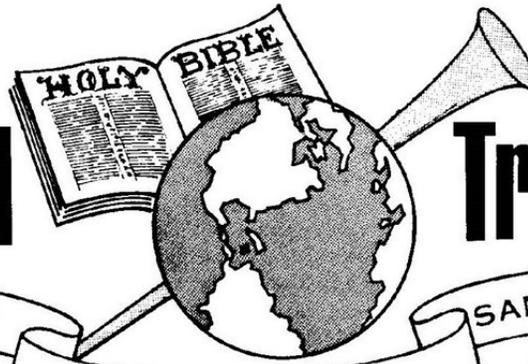


The Gospel



Trumpeter

JUSTIFICATION

"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."

Ezekiel 34:12
Jeremiah 32:39

SANCTIFICATION

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished."

Revelation 10:7
Matthew 24:31

UNITY & TRUTH

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 52 November 2022 No. 11

"The LORD
hath done
GREAT
THINGS
for us; whereof
WE ARE
GLAD."

—Psalm 126:3



"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 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matthew 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)
- Eternal life (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7-8)

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

- Jesus organized it (Matthew 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Ephesians 1:22-23; Isaiah 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Romans 11:22; Exodus 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Revelation 22:17)
- Final rewards (Revelation 20:12-15; 21:3-4; 22:14)
- Bible name of the church (Acts 20:28; Galatians 1:13; John 17:11)

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

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Vol. 52 November 2022 No. 11

Guest Editorial



A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

First Chronicles 16:8-9 states: "Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works." We are quickly approaching the end of another year. The Lord has blessed us with many physical, financial, and, above all, spiritual blessings throughout this past year.

This is the time of year when our nation celebrates Thanksgiving. It is a time for us to be reminded we owe the God of Heaven thanks and praise for His bountiful blessings upon us. It is a time to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation for His never-failing goodness and faithfulness to us. Without a doubt, our nation is one of the most highly blessed and prosperous nations on this earth. Amid the many trials and problems we have suffered, we are still blessed beyond measure. We ought to be thankful every day of the year and not just during this particular season.

America has been endowed with great quantities of natural resources, education, and technology that far exceed other nations. The greatest blessing and privilege we have is the freedom to worship God without the fear of being molested. We must never forget His bless-

ings bestowed on us or fail to give Him the heartfelt thanks He is due.

Have you ever stopped to consider how blessed you really are? Acts 17:28 says, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being." It is because of the Lord's goodness we are alive and as well as we are. He gives us the strength to go about our duties and provides food for the nourishment of our bodies. If you have eyes to see His beautiful creation and ears to hear the delightful sounds of nature, all these physical blessings come from the hand of God. Sadly, His goodness is often taken for granted. Multitudes are ready to receive, but many never think to say, "Dear Lord, thank You."

During Jesus' earthly ministry, ten lepers met Him, desiring to be healed of their leprosy. In His kindness, He miraculously healed all of them from this dreaded disease. They all went happily on their way, but only one "turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God" (Luke 17:15). Only one stopped and considered what the Savior had done for him. This leper fell down on his face at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks for what He had done. He offered heartfelt gratitude for the loving kindness and mercy shown to him.

[continued on page 7]



THE BLESSINGS AND RESPONSIBILITIES of Being a Christian

Brother Roger L. Decker

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

The Blessing of a Heavenly Father

Many of us have had outstanding events or great happenings in our lives, such as the first time we got our license and drove a car, graduated high school, got a job, got married, had children, or bought a home. However, there is something greater than all these put together. The greatest event in anyone's life is to become a Christian. It affects the whole life. Changes are made that could not be made without Christ. Salvation not only affects us, but it affects others. The effect is far-reaching, all the way into eternity.

Our walk with Christ can become more productive and more enjoyable when we grasp the true significance of being a Christian. There is nothing that can compare to it. Time is well-

spent looking into some blessings that belong to a child of God. One of the greatest blessings is having God as your Heavenly Father. Many earthly fathers do a good job providing for their families. Some help them spiritually, if they are a Christian, but not all earthly fathers are Christians. They may do their best to love and care for their children, but there is no greater love than the love of God, which He bestows upon you and me.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not [just as they do not know God], because it knew him not." First John 4:9-10 says: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

God is not just a friend; He is a Father, but not like a father in the world because many fathers in the world do not know Him. It is a great blessing to have God as our Father! Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). He is a Father who is there all the time, not just certain times.

"Joint-Heirs With Christ"

Although we were strangers and foreigners to the covenant, as Christians we have been adopted into the Kingdom of God. Romans 8:15 tells us, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." There is no doubt the

Apostle Paul wrote this because of the surrounding circumstances he was in. His mind went to Roman adoption, and the Roman law of adoption is a beautiful picture of our adoption into the family of God.

There were four main attributes that accompanied the Roman law when a son was brought into the family. First, the adopted son lost all rights in his old family, and he gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. The law said he got a new father; therefore, all his rights pertaining to the old life disappeared, and all rights pertaining to the new life appeared.

We, as Christians, have also received rights we did not have before. We did not have a right to approach God or have our prayers answered when we knowingly lived in sin. Now we can talk to God anytime. We do not have to wait for a high priest to go to God for us once a year. We no longer need our sins atoned for once a year. When you are born again, you can go to God whenever you want to go to Him. Hebrews 4:15-16 reads: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; [The old high priest was not touched with everyone's infirmities. He probably did not know everyone.] but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace [right before God], that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Sometimes, when we need our earthly fathers, they are not there, but our Heavenly Father is there every time we call upon Him. Revelation 1:6 says we are all, as Christians, "kings and priests," and we also have a High Priest, Jesus Christ. He does not

remove sins just once a year, but you can go to Him anytime you are in need.

Second, in Roman law, the son became an heir to his new father's estate. No matter how many children were born into the family after the adopted son came in, under the Roman law, an adopted son was also a joint heir with the family. We become heirs to our new Father's estate. We have access to His angels, His Holy Spirit, His blood, His grace, His worship, and His fellowship. We did not have any of those in the old life. We are not

Under the Roman law, an adopted son was a NEW PERSON entering into a NEW LIFE.



only heirs, but "joint-heirs with Christ," according to Romans 8:17.

Third, in Roman law, when a young man was adopted, his old life was completely wiped out. For example, all his debts were canceled, and anything he owed disappeared. Anything pertaining to the old life was gone. He was regarded as a new person entering a new life in which the past had nothing to do with him. The same is true for you and me. All our sinful deeds, hurts, shamefulness, and embarrassments have been removed from the new life.

Finally, in the eyes of the Roman law, the adopted son was absolutely the son of his new father. What the Roman law required regarding adoption, we receive through Jesus Christ.

Galatians 4:6-7 reads: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Paul said we were under the law of sin and death, but now we have the Spirit of the Son in our hearts, and we can go to the Father and receive strength to overcome.

Our Father is the source of every good and perfect gift that comes down from Heaven. James 1:17 reads, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Jesus said in Matthew 7:11, "If ye then, being evil, 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?" God gives the church so many gifts. We lack nothing as members of His family.

Comfort and Correction

One blessing a Christian enjoys is his Father gives comfort in the time of tribulation. It states in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The word *tribulation* means "a burden, or an affliction." During the time of tribulation, God is concerned. He cares when you are burdened down and going through a hard place. The Scriptures say He gives comfort. There are many times when

we need comfort. Words are great, but there is nothing that can comfort like God's Holy Spirit.

Christians also receive correction from God. He is our Father, which means He chastises us when we need it. God corrects us because He loves us, even though we may not think so at the time. When my dad started for the barn to get the leather strap, I did not think there was any love there at all. In fact, the more he worked on me, the more I was convinced he did not love me. The same may be true when you are getting corrected by God.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:5-11: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not [hate not] thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God deal-eth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? [Just think of where you would be if you were never chastised. When you get saved, you do not know it all, and there are some things you may still do that you should not be doing. God will take care of it by chastising and correcting you.] For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, [It is not a happy time when God corrects you, but it leads you to

holiness. It teaches you a lesson not to do it again.] but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yield-eth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

The Responsibility of Submission

Another blessing of being a Christian is Jesus said He would never leave you or forsake you. Friends may leave you, and they may even forsake you, but God will not. Hebrews 13:5-6 says: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

With all the great blessings of having God as our Father, there are tremendous responsibilities associated with being a child of God. Every Christian is responsible for submitting to God. Submission is going God's way when you do not agree with God and would rather go an easier way. It is easy to submit when you agree, but what about when you do not agree? There are going to be many times when you will not agree with the Word of God.

Submit means "to obey, or to be subjective to." Serving God is the bringing of your will into submission to the will of God. The Word of God has much to say about submission. Colossians 3:18 reads, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." That Scripture does not mean the wife is a slave and the husband can walk all over her, so to speak. When a husband truly loves his wife, she will have no trouble submitting to him.

Hebrews 13:17 says, "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." In 1 Peter 2:13-14 we read, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." "Every ordinance of man" means the law of man that is over us to guide us and rule us as a nation.

Christians must submit to the Word of God. Luke 4:4 tells us, "And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."

Our Lord and High Priest

Jesus Christ is our Lord and High Priest. You can read about the old priesthood in the Old Testament. Samuel and Aaron were both high priests. The people were not allowed into the Holy of Holies or the holy place. The high priest went into the Holy of Holies once a year to make atonement, not only for his sins, but for the sins of the people. Hebrews 4:14 says, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

In those days, the high priest may not have known many of the people he made atonement for. They belonged to different tribes, and I can imagine he did not know every individual in all those tribes, but he made atonement for them. Our High Priest is touched with every one of our feelings. He knows every one of us. We are not prohibited from the holy place, but we can go into God's presence, right into the Holy of Holies. We are not limited to just once a year, but we can go as many times as we need. When we go there, we receive

grace. Our High Priest has feelings for our infirmities because He "was in all points tempted like as we are [the same way you and I are tempted], yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Jesus Christ is not only our High Priest, but He is our Lord. We read in 1 Corinthians 8:6, "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." One song says, "For if you're not Lord of everything, Then you're not Lord at all." All authority in Heaven and earth has been given to Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:18 says, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Even though He is our Lord, He calls us His brethren. Hebrews 2:11-12 states, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Our High Priest understands our feelings, and He intercedes for us.

With great blessings come great responsibilities. If you call Him Lord, then you must do what He says. He must be in control of your life. If you love Him, you must do what He commands. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." That Scripture is power packed! Do not take Jesus for granted and feel you can do what you want, go where you want, and He will still be Lord. When He is Lord, He has complete rule over you.

The Blessing of the Holy Spirit

There is a blessing of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Instead of being filled with bitterness, hatred, and revelry, you



can actually be filled with God Himself. You receive the Holy Spirit when you are converted. His Spirit gives life. Without Him, there is no strength to keep the flesh under. We could not put these fleshly deeds to death without the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit would come and do some things for us.

We read in John 16:13-14: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be a Guide, a Revealer, and One who glorifies God. Oh, what a responsibility we have to the Holy Spirit! We must keep the temple of God clean and holy. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." The Bible speaks of walking in the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, grieving the Spirit, and quenching the Spirit, which shows the important place the Spirit of God has in our lives.

There is a real blessing in

having a church family of brothers and sisters. This family is closer than your own fleshly family, and God is the Father of everyone. We have a responsibility towards each other. We bear one another's burdens, assemble ourselves together, edify one another, support one another, care for one another, and pray for one another. When one member suffers, we all suffer. When one rejoices, we all rejoice. When one uses a God-given gift, we pray for them and rejoice with them.

We are blessed as God's people, and we are also responsible. Many want the blessings of God, minus the responsibilities. Many people think of marriage in the same way. Some do not want to enter marriage, so they decide to live together. They want the blessings of marriage, but not the responsibility of marriage. Lesbianism and homosexuality are getting stronger and stronger. I wonder what God thinks when one of them can run for the President of the United States and get a following? It is perversion! We cannot take the blessings and avoid the responsibilities because the blessings and responsibilities go together.

A Christian's daily association with the world is very crucial. They see how you act when you go shopping, when things go wrong, and when adversities come your way. They see how you act in a restaurant if the food is not good or if the waiter serves you the wrong order. Do you lose your cool and tell others off? Watch out! Someone is watching you. Do you make a scene when something needs taken care of, or do you politely take care of it? People are watching.

Our Responsibility to One Another

How do you treat your church family? There may be those who attend the services

who are weak, obnoxious, or overbearing. The Bible tells you how you should treat them. First Thessalonians 5:14 reads, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." The *Amplified Bible* reads, "And we earnestly beseech you, brethren, admonish (warn and seriously advise) those who are out of line [the loafers, the disorderly, and the unruly]; encourage the timid and fainthearted, help and give your support to the weak souls, [and] be very patient with everybody [always keeping your temper]."

Romans 15:1 says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Those who have stronger faith must be patient with those who are weaker in faith. We must not think only of ourselves.

There is no greater life to live than that of a Christian. It comes with tremendous responsibilities. We have a heritage of ministers who have been true to God and have faithfully delivered the message of God. We have a high standard to live by, but we can all adhere to it if we submit to God.

You need to make sure your experience is as up to date as it ought because you do not know when you may be called by God to do a specific task in the Kingdom of God. Are you in a place where God can call on you for a specific task? Maybe God wants you to go visit someone who is deep in sin. Are you clear yourself? Do not allow little foxes to get into your heart and cool you off. You do not want to be in a place where you cannot hear the voice of God through His Word. Working in the Kingdom of God brings a tremendous blessing to our lives.

God bestows so many blessings upon His children, but let us

make sure we step up to the responsibilities that go along with receiving those blessings. Do not allow the tiniest speck of wrongdoing into your heart. If God tells you to take care of something, do not put it off, or it could grow to the place where you will no longer receive the blessings of God. If the slightest thing is troubling you, now is the time to pray about it.

Do not procrastinate getting your needs met because the rain may no longer come down to water your spiritual life. The slightest speck of wrong in your heart will put you outside of the doctrine that falls like rain. You need the rain, the doctrine, to come down so you can grow and be more like Jesus.

One song says, "We're blessed, we're blessed, we're blessed!" We are blessed, but with blessings come tremendous responsibilities. Again, do not allow the slightest speck of wrong to get into your heart. Once it gets there, it is like a tiny cancer. If it is not eradicated or taken care of, it will grow and grow.

(Compact Disc TR-2410)

[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]

The other nine received healing, but they failed to see the need to offer any praise or thanksgiving in return for their healing. We need to be careful not to allow a spirit of ingratitude to get into our hearts.

While we give thanks to God for His goodness shown to us, we also want to extend our appreciation to all our readers. Pastor Roger Decker wants to thank each of you for your prayers and financial support for *The Gospel Trumpeter* throughout this past year. It is through prayer for this work that the Gospel is still reaching out and getting into the hands of needy souls. It is bringing direction to the lost and shedding light and understanding on the Scriptures.

Pastor Roger Decker would also like to extend a word of thanks to all who have attended the camp meetings this past summer. Your presence and contributions were much appreciated. Those who used their talents for singing specials added much to the services. We also appreciate those who worked in the dining hall and other necessary positions. We thank each of you dear saints for all your great work in helping to promote the Gospel.

Selected

**Backsliders
begin with
dusty Bibles
and end with
filthy garments.**

C. H. Spurgeon



Exodus 22:21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and

embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

How Is Your SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?



Brother Mike Wilks

The Most Important Journey

Thanksgiving is a time of reflection. How is your spiritual journey up to this point? Every one of us is making a pilgrimage. The providence of God is working in our lives. You do not motorize your car. There is an engine under the hood, and it is similar with God. He is the engine in your life. He guides you down a path, and ultimately, that path will lead you to Heaven.

The most important decision you will ever make is where you will spend eternity. In this modern era, the word *pilgrimage* does not have the same meaning as it did to the pilgrims. When those pilgrims made their journey to the new world, a large majority of them died because the journey was so hard and stressful. When you get saved, you find a new

world. Your pilgrimage begins with God. It is the most important journey you will ever make, and you need to guard it.

When you get saved, the devil is watching and surmising how he can knock you out of the race. Therefore, you need to be on guard because he is actively planning your demise. You must stay close to God. He is greater than all the enemy's tactics.

Are you satisfied with your pilgrimage? Are you satisfied with your direction? When you are navigating this life, you do not want to get caught in a by-way. You want to make it to your destination, which is Heaven. Your personal choices will determine whether you make it. God has provided everything you need to succeed. There are no excuses. If you want to be saved, you can be.

When I got saved, I worked through struggles. I did not get up from an altar of prayer and walk away with no battles in my life. I had many things to overcome. I soon learned the devil will come after you and torture you in your mind. I can so vividly remember how the devil worked on my mouth. I had developed some bad habits when I was out in sin, and I had to work on those problems. I would cuss in my dreams, and it would tear me apart. I would wake up feeling so low, but I kept pressing forward for God. The enemy wanted to discourage me from trying. Friend, if you keep trying, God will meet you there.

God loves you, and without Him, you are so lost. Some people think they are doing fine. They make a good income, their children are successful, they have

more than one car, and they have a nice house. You are lost if you do not have a personal relationship with God.

Luke 19:10 reads, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Some do not even realize they are lost. Jesus comes looking for them, and they are not even looking for Him. He sends out a light, perhaps through a Scripture or through someone who is living for God. I have had lights come into my life ever since I was a boy. God wants you to make Heaven your home. Are you making your way toward Heaven or are you regressing? The choice is yours.

A Stranger in a Foreign Land

While on a pilgrimage, you pack light. Have you ever looked in your closet and said, "Some of this stuff has to go"? There are some things in this life that accumulate, and we need to get rid of them. The good things are the things of God. You should accumulate the Word in your life, prayer, and going to the house of God. That is where the power is. If you fail, it is because you have not given God an opportunity. He wants to give you power, but you must do the essentials. If you want a blessing, open the Book.

You may say, "Well, I read the Bible last night and got nothing." Have you read it today? I like to get into the Word and read until He opens up my understanding. I would not trade the opportunity to have Almighty God open up something to me for anything in the world. Sometimes I read one verse over and over again, and it just opens up something new. It helps me, and I can share it

with others.

Do you realize that every bit of knowledge you gain is not only for yourself but that you are given this treasure to share with others? I cannot think of anything better to share than the Gospel. The Apostle Paul said he became "all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22). I grew up being sports minded, and I have found that to be a good way to connect with people. It is something I may have in common with someone, but what I really want to share with them is Jesus.

When God meets your decision to humble yourself before Him, it will become a witness immediately. You may not understand it, but you have become a pilgrim in this world. God will meet you right there, and there will be a witness you will experience nowhere else. There is power in being a pilgrim. You will be on a pilgrimage.

I went to Italy years ago, and when I was there, I was a stranger in a foreign land. I did not speak their language, and I did not look like them. They were dressed differently. This does not differ from being saved in the world. You are in a foreign land. This world is not your home. You talk, act, and look different. I want to please the Lord in all phases of my life because that is where the power comes from.

I want to be a successful Christian and obey the Word of God. Every Christian wants a victorious life. The victory is in obedience. Hebrews 3:17 states, "But with whom was he grieved

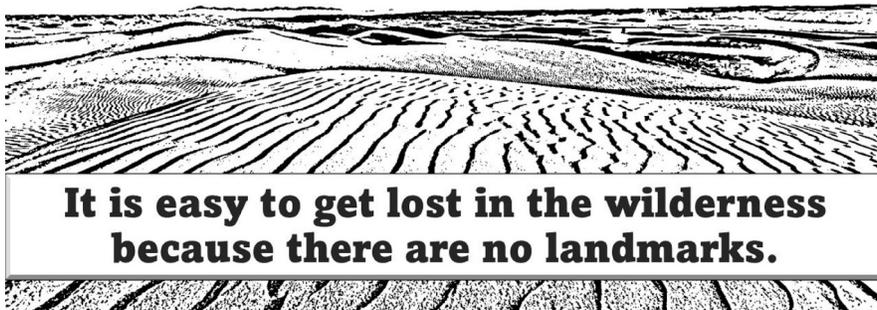
forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" When you are living in sin, you are in a wilderness. That is the reason there is so much confusion about who is right and who is wrong. In the wilderness, there is no guide or direction.

"The Bright and Morning Star"

It is easy to get lost in the wilderness because there are no landmarks. I wandered aimlessly for many years. I ran around in circles in the wilderness of sin. I was searching, chasing my tail, and circling. I would do something that made me sick. I made decisions I regretted, but just like the dog who goes back to his vomit, I would turn around and do the same things again. One day, Jesus lifted me.

The North Star can be a reference point to guide you out of a literal wilderness. If you want to be guided out of the wilderness of sin, you must look toward Heaven. There is a brighter star than the North Star, and His name is Jesus. Revelation 22:16 states: "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

When I was out in the wilderness, the clouds were dimming my view. They were the clouds of depression, sin, and ungodly habits. Those things were working to block my view of the heavenly things. Jesus will lift up your head. God wants you to look up, sinner friend. You have been wandering in the wilderness for too long. It is time to start this journey toward Heaven. It is a journey unlike anything you have ever experienced.



It is easy to get lost in the wilderness because there are no landmarks.

Psalm 3:3 reads, "But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." He is the One who lifts your head so you can see the things you need to see. While out in the wilderness, I was so lost, but thank God for His guiding lights. The sun and the moon are universal to all. The Old and the New Testaments were given to us so we could experience new life.

Do I know everything that is coming my way? Do I understand everything that comes into my life? Absolutely not, and I have to leave those things with God. You can be assured that you are not the only one who has had things happen you do not understand. Every one of us has been subjected to such things. We must leave this world, spiritually speaking, and start on a journey to make Heaven our home. I absolutely love reading the book *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Christian was on a journey to the Celestial City, and it parallels with our journey to Heaven.

Separating Yourself From the World

I was talking to a man once who told me he used to be a minister when he was twenty-one years of age. He said God kept telling him to stay away from the world, but he ignored Him, fell away, and went into the world. Christians need to separate themselves from the world. Exalting and usurping the things of the world over the things of God is sin.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 4:9, "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" Once you taste of the things of God, the things of the world become "beggarly elements." I used to be

involved in those "beggarly elements," but the tender mercy of God brought me out of them. Joy is not found in drinking a bottle of alcohol or in smoking a cigar. I find far more pleasure in reading the Bible than in foolish things. You cannot understand it unless you get an experience with God.

Can you imagine what it will be like to stand on the shores of Heaven after all the battles with the flesh and the devil and to be with Jesus, safe evermore? This is a pilgrimage, and you have to focus on the things of God. When you go to the house of God, you get refocused on what is really important in this life. It is not important whether your favorite sports team wins. Those temporal things do not really matter in the light of eternity. Those things will drive a stake in your life and hold you down, which is what the devil wants.

When you prepare to go on a vacation, you pack the essentials. You do not take everything in your house to wherever you are going. Be careful in this life that you are only packing the essentials. God will give you shelter, clothes, a job, and a family. There are many things you can get involved in which are not really necessary. In Luke, Chapter 16, you can read about the rich man who lifted up his eyes in hell. He did not recount all the things he had while he was living on this earth. He started thinking about the most important things. He wanted someone to warn his five brothers, "lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:28).

The world is pulling at you, and it is a powerful force. Galatians 5:17 says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The Spirit and the flesh war against each other

continually. Every day is a battle, but you can have the victory if you put Jesus first. Look toward those things which are eternal.

Your Pilgrimage Begins With Salvation

The greatest thing in your life is to have Almighty God seeking you. Friend, He is actively seeking you through the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and other things He sends to cause you to want to be saved. Getting saved is the number one decision you will ever make in life. Other decisions are not nearly as important. Deciding where to go to school, where you are going to live, and who you are going to marry should fall in line after that. Salvation should be first.

Once you start on this journey, you will encounter pitfalls along the way. There are so many ways you can get off track. Sad to say, I have watched some men and women get off track who have worked hard for God. They are no longer serving the Lord. Greater men than me have gotten off track. It is a warning to each of us. I fear that because I have decided in my life that I want to make Heaven my home.

How is your spiritual progress? Are you really committed to the Lord? You may say, "I don't feel like I'm getting anywhere." Keep moving forward. Do not stop trying. There will be times in life when things will get tough, but remember the prize.

Acts 9:20-21 reads: "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?"

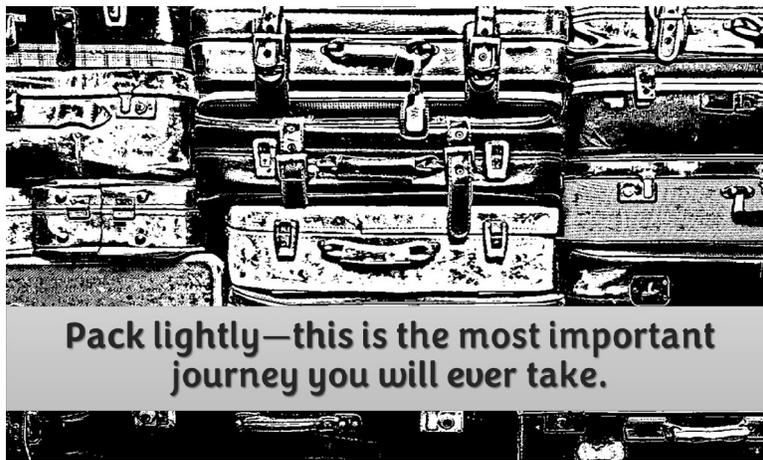
All who heard Paul were amazed. Paul had started on a journey, or a pilgrimage, and it

so radically changed him that many people could not believe it. Salvation will do the same thing for you. God is no respecter of persons. If you want to be saved and have God's power in your life, thank God, it is available. There is no discrimination with Him. We all are equal in His sight.

When I first got saved, two of my best friends were twins. They called and wanted me to attend a meeting with all my friends to figure out what was going on with me. They were alarmed, and they could not understand the change in me. All those things my friends and I had done down through the years did not matter to me anymore because I gave my heart to Jesus. I found something so much greater than the things I used to do. I could not explain it. In the twinkling of an eye, those sinful things, such as drinking alcohol and hearing ungodly language, became strange to me. All of this happened at an old-fashioned altar of prayer. It was not complicated. I simply got saved and started my pilgrimage.

The Bridge to Eternity

There is more to this journey than just starting. You must finish. Many start, but they never finish. If you have started this pilgrimage, you need to keep right on it to make Heaven your home. If you are not on this journey, when are you going to start? You need to think about your family members and those whom you love and have confidence in. Do you want to join them on this journey? Someday I want to see my grandmother again. I want to thank her for her prayers and for living faithfully for God all those



Pack lightly—this is the most important journey you will ever take.

years. Had she fallen by the way-side, I do not think I would be saved now. There are people I want to see someday and thank personally. I want to go where they are.

Friend, the only safe path to continue in through this world is salvation. If you really love your family, you will get saved and stay saved. If you do not have God, one day you are going to experience eternal separation from everyone you love. Do not let anyone talk you out of your salvation. There is a hell, and there is a Heaven. You have a choice. God is not pushing you into hell. Sin deceives people and causes them to attach themselves to the temporal things that are going to fail them one day.

This world is nothing but a bridge to eternity. You do not see housing developments built on a bridge. A bridge gets you from one side to another. Jesus understood this. He had two objectives: He wanted to finish His work, and He wanted to get back to the Father. He knew this world was not His home.

If you visit North Carolina, I recommend you go to Grandfather Mountain to see the Mile High Swinging Bridge. The suspension bridge spans an 80-foot chasm at more than one mile in elevation. They have had high winds up to 176 miles per hour up there, and that bridge sways. I have no desire to camp on that

bridge. I cannot imagine sleeping on it at night. When most people walk across that bridge, they scamper across quickly to get to the other side because it is dangerous. There is no stability and the winds are strong. It is the same thing in this world. You need to concentrate on getting to the other side. You

need to pack lightly because this is the most important journey you will ever make. It is so easy to get sidetracked.

"Lay Aside Every Weight"

I am going to end with the story of Lot. Genesis 13:12 reads, "Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom." Here, Lot was pitching his tent toward a sinful city. He was not *in* the city, but he was moving toward it. A tent is not an established place of abode. However, in time Lot moved into the city. That is a progression we do not want to be involved in. Lot went from being on the outskirts of the city to being in the city. He was no longer a pilgrim.

Genesis 19:1 states, "And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground." The mercy of God sent two angels to physically pull Lot and some of his family out of there.

How is your progress? Are you pitching your "tent" too close to the world? Which way are you leaning? Are you leaning toward the things of the world or toward the things of God?

In Acts, Chapter 27, you can read about Paul being on a ship

that was caught in a tempestuous wind called "Euroclydon." It was a storm, and for a while it seemed all hope was lost. Do you know what they tried first? Acts 27:18-19 reads: "And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship." They were so desperate to survive that they were unloading the tackling of the ship to lighten it so they could stay alive.

In your Christian experience, you must be on guard and be careful you are not attached to

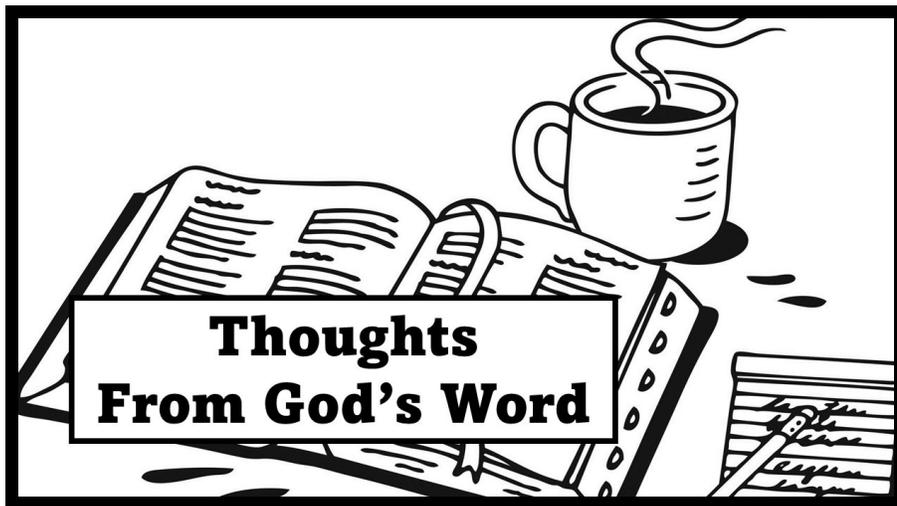
too many things. The more things you are attached to, the more your vision will change, and the more interference there will be in your experience. You must be careful, as you are on this pilgrimage, to pack lightly. You should only pack the essentials.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:1, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Lay aside every weight so that you can make Heaven your home.

If you are lost, when will you start on your journey? People offer many excuses for not starting this pilgrimage. One day, the excuses will stop, and time will be no more. You will take your last breath, and only what you have done for God will matter.

You need to be on guard. Remember, you are a pilgrim in a strange land. There is an enemy who is actively seeking you, and he wants to knock you out of this race. Survival is found in the Word of God.

(Compact Disc TR-1804)



"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways." Haggai 1:5

How are you living your life? In Haggai 1:8 God said to build your house, and "I will take pleasure in it." God wants you to build a spiritual house with Him in control of it.

Have you left your spiritual house a wasteland? Is it barren of the Word of God and the Spirit of God? Are you going your way and not God's way? If so, you are in a spiritual drought and your life is yielding no "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23). Without water, your land will be bar-

ren. The Spirit of God gives life to the soul now and everlasting life when your time on earth is over.

If you allow the Word and the Spirit to work in you, your life can be a fountain for precious souls. Matthew 5:13 says, "Ye are the salt of the earth." Salt causes ones to be thirsty. Your living for God makes others thirsty to have the life you have. They want the peace in their life that you have. They want the grace you have for situations that come your way. Matthew 5:14 says, "Ye are the light of the world." You have the knowledge and understanding of God's Word that people desire to

know and understand. They listen when you talk. Truth shines in the darkness.

God wants you to obey His will. You need to have godly fear in your life, a fear that your life may hurt the great heart of God by your words and actions. Galatians 5:19-21 lists the "works of the flesh," things people do when they are not serving God. Proverbs 6:16-19 tells us the things that God hates.

God gave man the Ten Commandments. When one of the Pharisees, who was also a lawyer, asked Jesus, tempting him: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:36-39).

If you obey God, He will be with you through every situation in life. He will give you grace and peace. Serve God with all your heart.

Sister Susan Hogan

ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Tragedy of Being a Reprobate



Titus 1:15-16 says: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Let us read these two verses from the *International Children's Bible*: "To those who are pure, all things are pure. But to those who are full of sin and do not believe, nothing is pure. The thinking of those people has become evil and their knowledge of what is right has been ruined. They say they know God, but the evil things they do show that they do not accept God. They are terrible people, they refuse to obey, and they are useless for doing anything good."

In the book *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan, Christian goes to Interpreter's house (the name given for the Holy Spirit in this allegory). He shows Christian seven truths within that house. There is a cage with a man in it who was called a despairing reprobate or backslider. *Despairing* means "to lose, give up, or be without hope." *Reprobate* means "a depraved, unprincipled or wicked person, a person rejected by God and beyond hope of salvation." This man was in a cage, rejected by God, and beyond hope of salvation.

The testimony of this back-

slider was this: "I was once a fair and flourishing Professor, both in mine own eyes, and also in the eyes of others." He had a very promising life ahead of him, and he thought he was going to Heaven. In this allegory, he became shut up in a cage with no hope of getting out, and no hope of salvation.

Christian asked the caged man how he got into such a condition. He answered: "I left off to watch, and be sober; I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts; I sinned against the Light of the Word, and the Goodness of God: I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone; I tempted the Devil, and he is come to me; I have provoked God to Anger, and he has left me; I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent." Young person, you have a promising life ahead of you, and you are not exempt from these things.

Christian asked, "Is there no Hope, but you must be kept in the Iron Cage of Despair?"

This man said, "No, none at all." He went on to say: "God hath denied me Repentance. His Word gives me no encouragement to believe; yea, himself hath shut me up in this Iron Cage; Nor can all the men in the world let me out. [Think about that. There was no one in the world who could ever let this man out of his cage.] O Eternity! Eternity! How I grapple with the Misery that I must meet with in Eternity!" This

man was in misery, with no hope of getting out.

Have you ever been physically sick, and it caused you to feel miserable? That misery lasts for a short period, but this man was spending the rest of his life in the cage of misery, with no hope of ever getting out. This is a warning. You or I could end up in this condition. None of us are exempt from this happening to us.

Even though this man said God had shut him up in the cage, the cage was of his own making. It was built bar by bar. Picture this man in a cage with no door. The animals at a zoo are in cages with doors so the keepers can feed them or get them out. Every cage has some means of escape. This cage was built bar by bar by this individual. It had no door; therefore, he had no hope of ever getting out.

What a sad state of affairs this man was in. He was enclosed in a cage, and no man could get him out. He had no hope of ever being free again. There are criminals locked up in prison who have some hope of getting out of their prison cells. This man did not have any hope.

How did this man with a bright future end up being rejected by God? First, he "left off to watch, and be sober." First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh

about, seeking whom he may devour." We have an enemy walking about, seeking and doing his best to devour us. You must watch, young person, and be vigilant.

During times of war, soldiers are placed on guard duty along the perimeter of encampments. Did you know a soldier could be shot as a traitor if he fell asleep while on guard duty? If someone is not vigilant and watchful, the enemy could attack, many could be killed, and the camp could be overtaken. Sleeping on guard duty was a hangable offense. The Bible is telling us to be careful, watchful, and vigilant because we have an enemy who is out to get our souls.

This man who was locked up in a cage quit being vigilant and watchful. That was the first bar he put in his cage. You may think, "That is only one bar; it is no big deal; he can still get out if it is just one bar." However, he continued to add bars until he was enclosed in the cage with no hope of ever getting out. If you are not watchful, sober, and vigilant, you are adding a bar to your cage.

Second, he "laid the reins upon the neck" of his lusts. Instead of having a hold on God, he let his lusts have their way in his life. The word *lust* means "having a strong desire for something." Many times, when you think about lust, you may think it has to do with sexual connotations. This is not always the case. Lust is having a strong desire for something. It does not have to start out sinful. It becomes sin when God asks you to lay it aside and you refuse.

Has God asked you to lay something aside that you have a strong desire for? It will become a sin to you if God has asked you to let it go. James 1:15 says, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth

death." If you are holding on to something God has asked you to let go, you are adding another bar to your cage.

Third, the testimony of this man was, "I sinned against the Light of the Word and the Goodness of God." As you read the Bible, pray, study, and listen to messages, God will shine His light on your path. Light is progressive. When I was a kid out in the backyard, if suddenly a cloud came across the sun, I would run to catch up with the light as the cloud moved across the sun. I wanted to keep up with the light. I did not want to be under the dark cloud. God shows His light on your pathway. It is progressive, and it keeps moving.



The Cage of Despair

Are you keeping up with the light as God shines it on your path? Are you walking in it? God may show you something, and in order for you to continue in this way, you need to move up. If you are not keeping up with the light, you are adding another bar to your cage.

The fourth part of this man's testimony was, "I have grieved the Spirit, and he is gone." Ephesians 4:30 says, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The word *grieved* means "to make sorrowful." If

you are grieving, you are sad and sorrowful. Are you making the Holy Spirit sorrowful? Are you rejecting the Word of God? If you are resisting the Holy Spirit, you are grieving Him and making Him sorrowful. He may go away, never to speak to you again.

Has the Holy Spirit been talking to you, asking you to measure up? Maybe He wants you to do some particular task, lay something aside, or move up higher. It is up to you to choose whether you want to obey. You have a choice. You can choose to resist and say no, or you can choose to move up and do what God is asking you to do. Young person, if you are resisting the Holy Spirit, you are putting another bar in your cage.

Fifth, this man said, "I tempted the Devil, and he has come to me." The word *tempt* also means "attract." If you reject the things of God, the devil will be right there to help you along. He will give you the courage to resist God and say: "God, go away! Leave me alone!"

The sixth thing this man said was he "provoked God to Anger." Are you doing anything to provoke God to anger? Many times during their journey through the wilderness after leaving the land of Egypt, the children of Israel provoked God to anger. There were consequences of God's anger. Once, the earth opened and swallowed up some people. Another time, the children of Israel provoked God to anger, and He sent fiery serpents. Many people died because of those serpents. Finally, everyone forty years old and older never got to see the Promised Land because they did not believe God. Young person, unbelief will provoke God to anger. If you are provoking God to anger, you are adding another bar to your cage.

Last, this man testified, "I

have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent." The more you reject God, the harder your heart becomes. You can sear your conscience according to the Bible. I often think about the time I seared my finger with a hot piece of metal. The skin on it is really hard, and for the longest time, I had no feeling in my finger. It had a hard shell on it, and you can do that with your heart if you are not careful. Just as that hot piece of metal seared my finger, you can sear your conscience. If you are hardening your heart, you are adding another bar to your cage.

By adding just one bar at a

time, you will not realize you are being trapped by your own choices. This man was in a cage of his own making, and it had no door. He was in there with no hope of ever getting free. Young person, you have a will. You can follow the same path as this man followed, or you can follow the path God has laid out for you. You need to be wise to the enemy's tactics.

It is serious if you become a reprobate, or one with no hope of salvation. Let this be a warning to you. Never become as this man was, locked up in a cage of his own making. At some point, if you keep resisting, pushing

God away, and walking against light, you could end up like this man. It is a very serious thought to have God turn His back and say, "If this is what you want, I am going to let you have it."

If God is working with you and talking to you, do not push Him away. The more you push God away, the further away He is going to be. If you keep adding bars to your cage, soon you could end up as a reprobate, locked in a cage with no hope of salvation. You never want to get there.

Brother Steve Strelecky

HOW DID THIS MAN WITH A BRIGHT FUTURE END UP BEING REJECTED BY GOD?

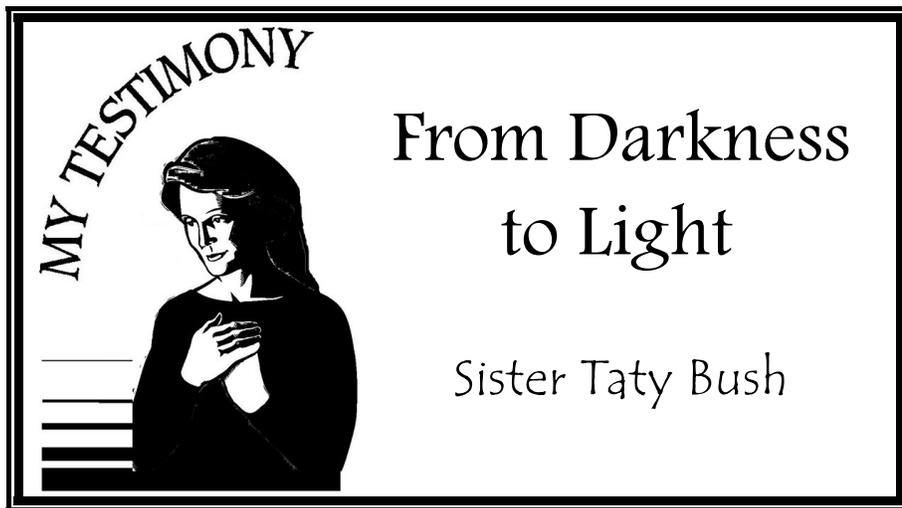
1. He "left off to watch, and be sober."
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 5. He said, "I tempted the Devil, and he has come to me."
 6. He "provoked God to Anger."
 7. He said, "I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent."
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Isaiah 42:16 says, "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

My life had no direction, no purpose, and I was in darkness. If you have been raised in a Christian home, you may not understand a family who lives without the Bible and Bible stories. They do not know the answer to the question, Why are you even here? The Bible says it well when it uses the word "darkness."

I was born in Michigan and grew up in Toledo, Ohio. I had a mom, dad, and a sister, who is one year older than me. If you had seen us at the grocery store, at the park, or at a ballgame, you would have thought we were a nice family, according to the world's standards. You do not know what goes on behind closed doors. I am not trying to run down my mom and dad. They did the best they could without the Bible.

My mom worked really hard. She worked the second shift most of my life, so I did not see her very much. My dad was saved several years ago in Arkansas, so he has his own testimony. He

called me and said he had accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Before this, he believed nothing the Bible said.

My dad was mentally and physically abusive. I had to be perfect. He would say: "You are never good enough. You cannot do it right." He would always yell, "Why?" I could not tell him why I spilled the milk. I did not know why I lied, and I did not know why I did what I did. It was very hard. His father drank alcohol and would get mean. My dad never drank alcohol, but he would get mean. You would think he was a raging, drunken man by the way he treated my sister and me. He would get so mad, and there were times he picked us up by our hair. It was always because we could do nothing right. It added to the darkness.

Mom and Dad would fight. Most of the time it was screaming and yelling, but sometimes it was physical. I remember my sister and I hiding under the table holding each other, crying and screaming. One time, my dad had claw marks on his neck. It was not fun, but no one would have ever known. We looked like a nice family out in public.

Often, you really do not know what the home life of other children in schools is like. They need the Bible. They need the

Gospel to teach them how to live.

My mom and dad eventually got a divorce. I might have been in the fifth grade. Then my dad was mostly out of the picture. He would come to visitations and then be gone. Sometimes he was there and sometimes he was not. Because my mom worked the second shift, my sister and I were home alone most of the time.

Divorces are very ugly! You need to really pray about the one you are going to marry. Children are hurt the most. They are tossed back and forth, and they play sides. My sister always thought Dad absolutely hated her, so she was on Mom's side. However, I played the deceitful game of "I hate Dad when I am with Mom, but I like Dad when I am with him."

When I was in the seventh or eighth grade, a couple of years after the divorce, Mom fought for full custody. That was another reason I did not see my dad as much. While my mom was fighting for full custody, they took my sister and me separately to see a psychiatrist because we were too young to be put on the witness stand. I gave him one-word answers to all his questions. I was a very walled person, and he could not get into my walls. If he asked me a question, my walls went up, so he was getting nowhere. However, he was trained, and he knew what he was looking for. Finally, at the end, he told me, "Well, you are going to grow up and marry someone who beats you, or you are going to beat your children." I did not like psychiatrists after that. When he got on the witness stand (I was not there to see it because I was too young), the judge was completely won over to Mom's side, and she got full custody.

I have a half-sister and a half-brother who are fourteen years younger than me. My mom had a daughter and my dad had a son the same year. I have not seen

my brother, Alexander, very much because he lives in Colorado, but my sister, Maia, was at home.

It was good for us to have a sister since Mom worked the second shift. My older sister and I took care of Maia, and it gave us some responsibility and a purpose, which we lacked. We had to feed the baby and keep her safe. I am thankful for that because we got into enough trouble as it was in those teenage years. It helped keep us from going off the deep end. Again, there was no direction or purpose in our lives, only darkness. It was very dark!

I was troubled and I did not understand why. Then I met my future husband Shawn. (Whether or not you are saved, if you grow up in a Christian home, you have the influence of the Gospel. It is on you whether or not you want to serve God.) Shawn conducted himself by the way he had been taught. I am thankful for his parents, Sister Ruby and Brother Dave Bush. Of course, he had a happy home, which is how a family ought to be.

I did not understand that the Gospel was the light I was craving in my dark life. It is awesome and refreshing, like a cool stream. The Gospel is powerful! Shawn could get into my high walls, which was a miracle. Again, I was craving the Gospel! I was so hungry for purpose, direction, and light. The influence of the Gospel in Shawn's life caused him to be someone I could look up to. He is a very good man, and the psychiatrist was wrong!

Shawn has always been faithful on Sunday mornings to go to church. Naturally, when I married Shawn, I came every Sunday morning to church. I really did not know what anyone was talking about. I really did not pay attention to the messages, but we were there. One day I asked:

"Shawn, what is 'saved'? (I had never heard of such a thing.) What is sin? What do they do when they go down to the altar?" Then I said, "I feel like going to the altar."

He looked at me and said, "You should."

Somewhere during this time, I tried to read the Bible, but it really made no sense. I could not bring myself out of the darkness. No matter how hard I tried, it did not work. I still felt very dark and yucky inside. I could not understand what was wrong. I had a good husband, but I needed Jesus! I could not save myself. I could not make my wrongs right or fill my heart with peace and joy.

Before I had my daughter Kaitlyn, I was very ignorant about having children. I thought when you wanted to have a child, you would have one. I did not get pregnant right away, which is normal. Some people try for years, but I did not know that. God was working on me. He knows right where you are. When I did not get pregnant, I thought it was because I was the worst person in the world. I thought I would never have children because I was so terrible. It was crushing me, but later I realized it was really my sin that was crushing me.

God used that situation to get to me. Whatever God uses to get you to the place where you are crushed, and you say, "I cannot do this," cry out to God. He is right there, and He wants to save you.

I was really low. The next month I got a bee sting, and I took the tweezers and squeezed where the stinger was. You should never do that because when you do, you are squeezing all the poison into you. The doctor said to use a fingernail, credit card, or straight-edged object to scrape off the stinger right away. I did not know that, so I ended

up with cellulitis in my leg from a bee sting, and I had to stay overnight in the hospital. God knew I did not need to be pregnant then. His timing is always perfect.

Before I got pregnant, I really did not know how to pray. I never prayed because no one taught me how to pray. However, I prayed, "God, if You give me a little baby, I will do my best to raise the baby for You." I really did not know what I was saying, but I meant what I said.

The next month after my bee sting, I was pregnant. I was so excited because God was going to give me a baby! I remembered the promise I made to God in my first prayer. I was so ignorant of what sin and salvation is, but I told God, "If I feel the pull again to go down to the altar, I will go." I had made two very serious promises, and even though I did not completely understand what I was saying, I meant what I said.

The whole time I was pregnant, we went to church every Sunday morning, but I did not feel a pull to go to the altar. I had Kaitlyn, and all the way until she was six months old, we would go to church and I felt nothing; but God was working. Sometimes, you may not know how, or in which area, but He is working.

Every Sunday morning, God put me in the nursery with sisters who loved the Lord. You can be a witness by the way you talk, how you treat people, and by your countenance. These sisters talked about good things. When one of them got up and left, the other two did not eat her for lunch, so to speak. It was not like it is in the world. They were happy. You never know who you are influencing as you are living for Jesus. God was working even when I did not feel the pull to go to the altar. He was bringing me to a place of repentance.

One Sunday morning, as the altar call song "Humble Thyself

to Walk" was being sung, Kaitlyn became fussy; so Shawn took her out of the service. I was standing there by myself listening to the words, "Humble thyself, and the Lord will draw near thee," and there was the pull! I thought, "Oh no, not now." Of course, I remembered what I said. I tried to stop it, but it did not go away. That still small voice was leading me. He kept drawing and saying, "You said . . ." Finally, I gave up and went down to the altar.

Sister Cummings prayed with me. I really did not know what was happening. She asked me, "Have you asked God to forgive you?" And I was a liar, so I told her yes. I did not understand. I guess I thought that was what was expected of me. My dad would have said: "You are not good enough. You did not do it right." She also told me: "Every time the church doors are open, you come." I thought, "I have to

go to church even if Shawn does not come?" That was hard.

God can keep you if you want to be kept. Just keep going the right way. Of course, later I had to go to the altar and tell Sister Cummings about what I had said, and she prayed with me again. My blinded eyes were opened! It was a miracle I cannot describe! God saved me! I was clean, happy, and I could understand the preached Word of God. I was in so much darkness, and then there was light.

When people talked about the standard, I did not care. Give me more of the Gospel! I was so hungry. I had lived in darkness my whole life, and I just wanted to be fed.

I went home and started reading the Bible. I read about Moses and the Red Sea. I had never heard Bible stories. I thought, "What did that say?" And I read again and again

about the sea parting and the Israelites walking through on dry ground. I read it over and over, and I believed it.

I have had so many things God has had to work on and is still working on with me. It is awesome because God can take anyone, no matter where you come from or how you were raised, and say: "Just believe the Gospel. I will show you the way. Follow Me." He can do anything for anyone. God met me where I was at. He led me in a path that I did not know. He gave me what I needed.

God can mold you when you are obeying and believing. If you want to step up and grow spiritually, obey and believe because God is real. I have a purpose in life. Now I know why I am here, and I know where I am going. I am so thankful my darkness is gone.

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Genesis 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

8 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

11 And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with

me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

13 And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Where Are You?



Brother Calvin Foster

Are You in the Kingdom of God?

I would like to put before you a thought in the form of the question the Lord asked Adam: "Where art thou?" Colossians 1:12-14 says: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the

forgiveness of sins." Thanks to God, through Christ, we have come out of darkness and into the kingdom of His dear Son.

It is very important to know where you are spiritually. Are you in the kingdom of His dear Son? If you are in His kingdom, you are in the church, and if you are in the church, you are in His kingdom. The church and the kingdom are the same. Romans 14:17 states, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Do you have

the righteousness of God, the peace of God, and the joy of the Holy Ghost in your heart? Do you know where you are?

In our Scripture text, God was disappointed in Adam, His greatest creation. He came to fellowship with him in the Garden of Eden, and when Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord, while walking in the garden in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. Are you hiding yourself from the presence of the Lord? God called Adam and

said, "Where art thou?" Adam said, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked." God does not want you to be afraid of Him. He wants you to have fellowship with Him and be at peace with Him.

The Lord said, in essence: "Who told you that you were naked? You and I had sweet fellowship. Did you eat the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden that I commanded you not to eat?" Adam had his excuse. He blamed the woman. People always have excuses for God, but those excuses will not stand.

I have looked into the profession of a surveyor who uses instruments to mark off property boundaries. The first step for a surveyor to survey land is to line up with the initial point. He always knows where he is once he has lined up with the initial point. The initial point of a Christian is the Word of God. Do you know where you are? What are you lined up with?

What Type of Ground Are You?

Jesus gave the parable of the four types of ground. Today, some people do not seem to know where they are. Jesus said in Matthew 13:3-4: "Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up." Jesus explained what He was saying to His disciples. Those seeds represent people who hear the Word, but they do not understand it. So Satan comes and takes it away from them. God does not want you to be in that state. The Apostle Paul told the brethren in Romans 1:13, "Now I would not have you ignorant." Satan will try to take the seed (or the Word of God) from you if



What Type of Ground Are You?

you do not get a good understanding.

Other seeds fell on stony places. This represents people who go to church, sing, and receive the Word with joy, but they do not have any root in themselves. They like to be seen doing righteous acts, but they do not have any real determination in their hearts to live for God. Matthew 13:21 tells us, "Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." Satan, in his roaring lion state, says: "I will get you. I'm going to scare you." Then, someone laughs at them or persecutes them, and they give up serving Jesus. They do not have any root in themselves.

Jesus said other seeds fell among thorns. Verse 22 says, "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." They care about material things. One may say, "I'm worried about my automobile." Another may say: "I'm watching the stock market. The stocks went down today, so I'm worried about that." They cannot make it to church because they are involved in other things, which "choke the word" out of them.

Then Jesus spoke of the seed that fell on good ground, which represents those who hear the Word of God and keep it. They have honest and good hearts. When the Word of God comes

forth, they hold tight to it and value it. They value the fellowship of their Christian brothers and sisters, their family and their marriages, and their pastor. When the Word of God goes forth, they do not take it lightly.

They take it very seriously.

You Need the Word of God

You must stay on point and realize the Word of God is right regardless of what people say about it. Psalm 119:89 reads, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." God's Word is settled, and God's Word is right. He will not change His Word for you or me. Psalm 119:160 says, "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

Second Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." My friend, God has given us an inspired Book. You may read many books in your lifetime, but nothing can compare to the Book of books. It is the initial point.

The Bible is also like a compass, and you definitely need to keep the compass before you. If you follow it, you are going in the right direction, and you will not have to worry about being off track. Matthew 4:3-4 reads: "And when the tempter came to him, he [the tempter] said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, [You cannot whip the devil in your own strength. You need to tell him 'it is written.' You need to put the Word of God on him.] Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

How did the Apostle Paul instruct the young minister, Timothy? In 2 Timothy 4:1-4 he wrote: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

The Apostle Paul said many people have "itching ears." In other words, they want to hear what is pleasing to their ears, or what they like to hear. He instructed Timothy to "preach the word." People need the Word, not someone's ideas or opinions. The Word is what will save you. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

"Do Thyself No Harm"

In Acts, Chapter 16, you can read about how Paul and Silas were put into jail for upsetting a city. When a woman was behind them soothsaying, Paul turned around and commanded the evil spirit to come out of her. This hurt some men's business because she was making them money. When Paul and Silas were thrown into jail, they did not sit in jail moaning, groaning, and crying all night. They started praying and singing praises to God. The folks in the jail heard them, and suddenly, an earthquake shook the jail.

The jailer thought all the pris-

oners had escaped. According to Roman law, he would be held responsible for them. Therefore, he thought he would take his own life because he would be executed if all the prisoners had escaped on his watch. Acts 16:28 tells us, "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." If you are living in sin, you are hurting yourself. You are not in fellowship with God, and your behavior is self-destructive. I want to cry out to you, "Do yourself no harm."

When the jailer came to Paul, he was trembling. No doubt, he had mixed emotions. He was about ready to kill himself, and then Paul told him all the prisoners were still there. You can read in Acts 16:30 that he fell down before Paul and Silas and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The jailer asked a very important question. In verse 31 Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

You do not have to live another day in sin because Jesus Christ died to set you free from sin. Every moment a person lives in sin, he is doing harm to himself. He is caught in a snare, as Paul talked about in 2 Timothy 2:26 when he said, "And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

It is something to be caught in a snare. One time we had a problem with some opossums that dug a little burrow under the church, so I set a trap there. Later, I went back and looked at it, and a big gray cat was caught in the trap. It looked up at me, meowing. It was in a snare and could not get out. I had put cat food in the trap, and the cat thought it had something good, but then it got caught and could not get out. Spiritually speaking, that is how it is when the devil sets a trap for you. You cannot

get free from the trap the devil sets for you without God setting you free.

You had better move when God is talking to your heart. You might quit smoking or drinking on your own, but you are never going to quit sinning without Jesus Christ. You are in a snare when you are in sin. Do not wait for sin to destroy your life. It will destroy your thinking and cause you to have all kinds of wrong attitudes.

Asking the Important Questions

You need to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" You may live a long time and ask many questions, but until you ask the most important questions, you are missing the whole purpose of life. Ecclesiastes 12:13 states, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Many people are too busy asking unimportant questions such as "What must I do to be rich?" or "What should I do to be free from toil so I don't have to work and become burdened with responsibilities?" or "What can I do to be free from pain and sickness?" The important questions are these: "What shall I do to be blessed forever?" and "What shall I do to have the needs of my soul supplied?"

You need to ask the important questions about life. You do not need any substitutes. It is not about church joining, baptism, shaking a preacher's hand, or doing good works. You need to be saved from your sins. Christ died to save you from your sins. The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:4, "Who [God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Being saved means to be healed, cured, or rescued from the power and control of sin. Salvation is a beautiful experience.

The heavy load of sin is lifted, your eyes are opened, and the Holy Spirit moves into your heart. You will wonder why you did not get saved a long time ago. The power of sin enslaves men and women and drives them against their will. Paul told the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Friend, you need to commit your life to God and give Him full control.

Christian friend, God saved you out of the pigpen, and He does not want you to go back into it. What must you do to stay saved? It is one thing to get saved, but it is another thing to stay saved. Many people have gotten saved down through the years, but where are they now? They did not stay saved. Where are you? Like the good ground in the Parable of the Sower, do you have root in yourself? Are you determined to see this thing through with God? Are you determined to go all the way with Jesus? You need to stay saved.

Young person, stay saved. Someone is watching your life. Keep walking with God, keep listening to God, keep obeying God, keep loving God, and keep living for God. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." When a person gets saved, all the old things of the sinful life pass away and all things become new.

The Joy of Salvation

I thank God for the day He saved me. Oh, what a happy day it was when Jesus came into my heart! Every time that date comes around, I consider it my spiritual birthday. I will never forget the day when I went into my mother's bedroom and told her, "Momma, I want to get saved." My momma was so happy! It

made me happy to see how happy she was because I can remember many nights when I was disobedient and hardheaded. Before I got saved, I can remember turning the corner and looking up at the window of the house at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and Momma would sit there by the window, watching and waiting for me to come home. After I got saved, she would say, "That is my saved boy."

Do you know the joy and



peace of getting saved and being in the kingdom, the Church of God? It is righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Ghost. Maybe you shook a preacher's hand or joined a church, but are you saved from your sins? Do you have true salvation? If you do not have it, you do not know what you are missing. It can compare to a really good meal. On Sundays, my wife will cook a good meal. Sometimes my sons will call the house to see how we are doing. I say: "You do not know what you are missing right now. The cornbread is hot, and it tastes so good." So it is with salvation. This is the best thing that has ever happened to me. This is what I was looking for when I

was in the world.

Luke 24:1-11 reads: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

"He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

The Truth of the Gospel

For many who hear the Gospel preached, the words are as "idle tales," for they do not believe them. This will cause them to be lost. They will not believe the report of salvation ones tell them. They say: "Healing? That is nonsense." Salvation is mind-boggling to them. They feel it is too good to be true. The Bible says in Romans 3:3-4: "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid." Just because some do not believe does not mean it is not true.

The Gospel has helped so many people. God has changed many people's lives. The Gospel has done so much good for this country and for this world, yet there are ones who will not believe it. Whether or not you accept it, it is still true. Gravity is true. God put gravity in place, and no scientist will ever change that. Salvation is too good not to be true. God put it in place, and no man can change it.

First Corinthians 15:12-17 reads: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

We cannot do anything for ourselves, but we have a witness in ourselves that Christ is alive. We are the only religion on the face of the earth whose leader rose from the dead and is still living. The rest of the religious leaders are still dead. One song says: "*You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.*" I could not do the things I do and live the way I live without God. I give Him all the glory and all the praise! Without Him, I can do nothing. I would not want to live without Christ. Jesus conquered death. All He said about forgiveness, being born again, being converted, and eternal life is true. All the Gospel has taught us and done for this old world is too good not to be true.

Second Corinthians 4:3-4 states, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In

whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." The devil does not want the light of the Gospel to shine in our minds and open our understanding to see God is real. Thank the Lord, it is wonderful to be saved!

Take Heed to the Warnings of God

Jesus did not merely preach religion. He preached the need of Him dwelling in your life and in my life. We need Jesus in our lives. A true minister will not tell you to join a church, shake a preacher's hand, or sign a card. He will say you need to accept Jesus into your heart. In Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Jesus taught: "Learn of Me, follow Me, love Me, and obey Me. I am the true Shepherd; I am the Living Bread." Jesus preached the need of having Him in our lives.

Religion is boring; serving Jesus is exciting! In Mark 8:34-36 we read: "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 [turn away from evil and the sinful things you love and take up the Cross of Jesus Christ; be willing to follow Him]. 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?"

What if you had all the wealth of New York or Chicago?

According to reports, more millionaires are in our country now than ever before. Many of them have so much money they will never live long enough to spend it all. If you had all that wealth, what would it profit you? Would it be worth losing your soul? In verse 37 Jesus said, "Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" What are you going to offer God in exchange for your soul? Absolutely nothing! Therefore, you need to pay attention to God's Word and take heed. Do not ignore the warnings God has placed in your life.

You ought to heed the warnings God gave in His Word and not ignore them. God warns you to turn from your evil ways. We read this warning in Proverbs 1:24-33: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

"Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; [You need to call on God while you have your right mind, health, and strength. Call on Him now, young man. Call on Him now, young woman. Tomorrow is not promised to you. Maybe you have refused to get saved because your boyfriend or girlfriend will not get saved. Are you going to lose your soul because of your boyfriend or girlfriend?] they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple

shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

If You Are a Sinner, You Are Sick

In Mark, Chapter 2, when Jesus went into Levi, the son of Alphaeus' house, many publicans and sinners sat there with Him. When the scribes and the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with the publicans and sinners, they said to His disciples in verse 16, "How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" They did not understand Jesus. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Jesus told them in verse 17, "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Sinner man, sinner woman, the Word of God teaches you are sick. You may not understand how sick you are, but you are sick. Jesus came to save you and to make you well. When Adam sinned and cut off his fellowship with God, God said to Adam, "Where art thou?" When Adam disobeyed God, he became sick and covered himself. God said, "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" God knew right away Adam was sick. In essence, God said: "My man is sick. I told him not to eat from that tree, and now he is sick and hiding from Me." God does not want you to hide from Him. He did not create you to hide from Him. He wants to have fellowship with you.

Friend, without God in your life, you are sick, no matter how much money you have or how educated you are. The reason Christ came is to save you. He came to call sinners to repentance. If you are a backslider, you are also sick. Proverbs 13:15 says, "Good understanding giveth fa-

vor: but the way of transgressors is hard." You may think your way is not hard, but you are so sick your thinking is not right. Many people do not realize how sick they are. The way of a transgressor is hard. Sinner friend, maybe you have a good job and a little money in your pocket, but God sees you are sick. I hope you do not die in your sinful condition.

Peter lets you know in 2 Peter 2:22 when you go back on God, you are like a dog that turns to its own vomit. Have you ever seen a sick dog go back and lick up its own vomit? Backslider, after all God has done for you, He saved you, and perhaps gave you a good home, a good job, a little money in your pocket, a nice automobile, and good health, yet you have backslidden on God. You are like the dog that turns and licks up its own vomit. One day, you are going to stand before God. This is serious! Proverbs 14:14 says, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." If you are a backslider, you are filled with your own ways.

Is Your Name Written in the Book of Life?

In Genesis, Chapter 37, you can read about Joseph, who was sold by his brothers as a slave to the Ishmaelites, who then sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Then, in Chapter 39, you can read how Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph. She was after him day after day, but Joseph refused her. We read in Genesis 39:8-9, "But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and

"THE WAY OF TRANSGRESSORS IS HARD."

PROVERBS 13:15



he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

This religious world is mean and evil. Proverbs 23:23 reads, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." You need to find a pastor who preaches the Word of God. Is the old-fashioned Word of God going forth where you are going to church, where you can get your soul fed Sunday after Sunday? A true man of God loves you and watches out for your soul. He is doing judgment work.

Revelation 20:12-15 states: "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. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Where are you? Is your name written in the Book of Life? You can rest assured the Gospel is a two-edged sword.

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and

knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Jesus is knocking at your heart's door, asking you to let Him in. How wonder-

ful is that! Perhaps God has blessed you to see your forties, your fifties, or your sixties, but you are still not saved. What are you waiting for? You need to get saved before it is too late. Jesus is

not hard to find. He is knocking on your heart's door.

(Compact Disc TR-1214)



2022 Winter Camp Meeting December 26-29

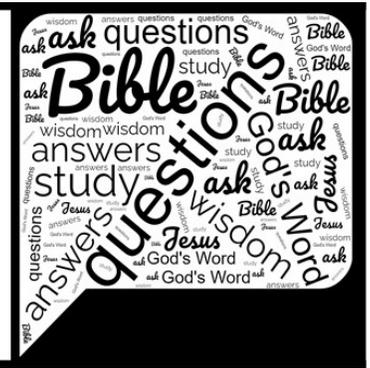
Make your reservations to come and worship the Lord with us in an old-fashioned meeting at the Church of God, God's Acres, in Newark, Ohio.

The first service begins Monday evening at 7:00 p.m.

To make your reservation, call: 740-345-1213
or visit: GodsAcres.org
(Click on "Events" and "Dates and Reservations")

Questions & Answers From the Bible

Can We Fellowship With Brothers and Sisters Who Hold a Different Viewpoint?



Many have the misconception we must have *unity* to have *fellowship*! Biblically, we must have *fellowship* before we can have *unity*. The Apostle John was divinely inspired to pen three Epistles to steady the ship of faith in the time of apostasy. He began by setting forth the terms of fellowship. First John 1:1 refers to Christ as "the Word of life." Verse 2 speaks of "the life" and "that eternal life"; in verse 3 John penned, "That ye also may have fellowship with us . . ." The English word "fellowship" in the Greek is *koinonia*, which means "share in common." Contextually, what we "share in common" is this "life" spoken of in the previous verses. We are in "fellowship" with all who "share in common" this "life" with "the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (verse 3).

Our continued "fellowship" and "fellowship one with another" (verse 7) is based on our ability to continue to "share in common" this "life" and is contingent upon our continuing to "walk in the light" (verse 7). "Walk" indicates progression and advancement. Psalm 119:105 says, "Thy word is a . . . light." To maintain spiritual "life," we must do as Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

The "life" we receive comes through the agency of the Spirit of God (Romans 8:10; 2 Corinthians 3:6). When we are "born again" (John 3:3), or "born of the Spirit" (John 3:6), "the spirit giveth life." When this occurs, we have "unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3) with every other individual who has "the Spirit" and this "life." We have a reality that we "share in common" with every other saved individual. Man cannot produce this unity! It is divinely produced by "the Spirit." The role we are charged with is to be "endeavoring to KEEP the unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3).

There is a great assault against this unity. The enemy of our souls works to cause people to have a change in their spirit. "Unity" is impossible with anyone who does not possess "THE Spirit." Unfortunately, one of the enemy's ruses is to have people who have a seemingly correct doctrinal stance but not a right spirit try to force a supposed "unity." That is conformity, or uniformity, not "unity." First Corinthians 1:10 admonishes to "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." The prior verse says, "Ye were called unto the fellowship [share in common] of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." This fellowship is based on our continuing to

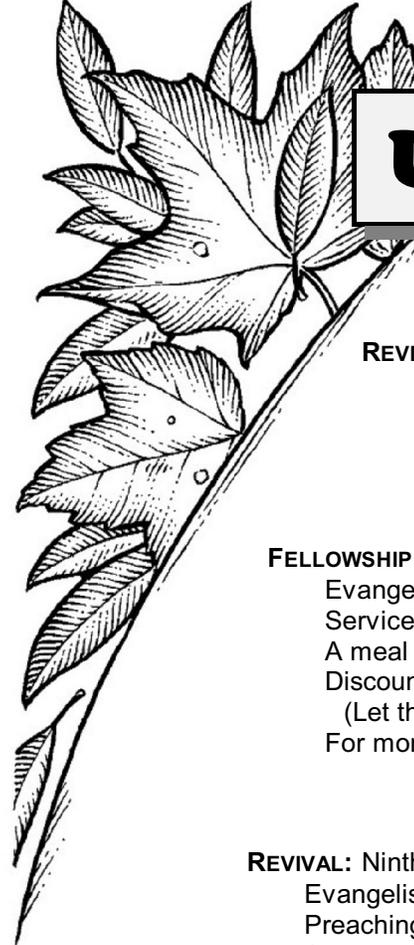
"walk in the light." By allowing "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13) to enable "the eyes of your understanding [to be] enlightened" (Ephesians 1:18) concerning "the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), we will see a progression to where God's people will "come in the unity of the faith" (Ephesians 4:13).

God certainly desires that "all men . . . come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4), but it is a "knowledge" to which people must "come." When Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos speak and knew that there was greater light than what he currently had, they "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). Yes, the Lord desires we all understand "the way of God more perfectly" and "come in the unity of the faith," but we must realize that the highway of holiness has a ditch on each side. The devil does not care which ditch he gets us in as long as he can wreck us and get us off of the highway.

One ditch is division, dividing from everyone who does not see exactly as we do. When the disciples rebuked a man "because he followeth not us" (Mark 9:38), Jesus said, "Forbid him not" (Mark 9:39). The spirit that gave rise to and promoted sectism was a spirit of division that compromised the Biblical truth concerning "fellowship." Another ditch is an ecumenical spirit that accepts anything and anyone. This spirit animates the eighth beast (Revelation 17:11). Divisiveness and ecumenicalism are ploys of the devil. The Bible teaches separation (2 Corinthians 6:17) but not division (Romans 16:17), unity but not ecumenicalism, and indeed true divine fellowship.

We are admonished in Galatians 5:16 and 25 to "walk in the Spirit." When we "walk in the light" (progressing in understanding and obedience to the Word of God), "the Spirit" will unify us with all others who "walk in the light." We certainly, as the songwriter penned, "*Stand from sin Babel aloof*." Babylon is a spiritual condition produced by a devilish spirit. Wherever that condition (or spirit) pervades, unity is not possible in that setting. We must ever "preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2), so "the Spirit" has that to use to bring people understanding, for Jesus said in John 3:21, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." While we work with souls, we must not allow the enemy to move us to either of the ditches.

Brother Earl R. Borders



Upcoming Meetings

October 31 - November 6 — WARRENSVILLE, NC

REVIVAL: Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Road, Warrensville, NC 28693
Evangelist: Brother Jeremy Hupp, Newark, OH
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Borders @ 740-485-8881

November 4-6 — FINDLAY, OH

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Lima Street Church of God, 119 E Lima Street, Findlay, OH 45840
Evangelists: Brother Brandon Gonzalez (mornings) and Brother Calvin Foster (evenings)
Service times: Friday 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 5 p.m.
A meal will be served after each service.
Discounted hotel rooms are available: Findlay Inn & Conference Center @ 419-422-5682
(Let them know you are with the Lima Street Church of God)
For more information, contact: Pastor Joshua Thilmony @ 419-721-7384

November 14-20 — NEW CASTLE, IN

REVIVAL: Ninth Street Church of God, 125 S 9th Street, New Castle, IN 47362
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Summersville, WV
Preaching from the Book of Revelation nightly
Service times: Monday-Saturday 7 p.m.; Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 5 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Polston @ 765-521-8284

November 24-27 — CANBY, OR

ANNUAL THANKSGIVING & FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 522 NW 2nd Ave,
Canby, OR 97013
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Summersville, WV
Services times: Thursday 7 p.m.; Friday-Saturday 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m.;
Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 6 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor David Stegmeier @ 503-313-0227

December 7-14 — PHOENIX, AZ

REVIVAL: Church of God, 3050 West Grovers Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85053
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Summersville, WV
Service times: 7 p.m. each evening; Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Preaching from the Book of Revelation nightly
For more information, contact: Pastor Scott Kerr @ 480-310-3199

December 26-29 — NEWARK, OH

CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 675 N Cedar Street, Newark, OH 43055
Three services daily: 10 a.m., 3 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Please Note: The first service begins Monday evening at 7 p.m.
For lodging reservations, call 740-345-1213 or visit us @ GodsAcres.org
(Click on "Events" and "Dates and Reservations")
For more information, contact:
Pastor Roger L. Decker @ 740-344-2543

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