

The Gospel Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

UNITY & TRUTH

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. 52 January 2022 No. 1



Church of God Tabernacle in Newark, Ohio

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

Psalm 122:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker Editor
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or
items.

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Vol. 52 January 2022 No. 1

Guest Editorial

*"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, and unto the
uttermost part of the earth."*

Acts 1:8

"Ye Shall Be Witnesses"

Christ came into the world to save mankind from the awful bondage of sin. His salvation in the heart changes a person's life completely. The recipient is no longer the same person he used to be. Christ saved us to be witnesses for Him and for His cause. To be an effective witness for Him, a person needs to be empowered with greater strength than that of his own. Before the Savior died, He promised to send His Holy Spirit to the believers. God's indwelling presence in man's heart gives him the power to be the witness Christ desires him to be.

Being a faithful witness for Christ and Truth is so necessary. The world is buried in sin and ungodliness on every side. Our society is saturated with false religions that believe and teach that no one can live without sinning. Many people feel that it is impossible to live a holy life free from sin and corruption. However, 1 John 3:9 tells us, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Being born again from above and possessing the Holy Spirit gives a person the power to live a holy life. Chris-

tianity shines brightly when men and women live like the Savior. Unbelievers may argue about the doctrine, but it is difficult to refute a life lived in holiness and righteousness.

The world needs to see the true light of Christ shining in every place. One old song says, "What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him; What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him; He will bring joy and gladness, Take away sin and sadness, What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him." The world sees Jesus through the life that the Christian lives before the people. A holy life lived in a darkened world is like lighting a candle in a room that has no light; it brings illumination.

Jesus worded it like this in Matthew 5:14-16: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is heaven." Those who are lost cannot see the precious Savior

[continued on page 26]

Acts 8:26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I,

except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water:

and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Soul Winning



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Time of Persecution

If you read the first part of Acts, Chapter 8, you will find that it was a time of great perse-

cution. Verse 3 tells us that Paul (then known as Saul), made havoc of the church. The Scripture says in verse 1 that Saul was consenting to the death of

Stephen. He approved of the barbarous action, and he took care of the clothes of the witnesses that stoned Stephen.

The word consented signifies

that Saul gave consent, which indicated that he had pleasure and delight in that persecution. He was well pleased with the stoning of Stephen and rejoiced in his heart. He joined with the other Jews in it, and he had the utmost pleasure and satisfaction. He got so stirred over the death of Stephen that he went about turning up the heat on persecuting the saints. In other words, he became a violent persecutor.

Afterward, Saul (later called Paul) was converted and became a tremendous preacher of the Gospel. This shows what happens when the power of God works in an individual's life to turn them around. He had a complete turnaround in his life. Read Paul's testimony as he stood before King Agrippa in Acts 26:10-11, which reads: "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."

The Scripture says that Paul made havoc, which means he was out to destroy and breakup Christianity, "entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3). It made no difference to Saul if an individual was a male or a female, he sent that person to prison. Saul witnessed the grace of God in Stephen's life when he died. Stephen died calling upon God and asking that the sin not be laid to their charge (Acts 7:60).

What Saul saw stirred him when he witnessed that man die for his convictions that he had in Jesus Christ. No doubt, some recanted and cried out: "I change my mind! I will do whatever you

want," but not Stephen. Stephen died for his belief that he had in Jesus Christ, and he did not recant. This stirred Saul. Acts 7:58 tells us, "And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul."

Some things about Stephen were very notable. First, he was loyal to his calling. Second, he was willing to die for what he believed. The Scripture says that he saw something that the other men did not see, and that was Jesus, Who was awaiting him. Stephen followed the example of Jesus Christ. In Luke 23:34 Jesus prayed to God for the forgiveness of those involved in His crucifixion. Likewise, Stephen prayed for the forgiveness of those who were involved in his stoning. Last, look at the end of Stephen's dedicated life. He was at peace, while his persecutors were enraged. While the angry crowd was stirred, throwing stones, perhaps cursing and carrying on, what happened? The Scripture tells us that Stephen fell asleep (Acts 7:60).

The Church Reaches Out

Due to the persecution going on, the church was scattered. Those who were scattered preached Christ wherever they went. This expanded, edified, and built up the Kingdom of God. The Scripture says they went everywhere preaching the Word of God. The church was scattered, but the apostles stood fast. Whatever peril was to come their way, they stood against it. They were men of courage.

I read a story of a young sailor or who was being taught how to steer a sailing ship. While he was learning to steer, a strong wind began to blow. Fear began to work on his courage, and the fear was overcoming him. The older man told him: "Keep her face right into the wind; keep her fac-

ing it." That is exactly what the apostles did. They faced whatever danger threatened the church, and they stood bravely. They were good men, and they lived in such a way that many men feared to lay their hands upon them. There was a man who once received a slanderous report and his answer was that he would live such a life that all men would know it was a lie.

The Bible tells us that during this scattering of the church, Philip went down to Samaria. While he was there, he preached Christ to them. The church was beginning to reach out to others. Up until that time, the church was primarily Jewish, but you can see how God wanted the church to go worldwide, so He sent persecution to scatter them. Philip traveled down to Samaria, and the city was half Jew and half Gentile in their beliefs. God used Philip mightily as an instrument to set the city on fire with revival.

Miracles and healings took place, unclean spirits were cast out, and there was great joy in the city, but God was not finished. The church was to reach out further by taking in an Ethiopian eunuch. The eunuch was one who feared God. No doubt, he was tired of the worship of many gods, and he went to Jerusalem to worship.

Persecution did not slow the growth of the church, but rather it propelled it into the entire world. Today I see a great need of the church reaching out to the lost in a much greater way. This was not Pentecost where an extreme amount of souls were coming to Christ, but rather it was one man on a road from Jerusalem just south of Gaza.

God loves every soul. Ezekiel 18:4 reads, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave

his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Power to Become a Witness

Although we live in a different age of time, Jesus is still the same. A lot of people get up and testify to that. Hebrews 13:8 tells us, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Many people quote that verse of Scripture, but do they actually believe it? There are people who come and go all the time. There are leaders who rise to great heights, but they still come and go, yet Jesus remains the same. He is still the Head of the church, He is still able to save to the uttermost. He has an unchangeable Priesthood, and He is permanent. We who follow Him must be led by His leadership. We know that Jesus is still all-powerful.

Before Pentecost, Jesus made a statement which came true. If you read the Acts of the Apostles, you will see that this verse was fulfilled in the believers. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "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, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." I want you to see that this power was going to come to each individual. The apostles had this power, and you can have the same power. Jesus used the words "ye shall," saying they would be witnesses in Judaea, Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth. The word *witness* and the word *martyr* come from the same word *martyras*, which means they were to be loyal at all times. They were to be witnesses at all times, and their lives were to be like their leader Jesus Christ.

In our Scripture reading, we

see that a brother became the instrument of a great revival that broke out and brought much joy in that city. They could not have enjoyed the revival with unclean spirits and devils in people, but as Philip preached Christ, those spirits were cast out and people repented. There was great joy in the city. Philip went from that great revival to seeing one man in the desert. This shows us the love of God. Wherever God sees an honest heart, He is going to speak to that person. Philip did not have the help of the other saints or music or a church building, but he had God and His Word. That was all he needed.

Why did God choose Philip to go out to the desert and speak to a man? No doubt, other members of the church were not far away because they were scattered. Why did God choose the man who was the busiest? Philip was the one who did the preaching at Samaria. Could someone else have gone to Gaza? Others were not as busy as Philip. Why did God send Philip? Well, he was not prejudiced against people of other religions, and the church was beginning to reach out. God was going to use one who had already been proven at Samaria.

Philip was a very busy man for the Lord. Many times God uses those who are already busy. Do you ever think about that? Many times God uses those who are so busy that they do not have much time. When God called Philip, he went. He did not discuss it with anyone; he just went. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Jesus seeks those who seek Him.

Leading a Soul to Christ

In the days of the apostles, they had no church buildings as

we do today. Some commentators have said they did not have any church buildings for the first three hundred years. They met in people's homes. The Bible tells us in Acts 2:44-47: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

In 1 Corinthians 16:19 Paul wrote, "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house." He said in Colossians 4:15, "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house." We read in Philemon 1:2, "And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house." Romans 16:5 reads, "Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ." They worshipped in houses, but what a mighty work for God they did!

You may invite people to church and that may be the last you ever hear from them. The devil may draw them away or give them something important to do, and the conviction of needing to get to the house of God fades away. As a Christian, there may come a time when you have to lead someone to Christ right where he is. Could you do that?

In John, Chapter 4, you can read about a woman who got saved at a well. In Acts, Chapter 16, a jailer and his household got saved. Then in Acts, Chapter 8, you can read about the Ethiopian

in the desert. There are going to be individuals like King Agrippa who are almost persuaded. There are going to be some like Felix who trembled but sent Paul away. Some will believe, and others will not, but that does not relieve us of our responsibility. Some will be like the rich, young ruler who went away sorrowfully after Jesus spoke to him.

We read in Mark 16:15-16: "And he [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God can help us, if we seek His face and get the direction needed in soul winning. Proverbs 11:30 tells us, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

I read something that has to do with abortion. Tim Tebow is a Christian athlete who speaks for pro-life. He speaks against abortion and is quite a speaker. It thrilled me that someone like him would stand up for what is right. He made the statement that he would much rather save a little baby than to win a super bowl. That is quite a statement to make, especially when persecution is going to come with it. I thank God for people who are willing to stand against that which is wrong.

The Great Commission

A commission was given to all mankind in the beginning of

the Bible. Genesis 1:26-28 reads: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

These verses have reference to physically bringing forth children to replace those who have passed on. It stood out to me and could also be applied spiritually. We have spiritual ones who have left our world, and we need to replenish and build up the Kingdom of God.

Nothing is greater than working for the Lord. There is nothing greater than witnessing and talking to someone about God. There may be times when someone will shut you down, but that does not mean you should stop talking to others. There are people out there who want the Gospel. Although this commission was given to the apostles, I believe it is also for you and me. Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We need to

replenish and keep the Kingdom of God built up.

We need to reach out to every soul we possibly can. We need to invite people to church. That is how I got saved. Someone I worked with invited me to church, and God got hold of my heart. Now there were a lot of hindrances. I kept putting it off, but that person kept inviting me. Worldly people would come to me and say bad things against the church, and all he told me was to come and see for myself. When I came out, I found that what others said was not true. Some people may turn you down, but stay with it as the Lord God directs.

Remember, the Spirit led Philip out into a desert and told him to go join himself to that chariot. You need to make sure that you have the Spirit of God active in your life and that you are walking in all the light that you have received, and then ask God to lead you. When you are led that way, you will know that God led you to an individual.

You do not know what some people may be going through. You see the outward man, but you do not know the trouble that they have, maybe in their mind. Maybe they have marital problems, financial problems, or got messed up on drugs. God knows, and He can lead us and help us. Are you up to par for soul winning? Let us work as we have never worked before to get people to Christ.

(Compact Disc TR-2414)

Bending your knees in prayer keeps you from breaking under the load of cares.

Luke 11:1 And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

2 And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is in-

debted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

5 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

7 And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

8 I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity [another translation says 'persistence'] he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Prayer



Brother Keith Wolfe

The Act of True Prayer

Prayer is a need. It is something that is very basic. Someone may ask, "What is prayer?" and "What is prayer's intended purpose?" Prayer is defined as our way of making requests known to God, yet it is so much more.

Here are a few quotes about prayer. One quote by Oswald Chambers is, "Prayer is not ask-

ing, but it is an attitude of the mind which produces the atmosphere in which asking is perfectly normal." Charles Spurgeon said this: "The reality is, my prayers do not change God, but I am convinced that prayer changes me. Praying boldly boots me out of that stale place of religious habit into an authentic connection with God Himself.

True prayer is neither a mere

mental exercise nor a vocal performance. It is far deeper than that. It is a spiritual transaction with the Creator of Heaven and earth." Charles Spurgeon also said: "If you believe in prayer at all, expect God to hear you. If you do not expect, you will not receive. God will not hear you unless you believe He will, and then He will be as good as your faith." That is an excellent quote.

Martin Luther said, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." E. M. Bounds said: "Prayer makes a godly man and puts within him the mind of Christ, the mind of humility, of self-surrender, of service, of pity, and of prayer. If we really pray, we will become more like God, or else we will quit praying."

Prayer is a journey, not so much a destination. I believe prayer is intended to get us to see God as He really is, to see how much He loves His children, and to see how much desire He has to know you and me. It is as much an attitude as it is the words spoken. Prayer is communion with God. It is sharing your needs, your fears, and your circumstances with your Heavenly Father, and then asking for His will to be done in all of them.

Prayer is not simply asking God for things. The act of true prayer itself gets you into a position where God can bless and supply your needs. When you really enter into true prayer with God, you empty yourself out. You leave self-righteousness and pride behind you. You leave your dreams behind you and seek Him wholly. You want His will. You lay aside your desires and seek the things of God and the pleasures of God. You seek to see God as God and hunger to know Him more fully.

Spending Time With God

Prayer is so much more than asking God for a favor. I think some people get the idea that prayer is like going to a rich man who has more than he needs. God certainly has all He needs. Friend, God has all you need if you will take Him at His Word. If you will pray, God can supply every need you have.

Some people think that the idea is to go to God as a poor man would go to a rich man's

gates and say, "Could you help me and spare a little?" Friend, I want you to get a bigger picture of God. Prayer involves spending time before God. It is not simply asking from a rich man, but spending time with your Heavenly Father who loves and cares for you. You should want to share your life with Him. Through the avenue of prayer, God can send a peace that goes beyond understanding. Words fail to express the amazing ability of God. God will meet you right in your prayer closet. He knows the needs that you have.

The older I get and the more I understand about prayer, the more I want to spend time with God and get to know Him better. The many times over the years that I have truly separated myself from the world and have gotten away with God have been some of the sweetest times of my life. Regardless of how hard the problem or how severe the trial that I face, I find strength in getting alone with God. When I get up from prayer, my problems are still there, but God knows about them, and I am convinced that He will help me because He is my Father and He cares about my needs. He cares about your needs as well. He is unlike anything this old world has to offer. Nothing is even worthy of comparison.

Friend, getting in an attitude of prayer takes time and effort. You should not just hurriedly whisper a prayer as you run out the door. Now, God understands that sometimes a quick prayer is all you can manage, but you need to set aside more time. There are twenty-four hours in a day and seven days in a week. You are going to spend time on something. The Bible teaches us to redeem the time, or to buy back that time, and choose to spend it with God.

I remember something that my grandfather, Brother Emer-

son Wilson, said one time. He said that people pretty much do whatever they want. Friend, that is true in every one of our lives. People make time for what is really important in their lives. If they really enjoy shopping, playing golf, watching baseball, or reading a good book, they find time. They set aside other things to make time to do what they want to do. Prayer is one of those things that, if you will dedicate the time, I guarantee you, you will not regret it. If you really pour out your heart before God and allow Him to come in and sup with you, it will be the best thing that you could spend your time on.

Making Prayer a High Priority

One brother used to sing a song that says, "*Pray until you pray, and you will pray the clouds away.*" Have you ever had to get down on your knees and pray for a while before you could get rid of the clouds of doubt, the clouds of trouble, and the problems that were trying to interrupt you?

Have you ever had to keep praying to push past all of that until you found the place where you could really pray and get the results that you needed? You were not going to settle for anything less than the blessing of God. Just as when Jacob wrestled with that angel, you were not going to let go until the Lord blessed you. Sometimes you have to take hold of the horns of the altar, as it were, and hang on so something else does not distract you or draw you away.

I thought of a story about a man who was a missionary in Africa. He had some local boys helping him, and they had gotten saved. They were on their knees praying, and a man came to the house to make a delivery. He knocked on the door, and they said, "Wait; we are praying."

The man became more

persistent and continued to knock, saying, "I have to make a delivery."

Again, they said, "Wait; we are praying."

Then a third time, even more forcefully, the man said, "I need to come in."

They insisted, "You wait; we are praying."

The missionary man said, "I wondered what affect that had on the delivery man who waited until they were done praying. We need to have that attitude of "Wait; I am praying." Life's circumstances sometimes demand our attention, but we need to place a high priority on prayer. Prayer needs to be something that we look at with great urgency.

If you look at a vehicle battery, you will see that cables connect it to the starter. If the battery goes bad or if the cables are loose or the starter is not connected well, there will not be any power to start the vehicle. We have to make sure there is a good connection between the battery and the starter. When it comes to prayer, God is the powerhouse; He is that battery. We are the vehicle needing power from God, and prayer is what supplies that power. Prayer and Bible reading, knowing God's Word and understanding it, seeking God's face, and seeking His will are of utmost importance. You need to pray, "Lord, what do You want from me?" We all are called to be children of God, but we each have an individual call. Let us fulfill that call to the best of our abilities.

Someone may say, "It is the pastor's job to witness." On the contrary, it is the job of every Christian to be a witness. If you are a child of God, it is your job to put on Christ and show Him to the world. You should not be afraid and hide Him under a bushel, so to speak. You ought to tell others what God has done for

you. Most people have enough respect to listen.

Putting Forth Effort

What people should not want is a mere form of religion. A religious form has nothing to offer people. God does not want you to put on an act. He wants you to get the real thing; it is so much better. Do not play around with church and only go halfway with God. You must give God your whole heart. If you will give your whole being to God and allow Him to have His way, you will get results from your prayers. It will be worth your time. It will not be such a struggle anymore for you to find time to pray.

The Bible says that if you seek, you will find. It is a law of God. We all are seeking something. Whether you realize it or not, the world is testifying to you every day that there is nothing out there. If you doubt that, go to the rehabilitation clinics. Many of the patients in those clinics have tried every drug out there, yet they are not satisfied. They start out with a little, and that might satisfy them for a while, but then they want more. They move on to try this drug and that drug. This often happens with Hollywood movie stars.

The devil may get you to look on people of notoriety and think: "Wow! I wish I could do that and have that kind of money and live that kind of lifestyle." Friend, those people are not truly happy. Many of them do not stay with the same man or the same woman for very long. They cannot be happy living as they are. They are not content. They are showing us there is nothing out in the world to really satisfy. They are looking for something. That is an opportunity for you to tell others, "I found something, and I have what you need." May God help you not to merely say words but to mean what you say.

Most people know whether you are fake or real.

It is a law of God that whoever will put diligent effort into finding God and His will shall find it. Over the past decades, scientists and others have made great progress because of their searching. Look at the technology field. From the 1970s until now, much progress has been made. They have dedicated a lot of time and money researching and trying new things. In some cases, they failed, but they kept seeking until they found what worked. After they found what worked, they kept working to improve it. They are never satisfied after finding something new. They want the gadgets of tomorrow.

Friend, if you will put forth the same effort that people put into finding scientific and technological advancements, you will be rewarded as well, but more so. If you will put that same effort into serving God, finding places to move up, finding room for more of God in your life, then that same principle will apply to you. Your rewards will not be something that will pass away in this world, but you can carry them with you into the next world.

Jesus Gave the Example

This message, by no means, is an all-encompassing message on prayer. Each verse of the Lord's Prayer could be a message in itself. The first thing that stood out to me from the Scripture text was that those men wanted to learn how to pray. Those disciples went to the Expert, not just anyone. They did not go to a religious man standing on a street corner. They went to Jesus. Why? They had seen Him pray. Sometimes they were present when Jesus talked to His Father. They saw that He got results, and they wanted to pray just as He did.

Today we need to go to the Expert.

There is nothing wrong with seeking advice from good brethren. Sometimes you may need one-on-one contact and face-to-face encouragement, but when you do, make sure you find one who is walking the walk and not just talking the talk. My grandpa used to tell the story about a farmer that he knew. He said, "This man could tell you all about how to grow crops, but his place was overgrown with weeds." Friend, you need to be careful that the person you ask is spiritual.

The devil may say, "This person is a good example because he talks really well" or "This one has been around for a long time." You need to find someone who is living the entire Gospel and who is doing what he knows he ought to do, not someone who is cutting corners.

If you have been saved for very long, no doubt, you have found in your experience that if you cut corners on God, you will lose your joy. God knows your heart. If you are guilty of trying to find shortcuts, your conscience will convict you, and you will not be happy, so do not try to cheat. You need to do what God wants you to do. You must be what God wants you to be, and you will be happy. If you are happy, you will make those around you happier. If you have your cup turned up and get it full, it will overflow to others.

The second thing I thought about is that Jesus prayed when the disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." What better example than Jesus! He did not start preaching to them. He gave them an example of prayer. Someone may say, "There is power in that prayer." There is because Jesus prayed it. Friend, it is not something that you gain power from by repeating the words. He was not telling them to repeat those

same words and they would be blessed. He was giving them an example. In other words, He was saying, "If you will pray with this attitude, you will see results with God."

I want you to notice how short Jesus' prayer was. There is nothing wrong with long prayers. It is easy to do when you are burdened. Sometimes the devil may cause you to feel that you cannot pray long enough or that you cannot pray as eloquently as another brother or sister. Friend, God is not looking for that. Jesus gave an example of a prayer that was short, but no one can say that Jesus did not have power with God. Do not let the devil beat you up. You need to pray what God lays on your heart.

Come Boldly to the Throne of Grace

Another thing that I noticed is that you need to pray in secret. There is nothing wrong with praying with others, but the Bible tells us God will openly reward you when you pray in secret. You may think, "If I can pray a really powerful prayer in the presence of others, I could really do a good work and help someone." In reality, what you need to do is pray in secret and pour out your heart to God, and He will bless you on the job, at school, at work, or wherever you may be. That is what you should be seeking when you pray. What are you seeking? Are you seeking the blessings of God, the presence of God, and the power of God? We are not sufficient in ourselves.

I do not have anything to offer people. I am always amazed at the little I know, but somehow God blesses, just like the five loaves and the two small fish. God moved and fed a multitude. Jesus prayed to His Father because there was a need, and God multiplied the loaves and

fish and there was plenty for the multitude to eat. They gathered up twelve basketfuls when they were done. That is the power of God. It was not due to the ability of man. Jesus prayed to His Father, just as we pray to our Father.

We can have the same works today. God has not changed. We can approach the throne of God with boldness because of Jesus. It was His blood that made us joint heirs. We can go to God and say, "Abba Father." Without Him we are nothing. It is only because of Jesus' blood that we are cleansed and can come into the presence of God. We can expect Him to hear us because of the love of Christ. Jesus was willing to come and die for you and me. The Bible tells us that He loved us when we were unlovable.

I remember when I was lost. I did not even like myself, but Jesus saw something and said, "Father, if You will let Me save him, We can make him a child of God." Because of Jesus' willingness to die on my behalf, I can now walk into the very presence of God, not shaking or quivering, but He said that I could come boldly to the throne of grace. You may say: "I wonder if God will answer this. I am unworthy." Friend, if you are saved, you have been made worthy, and you are a joint heir with Christ. You can pray through in the name of Jesus. How could He deny you?

God did not spare His only begotten Son. He found it good to send Him to die for us. If He was willing to do that, do you really think that He will refuse to supply your needs? Do you really think He will not give you the grace, the mercy, or the strength that you need to get through your trial, temptation, financial difficulty, or physical illness? God will if you will believe and claim His promises and stand on the promises, and then you will have the victory of God

and the power of God. Friend, it works just that way. Sometimes people have not because they ask not.

How to Have an Effectual Prayer Life

In verse 2 of our Scripture text, you can read that Jesus started His prayer by recognizing the superiority of God. When you start your prayer with recognition of who God is, it is an excellent idea. You immediately start by humbling yourself and acknowledging that God is the Creator of the universe, the One who hung the stars in space, and the One who spoke this world into existence. When He wanted something, He spoke it into existence. When He longed for companionship and fellowship, He made man, and made him a living soul, one who had the right to choose to follow and serve Him.

God is pleased with His Creation. When you choose to follow Him, He is pleased. He made us with a free will. We each have the right to choose to serve Him, and because of that right, we each decide where we are going to spend eternity. God has all power, including the power to save. He is the One whom you are addressing in your prayers. This ought to put you in a humble position.

If you are to have an effectual prayer life, you must be humble and not full of self. Therefore, it is best to begin your prayer by humbling yourself before God. In Luke 18:9-14 we read: "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust,

adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The Pharisee was full of himself, but the publican did not even have the boldness to look up toward Heaven. He simply hung his head and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." What did Jesus say? He said in verse 14, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Sometimes people in the business world, in sports, and in other places think the only way they are going to get recognized is to push everyone else out of the way. If you want to get recognized, you need to stand for God, get in your secret prayer closet, shut the door, and pray. When you are alone with God, you can pour out your heart to Him. You must humble yourself, acknowledge His greatness and His goodness, and thank Him for His mercy, grace, and long-suffering; then ask Him, "Lord, help me to be Your child and to represent You rightly to others."

Friend, there is a great danger in comparing yourself to others. The Pharisee thought he was fully justified because he thought he was better than that publican. You should never forget that Jesus is the standard. He is the model that you are to pattern yourself after. He is your example in all things. Your job is to live right. Jesus will do the lifting up.

Letting God's Will Be Done

If you will be what you need to be, you will lift up God. By living a holy life for God, you are letting your light shine, and that is lifting up God. Men and women will see you and say: "Something has changed about that fellow. I cannot quite figure it out, but something is different about him. He does not get angry as he used to." When you lift up Jesus, the Scripture says He will draw all men to Him. That should be your goal. In order to do that, you must stay humble.

Jesus continued His prayer by asking for God's will to be done. Jesus said as God's will is done in Heaven, let it be done in earth. He meant that you should let God have His way in your life as you live, as much as if you were with Him in Heaven.

I want you to think about this: If God was by your side physically all day, would your Christian walk be any different than it is today? Would your actions, your comments, or your thoughts be different? How different would your life be? Would it be any different? God not only sees and hears everything, but He also records it, and it will all be brought out someday.

I am so thankful that we live in a day of preliminary judgment. Our sins can be forgiven, and we do not have to account for them anymore. I appreciate that. I would not want to meet my past sins at the Judgment. I am glad that Jesus made a way for me to go to an altar of prayer and pour out my heart to Him and accept His saving grace.

After you recognize your own weakness compared with God's great strength, you must see your great need of having God's will done in your life. A truly humble Christian recognizes that he is unable to do anything in himself. If you have the right attitude of heart, you will

recognize that it is in Him that you live and breathe and have your being. It is the goodness of God that allows you to get up every morning, to go about your day and to do the things you need to do.

Friend, it is always best to let God have His way. If you demand your own way, it will end up leading you to sin. Your way is not the best way. The best laid plans can go awry. God knows what is best. It is always good to seek God to see what He would have you to do.

Every day you are faced with choices. Are you going to choose God's way or are you going to go your own way? This is a choice that you must make dozens of times a day. What do you do when certain thoughts come into your mind? Are you going to go God's way or are you going to dwell on a thought that you know is wrong?

God is faithful. If you are not sure whether or not something pleases God, that ought to be enough warning for you to be careful. It would be far better for you to learn this while you are young and unscarred than to wait until you are older.

God Provides Our Needs

In verse 3 of our Scripture text, Jesus said, "Give us day by day our daily bread." The point that I want to make here is that we need to take one day at a time. Jesus said in Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The Scripture lets you know that you should not borrow trouble from tomorrow. It will be there. You should be content and be thankful for what you have and enjoy today.

Psalms 118:24 states, "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad

in it." God is able to provide for your needs. Do not worry about tomorrow. Your Heavenly Father knows that you have needs, and He will provide for them, so enjoy today. Philippians 4:19 reads, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." God has promised to provide all your needs according to His riches. He has a warehouse full of whatever you need.

Matthew 6:25-33 states: "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

We read in Romans 8:31-32: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall

he not with him also freely give us all things?" If you want to get blessed and really excited, meditate on that.

When you were unable to change, no matter how hard you tried and no matter how much you wanted to, Jesus did what you could not do. He forgave you and changed your heart so that you did not want those sinful things anymore. You wanted His way. If you come to Him as a joint heir with Christ, will He withhold anything? In short, the answer is no. If you have a need, God will provide. That is what the Bible teaches. If you are His child and you ask anything according to His will, believing, you will have it.

Claiming the Promises of God

God's promises are by faith, and it is up to you to claim them. If you will believe His Word, you can have it, if it is according to His will. Are you praying as a child of God: "Lord, not my will, but Your will. I am not seeking my will anymore"? The Bible does not say He will give you whatever you want, but He will give you what you need. He promised, and He will not go back on His promises. He will not fail you. Matthew 24:35 reads, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Hebrews 13:8 reads, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He is the Word. He said it, and He will do it if you will believe Him.

In Matthew 7:7-11 Jesus said: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened [notice that He did not say 'it might be']. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a

stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil [or being human, fleshly, or unlike God], know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

I want you to notice that Jesus said "how much more." I love those three little words. Jesus said in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world. . . ." You cannot just read that silently. I think you need to read it aloud to get the full impact of the words. There is power in the spoken Word of God.

When your children come to you with a need, if there is any way possible for you to provide it, do you provide it? Of course you do! Why? You love them, and you want to see them have the best. Sometimes you may work extra hours so you can give your children what they need, and you probably try to supply some of the things they want. Now, how much more would a holy, righteous, loving God willingly provide what you need if you will ask Him for it?

Friend, the point of the message is to pray. You need to pray often, pray daily, and pray hourly if necessary, but pray. God wants to hear from you. It is not that you need to go pray so that you can receive something. That is the wrong attitude. You need to talk to God. He loves you, and He wants to hear from you. I do not mean that you should merely say, "Lord, help me today," and then go on your way. You need to tell Him about your day, your troubles, and your struggles. You need to talk to Him and say: "Lord, I'm having a temptation. I'm struggling with this thought, and I need help. Physically I have this issue." He loves to hear from you.

Have you ever gone to your father or your mother with a

need? A godly father and mother will listen. God is the same way. I picture God as leaning over the banister of Heaven to hear what His children have to say when they cry out to Him. Second Chronicles 16:9a reads, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

The Lord is seeking the righteous so that He can show Himself strong in their behalf. Friend, God wants to fill you with His power more than you want to be filled with His power. God wants to bless you so much that you cannot contain the blessing. That is the reason you need to pray. Also, He wants you to be more like Him.

The Blessings of God

Eventually we will have to lay down the physical body that we have now so that we can go to Heaven and enjoy it. We will get a new body. This one will not work there. In so many words, Paul said it would not be lawful for him to try to explain the things that God has in store for those who love Him. That is what prayer can bring about.

You will be thrilled with the smallest blessings when you really pray and God answers. It will encourage you not to stop there. You will keep praying. That is just the way salvation works. One songwriter said it gets sweeter and sweeter. Another songwriter said, "I keep falling in love with Him, over and over again." What does that mean? It was great to get saved, but when He answers prayer, it is like getting saved all over again. Paul kept telling the story about getting saved, and each time he told it, he seemed to get more excited about it. A light shined down upon him, and it was a great light. At one point,

he said he saw a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun.

There is a story told of Alexander the Great. He had a general that he really liked. As a reward and a token of his appreciation for this general, he said, "General, you go to the treasury, and for any need that you have, you can withdrawal enough to cover it." The general took him at his word. He went to the treasurer and said, "I need this amount." The treasurer said, "That is too much." So the general went back and told Alexander. Alexander contacted his treasurer and said, "Did I not tell you to give him whatever he asks?"

The treasurer replied, "But your Eminence, do you know how great a sum he is asking?"

He said: "It does not matter. He honors me in my kingdom by making a great draft."

Friend, do you ever feel that you are asking something that is too big for God? Perhaps you have had thoughts such as these: "I know God can do this. He can help the car to start, but the washer is broken too. I don't know if God can do that" or "I don't know if God can heal this" or "He is a lost cause. I don't think that one is ever going to get help." God is honored by your faith in Him.

Do you know that God is only limited by what you think He can do? We need to claim more ground for the Lord. God will provide for your needs. He is only limited by how much you pray. James wrote in James 4:2-3: "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." In other words, you do not ask according to His will.

Let us humble ourselves, get self out of the way, and give God the room that He needs. We live in the Laodicean (or lukewarm) age. We live in an age when people say: "We are rich and in-

creased with goods. We do not have any needs." What was the message to the Laodicean church? The message was: "Repent. Come unto Me and get gold that has been tried in the fire." God has so much more for us than we are laying hold of. The power is there. The victory is there. The grace is there. The strength is there. The healing is there. The only thing holding it back is us.

God Wants to Hear From You

We honor God by making larger requests. Jeremiah 32:27 states, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" Through prayer and repentance, I gained salvation, not through any work of my own, other than accepting the mercies of God and believing His Word. He said He would forgive me if I would confess and forsake all sin, and He did. To how many other things are we going to say, "I will try and prove God true"? God help us. There is so much that God has for us.

My whole point in delivering this message is to encourage you to pray. Friend, God has so much for us. He wants to do so much for us. Do not let the enemy tell you that things have to get worse and that things are going to fall

apart. Whether it is in your life or in our country, God is able to change things in a moment of time. Second Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

God is waiting. If you go back and study the Book of Ezra, you will find that Ezra prayed because of a burden. He was brokenhearted about the conditions that he saw in Jerusalem. God moved before Ezra could even preach. The people were going to run Ezra out of town, but before he could preach, he prayed with a broken heart, and God heard his prayer. Because of that prayer, when he opened his eyes, there was a whole crowd of people weeping around him, saying: "Lord, have mercy on us. Let us follow God's way."

A revival started right there because one man humbled himself and prayed. I thought of the song entitled "One Man and God." One man and God are still a majority. Did the situation change because of Ezra's ability? Did he have some extraordinary gift? No, but he prayed. If you

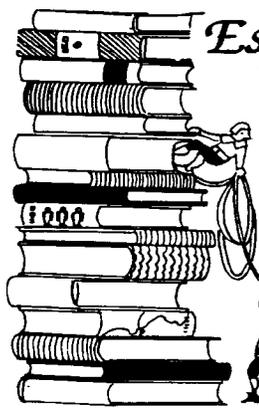
study the Bible, you will find instance after instance of when ordinary men did extraordinary things because of God. God is still able. God wants a personal relationship with each one of us. He wants to save the lost world, but God wants us to spend time with Him. We sing a song that says, "Come closer, My child, to Me."

We are rubbing shoulders with the world day in and day out, and it wears on us. If we do not spend enough time in prayer, it will rob us of our faith. It can certainly rob us of our time more than we realize. In Matthew, Chapter 13, Jesus talked about the parable of the sower, and He spoke of the different types of ground. What was it that sprang up and choked the Word? It was the cares of this life. It was not sin, but it was getting too busy. One older brother said, "If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy." You need to lay something aside. God has been so good to us in this country. He has blessed us so much that it has become a weight to many. Many people are so busy trying to obtain more. It would not hurt to get rid of some things so they would have more time for God. Are you too busy to pray?

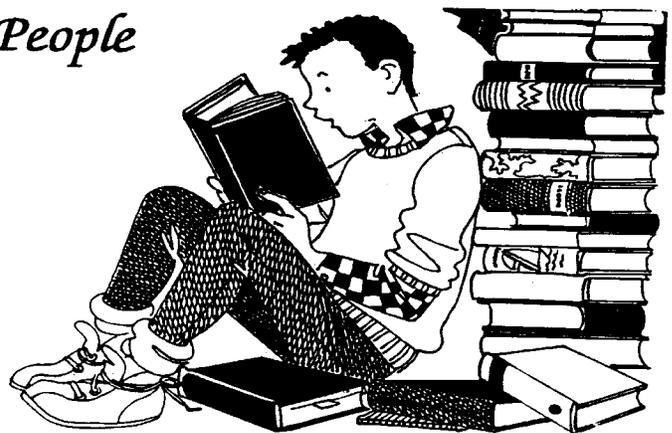
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The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is His delight.

Especially for Young People



Following God's Voice



God knows exactly where you are in your life. He knows your situation and what is going on with you. He knows how to order your steps. He knows when you have an obstacle that you need to step over, or He may have you walk around it. He knows where you are because your steps are ordered by Him.

There are going to be a lot of voices in your life. Someone may ask you: "Why do you dress the way you do?" or "Why can't you go to this party? Just go and don't drink" or "You should go to the party. Just don't dance." Some people will tell you all the things that you do not need to do or what they think you should do.

Some voices can be very convincing. You may meet someone who claims to be a Christian, and a large percentage of people make that claim. However, they do whatever they want to do, and they say God understands. One person told me that he did not need to go to church because he and God talked, and they had their own relationship. He must have skipped a few things in the Bible because that is not what the Bible says.

I thought about the Shepherd. If you study about shepherds, you will find that sheep do not come to just anyone when they are called. If you have a dog and you have trained it to come on

command, it will come when it hears your voice. If someone else gives the command, it probably will not do it.

As Christians, we are like sheep, and God's sheep know His voice and obey Him. One of your peers may say to you, "Hey, let's go hang out." That may sound innocent enough, and you may start listening to that person. Sometimes it is hard to filter out all the many voices that you hear. Today it seems like there are so many distractions and so many voices that you feel like saying, "Give me a minute so that I can hear what I need to hear."

Sometimes it may be hard to hear what the Lord's telling you to do when someone else is telling you to do something different. God is not going to shout over other voices, so you have to stop and filter out distractions and other voices. The devil is not going to keep quiet. He is going to keep doing whatever he can to distract you.

I thought of the song entitled "Voice of Truth." It reads:

*But the voice of truth tells me a
different story,
The voice of truth says, "Do not be
afraid!"
The voice of truth says, "This is for
My glory."
Out of all the voices calling out
to me,
I will choose to listen and believe
the voice of truth.*

You are going to hear voices of persuasion. You are at the time of life when people will try to persuade you. Often the voices of temptation will come to you in various forms. One voice may invite you to drink and smoke or it may be smaller temptations that will lead you to the bigger temptations. You will hear voices of confusion trying to throw doubts at you: "Do you really think you are going to make it to Heaven? Why do you believe that?" If you are not really sold out to God, you will have more confusion and doubt.

There are voices of negativity, gossip, and lies. Then there are voices of reason. After you graduate from high school, you may choose to go to college. College professors will try to reason with you and test what you think you believe. There will be voices of counsel. Often those voices can be opinionated, so you need to be careful about who you take counsel from. If you listen to the wrong voices, they may try to lead you to a completely different career path than what God would have you to choose. You must seek godly counsel. Do not trust every voice you hear. You need to pray and find out what God's will is. He wants you to seek His voice. That is what you want to listen to. God gave you the choice to be a Christian, and He still gives you that choice every single day.

As you seek God, sometimes you may think you hear God's voice, but how are you praying? Are you praying, "God, I want a godly companion"? God may say, "No, not this one; that one." How are you praying? Are you listening to God's voice?

If you walk by faith, you have to listen to God. In your walk with Christ, He may not show you everything right now because maybe you could not handle it at the moment. Have you ever read Corrie ten Boom's story? She went through horrible situations. If you have not read her story, it would be well worth your time. Had she been told where she was headed and what life was going to hold for her, it might have been too much for her to take. Sometimes you might not be able to handle what God has out ahead for you if you knew about it ahead of time. When you have to walk by faith and you get to that moment, you may say, "I really do not want to be here."

I thought about the first time I heard God's voice. Maybe you have not heard God's voice yet. Sometimes it comes as an impression. If you are saved, sometimes you may feel an impression to sing a song. You may feel a little bit of heaviness in your heart and think, "Ok, I think God really wants me to do such-and-such." Maybe you had an impression to testify.

When I was eighteen years of age, I had a very horrible situation that I was going through. I decided to take a drive one day to clear my head. I was pondering many things in my head: Was I to take this path or another path? I thought, "I do not understand what I am supposed to do." God spoke two words to me: "Stand still." God was telling me not to make a decision right then, but to stand still.

As I look back, some decisions that I could have made

would have really changed the course of my life. Most likely, I would not be where I am today had I made some decisions that were laid out before me. It seemed there was not a right or a wrong answer. It just seemed like an option that was better at the time. I think of how important it was as I look back. I might not even be a Christian now had I made the wrong decision. Oh, how important it was to have heard God's voice when I went on that drive! There were no other voices in the car. I did not have the car radio on. I did not have a cell phone at that time, and I was able to have that quiet moment and hear God's voice.

As you seek God, you need to talk to Him about all the decisions that you have ahead of you with high school courses or possibly college. What do you need to take? You have a lot of things to take into consideration. Should you buy a car that is over your budget because you like it or should you stick with one that is more affordable? You might have to pay on a school loan out ahead or you might get married. That more expensive vehicle might become a huge financial burden. There are a lot of things to think about. You have a lot of decisions to make coming up, so you need to make sure that you hear God's voice.

You need to think about how God must feel when He wants you to hear His voice and He is

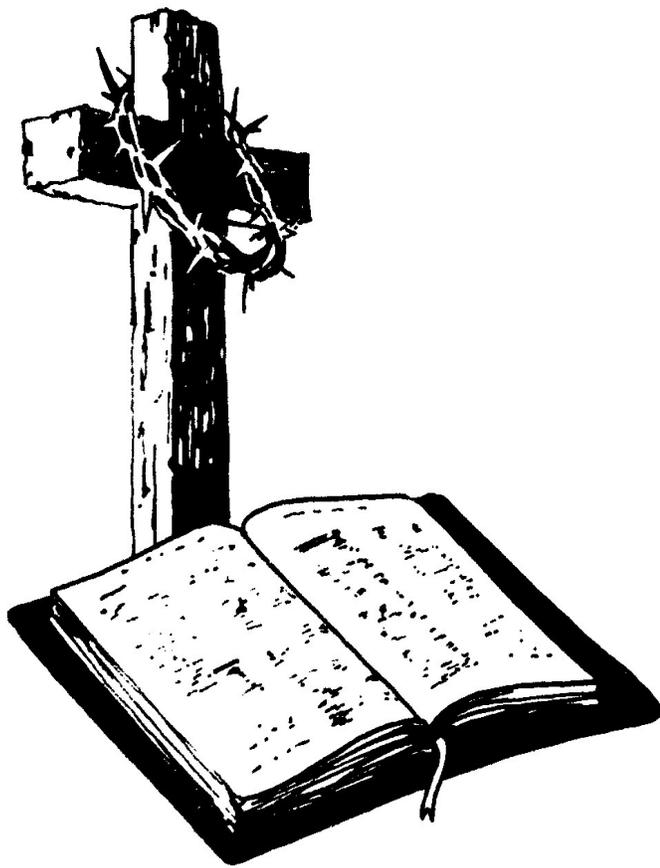
trying to talk to you and you are talking over Him. You may tell Him what you need in your life and say: "I need this. This is what is important to me right now, not what You have planned for me."

Maybe you have talked to others in your life, and they would not have chosen a lot of the situations they had to go through. They were hard and hurtful, but they learned a lot of things. Looking back there are situations that I would never want to repeat, but I grew by going through those things.

As you are going through life, you need to be sure about the voices that you hear. I thought about the song that says, "*His voice makes the difference.*" He is the One who is going to be able to take care of the situation for you. He is the One who is going to be able to carry you through. God sent His Son to die for you. He has your best interest in mind. Hearing and obeying His voice is what is going to make the difference, not listening to your best friend who thinks your best choice is another path. He knows what is best for you. In John 10:27 Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." You need to make sure the other voices are not so loud that you cannot hear the One that is going to make all the difference in your life.

Sister Victoria Miller

The greatest waste in the world is the difference between what a person is and what he could have become for God.



Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

*Follow Us
as We
Follow Christ*

Brother Calvin Foster

Beware of False Prophets

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 the Apostle Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." I want to encourage you to be sure that you follow Christ. Psalm 133:1 states, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" How wonderful that is! How good and how pleasant it is to dwell together in unity! The Lord wants to remind you that you are fighting for your life, spiritually speaking. This is very serious. A good taste of unity should spoil you for division and strife. I love unity better than I do my own opinion about things.

The Scriptures warn about false prophets and false teachers. If a man is not a false prophet, he will not mind hearing something about a false prophet. False

prophets and false teachers are all over the world, claiming to be followers of Jesus Christ.

The word *false* means, "not true or correct; erroneous." A lie is false, something that is dishonest.

Second Corinthians 11:13-15 tells us: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

The devil's ministers are transformed as ministers of righteousness. In our Scripture text, we read that Jesus said that false prophets "come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are

ravening wolves." This is serious. You do not want to follow anyone who is going to lead you to hell. This is nothing new. The early church dealt with this.

The Apostle Paul, speaking to the Church of God, said in Acts 20:28-30: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." I want you to notice that Paul said they would draw many disciples "after them," not after Christ. That is a serious matter to draw away disciples after

themselves.

The Scripture teaches us that these false prophets and false teachers speak lies in hypocrisy. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 4:1-3: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

The Commandments of Men

One of the largest religious organizations in the world tells men and women not to get married. Contrariwise, the Bible says that "Marriage is honourable in all" (Hebrews 13:4). Who are you going to believe? The false prophets, the false teachers, or the Word of God?

One characteristic of false teachers and false prophets is, they are blind. They need God to remove their blindness. Jesus said in Matthew 15:7-14: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

"Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind

leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

The Apostle Paul warned the church not to be ignorant. He said in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." Jesus said in John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." If you become blind, it will not be the preacher's fault. Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." This is serious business. These blind leaders of the blind do not even preach that you can live a life free from sin, but they are very zealous in promoting what they believe.

In Matthew 23:15 Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte [or new convert], and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

I thank God for men of God who taught me the way of Christ. No one ever told me, "Follow me." No, they said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." That made me want to read my Bible, study it, and be around the saints.

There are not many places where you can go anymore where people open the Bible and read it. First Timothy 6:3-5 tells us: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."

Making Merchandise of the People

Gain is not godliness. Everyone cannot be rich and have thousands of dollars in the bank. If you do, praise God, you are blessed. If you do not, that does not mean you are ungodly. Some people may say that gain is godliness, but the Bible tells us in 1 Timothy 6:7-8: "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." You brought nothing into this world and you cannot take anything with you. Verse 6 states, "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

Many people are falling prey to false prophets and false teachers. The horses in the Book of Revelation signify warfare. The white horse is symbolic of the militancy of the church. The rider on the white horse has a bow in his hand, and he is going forth conquering and to conquer. The Church of God is militant. We are on the battlefield for our Lord, standing and fighting for the Truth. The word *prey* means "a person or thing that falls victim to someone or something." When a person gets saved, he may not know anything about the Bible.

We are living in a world where many children do not know the Bible stories that their parents grew up listening to, and they fall prey to false teachers. Some have made the church world all about money. Friend, if you think you are going to get rich preaching the Gospel, you have a lot to learn, because no one should preach for money. In some churches they pass the offering plates, and the preacher says: "This is not enough. You all can do better than this. Take another offering."

Ezekiel 34:7-12 reads: "Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the

Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; 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."

False shepherds make merchandise of the people. Peter said in 2 Peter 2:3, they "make merchandise of you." Merchandise is something that is sold, like goods. Second Peter 2:1-3 states: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."

A True Shepherd

Some treat material things like those things have souls, but

they treat people as objects that have no soul and no intellect. Preachers should treat the people as intelligent human beings and with respect. I treat people with love and ask them to follow me as I follow Christ. Someday I am going to give an account before God of the things that I say and the way that I preach. I am not responsible for how others treat me, but I am responsible for how I treat others, so I am not going to treat anyone like merchandise. I treat people like human beings and merchandise like merchandise.

God has placed offices in the church, and He put shepherds over the flock to feed and care for the sheep. The Bible tells us that we are commanded to be submissive to the shepherd and the elders that He has placed over the church. Hebrews 13:17 reads, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

The Word of God does not imply lordship or human dominion over God's people in a human way. A shepherd is to protect his sheep. A true man of God preaches the Word of God and looks out for your soul. He is very serious about his job. A shepherd cannot protect his sheep unless the sheep are submissive.

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 5:1-6: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief

Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

Today there are a lot of cult leaders. The word *cult* means: "a religion or sect considered to be false or regarded as extremist." The followers often live communally under a charismatic leader. Often a charismatic leader does not tolerate honest questions. Most of the time when you see a religious organization named after a man, a sense of caution should kick in. Instead of praising Jesus Christ and praising God, they praise a man.

Honoring a True Man of God

The Scripture uses the word honor. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." Proverbs 3:27 states, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it." To honor is to show respect. You should never show disrespect for a man of God.

Galatians 6:9-10 reads: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." There is nothing wrong with looking for ways to show gratitude to those who labor in the Word to serve us spiritually. We should give them the honor they deserve. It is a wonderful thing to have a man of God who preaches the Word of God and

lives it.

The Apostle Paul was a true minister of God. He wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-10: "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.

"For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."

Taking Up Your Cross

The most powerful part of the Gospel was when God sent His Son down to live among men. John 1:14 states, "And the Word was made flesh." Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-39: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Do not put anything before God. Do not put family, mother, father, sister, brother, or anyone else before God. Jesus let us know that we must learn of Him, follow Him, love Him, and obey Him. He is the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, and the Living Bread. If anyone leads you away from Christ, that person is leading you astray. I love the words of Jesus. He is our Savior. The burden of my message is for you to beware of false prophets and false teachers, because they want to draw away disciples after themselves.

The Bible tells us in Mark 8:34, "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Jesus said to take up your cross. He was not talking about a literal cross or something that you wear around your neck. He was talking about denying yourself. If you are going to follow Him, you must be willing to suffer and be willing to give your life over to Him. You will have to lay aside the things that you want to do, where you want to go, and maybe even how you want to live. God gives us leaders and godly men to teach us, to keep us on the strait and narrow way, and to watch for our souls.

Mark 8:35-38 reads: "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

(Compact Disc TR-2318)

Looking From the Wrong Side

A minister was once trying to comfort a woman who had passed through sore trials. Failing in his efforts to cheer her and to dispel her doubts, he took up some embroidery upon which she had been working and said: "What a confusion of threads! Why waste time on a thing like that?" Turning the embroidery over, she said: "Now look at it. You were seeing it from the wrong side." "That's it exactly," said the man of God. "You are looking at your trials from the wrong side. Turn them over and look at them from God's side. The Lord is working out a design of His own for your life, and you must look at things from His point of view and trust Him.

Mercy



Brother Donald Orr

Mercy Shown During War

The definition of *mercy* is compassion shown toward someone who is within one's own power to punish or to harm. Mercy can take many different forms. There is mercy toward our fellowman. One can show mercy toward someone for something that person is involved in. Mercy can be extended to you for sin and foolishness. God shows mercy toward the human race. God is very merciful and long-suffering. The condition of the world today and the things that are going on in the world are shocking, yet God is merciful. There is nothing like receiving mercy. There are worldly examples of mercy, and I am going to tell you about three of them.

During World War II, German U-boats were tasked with sinking freighters and other supply ships, based on the theory that the countries with no food

supplies or fuel tend to surrender quickly. That was their philosophy. One night in 1942, the submarine captain of U-156 noticed a rather large ship, and knowing that he was not there to watch ships go by, he ordered it torpedoed and sunk. He was then surprised to find out that it was not a freighter or a military ship, but a civilian oceanliner called *Laconia*. It was full of civilians and Italian prisoners of war. The crew of the U-boat then did something extraordinary. They surfaced and began picking up survivors.

Admiral Karl Donitz, who was the head of the submarine operations, sent other submarines to help rescue the survivors. Even with all these submarines, there were still many people in the water. Then the Germans offered safe passage to Allied merchants who came to pick up the survivors. The Brits were sending ships to pick up

their own people. This was while a war was going on. This was extraordinary, but it was not the end of the story.

No one bothered to tell the United States antisubmarine bomber squadron that regularly patrolled the area. Therefore, one pilot radioed back and reported seeing U-boats on the surface and bombed them, figuring the lifeboats were just a ploy. One bomb landed among the lifeboats, killing dozens of survivors.

Fortunately, the pilots were not totally successful in their bombing attempts, and some of these survivors were picked up by other German U-boats. This sort of thing was not an isolated incident. It was not unusual for U-boats to surface near any surviving lifeboats and pass out food, water, and nautical maps. Though they had specifically been ordered not to do this by their government, they did it

anyway, and Admiral Donitz unofficially sanctioned it.

After the war, Karl Donitz was brought up on charges at the Nuremberg war crimes trials along with his comrades. United States Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz had also been a submariner, and though Admiral Nimitz did not particularly like Karl Donitz, he was not going to sit by and watch his opposite get hanged simply for being good at his job. When guilt was determined and sentences were handed down, Donitz received ten years in prison rather than the customary death squad.

Many defendants that went on trial received death sentences. Their excuse of following orders obviously did not fly. However, in the Karl Donitz case, his compassion for people in the water needing to be rescued was considered in his sentencing, and he was sentenced to only ten years in prison. It is an amazing story of how, even during war, sometimes mercy is shown.

A Pardon Given by President Lincoln

Another story is that of William Scott, known as "The Sleeping Sentinel." He was born on April 6, 1839, and he joined the Union Army during the American Civil War. When his regiment was encamped at the Chain Bridge near Washington, D.C., Scott was on guard duty and was found asleep at his post on August 31, 1861. He was subsequently court-martialed and sentenced to be executed. In Scott's defense, he had volunteered to take the place of a comrade the night before, and he himself was exhausted. These facts were known to the court at the time and figured prominently in newspaper reports, appeals by his superior for clemency, and his subsequent reprieve. On September 9, William Scott was

scheduled to be executed. During the proceedings, after the death sentence had been read, a pardon was read, sparing his life. The pardon was given and written by President Abraham Lincoln.

The pardon read: "Private William Scott, of Company K. of the Third regiment of Vermont volunteers, having been found guilty by court martial of sleeping on his post while a sentinel on picket guard, has been sentenced to be shot, and the sentence has been approved and ordered to be executed. The commanding officers of the brigade, the regiment and the company of the command, together with many other privates and officers of his regiment, have earnestly appealed to the Major-General commanding, to spare the life of the offender, and the President of the United States has expressed a wish that as this is the first condemnation to death in this army for this crime, mercy may be extended to the criminal. This fact, viewed in connection with the inexperience of the condemned as a soldier, his previous good conduct and general good character, and the urgent entreaties made in his behalf have determined the Major-General commanding to grant the pardon so earnestly prayed for."

The soldier was given a pardon right before he was scheduled to be executed. He was given a pardon for an act that, during war, meant death. However, considering the circumstances and those people around him that knew the circumstances, an appeal was made to President Lincoln for his pardon, and he received that. He eventually died later in the war, fighting as a soldier during the Civil War.

An Act of Mercy

The last article that I have is a very touching one entitled "Iran Mother Spares Son's Killer From

Hanging on Gallows" from *The Irish Times*. This is a true account of an Iranian man who was sentenced to be executed by hanging. This article points out the fact that in that country, public execution is the way they do things. It does not matter who is in attendance. There could be children there, but it does not matter to them. Obviously, they execute people publicly as a deterrent to crime.

The article states: "When he felt the noose around his neck, Balal must have thought he was about to take his last breath. Minutes earlier, crowds had watched as guards pushed him toward the gallows for what was meant to be yet another public execution in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"Seven years ago Balal, who is in his twenties, stabbed 18-year-old Abdollah Hosseinzadeh during a street brawl in the small town of Royan, in the northern province of Mazandaran. In a literal application of qisas, the sharia law of retribution, the victim's family were to participate in Balal's punishment by pushing away the chair on which he stood. [You need to understand what was happening. It took six years for the court to hand down a death sentence, and the victim's family put off the execution a number of times. A platform was built where they hanged the convicted individuals. They brought the man out, put a bag over his head, put a noose around his neck, and stood him on a chair. The victim's family was given the choice of kicking the chair out from under the convicted man. This is a common practice.]

"But what happened next marked a rarity in public executions in Iran, which puts more people to death than any other country, apart from China. The victim's mother approached, slapped the convict in the face and then decided to forgive her

son's killer. The victim's father removed the noose and Balal's life was spared. [This does not mean that he was free to go. Possibly, he spent more time in prison, but his life was spared.] Balal's mother hugged the grieving mother of the man her son had killed. The two women sobbed in each other's arms—one because she had lost her son and the other because her son had been saved."

What brought on this act of mercy? The father said that he had a dream that prompted a change of heart. Three days prior to that, his wife saw his elder son in a dream telling her they were in a good place and for her not to retaliate. This calmed his wife down, and they decided to think more until the day of the execution.

Individual Examples of Mercy

We have many examples of mercy being shown. You read about the German U-boat, the soldier who was condemned to die and received a pardon, and this young man who was in a street brawl and stabbed and killed a person. Mercy was extended to each of them.

As I was studying for this message, I thought about individual examples of mercy. Have you ever been pulled over for a violation and cried in hopes that the officer would not give you a ticket? Because an officer pulls you over does not mean that he has to give you a ticket. Sometimes an officer has mercy and people merely receive a warning when they rightfully should have received a ticket.

What about people who have received mercy in court? Some have gone to court for a crime that they were guilty of, and what happened? Perhaps you have heard it said, "Throw yourself upon the mercy of the court." Sometimes that works, but not all

the time. That means the guilty one has to beg and plead for mercy in the sentencing phase of the trial for whatever he has done. If you have ever had jury duty or visited a courtroom, no doubt you have seen that people are not bashful about crying and saying all kinds of things to escape punishment for the crime that they are guilty of.

I read an article about a man who was a judge, and a shoplifter came before him. The girl was guilty of shoplifting, so he talked to her and said: "You have been in my courtroom before. Do you know what? I'm going to have mercy on you. Basically I am going to slap you on the wrist. I don't want to see you in this court ever again, because if you come back before this court, I am going to throw the book at you. I want you to make something out of your life besides stealing stuff." He showed mercy when she was guilty.

If you have children, how many times have you corrected them and they wailed and cried and asked for mercy for whatever they did? Maybe you showed some mercy for whatever they did. Maybe you showed some mercy and did not correct them as harshly as you had intended. You showed a bit of compassion. Why? Perhaps you can see yourself in your children. Obviously, children still need correction. I am not taking away from that. Mercy is given to us many times in life.

I thought about some Bible examples of mercy, and there are many of those. What about the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus? The one thief came to himself and realized that Jesus was not acting like they were. No doubt, He saw what was written over His head: "King of the Jews." He saw the crowd and knew this was not a simple crucifixion. One of the thieves did not have a repentant attitude. The

other thief did, and he received mercy at the last hour.

David's Mercy on Mephibosheth

What about the story of Jonathan's son in 2 Samuel, Chapter 9? There you can read how David showed mercy on Mephibosheth, which was Saul's grandson. Back in those days, when another king arose and assumed the throne, he would do away with anyone that could potentially disrupt his reign on the throne, and so anyone left of the previously reigning family was killed. The reigning monarchy did not want any opposition or power to rise from any side.

After King Saul committed suicide and David began to reign, a period of time passed. We read in 2 Samuel 9:1-8: "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar.

"Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence [he was lame on his feet because a maid dropped him as they were trying to escape, and it crippled him]. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he an-

swered, Behold thy servant [Mephibosheth was very humble at this time because he probably thought David was bringing him there to kill him]! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?"

Mephibosheth recognized that he was nothing. He was lame, and he undoubtedly felt worthless. Verse 13 says, "So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet." David had a heart after the heart of God. He extended mercy and compassion, which are characteristics of God, to someone that he did not even have to acknowledge. He even restored to Mephibosheth the land that was previously Saul's. It is an amazing story of mercy that David extended to Jonathan's son. It shows the character of David.

A Pardon for Sin

When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:7, He said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." In Luke 6:36 Jesus said, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." The Jews had a hard time with extending mercy toward one another. You do not have to read very far to see that for the Jews it was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That was prevalent in the Jewish culture. Since the whole concept of showing mercy to one another was odd to them, Jesus, preaching the Sermon on the Mount, told them, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

Jesus is our example in all

things. He went around doing good. I thought about the fact that Jesus had the power to punish those who abused Him, mocked Him, and lied about Him. What happened? Jesus showed them mercy. He showed mercy to all those who put Him on the Cross. He had all power, yet He went to the Cross. He suffered and died so that He could show mercy to the repentant thief. Think about that. Jesus showed mercy to all mankind from that point forward. He is sitting on the mercy seat right now, keeping the wrath of God from consuming us.

I am glad that one day, back in 1989, I made the decision to accept the mercy that was offered to me, the forgiveness of Jesus. No one else could supply the mercy and the forgiveness for my sins. My parents could not fill that spot, and my friends could not fill that spot. Jesus Christ is the only One who could fill the spot of mercy that I needed for my sins. Jesus Christ alone gave me a pardon for sin. Just as William Scott had a death sentence, I had a death sentence too, but Jesus gave me a pardon so that I do not have to die spiritually. I was guilty, but a pardon was offered, and I accepted it. Praise the Lord!

That pardon is offered to every soul. You can make the best choice ever, and that is to accept a pardon for your sins. Having mercy offered to you is wonderful. Being able to escape punishment for sin is a glorious thing. You can escape the punishment for your sins by accepting that pardon.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

Now to the most sobering thought of the message. I want you to think about the absence of mercy. There is coming a time when there will be no mercy. Many people think they can bar-

gain with God when they reach the Day of Judgment. Some people think their good deeds are going to outweigh the bad deeds.

In Matthew 7:22 Jesus said, "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?' God knows exactly where you are in your life. He knows your situation and what is going on with you. He knows how to order your steps. He knows when you have an obstacle that you need to step over, or He may have you walk around it. He knows where you are because your steps are ordered by Him.

Jesus stated in Matthew 25:31, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." Hebrews 9:27 reads, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Matthew 16:27 states, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Revelation 20:12 tells us, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

John 5:22 reads, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Jesus Christ will move from the mercy seat to the judgment seat. Romans 2:16 states, "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

Has God ever shown His wrath? Has He ever shown judgment? The answer is yes. What about the Flood? Both mercy and judgment were shown at the same event. Mercy was shown because Noah preached for more than one hundred years to warn the people that a flood was coming; judgment was coming. God showed mercy by having Noah warn the people, but when God shut the door of the ark, judgment began. It was not an act of man; it was an act of God.

Have you read the account of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Book of Genesis? God was willing to spare that city for the sake of ten righteous people, but what happened? God could not even find ten righteous people in the city, yet He was merciful to Lot and part of his family for Abraham's sake. As soon as they were out of the area, God rained down fire and brimstone and destroyed those wicked cities. This is another account of both mercy and judgment shown.

In Acts, Chapter 5, you can read about Ananias and Sapphira. There are times when God dispenses immediate judgment. Ananias and Sapphira knew better than to lie to God. When that sin was exposed, both of them died, not by any man's hands, but God pronounced judgment upon them.

There are many examples in the Bible of times when God was unhappy with people. In the Old Testament, you can read the account of a group of children who mocked and made fun of Elisha, saying, "Go up, thou bald head; go up thou bald head" (2 Kings 2:23). What happened? Two she bears came out of the woods and tore to pieces forty-two of the children.

A Time of No Mercy

The question is, When will mercy be over? Mercy will be

over at the end of time. No one knows when he will take his last breath. It is a sobering thought, and most people do not want to think about it. They do not want to spend energy thinking about the fact that they are one breath or one heartbeat away from eternity. Sinner friend, you are only one heartbeat away from no mercy. It is a very sobering and serious thought. I thought about the fact that God is not mocked. Many times in the course of history, people have thought that they could get away with certain things, but God is not mocked.

In the terrifying thought of no mercy being given at the Judgment, think about this. When you go to the Judgment, it will not matter what you say. If your name is not recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, you will not make it into Heaven. This may be hard to reason in your mind because human reasoning is always there. Mercy is all around us, or at least the possibility of mercy. For example, you may think, "Maybe this person will give me a break" or "The boss will not make me do that" or "He will take pity on me because I am not feeling well today" or "I hope the officer will let me go if I cry."

Throughout our lives, we experience mercy, but one day there will be no ability to rebut what God is saying. In light of that, I implore you to take the mercy and the pardon that is being offered to you now. You need to fall upon the mercy of God now, before it is too late. Everyone who has accepted His pardon is so glad that he or she did.

Sadly, many people are turning their backs on the pardon that God is offering to them. They reason, "I don't want it now, but maybe later." They walk away from such a great thing. Jesus has forgiveness. Do you know that? He has a pardon. He has compassion on the sinner.

God does not like sin, and Jesus does not like sin. Although God has compassion on the sinner, you must make the choice to accept it and turn from your own ways.

Many times when God deals with an individual, you can almost see in your mind Jesus standing with His open arms, saying: "Just give up. Yield to My way and come to Me. You can receive pardon and forgiveness." I thought about the prodigal son's father. The prodigal son abandoned his father and rejected everything about his home. He went out and sowed wild oats, so to speak, and made a mess of his life.

The Bible says he came to himself. You know, that is the key. People need to come to themselves and realize where they really are. When the prodigal son came to himself, he realized that the hired servants at his father's house had more to eat than he had, so he decided to go back home. The story goes on and says his father saw him coming and ran to greet his son with open arms. Think about that. Jesus is running to the sinner with open arms, but what happens? So many people turn Him away. Friend, you just need to come home and take the pardon that Jesus has to offer. That would be the best decision you could ever make. Those of us who are saved can say it is the best decision that we have ever made. When the Holy Spirit moves in, He will give you a new heart. The peace and the love that will fill you is beyond explaining. People will look on you, and they will not be able to understand how you have become so happy and joyful. That is because there is a change down inside when you receive the pardon that Jesus offers you.

(Compact Disc TR-1977)

How They Prayed

George Whitefield, the famous English evangelist, said, "O Lord, give me souls or take my soul!"

Henry Martyn, a missionary, cried as he knelt on India's coral strands, "Here let me burn out for God."

David Brainerd, missionary to the North American Indians, 1718-1747, declared: "Lord, to Thee I dedicate myself. Oh, accept of me, and let me be Thine forever. Lord, I desire nothing else. I desire nothing more." The last words in his diary, written

seven days before he died, were these: "Oh, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen."

Thomas Kempis, 1379-1471, said: "Give what Thou wilt, and how much Thou wilt. Set me where Thou wilt and deal with me in all things as Thou wilt."

Dwight L. Moody implored, "Use me then, my Savior, for whatever purpose and in whatever way Thou mayest require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel. Fill it with Thy grace."

Martin Luther prayed thus on the night preceding his appear-

ance before the Diet of Worms: "Do Thou, my God, stand by me against all the world's wisdom and reason. Oh, do it! Thou must do it! Thou must do it. Stand by me, Thou true, eternal God!"

Praying Hyde, a missionary in India, pleaded, "Father, give me these souls, or I die."

Mrs. Comstock, a missionary in India, uttered this prayer of parting when she sent her children: "Lord Jesus, I do this for Thee."

Selected

[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

or the right way to live without the Gospel light shining. Therefore, many dear souls stumble through life in the darkness.

Standing for the Truth and showing a sweet spirit in the difficult situations and circumstances of life has a great effect on the lost and unbelieving. The saint who faithfully endures severe opposition hurled against him proves that the Bible is true. It shows the grace of God in powerful demonstration to those looking on. It illustrates God's ability to keep a trusting soul secure through the tests and trials that befall him. Honest hearts watch to see if Christianity really works when the pressure is applied. A Christian's faithful witness has often been the convincing element that has won many a precious soul to the Lord. In some homes where a spouse is unsaved or backslid, the saved spouse was able to win the unsaved one to the Lord by living a godly life. A faithful witness is a good influence on that one who is lost.

Living the life of a Christian

and being a faithful witness is pleasing to the Lord. Your love and faithfulness to Christ and His cause will never go unnoticed or unrewarded. You may not always see the fruit of your witness as you would like. However, the Lord keeps the record straight. Never be discouraged by what you see with your physical eyes, but continue to press forward for the Lord. Remember faithful Stephen. He was an ordinary man whom the Lord chose to wait tables and administer to the widows and the fatherless. The Lord used this humble servant to do great things for Him in the Kingdom of God. Stephen was called to be a witness for Jesus in the midst of a crowd of unbelieving Jews. Those same men were responsible for crucifying Christ. Stephen boldly proclaimed the Word of God and pointed his finger at those religious professors. Stephen's faithful witness that day made an impression on a man named Saul of Tarsus. Saul was later saved and became the Apostle Paul. Oftentimes one man's faithful witness and great

service for the Lord has led others to salvation.

Have you ever thought about this: "What if Stephen had not been faithful and allowed the Lord to use him to be a witness?" Perhaps Saul never would have been won to God. He might not have had the chance to become the mighty instrument in God's hand to win many souls to the Lord. The letters that Paul wrote in the New Testament might never have been written.

What if you fail to be faithful to God and neglect to be the witness that God wants you to be? Your failure could result in a lost soul never finding his or her way to the Lord and gaining salvation. This is a sobering thought. God is counting on each of His children to be the faithful witness he or she needs to be. A lost and dying world is waiting for you and what you have.

Selected



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