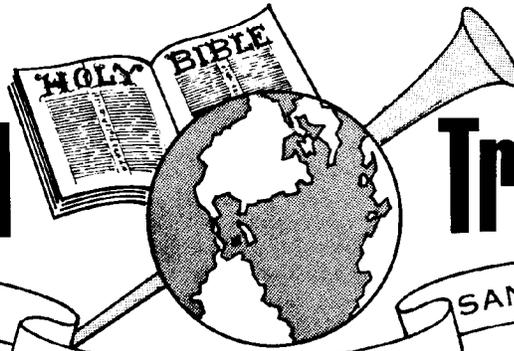


The Gospel



Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

SANCTIFICATION

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

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

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 51 June 2021 No. 6



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

Guest Editorial

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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

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Vol. 51 June 2021 No. 6

"Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Isaiah 2:3

LET US GO UP TO CAMP MEETING

The words of this Scripture were to encourage the people of old Israel to assemble themselves together in the house of the Lord at Zion. Zion was where the people of God came to be taught the Word of God. There they could learn of the old paths and the ways of God. Today Zion is the true Church of God. The saints gather there to learn sound Truth and the doctrines of God. God's church teaches the saints how to live clean, pure, and holy lives. It is also a place where lost men and women can hear and find the saving power of Christ's Gospel. Thank the Lord, there are Church of God congregations where people can receive godly instructions on sound doctrinal principles. God's Acres is one of those places where the Truth of God's eternal Word is yet being heralded. The Lord has blessed us with the facilities to accommodate.

Here it is the first of June again and time for another camp meeting season to begin at God's Acres. Yes, in just a few weeks (June 20) we will gather on the old campground to worship with the saints. It is always a special time when we enjoy the sweet presence of God. It is a

time when we can get away from the hassles of life and have our souls enriched.

What a wonderful opportunity to feast on heavenly manna and the good things that God has for us! I am sure that the Lord is planning some good things for us to enjoy. The messages and fellowship will challenge, strengthen, and lift our hearts. God is so willing and ready to give us that which will enhance us with greater understanding. The Lord is planning to give us heavenly manna. The rich instructions will inspire us to keep pressing to the goal.

We all are aware of the troublesome times in which we are living. Forces of evil are striving to turn people away from God. Demonic spirits are putting forth every effort possible to destroy faith and confidence in God. Satan's purpose is to divert the saint from the pathway of true holiness and righteousness. These same situations worked in Jesus' day. Some followers of Jesus turned and went away. He asked the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Peter's reply to Him was, "Lord, to whom will we go? thou hast the words of eternal

[continued on page 8]

Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me [that is the first and the last time you will see those words 'wait for the promise of the Father'].

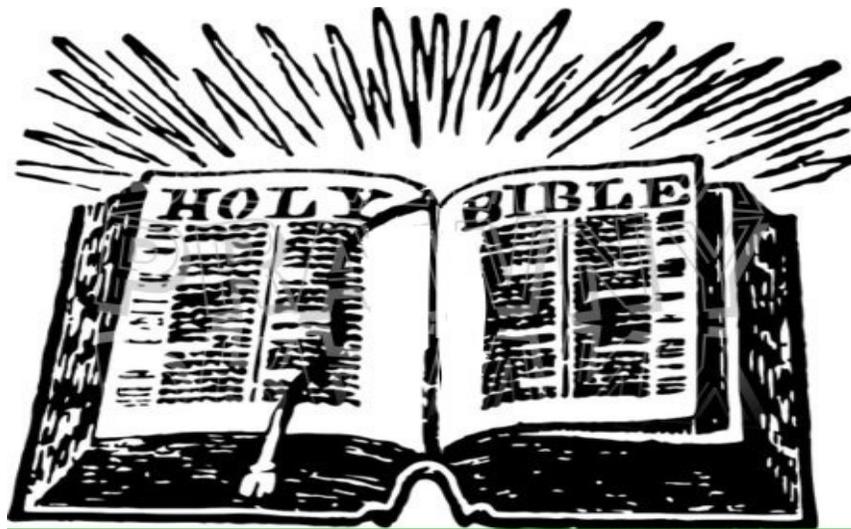
5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying,

Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria [all three divisions], and unto the uttermost part of the earth.



THE GIFT OF LANGUAGES

Part 1 of 2

Brother Roger L. Decker

The Baptism of the Holy Ghost

Only Truth can truly set us free. I want to do my best to clarify Acts, Chapter 2, and to teach it by rightly dividing the Word of God. In our Scripture reading in verses 4-5 we read: "And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of

the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Luke 24:46-49 reads: "And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name

among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

What does this reveal? The disciples were powerless before the Day of Pentecost. This baptism was going to be the Holy Ghost Himself, not one of the

gifts. John 14:26 states, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

What was going to be the effect of the Holy Ghost? What is the effect of the Holy Ghost in our own lives today? First of all, He was sent to guide the lives of Christ's followers. Romans 8:14 states, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." First John 2:27 tells us, "But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things." He empowers us for soul winning. Acts 1:8 reads, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

The Holy Ghost also gives us liberty. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He conforms us to the image of Christ. He wrote in verse 18 that we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Lord strengthens the soul. Ephesians 3:16 reads, ". . . to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." He reveals Bible Truth to us.

Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 2:10, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." God assures us of salvation and service. Romans 8:16 states, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

The Holy Spirit fills the Christian's mouth with appropriate things. Mark 13:11 reads, "But whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost gives gifts to individual believers. Jesus told the disciples to tarry because they lacked power, guid-

ance, and teaching. Everything that the disciples received, they received of Jesus in His corporal body, but He could not be in all places at all times.

The Spirit Is Given to Profit Withal

There has always been a Holy Spirit since the world was made, but access to the Holy Spirit did not come about until Jesus Christ died on the Cross. For example, air has always been in the world, but you did not have access to it until God gave you a set of lungs and you breathed your first breath. Also, the air does not do you any good until you take it in on the inside. Similarly, it is the same way with the Holy Spirit. He is not going to guide, teach, direct, and keep you until you get Him on the inside. The disciples did not have Christ on the inside before the Day of Pentecost. They let Christ's guidance teach them. Consider how the disciples acted before Pentecost and then how they acted after Pentecost.

First Corinthians, Chapter 12, lets us know that some gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, and Paul named some of those gifts. He stated in verses 7-10: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues."

Verse 7 tells us that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to profit withal. Another translation makes this verse very simple to understand. It reads, "Something from the Spirit can be

seen in each person, to help everyone." The Spirit gives this to each one to help others, not for self-edification.

When Jesus was on this earth, He was hindered because He could not be every place at one time. Jesus was always greeting and saying farewells. He was confined by limitations, but with the Holy Spirit, neither place nor time was a factor. Wherever man goes, the Spirit of God is available.

Psalm 139:7-12 reads: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

The psalmist was letting us know that the Holy Spirit is available wherever one is and to whomever is willing to meet God's conditions. As we proceed in this chapter, we are going to see one of the works of the gift of the Spirit. There are a lot of details given in Acts, Chapter 2, but one thing that is not mentioned is that the gift of language was given as proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Gave Them Utterance

The Day of Pentecost was the fiftieth day after the Passover. There was a celebration of Pentecost. Let me clarify that "Pentecost" was not the name of a church; it is the name of a day. There will not be another Pentecost. The Jews kept the fiftieth day of the giving of the Ten Com-

mandments on Mount Sinai, fifty days after the Exodus. Jewish tradition says this took place fifty days after the Passover. Fifty days after the crucifixion, the Holy Spirit was given. I want to highlight the meanings of these verses to emphasize the point that the Apostles were told to tarry. However, they did not know that the gift of languages was going to be manifested. In fact, they knew very little except to tarry. They did know they were to receive power, which is brought out in Acts 1:8.

Acts 2:1-6 reads: "And when the day [not the church] of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them [I want you to notice first that they were sitting in a house; they were not praying for tongues or kneeling at an altar asking God for a sign].

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance [or as the Spirit revealed to them what they should speak, not a language that someone had to interpret]. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language."

Those who spoke were Galileans. This was the real reason that it was so remarkable to the hearers. Galileans were considered ignorant, rude, and uncivilized. Most of them were fishermen with little or no education, and they had a certain dialect about them. In Peter's denial of Jesus to the little maid,

Jesus said in Mark 14:70, "And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto."

Galileans were considered to be a rough and crude people. They were also looked upon as unlearned and ignorant. Acts 4:13 reads, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." The disciples did not learn all these different languages. They spoke Galilean, and God translated that language into the different languages, or dialects, gathered there that day. In a foreign country, although the people may speak one language, different regions of that country speak in different dialects. In other words, it differs from the standard language of that country. We have different dialects in the United States. Sometimes it is difficult for someone from a northern state to understand someone from the deep south, or vice versa. Certain words are pronounced differently, depending on what area of the country a person is from. Also, English in the United States differs from English in England.

An Understandable Language

On the Day of Pentecost, there were at least eighteen different dialects represented among the people in the crowd. No one stood up and spoke in each of those dialects. God took the Galileans, people who had a certain speech, and gave each person the ability to hear and understand in his own native tongue. Nowhere do you read that interpreters of the different dialects got up and spoke.

Acts 2:5 states, "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews,

devout men [devout men kept those feast days], out of every nation under heaven." Pentecost was one of the major feast days that the Orthodox Jews kept. Verse 8 says, "And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Every man heard in his own native tongue, or language. What did they hear? Verse 11 tells us, "Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." Again, everyone heard them speak in an understandable language, not in gibberish, or an unintelligible speech, that no one could understand. They heard them speak the wonderful works of God in their own tongue wherein they were born.

Back quite a few years ago, I was introduced to a couple and invited them to our home. My wife fixed them something to eat, and we had a conversation. The subject of holiness came up. He said, "Yes, we believe in holiness." However, in further discussing the matter, I realized that they did not believe in living free from sin, which is what true holiness is. They believed that everyone sins more or less, but that you do not do the "big" sins. Also, in our conversation I could detect that they were into "tongues." He told me that a group of them would gather around an altar, hold hands, and start speaking in tongues.

Again, I want to remind you that the real gift was given with people sitting in a house, not praying for it or desiring it. When they spoke, they only spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance, and what they spoke was understandable. My wife entered the conversation, and she was strong when it came to holiness. She said, "Well, the sin has to be gone before you go into eternity." The man spoke up and said, "Well, if God wants to take someone in with sin in his life,

that is up to Him."

My wife replied: "Oh, no. What God requires of me, He requires of everyone else."

There is a way that you can know that you have the Holy Spirit. First of all, you are holy. Now, this man who visited our home was saying they did not understand what was spoken in their meetings when they gathered around the altar. However, the men understood what they were saying on the Day of Pentecost. Today when people tell you that they do not know what they are saying, that is a far cry from what the followers of Christ experienced on that day.

Preaching to the Gentiles

When Peter preached to the Gentiles, there were at least three different factions: the Orthodox Jew, the Samaritans (or the half-breeds), and the Gentiles (or the pagans). These factions were split and had nothing to do with one another. If you read history about some of that, you will find that if a Jew saw a Gentile man in need or a Gentile woman in pain delivering a child, they would not help that one in need. You can see that in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Help was not there from one faction to another.

In Acts, Chapter 10, Peter was chosen to go down to the Gentiles at Cornelius' house. Of all the apostles, Peter was probably the most prejudiced, at least that is what the Scriptures imply. He was the one to whom God had given a vision of a sheet being lowered three times, and on it were things that the Jews considered unclean, and a voice told him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat" (Acts 10:13). God was preparing him to go to the Gentiles. Verse 15 reads, "And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." So Peter went down to the house of the Gen-

tiles. He took witnesses with him. Verse 46a says, "For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God." What does that tell you? They understood what was being said.

We need to look at some facts in Acts, Chapter 2, but first I want you to read 1 Corinthians 12:7, which states, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." There was not any way the message that Peter preached could prick their hearts unless they knew what was being said. God wants people to understand. The only way anyone can receive help is by understanding the Gospel.

Look at what God did with Peter. He was no longer a denier or a coward. He had a little cowardness in him when it came to standing for Christ, but look at the boldness of Peter after the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit of God gave him knowledge of the Scriptures. In Acts 2:16 Peter said, "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." It lit up in his mind. The Holy Ghost will illuminate Scriptures to you.

Sometimes you can read a Scripture repeatedly, and suddenly it will light up to you, and you will see something in it that you never understood before. God gave Peter a knowledge of the Scriptures and translated his message so all the different nationalities could understand what was said. They did not have an interpreter to repeat what was said in everyone's language. Peter spoke Galilean, but all the people heard in their own tongue wherein they were born.

The Samaritans Received the Holy Ghost

There are three instances in the Book of Acts where the gift of languages was used. Now we are going to the third one. First was with the Orthodox Jew (He came

to his own first); the second was the Gentile; the third was the Samaritans. Acts 19:1-7 reads: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth [Apollos was a Greek who was very wise in Scriptures], Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not as much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

"And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve."

The twelve men mentioned had known only so much of the truth that had been revealed to them through John the Baptist. They felt the need of repentance. No doubt, God was dealing with them. They had heard of Christ being the Lamb of God and of His resurrection and ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, when it came to the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were very ignorant. God had first come to the Jew, then to the Gentile, and then to another strong faction, the Samaritan. Without going into a lot of history, the Samaritans had migrated to where Paul was, the upper coast of Ephesus.

God is so fair, and He reached out with His plan of redemption to all three of the factions present in the time of Jesus and the Apostles, called the

morning-time of the church. No doubt, those Samaritans had heard the preaching of John and were baptized of him, but they felt the need of repentance. They were probably there when John said that one was coming after him who would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

The Scripture says they spoke with tongues and prophesied. What does the word *prophesy* mean? It means, "to speak or write with divine inspiration." One does not write something that he does not understand, and he does not write something that no one else can understand. Likewise, one does not speak something that he does not understand or speak something that no one else understands. When two people talk together, one wants to make sure that the other person knows what he is talking about. That is a far cry from what goes on today.

The Sign of the Holy Spirit

The sign that you have the Spirit of God is that you are under God's control; in other words, God has control of your life. You have been bought, and you are not your own. You must live a consistent, holy life and be faithful to the work of God. We do not gather at an altar and pray and pray that someone will speak in some foreign language so that we can know that a person has God on the inside and has the Holy Spirit. We know that God is on the inside when a change takes place in that person's life. There is something different about that individual. The change is on the inside and works its way to the outside.

I was one rough character when I first came to church. I am not proud of this, but I was a drinker and a tobacco smoker, and I loved to gamble. I would bet on anything, and I lost many

a paycheck. I made good money, but I wasted a lot of it. I was one rough-looking character. The first time we went to church, we sat in the back. My wife wore the best she had, and she certainly looked a lot better than I did. She had earrings and lipstick on. As we sat back there and saw the choir come out looking godly, I saw my wife take out a tissue and rub her lipstick off and pull off her earrings.

I thought I was a very tough fellow until the message pricked my heart. I felt something working on me that I had never felt in my life. Conviction caused me to tremble. I thought about the message, and I thought: "I can't do this. There's no way that I can give up drinking, quit smoking, and give up my card playing." Those three things were the things that stood out to me. Those were the things that I was involved in most of the time.

The Holy Spirit was dealing with me. This was in a service when Brother Emerson Wilson preached, and he came down off the pulpit area and headed straight back the aisle to where I was standing. The only thing I could have done was run, but I was not about to do that, so I stood there. He came and put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Brother Decker, is God dealing with you?"

Trying to think of something to say, I said, "Yes, He is, but I'm not ready yet."

Brother Wilson was not satisfied with that answer. He did not turn and walk away, as I was hoping he would. Instead, he said to me: "You never will be ready; it is only when God is ready. You need to pray."

I broke loose and went to the altar, and I am so glad that I made that trip. It was not a long trip, but it looked like a long trip to me from the back of the church down to the altar. I knelt at the altar and told the Lord, "I don't

know what I need, but whatever it is, please give it to me." I will guarantee you, He did. It makes no difference what your prayer sounds like or how you word your prayer as long as it comes from your heart.

On the Day of Pentecost, how was Peter going to speak to all those different factions and dialects? The people understood one another, so there was no need of tongues. The gifts of God are given for service, not for signs.

Godly Sorrow Brings Repentance

Galatians 5:22-23 states: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Having this fruit working and manifesting itself is a sign of repentance. True repentance is brought about by godly sorrow in one's life. It is a sorrow that God puts on you because you have hurt Him.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:10 reads, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." The Amplified Bible (we do not preach from this version, but it is good to amplify a verse once in a while) 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]."

Worldly sorrow is far different than godly sorrow. Godly sorrow brings God into the picture; worldly sorrow brings you into the picture. For example, when a person has worldly sorrow, he will keep on doing whatever he is doing. On the other hand, godly sorrow calls

for repentance; a change takes place in a person's life. Proverbs 28:13 reads, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy [or shall prosper]."

Gifts given by the Holy Spirit are given to profit, to edify, and to build up the Kingdom of God. Some of the most humble men had multiple gifts, and they did not use those gifts to exalt themselves. They were humble, and they used those gifts to build up

the church, or the Kingdom of God. Romans 12:3 reads, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." God has a way to level the ground.

In closing, remember these facts. On the Day of Pentecost, all the people present heard and understood. When Peter went to Cornelius' house, the Gentiles

heard and understood. The Samaritans at Ephesus heard and understood. God did the interpreting. On the Day of Pentecost, they were sitting in a house. They also spoke as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance. Lastly, it edified and built up the Kingdom of God. Three thousand souls got saved, and that was the birth of what we know as the Church of the Living God.

(Compact Disc TR-1935)

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]
life" (John 6:67-68). Dear one, turning away from the Savior at this critical time would be like committing spiritual suicide. This is not a time to turn back, but rather to press your way onward. We all need more godly counsel, instructions, and direction from the Lord in these crucial times.

Learning about the good old paths that please God is more and more needful today than ever before. The Hebrew writer instructed us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in Hebrews 10:25. It is through the hearing of the Word of God, believing, and obeying that will bring us victory. James also gave good admonition when he said to

"be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). Saint, we must not relax our efforts or become indifferent. Paul instructed in Philippians 3:14 to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." If you ever expect to make it through with victory, you must press firmly against the odds.

Camp meeting is designed with your spiritual welfare in mind. Our sincere desire is to provide you with a spiritual atmosphere here at God's Acres. We encourage you to attend this camp meeting and to be spiritually renewed. We invite you to allow your soul to be fed and your spirit refreshed. We trust

that you will be here. Every effort or sacrifice that you put forth will surely be amply repaid.

Brother Roger Decker extends a special invitation to each of you to join us here at God's Acres for camp meeting this year. Last but not least, we ask you to pray for the camp meeting. God's direction and presence is most certainly needed in every service. We need God to send the messages that we need to hear. Having Him in our midst as the Honored Guest is of the utmost importance. To make your reservation for the meeting, please call Brother Dave or Sister Ruby Bush at 740-345-1213. We will be looking forward to seeing you at the camp meeting!

The Bump of Affection

When Gipsy Smith was conducting a very successful series of revival services, an older preacher came into the room where Mr. Smith was sitting after the service, placed his hand on the evangelist's head, and said, "I'm trying to find the secret of your success," he confessed.

"My friend, you are too high!" admonished Mr. Smith. The secret of whatever success God has given me is not up there, but down here," and he placed his hand upon his heart.

Luke 2:6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock

by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ



Brother Calvin Foster

The Miracle of the New Birth

I want to focus on verse 14 and make this statement that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is joy, peace, and goodwill toward men. Do you hear the joyful sound? In Romans 14:17 the Bible says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat

and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." I thank God for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings joy, peace, and goodwill toward men.

When Jesus Christ came on the scene and started preaching the Gospel, there was a man

named Nicodemus in John, Chapter 3. He came to Jesus one night and asked Him some questions. We read in verses 4-7: "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily,

verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Being truly born again is a life-changing experience. Being born again is not shaking the preacher's hand or joining church. Being born again is a miraculous experience of salvation from sin. Being born again changes your life completely. Thank God, through the preaching of the Gospel, you can be born of the Spirit of God.

Jesus is telling us in this lesson how men who are spiritually dead can be made alive. A man cannot really live his life until he is born again, and you do not really understand what life is all about and how to really enjoy life until you have been born again. Thank God, this is a spiritual birth. In 1 Corinthians, Chapter 2, Paul tried his best to make it plain. In verse 14 Paul said, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

You are a natural man or woman, and you live in the flesh. You eat, drink, and sleep, but you become a spiritual man or woman when you are born again. Therefore, you cannot understand spiritual things until you are born again. You may go to church, hear the Gospel, and see people, but you cannot understand it until you have been born again.

Before I was saved, I did not want to go to church. My mother would get me up and say, "Get ready for church." I would slip out the back door, and she would not see me until later in the evening. Since I have been born again, I love going to church and

camp meetings. Why? My spiritual understanding was opened up. When I was not saved, I could not understand the joy of the Lord. You must be born again to see these things. There is an experience for you in God. God will bless you with this experience if you will open your heart to Him.

"Good Will Toward Men"

Ephesians 2:1-4 reads: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us."

God has great mercy. Do you know what the word "great" means? It means, "much more than the ordinary size." God's mercy is great. I thank God for His great mercy wherewith He loved us. Even when we were yet in sin, God loved us. God wants you to know how sinful you are, but He has great mercy. Thank You, Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus!

Being born again is the making of a new man. Have you heard the joyful sound? Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." You cannot get this by joining a church or by shaking a preacher's hand. This is a miraculous experience when God comes into a person's life. He will change you so radically that you will look in the mirror and wonder about yourself, saying, "Am I the same

person?" In John 14:6 Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." No man can come to the Father but by Jesus. There is only one God and only one Mediator between God and man, and it is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the Truth, and the life.

When Jesus called His disciples to Him, He wanted them to be with Him, to follow His instructions, and to live by His example. He preached the need of their having Him in their hearts, and having Him in their lives personally. Today Jesus is saying: "Get Me in your heart and life. Come to Me, learn of Me, follow Me, love Me, and obey Me. I am the true Shepherd. I am the Living Bread." It is all wrapped up in Jesus.

Verse 14 of our Scripture text tells us the angels made the announcement, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Jesus could have let us go on in our sins, and we could have gone to hell, but God said, "No, I am going to send Jesus and goodwill toward men." If you do not accept Christ, you are living your life beneath your privilege. Your life can be so much better with Christ in it.

Psalms 23:1-6 reads: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Traitors in the Last Days

We are living in perilous times. We are living in the last days of time. Many people have backslidden. They have walked away from the Lord and have gone back into sin, but thank the Lord, He is good and His mercy is great. Second Peter 2:21-22 says: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Salvation is so wonderful! This life in Christ is so beautiful. I never want to give it up. I never want to go back on God, because it is not that easy to come back and pick it up again. God is telling you, "This life that I have given you, this gift of salvation that men laugh at and turn down is so wonderful that if you go back on God, it is just like a sick dog going back and licking up its vomit." Have you ever seen that? A dog will vomit and walk away from it, and then it will go back and lick it up. That is what it is like going back on God.

The Bible says in Proverbs 14:14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." Thank God, you will not backslide if you have a fervent love for God, but you must keep your love for God hot.

In Matthew 24:11-12 Jesus said: "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Saint of God, you should never let your love for God wax cold. You need to go to revivals and camp meetings, and keep going to your home church congregation. You need to get

behind your pastor and say, "Preach the Word of God to me." You should not want to give your pastor any trouble at all.

In 2 Timothy 3:4-5 Paul warned of the last days, and he said men would be "Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Paul said men would be traitors in the last days. What is a traitor? A traitor is one who betrays the cause, or a trust. It is a person who commits treason by betraying his country. I do not want to betray the Lord. I do not want to be a traitor, and I do not want to betray the saints, by the grace of God. My prayer is, "O God, keep me humble and keep me saved." I do not want to betray the Lord. I do not want to betray the cause, and I do not want to betray the trust.

When the ministers ordained me back in 1980, they laid their hands on me, and my pastor spoke very clearly and very profoundly to me and said, "Do not betray our trust." I have never forgotten that. That did not mean the ministry was going to be easy. That did not mean that I was going to be on a flowery bed of ease, but I determined in my heart that I was not going to betray their trust, and I do not want to betray Christ.

In John 13:2, when Jesus was at the Last Supper with the disciples, it says, "And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him." Sitting right in the midst of the brethren, right at suppertime when the spiritual atmosphere was high, the devil put it in Judas' heart to betray the Lord. The Bible says that Judas was a thief.

Matthew 26:47-50 tells us: "And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief

priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he [the devil put it in Judas' heart to betray the Lord with a kiss]: hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him [that was cold-heartedness]. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus and took him." Saint of God, do not betray Christ. If you betray Christ, you will betray the saints of God too.

The Importance of Truth

God put the church together. God put the members in the body, and He will save anyone anywhere. No matter what kind of sin they have committed, God will save them and put them right in the Church of God. He gives us the Truth. Proverbs 23:23 tells us, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." You should buy the Truth, and keep the Truth. I buy the Truth with my life, and I will not sell it. You may have personal things handed down from your family that you do not want to sell. They should not be for sale.

The Truth is not for sale. Saint, we have given our lives for the Truth. We are following Jesus. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." If you want the Truth, you must buy it from Jesus. He is the embodiment and the personification of the Truth, wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The Bible says in Proverbs 4:7, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding." You need to buy these things and sell them not.

God gives you wisdom. A lot of times since I have been a pastor, I have called on other experienced pastors and asked them, "How would you handle this

situation?" or "What do you think about this?" When you get that wisdom, it is very precious. Do not sell it.

The Apostle Paul instructed us in 1 Timothy, Chapter 2, about praying. Some people take the attitude that they do not want to pray for our leaders. Verses 1-5 read: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

Men have a big church set up in Rome where they tell people that the pope is God. They tell people that he is a god on earth, but the Bible tells us differently. I believe the Bible. Oh, how important the Truth is! In 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 2, Paul preached the Gospel to those people in Thessalonica. He made it really plain by pouring out his heart to them.

In verses 1-4 he said: "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

"The Whole Duty of Man"

As we speak the Gospel, we have to make sure that we speak

the words that God puts in our mouth. Do not change it, do not add to it, and do not take away from it, because then you will start pleasing men. I do not want to run people off or hurt their feelings, but God knows what is best for us and He knows that the straight, unadulterated Word of God is what man needs. We need preachers in America to rise up and preach against sin. If people do not like it, we ought to preach it anyway. If they do not call you to come back again, that is all right. God will open another door to preach.

We cannot please men. We have to please God. What did the Word of God tell Jeremiah? The people were a hardheaded, stiff-necked people, but God said not to look at their faces. Some people are going to look mean. When the Gospel goes forth, some people look mean. You can tell they do not want to hear it.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 says: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The writer said the fear of God and keeping His commandments is the chief duty of man. This is the reason God created us. He wants to see men on earth have peace and goodwill through the Gospel. That is the conclusion of the whole matter.

We are going to face God at the Judgment. Hebrews 9:27 states, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Perhaps you have read the story of the rich man that went to hell, which is recorded in Luke 16:19-26. Jesus said: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar

named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, [Do not listen to Jehovah Witnesses who knock on your door and tell you that hell is the grave. Hell is not the grave. Hell is a place of eternal fire and damnation.] being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

"And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. [Hell is a terrible place. All the rich man wanted was one little drop of water.] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." May God help you to think about these things.

One Soul Is Worth All Our Effort

Jesus spoke a parable in Luke, Chapter 15, about the man with one hundred sheep. He told how, if he loses one, he leaves the ninety-nine and goes into the wilderness looking for the lost one. I want you to think about that. Camp meetings are worth all the effort and work put forth if only one person gets saved. That is how much God loves you. He does not want you to go to that terrible place called hell.

Jesus said in Luke 15:8-10: "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? [Many of us can relate to that in many different ways. If you were to lose your keys or your wallet around the house, you would look everywhere you could think of. This little woman had ten pieces of silver and lost one coin. She lit a candle, swept the house, and sought diligently until she found it.]

"And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. [That is how we felt when we got saved. We wanted to tell everyone about it. I remember telling my friends and my family about getting saved. Many of them

looked at me as if I was crazy, but I had found great salvation.] Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

My wife's cousin was not saved. Sometimes I think about her. She has gone on to be with the Lord, but at one time we lived in the same apartment building. As we would get ready for church and look out the window, sometimes we would see her getting in her car all dolled up. She was part owner of a nightclub. Sometimes I would say to myself, "I don't think she will ever get saved." God taught me something: do not give up praying for a relative. God saved her, and she became my "Gospel buddy." That taught me a lesson.

No matter how hard people look or what other people think about them, God can save

anyone. You should show them love and respect. Do not quit praying for them. Do not give up on your brother, your sister, or your children. God can save anyone, but in order for someone to be found, that person must admit that he is lost, and God will find him or her.

When God gives you a wake-up call, you ought to answer it, whatever that wake-up call is. You should be thankful for the truth that you have. Do not take it for granted. Do not be hanging around people who cause your spiritual battery to lose power. You need to stay with the Lord. If you are unsaved, I plead with you, for your own soul's sake, give your heart and life to the Lord. The Gospel on the earth is peace and goodwill toward men.

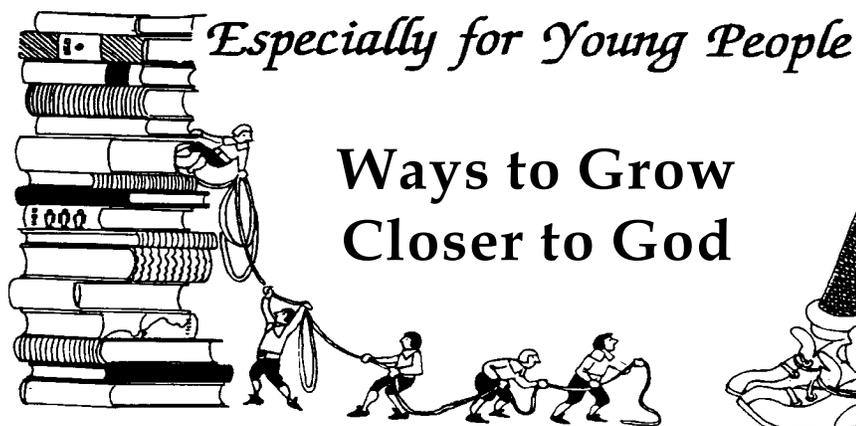
(Compact Disc TR-2133)

The Black Spot

A certain man was asked to talk to a company of businessmen. He tacked up a big sheet of white paper. Then he made a black spot on the paper with his lead pencil and asked a man in the front row what he saw. The man replied promptly, "A black spot."

The speaker asked every man the same question and each replied, "A black spot." That was what he had expected. Then with calm and deliberate emphasis, the speaker said: "Yes, there is a black spot on the paper, but none of you saw the big sheet of white paper. That's my speech."

What do we see? Of course, there is a "black spot." But do we see the big sheet of white paper, which represents our opportunities, our blessings, and the challenge of today and tomorrow? Matthew Arnold wrote of Wordsworth that he saw life steadily and saw it whole. That inspiring phrase expresses wisely and well the comprehensive conception of life which we all need. We see the spots. We see the obstacles, the clouds, and the depressions. But do we see enough? Do we see the heights and the lights in God's firmaments?



I want to share some ways that God has been helping me to grow closer to Him. I find it helpful when people talk about how they study. I have struggled with studying the Bible because I did not want to take the time to study. I could not figure out what to study. Before you study, you should pray for God's direction, and He will show you something.

One thing that I have used as a guide for studying is bullet journaling. When you open bullet journaling, instead of lines it has little bullet points, or little dots. During the week, I would take a word, such as faith, and write down questions or definitions to study or find stories and put them together. One person read the Books of the Bible, so each time he read through a Book, he colored it. This is a simple method that helps you to remember. Writing down what I studied helps me to remember them later.

Another way to study is Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer (SOAP), which is an acronymic method that helps you to visualize what you are studying. Sometimes when you read a chapter, some of it may not make sense to you, so for the first letter "S," you write down one verse that speaks to you. Next, for the letter "O," you write what stands out to you the most about the verse. For the letter "A," which stands for how you apply this verse to your life, you can write down

how you live in the light and truth of that Scripture. Last, for the letter "P," you pray about it and ask God to help you apply it to your life.

Sometimes you may not have to read a lot of Scriptures in the morning. However, if you just read your daily Scripture and go through this method, you can apply it to your life for that day. Sometimes I do not know what I should study, and that is when prayer comes in. I ask God to help guide me to something. When I really pray about it, He brings something to me.

As I sit in church, often I will hear something in a message or a song, whether it is a phrase or a word that I write down. During the following week, I try to study it. For example, a while back a group of men sang, "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning." I really did not know what that song meant when I listened to it, so I wrote down the title and looked up the history behind the song. The Lord helped me to understand what they were singing about.

You can learn the history behind songs, learn who wrote them, and learn what the writer was going through. You can download an Evening Light Songs hymnal app on your cell phone, and then you can always have the songs with you. If you do not know what to study, you can select one of those songs and learn what the author was going through at

the time it was written.

Another thing that God has impressed upon me to do is to listen to godly music. I used to do other things in the morning while getting ready, and sometimes I would fall behind schedule, but one day God pressed me to turn on Christian music instead. Doing that helped me to turn my mind toward God. If you turn on movies or videos, you can lose sight of what your devotional was about. Why not go to work or school with God and His music on your mind?

Another thing that I recommend is a thankful chart. I have always heard my parents say that they should write down all the things God has done for us. God gave me the idea to make a Google document and type each day what God does for me, and I enjoy doing this. A friend said, "Let's do it together." Honestly, I wanted to do it by myself, but God was working through my friend because we remind each other. It is nice to see what God is doing for other people in your life. I recommend doing a thankful chart with someone else. You can also get a journal and start writing things down. It is good to look back and see what God has done for you.

Another thing God showed me is that I can listen to messages while I do other things. They are provided online for us. Sometimes I listen to the messages while I do my laundry, and they are very helpful.

God has shown me not to hesitate when I feel Him tugging at me to read and pray. I would not want Him to hesitate in answering my prayer. One morning I woke up at 5:00 a.m. and did not know why. I was lying there and could not go back to sleep. A little voice said: "Go type up your lesson." I went to use my dad's computer, but he was using it, so I thought I could just go back to sleep. Again, a little voice told me to get up and type it, so I typed it on my phone. It is always best not to hesitate when God speaks to you. Sometimes talking to others is out of my comfort zone, but I have found that it is best not to hesitate when God tells me to go talk to someone. It will get easier if you do it right away.

I started praying on my knees at home. I would suggest that whenever you have time, get on your knees to talk to God. It is

very humbling. You can talk to God on car rides, whether you are riding by yourself or with your family. Before you go to work or school, beginning your day right by talking to God is best.

Memorizing Scriptures is something that I do not do very well. One thing I have found helpful is to find a picture with a Scripture on it, take a screenshot of it, and set it as my locked screen on my cell phone. Every time I get on my phone, before I open it, I say that Scripture and where it is found in the Bible. That has been very helpful to me.

In my walk with God, sometimes I have struggled to get closer to Him. I have talked to God and asked Him to help me every day to want to get closer to Him. He is giving me a greater desire to get closer to Him and helped me to make a habit of reading and praying. I read a while back that it

takes thirty days to create a habit. With that knowledge I knew I needed to keep reading, so I started reading in the mornings. I did not want to because often I was rushed, but I knew I had to stop and do that. I had to get into that habit. Whenever you have spare time, why not read the Bible and pray, even if it is just for a few minutes? Reading God's Word and praying will help you to get closer to God. Sometime back I heard the saying, "The closer you get to God, the more you will hear Him." This is one reason that you should strive to get as close to God as you possibly can. Knowing God personally takes effort and time. Jesus gave His life for us so that we could live in Heaven forever. I think it is something little for us to give Him our time and effort.

Sister Emilee Presley

SEEING THE GOSPEL

"Have you ever heard the Gospel?" a missionary man asked a Chinaman.

"No," was the reply, "but I have seen it. I know a man who was the terror of the whole district. He was at times as fierce as a wild animal and was also an opium smoker. When he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, he became quite changed. Now he is meek and no longer wicked and has given up smoking opium. I can see by that, that the Gospel and the service for Jesus are good."

Someone has said: "Lamps do not talk, but they illuminate. Lighthouses make no noise, but they give light."

Thus, the walk of a Christian must be a living sermon. Actions speak louder than words.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Matthew 14:22 And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

23 And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

24 But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them,

walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

28 And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

29 And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

30 But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

31 And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

32 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

33 Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

Are You Willing to Step Out of the Ship?



Brother Earl R. Borders

Spiritual Principles

As we commence consideration of this passage, we must recognize that it reveals a host of spiritual principles. This text of

Scripture was preserved not only for historical merit but also for the spiritual truths and the principles that it portrays. I want you to look at the principles that enabled this lesson to occur. This is

a unique passage, as it is recorded only in the Gospel of Matthew. Also, it is relating an event that never occurred subsequent to this occasion. It stands singular and unique, both in the

canon of Scripture and in the history of man.

First, we must recognize the audience. They were the participants, and they were there when this event occurred. In verse 22 of our Scripture text, we see a picture that relates to discipleship, and we must keep that in mind. This is not something crafted for the unbeliever, but it is speaking to those who are disciples of Christ.

There are five preceding principles. The first one is portrayed very clearly in verse 22: "And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away." The first principle we see depicted is this: in order for the divine to occur, one must follow divine direction. Had the disciples not entered the ship and set sail, this event would not have occurred. I am of the persuasion that God would like to see more divine events occur, but because individuals fail to follow divine direction, some events are hampered.

Verse 24 of our Scripture text states, "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea." The disciples followed divine direction. This has been a benchmark throughout the Scriptures. In 2 Kings, Chapter 3, the Prophet Elisha was called in because the king of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom were getting ready to go up against the king of Moab; however, they made a disastrous error in judgment. They went to a place where there was a severe drought, and they were unable to provide the necessary provisions; therefore, they inquired of the Prophet Elisha.

In 2 Kings 3:16-18 Elisha told them: "Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled

with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." Elisha said to make the valley full of ditches. No doubt, those men were very thirsty. Their lips might have been parched and their energy might have been waning. If they wanted to see divine intervention, they had to follow divine direction.

Elisha also told them a very startling thing in verse 17. He said, "Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water." Why did he want them to dig ditches? If they were going to have water, they were going to need somewhere to put it. God was going to make sure they had such a supply that they would need to have somewhere to store it. Therefore, they followed divine direction, and it happened just as the Lord said it would.

Following Divine Direction

In 2 Kings, Chapter 4, we find a widow whose sons were going to be seized by a creditor, so she appealed to the Prophet Elisha. In verses 3-5 Elisha, speaking to the widow, said: "Go, borrow three vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out."

In order for a divine manifestation to occur, the widow had to follow divine direction. In both of these cases, the divine direction came from a man of God to whom God gave the Word of God. We live in a day when

many people think they have no accountability and no responsibility. They think pastors are just like anyone else. No, pastors are not just like anyone else. We must recognize God's ordained avenues to operate; that is how God works.

In 2 Kings 5:10-11 we can read about Captain Naaman, the head of the Syrian army, who went to Elisha with a leprous condition. It states: "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. 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." When Naaman got to a place where he obeyed divine direction, God cleansed his leprosy.

Throughout the ages, it has been a prerequisite that for the divine to occur, those involved must follow divine directions. In the New Testament, consider the words of Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus, when He was talking to Martha. John 11:39 tells us, "Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: [Some people do not listen to what the Lord has to say because they are afraid. My friend, God has a purpose for all that He does.] for he hath been dead four days."

Jesus got the news in ample time to have been there before Lazarus died, but He chose not to. The Jews had a belief that when a man died, his spirit would wander around in the tomb for three days to try to re-enter the body, and the man was not really dead until the fourth day; therefore, Jesus waited until the fourth day. He wanted them to know that Lazarus was really dead. At Jesus' command, they

rolled away the stone. Verse 43 reads, "And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." Had Jesus not said "Lazarus," He would have emptied the whole graveyard. Again, we find that in order for the divine to occur, those involved had to follow divine direction.

In our Scripture text, we find that those involved in this account were the disciples. The word in Latin for disciple is *discipulus*, the same word from which our English word discipline is derived. In reality, a disciple is one who is committed to following the discipline of Jesus Christ. We live in a time when discipline is not a favored word. Our schools no longer have the discipline they ought. Our streets and many homes do not. The church is composed of disciples who are committed to the discipline of Jesus Christ. These brethren were committed to Jesus. He told them to get into a ship, and in verse 24 we read that the ship was in the midst of the sea, which lets us know they obeyed.

Dealing With Difficulties

What is the second principle that we see portrayed? Discipleship may present you with difficulties. The enemy would like you to be of the persuasion that if you are obeying the Lord and following divine direction, everything will be smooth sailing, so to speak. However, our Scripture text illustrates that Jesus sent the disciples into a storm. He knows the end from the beginning; He is the Alpha and Omega. Following divine direction may send you into a storm, yet it is still the right place to be and the right thing to do.

I want you to notice that verse 24 tells us the ship was tossed with waves and the wind was contrary. Ephesians 4:14

talks about the winds of doctrine, and Isaiah talked about the wicked being like the troubled sea. If you start following divine direction, you may find that you get embroiled in the middle of having to deal with some wicked religious people who are caught up with the winds of doctrine. If you cross them, you will find that they are contrary.

Following divine direction may put you in a position contrary to what is going on in the world or in the midst of the religious babel about us. Peter spoke of this in 1 Peter, Chapter 4. He used another analogy, but the principle is the same. In 1 Peter 4:12-13 he stated: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice."

Not many people say, "I want to thank God for that fiery trial." You do not rejoice in a fiery trial because of what it is. You rejoice because of what it accomplishes. It works patience, and patience gives you experience. Our light affliction works for us. Peter spoke of the fiery trial which is to try you. It is a different analogy but the same principle.

Isaiah 57:20 reads, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." When people start bringing up mire and dirt, it should help you to identify who you are dealing with: the wicked. The wicked are going to assail the ship. As Peter said, do not think that a strange thing has happened to you. Look at what Jesus said concerning the Apostle Paul, even before he was converted, when he was yet called Saul of Tarsus. In Acts 9:16 Jesus said, "For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."

Jesus did this more than once. Acts 20:22-24 reads: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the

things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me." Paul went on to say that he wanted to finish his course. If you are not careful, you will want to alter your course. Paul did not say, "I want to alter my bonds and afflictions" or "Maybe I should go in a different direction." No, he said, "But none of these things move me."

Isaac Watts penned the song entitled "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" In verse 2 he wrote these famous words: "*Must I be carried to the skies On flow'ry beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize, And sailed through bloody seas?*" Discipleship will present difficulties.

Christ Appears in Unconventional Ways

In verse 25 of our Scripture text, I want you to notice that it tells us, "And in the fourth watch [between 3 o'clock and 6 o'clock in the morning] of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." What does this reveal? It reveals the third principle, which is that Christ may come to you at a most unexpected time or in a most unexpected way. He went to the disciples in the fourth watch of the night, which was a very unexpected time. Throughout the Scriptures, many times Jesus came in the still hours.

Let us read a few accounts in the Old Testament when God spoke to some at unexpected times. In 1 Samuel, Chapter 3, it tells about a young lad named Samuel, whose mother had given him to the Lord. He worked in the temple with Eli. Verses 3-4 read: "And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am

I." Samuel laid down to sleep in a very quiet hour in the midst of the night.

In 1 Kings, Chapter 3, we find another occasion recorded of Solomon. Verse 5 tells us, "In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." He asked for an understanding heart, and God gave him wisdom that surpassed any man up to our present date, with the exception of Jesus Christ. When did he receive that? It was in a dream by night. There are other Scriptures, and we could look in many places, but I want to establish a point. Concerning the Prophet Elijah, in 1 Kings 19:5 we read, "And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him." When? It was as he slept.

In the New Testament, when Peter was in prison and Herod had already slain James with a sword, we read in Acts 12:6, "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping." Peter was to be executed the next day, yet he was sound asleep. Isaiah 26:3 speaks of having perfect peace. I believe Peter had it. He must have been a very powerful preacher because verse 4 tells us they had four quaternions of soldiers (sixteen soldiers) to guard him, and yet he walked out with all those soldiers around him.

Revelation 19:6 tells us that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." God still reigns and rules in the affairs of men. Isaiah 40:22 states, "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth." The Lord still puts men up and puts men down, and He is still in control. Some things may look out of control to you, but nothing is out of control with God. He has it all under control.

Verse 25 of our Scripture text reads, "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." No one had ever done that before, and no one

has ever done that since. Jesus appeared in a most unconventional way. If you study Christ, you will find that many things He did were not what we would call conventional. The Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush. The fact that a bush was burning was not that strange, but this bush was not being consumed. That is what attracted Moses' attention.

People sometimes ask, "How could someone go to hell and the body not be burned up?" The same way the burning bush did not burn up. Jesus said in Matthew 19:26, "With men this is impossible; but God all things are possible." Exodus 3:4 tells us, "God called unto him [Moses] out of the midst of the bush."

Another occasion was when Joshua was trying to determine what battle plan should be used to conquer Jericho. Joshua stood there, and suddenly he saw a man with a sword drawn in his hand and asked, "Are you for us or against us?" He said, "I am the Captain, son; come get in line," and he appeared as the Captain of the host of the Lord. That is what theologians call a pre-Christian era appearance of Christ. It was Christ that Joshua got a vision of. Christ appeared in an unconventional way to Moses in the burning bush, to Joshua as the Captain, and in our Scripture text He came walking on the water.

"Bid Me Come Unto Thee"

Again, the third principle that we see in conjunction with this is that Christ may come in a most unexpected time and in a most unexpected way. Verse 26 of our Scripture text reads, "And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear."

The fourth principle is, you may initially misunderstand the

approach of Christ. The disciples did when they said, "It is a spirit." Samuel misunderstood initially in 1 Samuel 3:3-10. When Samuel heard the voice of the Lord, he thought it was Eli. In essence, he said, "What do you want, Eli?"

Eli said, "I did not call you."

Samuel went back to bed and heard his name called again. He got up and went back to Eli. Again, Eli said he did not call him. The third time this happened, Eli told Samuel that the next time he heard that voice, say, "Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth." Samuel went back to bed and heard his name called again, so he responded as Eli had instructed him. Eventually Samuel got the message, but initially he misunderstood.

The first time the Lord appears to you, you might misunderstand. I do not believe you ought to pray when you definitely know the will of God. That is when you are setting yourself up for the error of Balaam. However, there will be times that you are not quite sure of what the will of God is. Maybe you are unsure of what you are hearing, unsure of what you are seeing, or unsure if it is the Lord, so you may initially misunderstand. What is the lesson? Do not distress and dismiss what you hear or see, but inquire. Samuel inquired and Joshua inquired, and both ended up receiving a divine revelation and great victory.

Verse 28 of our Scripture text reads, "And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Peter was a fisherman and an experienced seaman. In his seafaring career he had encountered storms, and no doubt, he had seen men lose their lives and become lost at sea. Yet Peter asked to do what no one had ever done before when he said, "Bid me come unto thee on the water." This begs the question,

which is the next principle portrayed in this passage: Are you willing to ask for what no one has asked for previously? Peter was, and many down through the ages have. Caleb asked of Joshua, when he was eighty-five years of age, "Now therefore give me this mountain" (Joshua 14:12). He said, "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Joshua 14:11).

John Knox, one of the leading figures of the Scottish Reformation, prayed this famous prayer: "Lord, give me Scotland or I die." He prayed this daily, and he was used of God to bring the tide of reformation to Scotland in the late 1540s. He was so powerful and so mightily used of God that Mary, Queen of Scots, also known as Bloody Mary, said these words: "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the armies of England." Why? John Knox was asking for something that had never been asked for before. He wanted reformation to come to Scotland, and it did.

History is strewn through the pages with others such as George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, and Faith Stewart. When Faith Stewart went to many of the missions, she had no pledged support at all, and she never took a salary in her life. Are you willing to ask God for what no one has asked for before?

Being Too Complacent

Now let us consider the personal principles, and there are five of those. First, you must have a desire arise to be dissatisfied with your current position. Many people are too satisfied, too comfortable, and too ineffective. Sadly, in a general sense, people are too content and too complacent. In Zephaniah, Chapter 1, the prophet gave a sober

warning. Verse 12 states, "And it shall come to pass at that time [we can take that as a prophetic application of our day], that I will search Jerusalem [this represents the church] with candles [or light], and punish the men that are settled on their lees [or another rendering says 'settled in complacency']: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil." *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines the word *complacency* as "satisfaction, contentment, self-satisfaction, or smug satisfaction." In some cases, traveling and supporting other meetings has almost become a thing of the past with some people because of complacency.

One characteristic of the Apostle Peter was that he had a lot of foibles (flaws or weaknesses), but he was never complacent or indifferent about anything. If he was in, he was in all the way, even if it was the wrong way. In the Book of John, where they sent word that Christ was not in the tomb, Peter and John headed for the tomb immediately. John got there first, but he stopped on the outside and looked in, but not Peter. As soon as Peter got there, he went right in, leaving John standing at the door.

When Jesus was on the shore after His Resurrection, He said in John 21:5, "Children, have ye any meat?" They were out on a boat, about one hundred yards offshore, and John said to Peter, "It is the Lord." That was all Peter needed to hear. He went right over the side of the boat and swam the one hundred yards before they could even get the anchor up. Peter was never complacent. Can that be said about you? You should not be satisfied with your current position. If you are, you will never do as Peter did and ask for what no one has asked for previously. Consequently, you will not see what

you could have seen. I trust the Spirit of God will challenge your heart.

Again, verse 28 of our Scripture text says, "Bid me come unto thee." Do you have a desire to get closer to Christ or are you content as you are? Peter had a desire to get closer to Christ, even if it put him in a position of risk. You must have a greater desire, as James 4:8 says, to "draw nigh to God." Never has there been a period in the Gospel Day that has had as much light, understanding, and truth as we have in this seventh-seal age of time. Never has a people had more and gotten less done.

God Only Uses Willing Individuals

The old pioneers rode buckboard wagons, walked, and rode horses and mules in doing the work of God. A group of saints on a buckboard wagon would go to the edge of a town and begin singing. By the time they got to the other side of the city, they had drawn a crowd, and then it was time to preach. By this means, they raised up congregations here and there.

I read a book entitled *Pioneer Evangelism*, about Brother H. M. Riggle. He lived in western Pennsylvania and felt impressed to do an evangelistic campaign in that area. He and his wife had just had a baby and started on an evangelistic tour, but the child became ill. Sister Riggle took the baby back to her mother to care for and went back with Brother Riggle to labor. Her mother and the child were also in western Pennsylvania, but it was six months before Sister Riggle saw her baby again. That is consecration.

I am trying to stir up your pure mind. In 2 Corinthians 7:11 Paul let us know that when repentance has brought people to salvation, it gives vehement

desire. Peter had such desire that he was willing to put himself at risk. Remember, the water was tempestuous. Our Scripture text says in verse 24, "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary." Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

The Apostle Peter's desire to get close to Christ put him in a position of risk. The Lord can only use people who have a willingness, even in the face of risk and even if it has never been done before. Have you ever thought about all the things that have never been done before? Someone had to do them the first time. God has only been able to use willing individuals.

Judges 5:2 reads, "Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves." An effective work can be wrought when people willingly offer themselves. Look at Nehemiah during the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Nehemiah, Chapter 11, says much the same thing. Verse 2 reads, "And the people blessed all the men, that willingly offered themselves." The greatest offering you can give is not what you throw in the offering plate, but rather it is the offering of yourself.

Too many times people think they can throw money in the offering plate to get by instead of doing what God wants them to do. Friend, you still ought to do what God wants you to do. Romans 12:1 talks about how God wants you to be a "living sacrifice."

The Lord desires to do as Ephesians 3:20 says. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. You may think big, but He wants to do bigger than that. The Lord desires to do much more than we are seeing accomplished. If you are going to see the work of God

prosper, see your experience grow, and see your community blessed, you have to be willing to step out of the ship. In too many cases, people are doing as old Israel did in Psalm 78:41, which states, "Yea they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."

Getting Past Fear

We are looking at five personal principles. Again, the first personal principle is, you must have a desire to arise and not be satisfied with your current position. Second, you must get past fear. Verse 26 of our Scripture text tells us, "And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear." Many times when the Lord first comes to you, your first response is fear. Perhaps you may think, "I can't do that," but where God guides, He provides.

In our Scripture text, Jesus said in verse 27, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." In Luke 12:32 Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; [There is a spirit behind fear. If you give vent to it, that spirit can get hold of you. That is the reason the wicked man flees when no man pursues him, because he is overcome with a spirit of fear.] but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." What does this verse tell you? When fear is operating, your thinking is not as sound as it should be and you may make moves that you should not make.

First John 4:18 reads, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Peter could not have had fear operat-

ing when he stepped out of the ship, because fear is a faith killer. If you do not think so, just let something strike your body and try to trust God and see what raises up first. Job's comforters will always be around. We have to deal with fear. If God calls a young man to start a work, maybe to pastor a congregation, he has to uproot his family and move them to a new community. What is the first thing that strikes the mind? It is fear. Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." Fear has torment. Peter could not have had fear operating when he stepped out of the ship. Again, fear is a faith killer, and you must get past that.

Pray Specifically

The third personal principle is that you must ask specifically. In verse 28 Peter said, "Bid me come unto thee on the water." In Matthew, Chapter 7, in the Sermon on the Mount, the inaugural message of Christ's public ministry, Christ spoke of prayer. In verses 7-10 Jesus said: "Ask [the answer to prayer is getting what you ask for], and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find [when you are seeking something, you do not quit looking until you find what you are seeking]; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh [that is present and continual tense] receiveth; and he that seeketh [seeks and keeps seeking; these are present tense verbs] findeth; and to him that knocketh [knocks and keeps knocking] it shall be opened.

"Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? [Would that be an appropriate response? Then why do preachers get up and say, 'Well, you prayed for this, but God saw this was better for you, so He gave you that.' That is not what the Bible says.]

Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

You would not give someone a stone instead of bread. You would not give anyone a serpent instead of a fish, and neither would God, but your asking must be specific. Peter was not vague, and neither should you be vague. Peter said very clearly in verse 28, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water."

When Jesus spoke to blind Bartimaeus, what did Jesus ask him? Mark 10:51 tells us, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Jesus asked blind Bartimaeus a specific question, and when Bartimaeus told Him, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Jesus got a specific answer.

Again, you must be specific. Much praying is too vague, or too general. Everyone is not going to get saved. That is the reason God made a place called hell. John Knox said in his prayer, "Give me Scotland or else I die." In Genesis 30:1 Rachel said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." They were specific in their entreaty, and they received a specific response.

Peter realized he could not do what Christ did without divine empowering, and neither can we. Therefore, he asked specifically, "Bid me come unto thee on the water." We must start with having a desire and not being satisfied with where we are currently, getting past fear, and then asking specifically.

Being Willing to Act Alone

What else do we see displayed in our Scripture text? Fourth, you must be willing to move alone. You must get past what others do or do not do. The other eleven disciples were still in the ship. A lot of people fault Peter for faltering, but the other eleven never attempted to step over the side of the ship. This

ship was filled with disciples, but none of the other eleven desired, inquired, or acted. Peter was willing to act alone.

You can see that again in John 21:7-8, which says: "Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved [John] saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits [or about 100 yards],) dragging the net with fishes." Peter was willing to do what no one else would do.

Some businessmen have a slogan that says, "The difference between being successful and unsuccessful people is that successful people do what unsuccessful people will not do." Another rationale they have in the business world is the definition of insanity. The business definition of insanity is doing the same thing over again and expecting to get a different result. Now, if you do the same thing repeatedly, you are going to get the same result. If you do not like the result, you need to change what you are doing.

Peter was willing to act alone, and so must you. You cannot wait on someone else to take the initiative. David did not wait on others to react. In 1 Samuel 17:26 David said, "For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" In verse 29, when David's brother Eliab reproved David, David said, "Is there not a cause?" There is a cause. Therefore, you need to come out of the trenches and be willing to put yourself at risk. Jesus said: "If any man will come after me [to be His disciple], let him [he must] deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Self-denial is the

first tentative of discipleship.

Paul said in his final epistle, right before his martyrdom in 2 Timothy 4:16-17: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." No man stood with Paul, but the Lord stood with him.

You must be willing to stand alone. Young person, you may be the only Christian in your classroom or in your school. Brother, you may be the only Christian in the factory, in the warehouse, or in the office. You may be the only one, so you need to be strengthened to stand alone, as Peter was.

Stepping Out By Faith

If Peter had waited to follow someone else's lead, we would not have this Scripture text. What about the woman with the issue of blood? In Matthew 9:21 she said, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be [made] whole." No one had ever done that before. That was the faith that she authored because Jesus said, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole" (verse 22). You need to be authoring some of your own faith. She was the first one to touch the hem of Jesus' garment and get gloriously healed. After that, Matthew 14:36 tells us, "And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole." Thank God, after her touch, many were healed. Someone had to be the initial one to reach out and touch Him. What if she had waited? Would there have been those others? Someone had to take the initiative and lead the

way.

You have to get past people and focus on Christ and listen to His Word. Look at our Scripture text again. When the Word came, it was single and simple. In verse 28 he said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Jesus' response was one word: "Come." Do you respond when Christ speaks only one word to you? Peter staked his whole life on that. He stepped out of the ship onto the sea that no one had ever walked on before except Jesus, Whom Peter was looking at, and no one has ever done it since. Peter put his life on the line because of one word from Christ.

The fifth and final personal principle is, you must be willing to step out by faith when you hear the voice of Christ. Jesus simply said, "Come." This reveals several truths. You must make certain that you are spiritually attuned so that you can hear the least word of Christ. Revelation 3:22 says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Peter was on the ship, and he was ready to step over the side into the sea. I want you to notice that you must be willing to change your position and leave what is familiar. Do you want to know the reason that more congregations are not being raised up or why more young men are not going out? No one likes to leave what is familiar. You must be willing to leave what is familiar and comfortable. Peter did, the reformers did, the missionaries have, and pioneer brethren did, and we must do what is needed. It is revival or ruin.

Peter was willing to step into the unknown and rest solely on the word of Christ. The work of God is a work of faith. You cannot stay safely in the ship and see the work of God accomplished. Stepping out by faith, Peter forever altered the historical record.

He did what no man had ever done and what no man has done since.

Faith alters history as it did when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, when Naaman dipped seven times in the Jordan River and was healed, when the walls of Jericho fell, and when Peter walked on the water. The miracles go on throughout the annals of time, and much has been written about these miraculous, historic events. What shall be written of our day?

God Works in the Supernatural Realm

I want you to notice that although Peter heard the word "Come," he had to exercise faith. Verse 29 of our Scripture text says, "And when Peter was come down out of the ship. . . ." Notice that Christ did not cause the storm to abate. It was not calm when Peter asked, when Jesus replied, or when Peter stepped out of the ship. Peter stepped into a storm tossed sea. Verse 24 tells us, "But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves."

Verse 30 states, "But when he saw the wind boisterous [after he was out of the ship], he was afraid." We do not find that the wind ceased until verse 32: "And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." Peter stepped into a tempestuous sea. Stepping out by faith may initially put you in a storm, but in the face of it all, Peter had been empowered to perform the supernatural. Following Christ's lead can carry one past what is natural to participate in that which is supernatural.

Again, Elisha told the people in 2 Kings, Chapter 3, that they would not see the wind or the rain, but he told them to make the valley full of ditches. The natural way is the wind and the rain, but God does not always

work in the natural realm; He is supernatural. Often He operates in response to faith. Oh, how Christ wants to see more people step out by faith. He desires to see people do what has not been done before. This was not just for John Knox, George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, Faith Stewart, or even the Apostle Peter in our Scripture text.

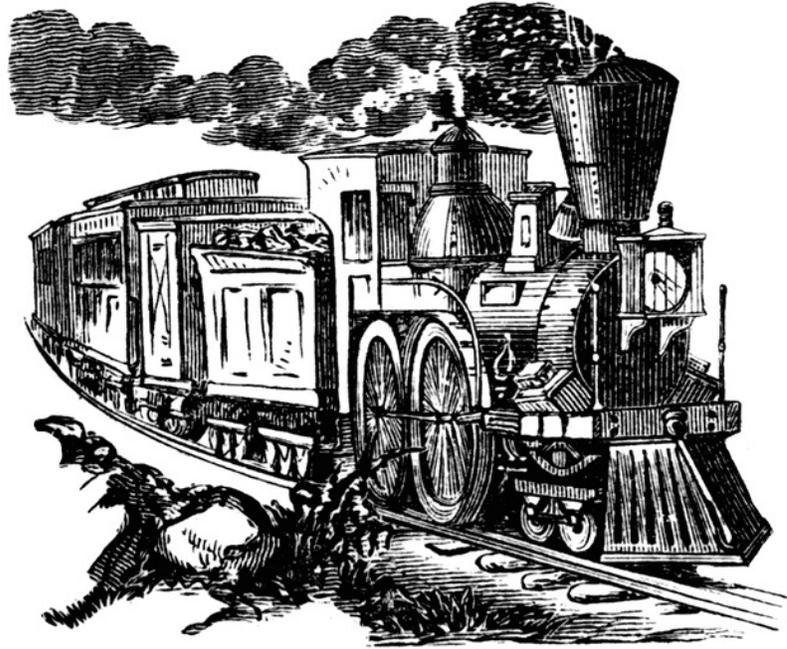
Acts 10:34 reads, "God is no respecter of persons." This is for each of us. If you exhibit these characteristics, you can do a work for God today. The question is, Are you willing to step out of the ship? The preceding principles that you must understand are these: First, for the divine to occur, you must follow divine direction. Second, discipleship may present you with difficulties. Third, Christ may come to you at the most unexpected time in a most unexpected way. Fourth, you may initially misunderstand the approach of Christ. Fifth, you must be willing to ask for what no one has before.

Personal principles are needed to receive what you are willing to ask for. First, you must have a desire to arise and not be satisfied with your current position. Second, you must get past fear. Third, you must ask specifically. Fourth, you must be willing to move alone. Fifth, you must be willing to step out by faith when you hear the voice of Christ.

Dear heart, are you willing to step out of the ship? Nothing notable will happen until you step out by faith. How is your experience with God? Have you become satisfied or complacent? As never before, Christ and the work of God need individuals who are ready to step out of the ship.

(Compact Disc TR-2101)

The Gospel Train



Brother Donald Orr

This Train's Destination

Did you know that a train engine can weigh around two hundred tons? That is close to half a million pounds. Most trains are propelled using diesel fuel or electricity. It is no wonder that they have so many axles on those engines. They are amazing!

We all know that a literal train moves people and goods from place to place. I would like to speak to you about the Gospel train. Sometimes it is referred to as the ship of Zion, a symbolic mode of transportation to Heaven. I am going to be using elements of the song that a sister used to sing titled, "This Train."

I did some research on that song and discovered that the origins are unknown. However, it was first recorded in 1922. Most likely it started in the south.

It was popular in the 1920s, and in the late 1930s it became a Gospel hit for a singer by the name of Rosetta Tharpe. By the way, she is considered to be the grandmother of Rhythm and Blues soul music. The song became popular again in the fifties and sixties during a folk music revival. Johnny and June Cash sang a version of this song as well.

This Gospel train is bound for Glory. The destination placard says "Heaven." When you go to the airport and get ready to board your flight, you look at the flight information display system to make sure that you are at the proper gate for the destination that you want to travel to. Did you ever board a plane and hear a flight attendant announce the destination of the flight and say that if you are not going to that destination to unboard the

plane? In years past, I have actually seen people get up and say, "Oh, I've gotten on the wrong plane." Nowadays they scan everyone's ticket, so people do not have that problem. Buses have a placard that displays the destination.

This Gospel train has one "placard," and it is in bold letters: **Heaven**. It is the only destination. The words of the song "This Train" are as follows:

*This train is bound for glory,
this train,
This train is bound for glory,
this train,
This train is bound for glory,
Don't carry nothin' but the
righteous and the holy,
This train is bound for glory,
this train.*

A Holy Train

First Peter 1:16 reads, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." Some people say, "Nobody can live holy." Peter was quoting Leviticus 11:44, which states, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." If God had commanded holiness and you could not live it, why would He command that? Yes, it is possible for you to live holy, but you must have a heart change. You have to be holy on the inside before it can be holy on the outside. Another verse to "This Train" reads:

*This train don't carry no liars,
this train;*

*This train don't carry no liars,
this train;*

*This train don't carry no liars,
She's streamlined and a midnight
flyer,*

*This train don't carry no liars,
this train.*

Revelation 21:8 tells us, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." You may say, "Well, I just told a half-truth." Friend, whether you want to call it a half-truth, a white lie, a gray lie, or a yellow lie makes no difference. A lie is a lie. There are no degrees of lies. The Bible says plainly that all liars will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Another verse of the song states:

*This train don't carry no gamblers,
this train,*

*This train don't carry no gamblers,
this train,*

*This train don't carry no gamblers,
No hypocrites, no midnight
ramblers,*

*This train is bound for glory,
this train.*

All on board this train are pure and holy. It is a clean train. There are a lot of gamblers out in the world who like to take a chance. They will not be on this train. Why is that? It is a clean, holy, righteous train. First Thessalonians 5:22 says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Some people remark that they do not see anything wrong with this or that. This Scripture covers those things that might be a gray area. A good rule to live by is this: if you have to question something, you should abstain from it. Then you do not have to worry about whether or not you are on this train.

This Gospel train carries no garbage. It does not have any rotten garbage on it; it is a clean train. Also, there are no smudges, no spots, no wrinkles, or any such things on this train. There are no streaks of oil running down the side. No, it is a clean train. There is no hatred, malice, envy, or bitterness on this train either. Another verse says:

*This train is running on the level,
this train,*

*This train is running on the level,
this train,*

*This train is running on the level,
All saints aboard, rebuke the devil,
This train is a holy train,
this train.*

There are no shady dealings on this train. Every once in a while, God pulls the covers back and exposes the shady corruption taking place on other trains. On this Gospel train, there are no shady, underhanded dealings. There are no backroom deals. No, it is a clean, holy train. All that live ungodly shall not inherit eternal life.

This Train Has Unity

I took the liberty of adding a couple of verses. They are as follows:

*This train it carries no drunkards,
druggies, or deadbeats,
this train,*

*This train it carries no drunkards,
druggies, or deadbeats,
this train,*

*This train it carries no drunkards,
druggies, or deadbeats,
All on board live clean lives,
This train is a clean train,
this train.*

*This train it carries no division,
this train,*

*This train it carries no division,
this train,*

*This train it carries no division,
All saints aboard are bound
together*

*This train is a unity train,
this train.*

There is no division on this train. We are bound together by the love of God through the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5 reads, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The Holy Spirit does not dwell where division and strife are working. Where there is no love, there is no Holy Spirit. God is love.

There is not a car on this train for this group over here and one for that group over there. This Gospel train is not spread apart down the tracks for different groups. You are looking at the wrong train. May God help people to get their spiritual eyes wide open to see the many tricks of the devil. This is a holy train, a clean train, and it has unity.

In the *Evening Light Songs* hymnal is a song entitled "Prophetic Truth," written by D. S. Warner. The first verse and chorus states:

*'Twas sung by the poets, foreseen
in the Spirit,*

A time of refreshing is near;

*When creeds and divisions would
fall to demerit,*

And Saints in sweet union appear.

*Oh, glory to Jesus! We hail the
bright day,
And high on our banner salvation
display,
The mists of confusion are passing
away.*

In too many cases, what do we see today? Often we see confusion and division. This is a trick of the enemy. I repeat, this train is a clean train and a holy train, and it has unity. It does not matter where you come from, whether you are rich or poor, what your skin color is, or what size you are, everybody is together on this train.

Only One Door

This Gospel train is the only train that will take you to Heaven. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is found on this train. Mohammad, Joseph Smith, Confucius, Buddha, Reverend Moon, and others have their own trains, but their trains are not going on the track that goes to Heaven where God dwells. Only one true Gospel train is going to Heaven. What are all these other trains trying to do? As the Bible says, they are trying to ride or climb up some other way to get to Heaven. Their train tracks do not lead to where God dwells.

Did you know that you cannot buy a ticket on this Gospel train? As it moves along, the only way you can get aboard this train is as Jesus told Nicodemus in John, Chapter 3: you must be born again. A heart change must occur, called old-fashioned salvation.

What is old-fashioned salvation? Sometimes I think people get confused about what salvation really is. First, you must be sorry for the sins that you have committed. You cannot be saved unless you are sorry for what you have done wrong. If you are not

sorry, what are you trying to do? When you are sorry for the sins that you have committed, next you have to repent. Also, you must have faith in the blood of Jesus to save you. Last, you must turn from your sins. Some people do not turn from their sins. When you turn from your sins, you never want to do those things again. You undergo a true heart change. When I talk about the heart, I am not talking about your physical heart. I am talking about the real you, and only God can change you.

In thinking about the passage in John, Chapter 3, regarding Nicodemus, I thought about three things that Jesus did not tell Nicodemus that he had to do. Remember, Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. First, I want you to notice that Jesus did *not* tell Nicodemus to put some money in the treasury of the church, and then he could have eternal life. Countless numbers of people are trying to buy a ticket on this train with money that is going to burn someday. This world is going to perish, but they try to buy their way to Heaven.

Second, Jesus did *not* tell Nicodemus to shake the high priest's hand and he would earn a ticket to eternal life. Today in our modern world, people are told to shake a preacher's hand and they will have eternal life. No, it does not work that way. Third, Jesus did *not* tell Nicodemus to live a good, moral life and do the best he could and he would have eternal life. Nicodemus was probably already a good, moral person.

How can you get on this train? You must be born again. A change must take place in your heart to get on this Gospel train. No tickets can be bought. There is only one door on this train, and the door is Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Mark 10:25, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a

rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It is a very strait and narrow way. Jesus knows everything. You may put on a good show and fool a lot of people, but Jesus is not fooled by anyone because He sees the heart. He sees the real you.

John 10:7 reads, "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." What do sheep have to do with trains? Well, the sheep symbolize the saints of God, and the sheepfold is the dwelling place of the sheep, or the saints of God.

What Amenities Are on This Train?

I am going to cover just a few of the amenities. First and foremost, there is love. Now, this is not the love that was made popular by the hit song from the early 1970s entitled "Love Train." I am not talking about that kind of love. I am talking about agape love, originating from God for mankind. The divine love of God is on this Gospel train. This agape love will cause you to smile and feel good.

What else is on this Gospel train? This train is not a quiet train. Why is that? There is joy on board. The saints are shouting and rejoicing continually because we have joy and victory through Jesus Christ.

Also, we have peace on this train. I am not talking about the peace derived from negotiating at a bargaining table or a truce between you and your neighbor. That is not the kind of peace I am speaking of. I am talking about the deep, settled peace that only the Christian can have in his heart. We also have a hope. Why? Jesus is the Captain and the Conductor on this train. He is on board.

Another reason that we have peace on this Gospel train is, there are no ravenous beasts on

this train. We do not have to worry about getting molested on this train. It is a clean train, a holy train, and a pure train that has unity. Another verse reads:

*This train is bound for Heaven,
this train.*

*This train is bound for Heaven,
this train.*

*This train is bound for Heaven,
Get on board and escape sin's
judgment,*

*This train is the only train to
Heaven, this train.*

A Unique and Distinct Call

Occasionally a coal train or a steam-fired train will travel through on the tracks here, and you can hear the whistle blow. It is a very unique and distinct sound that echoes through the valley, and it causes you to take note. This Gospel train has a unique whistle as well, and it is blowing. What does the whistle say? "Get on board this soul-saving train while the Spirit of God is calling." Many people have heard the whistle of this Gospel train. Some people heed the warning and the call, and others reject it. This call is not for

just certain people; it is for whosoever will.

You may ask, "Who is on this Gospel train?" The saints are on board this train. Did you know that the saints on board this train used to be gamblers, liars, drunkards, drug users, and deadbeats, and some were dishonest? The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." We all were former sinners on this train, but now in Jesus Christ we are made free to ride this Gospel train to Heaven.

The Conductor, Jesus Christ, is calling, "Get on board!" In the old days, before the train left the station, the engineer blew the whistle, letting everybody know they had better get on board right away because the train was leaving. The conductor would call out, "All aboard!"

The choice to get aboard this Gospel train is yours. No one will force you to ride this train. We are not robot Christians. We are on board this train because we love God and we want to do what He wants us to do. We

want to follow Him wherever He leads us. If you have not been born again and do not have an up-to-date experience with God, you need to get on board this Gospel train and change the direction that you are heading.

As I mentioned earlier, only one train is going to Heaven. What about all those other trains? They are on a track, but their track does not lead to Heaven. Millions of people have been deceived in thinking that the train that they are traveling on is going to Heaven. That is very sad. Many people in the world think they are on the right train. Our job as the saints of God on this train is to shout loudly the praises of God, to show forth the love of God, and to demonstrate the peace of God that we have in our hearts so that others can see the right choice. Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God, and the saints of God are saying, "Get on board." If you are not on board this Gospel train, I beg of you to get on board. All aboard!

(Compact Disc TR-2121)

Meeting Announcements

WHITE PINE, TN
June 13-20

Camp Meeting: Church of God at Douglas Lake, 185 Hwy 25E, White Pine, TN
For reservations contact: Bro. or Sis. Williams @ 678-215-1540
For more information contact: Pastor Roger Nethers. Telephone: 770-206-0786

NEWARK, OH
June 20-27

Camp Meeting: Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055
For lodging/camper reservations, please contact Bro. or Sis. Bush at 740-345-1213
For more information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker. Telephone: 740-344-2543

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.
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 Ave., Canby, OR 97013
Please make reservations in advance, if possible.
For more information contact: Pastor E. David Stegmeier. Telephone: 503-266-9297

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