

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER



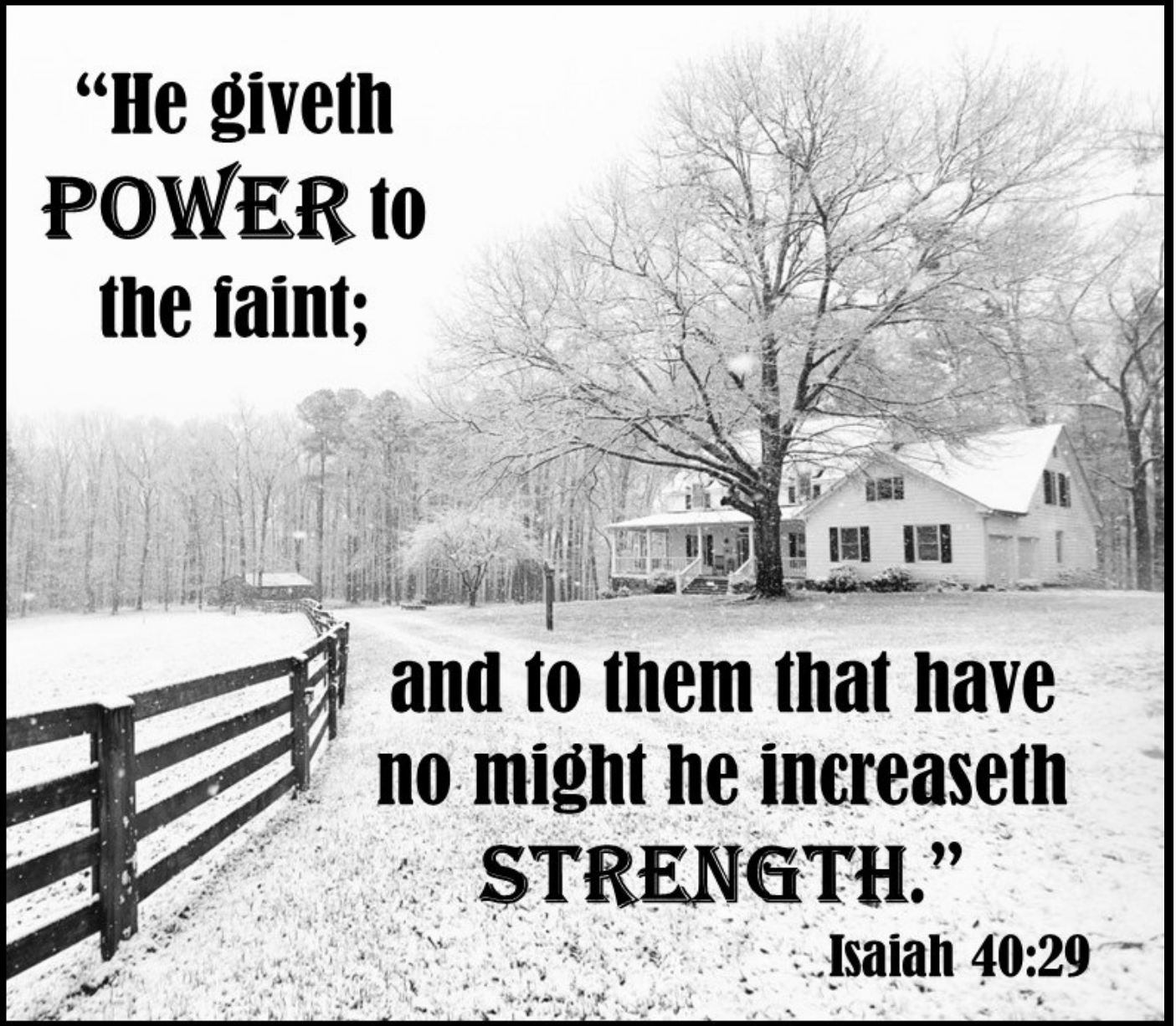
SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53 December 2023 No. 12

**“He giveth
POWER to
the faint;**

**and to them that have
no might he increaseth
STRENGTH.”**

Isaiah 40:29



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

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

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"O TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD"

A glimpse into this month's issue reminds us of how David searched for help. He concluded in Psalm 121:2, "My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." Even the most highly esteemed men of the Bible, such as David, became discouraged. You can find encouragement in the message on "Depression" by Brother Roger L. Decker. Depression is one of the devil's greatest tools. You will discover the many things that can cause discouragement, such as entertaining thoughts you should not be having. Warning signs and avenues by which depression can make an inroad into your life are laid out.

Brother Decker tells us: "Depression is real. It will visit you if it has not already"; "We are human beings with human thoughts, desires, affections, and passions"; and "As bad as things can be, there is no room for despair because there is hope in God." Thank the Lord, this message will give you hope and guidance on how to keep your thoughts on the great love of God.

Brother E. David Stegmeier's message on "The Miracle of the New Birth: Earmarks of a Christian" clarifies what it means to be born again. Some may have questions or be confused as was the Pharisee, Nicodemus. His deep curiosity led him to meet with Jesus privately at night. Brother Stegmeier points out, "Nicodemus had some fundamental questions" for Jesus. Jesus was true to his soul and is still true to souls today!

Great truths are brought out in

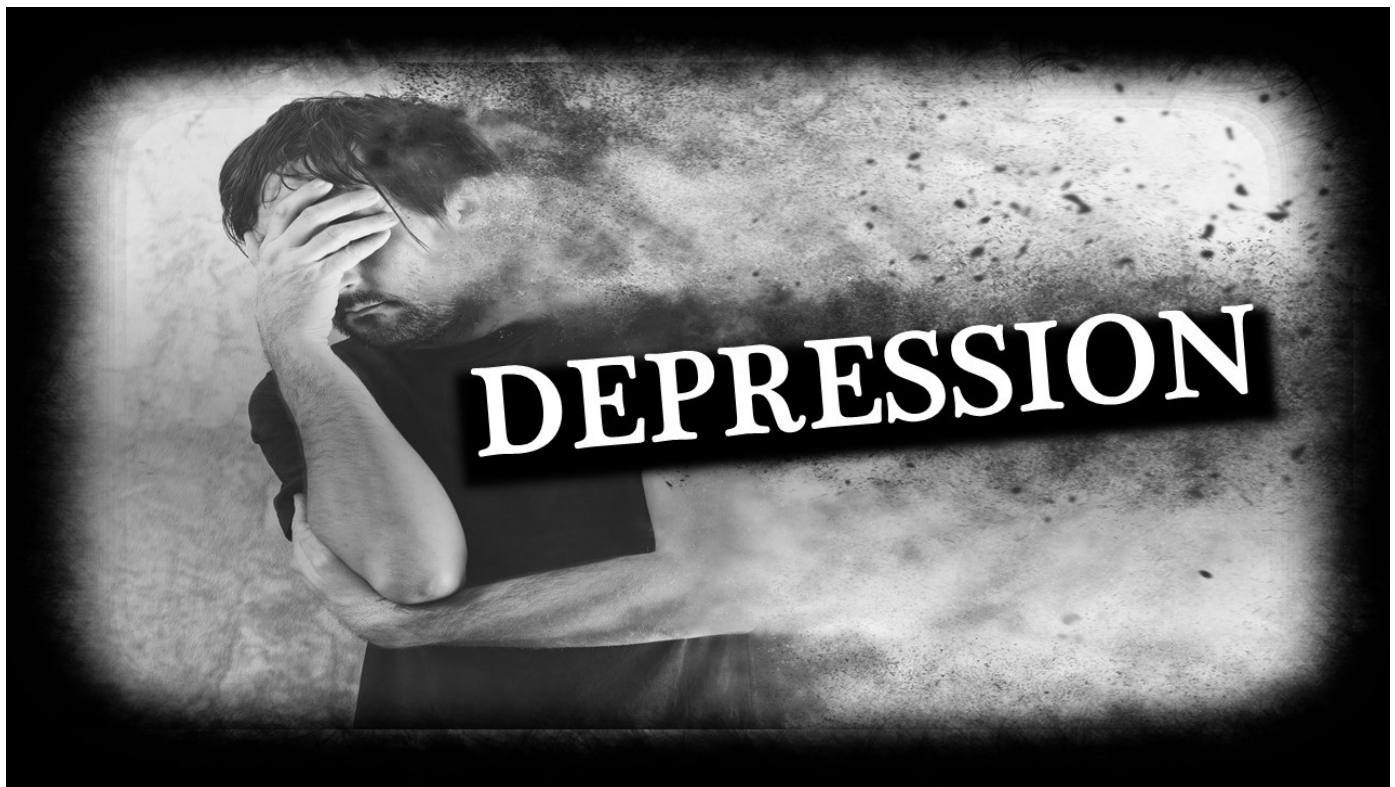
this message, such as holiness, becoming a member of God's kingdom, and what a person will truly find in living a life for God. Most importantly, some characteristics of the greatest of all miracles—the new birth in Christ Jesus—are revealed. Brother Stegmeier states that is when your "life begins to count for God."

The devil will not only attempt to infiltrate an adult with confusion, but he would like to get hold of the youth. In the "Especially for Young People" section, Brother Jared Decker shares his personal journey with our readers entitled "The Power of Choice." His testimony will certainly encourage the younger generation. Perhaps you are facing some of life's greatest temptations and trials.

Brother Jared, now married with children, shares how choices will shape your life, saying, "Our choices will either bring us closer to God or separate us from God." He has experienced what it was like to make wrong choices, and now he can point others who may be struggling toward victory. He can attest that "Jesus gets sweeter every day, but sin tears you down every time."

God is faithful to bring understanding. Brother Earl R. Borders continues a study into "Understanding Sanctification." He states: "Sadly, there is much confusion concerning this vital subject called sanctification" and "God never intended for His Word to generate confusion." This in-depth series brings greater light and knowledge into areas where there is much confusion.

[continued on page 8]



Brother Roger L. Decker

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

11 Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.

13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

14 But God forbid that I

should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

17 From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

18 Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

One of many tools the enemy of our souls uses to cause a Christian to quit, faint, or grow weary is depression. Have you ever been depressed? C. S. Lewis wrote an article called "The Devil's Best Tool." It reads:

The devil, according to legend, once advertised his tools for

sale at a public auction. When the prospective buyers assembled, there was one oddly shaped tool labeled "Not for Sale." Asked to explain why this was, the devil answered: "I can spare my other tools, but I cannot spare this one. It is the most useful implement I have. It is called discouragement, and with it I can work my way into hearts otherwise inaccessible. When I get this tool into a man's heart, the way is open to plant anything there I may desire."

Even good Christians feel the chilly winds of depression. I do not know of anyone immune to it. Great men in the Bible, whom we highly esteem, were victims of depression.

The first six chapters of the Book of Joshua speak of great victory. Jericho's walls were brought down, and Joshua's name was amplified before the people. Joshua, Chapter 7, gives another story. Joshua 7:1 says, "But the children of Israel

committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel." Israel was defeated by an enemy they should have easily gained victory over because of sin.

Discouragement—A Valuable Tool for the Enemy

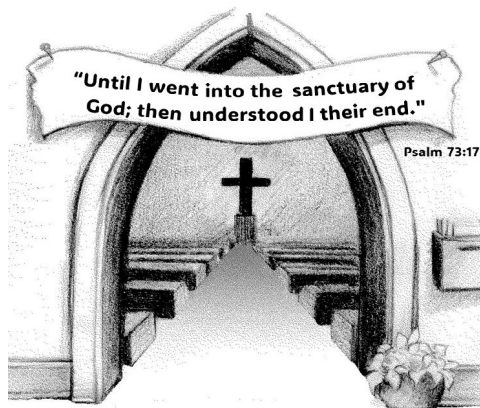
The children of Israel were bewildered, and their leader, Joshua, prayed. Joshua 7:6-10 states: "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan!

"O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name? [Joshua was blaming God for the defeat. He basically said to God: 'Why did You bring us over here to be an embarrassment in front of the Canaanites? We should have stayed on the other side.'] And the LORD said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Sin was in the camp.

Joshua was a great leader of Israel who had won victory after victory in battle. This great man of God fell on his knees with dust on his head and poured out his heart to God because he was discouraged. He asked God: "Why did You forsake us? You helped

us win a great victory at Jericho." Depression's chilly hands upon the soul of a Christian can take him to utter despair.

David was another outstanding leader of Israel. He was victorious in many battles. Psalm 73:1-3 states: "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But [here is a conjunction] as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped [what was the matter?]. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." He saw other people who were not serving God getting blessed, and he was being chastised daily.



David felt the wicked were getting along better than he was. He was envious and downcast because his thinking was wrong. He had entertained thoughts he should not have been entertaining. He saw the prosperity of the wicked. They were seemingly not having the problems he was having. Finally, he got his thinking straight, not by giving up or quitting, but by going into the sanctuary and hearing the Word of God. Many people stop worshipping God because of discouragement. That is why discouragement is a valuable tool for the devil.

David did not quit God or throw up his hands in despair. Psalm 73:16-17 says, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then un-

derstood I their end." He understood the reality of the end of the wicked. The devil likes to work on God's people by saying, "Some people are getting along better than you are, and they are not serving God." There is no truth in that statement. David saw the wicked getting blessed, but when he entered the sanctuary, he saw their end.

Being Subject to Human Traits

The Prophet Elijah was another outstanding man of God. James 5:17-18 says: "Elias [Elijah] was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain [Elijah had power with God]; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Elijah got depressed. First Kings, Chapter 18, is a great read. Elijah had victory over the prophets of Baal. He prayed for rain, and it rained. Then, in Chapter 19, there was a complete reversal. Everything changed.

First Kings 19:1-4 says: "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah [she sent a note threatening him], saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time [in other words, she said, 'I am going to end your life the same way you killed those prophets']. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life [the four hundred and fifty prophets did not send him away, but this woman threatened him and he ran for his life], and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and

came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." A change took place in Elijah's confidence and faith. He was so depressed that he felt he was the only prophet left (verse 10). However, God came to his rescue. He was a great man of God, but James said he had the same desires and affections as we do.

Depression is real. It will visit you if it has not already. We should never be discouraged, but that will not keep it away. We have much to be thankful for, but we are human beings with human thoughts, desires, affections, and passions. We are all subject to human traits. The word *depression* means "despair; sadness." It has several synonyms: gloominess, misery, hopelessness, melancholy, and unhappiness.

Allowing Afflictions to Draw You Closer to God

Many things can cause depression. Sickness is one of them. Constantly being sick not only wears out the body, but it puts a strain on your spirit. Sickness can wear you out physically and spiritually. Exodus 23:25 is a promise in the Word of God concerning healing. It says, "And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee." However, sometimes healing does not happen instantly, and sometimes it does not happen at all because God uses sickness to encourage us to trust Him and help strengthen our faith.

Beware of depression when you are not feeling well or are in pain. I have fought depression when I had to sit down to preach. I would rather stand to preach and work with ones at the altar, like the other brethren. I cannot,



so the enemy tries to use that to discourage me.

The Apostle Paul said in our Scripture text not to "be weary." Ask God to help you do your best with the circumstances surrounding you. When your body has been in pain, or you have been in a battle for a lengthy time, remember the attack is coming. The devil will try to make you think something is wrong with you spiritually or you must not be living right because you are sick. God will never hide from you some secret sin. You may try to hide sin from God, but God will hide nothing from you. He will make it clear to you if sin is in your life.

The devil will always point out someone who was healed instantly, but you are not any better. He will say, "God does not love you as much as He loves them." He will attempt to build a case against you. The Book of Job is in the Bible for a reason. It tells us what kind of character Job had. Job 1:1 says, "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Job went through some of the worst trials an individual could

go through, yet he was a perfect and just man before God.

Afflictions can bring you closer to God, which is why God sends them. The psalmist said in Psalm 119:67, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Maybe you were slacking off in your prayer life, Bible study, visitation, or testimonies for the Lord. When afflictions come, a real Christian will allow them to draw him closer to God. If you experience a major life-changing event, such as losing a job or moving across the country, you can develop depression. Maybe you thought your job was secure and planned on retiring someday, but the company shut down or sold out. Now, you are out of work, and discouragement has set in.

An insurmountable amount of debt is another trigger for depression. It is depressing if you have maxed out credit cards and now the payments are due. Many have been in a financial strain at some point in their lives. During those times, you will be tempted to cut back on your tithes and offerings to God. You may think, "The Lord understands." The devil will cause you to believe you have the right not to pay your tithes. You should reject those thoughts when they come to you.

The wife may start to work outside the home. The problems keep arising because the husband and wife are both worn out and depressed at the end of the day instead of enjoying life together. There are exceptions to the rule regarding the wife working, but it should never be because of covetousness or to deposit lots of money in the bank. Do not allow the devil to tempt you to take what belongs to the Lord and use it for yourself. You may need to cut back on your spending, but people often cut back on the Lord instead.

Avenues of Depression

The ending of relationships, such as divorce or separation of friends, tragedies, or a death in the family, can all cause depression. Some are depressed because they are growing old, or the thought of growing old bothers them. It will happen to all of us. I do not know anyone who enjoys getting old and having their joints hurt whenever they move around. There is no healing for old age. You may need to ask God to block those depressing thoughts out of your mind. The wrinkles are coming, and you cannot stop them. Your hair may turn gray. God is preparing you for eternity.

Some get depressed because they gain weight and fail in dieting. These are all avenues the enemy uses to bring depression. We are human beings; we are subject to these things. Someone with a negative outlook on life can develop symptoms of depression. There are optimists and pessimists, and both contribute to society. For example, the optimist invented the airplane, but the pessimist invented the parachute.

Anxiety disorders can bring on a bout of depression. Many people who have experienced some abuse in their lives early on can develop depression. It can follow them throughout their childhood and into their adulthood. A child who has been sexually or emotionally abused is a likely candidate for depression later in life. Statistics say men do not become depressed as easily as women, primarily because of hormonal changes in women.

Depression comes when a husband and wife fail to get along. It seems nothing goes right when a husband and wife are at odds with each other. It can get to where the home no longer matters to them, and the devil will take advantage and cause depression. He will hit the

home hard. Often, instead of working things out, the wife will go one way and the husband another, which is the opposite of what God wants. Hands are thrown up in despair as if to say, "What is the use?"

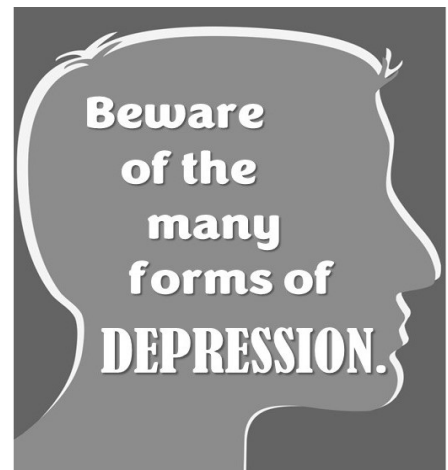
Our souls depend on us doing things right. Husband and wife, your influence and your prayers can be hindered. How can you talk to God when you and your companion dispute? First Peter 3:7 reads, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered [or affected]."

There is a place for strength, a place to roughhouse, so to speak, and a place for beauty and tranquility in the home. The man has what the woman desires, and the woman has what the man desires. God gives a place for both, and both are heirs together before the Lord. Do not allow contention and strife to rob you of being an heir and talking to God. Together, husband and wife can be a powerhouse for God. That is why the devil fights so hard. Who feels like praying when you are at odds with someone? You should pray, but you do not feel like it.

You will not feel like praying if you and your companion have been arguing over something. However, you should stop and say, "Let's talk to God about this." In too many cases, depression takes over, and the overwhelming thought is that the marriage will never work. Some even say they want a divorce. Proverbs 19:13 says, "The contentions of a wife are a continual dropping."

An Evil Report

An evil report can cause depression. Do not believe everything you read in the news. Why



would you want to listen to bad news? God is the only One who can turn things around. You can do nothing about what is happening in the world except pray. You can become so caught up in politics that your spirit is robbed. If others do not agree with your political views, you can have a problem with them. Elections come and go. There will be ones elected you did not vote for. There is no reason to become depressed about it. Always remember that God knows what is going on, and He is still in control. Be careful to avoid getting so caught up with theories until your mind becomes engulfed and you cannot think of anything else. All your thinking changes nothing.

There were twelve leaders of the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe, who viewed Canaan. Only two had the faith to go and possess the land. They all saw the same things—fruit and inhabitants. Only two looked at the promises of God. Ten looked at their feeble abilities. The children of Israel were so overcome with discouragement and depression that they could not be encouraged by a good report. The people were convinced what they saw was stronger than the promises of God. Nothing is stronger than the promises of God!

Numbers 13:30-31 says: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at

once [in other words, 'Let's not talk about; let's take action'], and possess it; for we are well able [with God] to overcome it. But [here comes the depression] the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." Certainly, the inhabitants were stronger than them, but they were not stronger than God.

Things quickly changed. Two men were encouraging the people, but the others threw cold water on it, so to speak, and depression hit the camp. The people cried all night. They were so upset that they threatened Moses because of a bad report. Their outlook and emotions were keyed up. Numbers 14:1 says, "The people wept that night." Then, they said in verse 4, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." That is exactly where captains made by people will take you — right back to Egypt. It was so bad that the people were going to stone the servants of God, but God intervened.

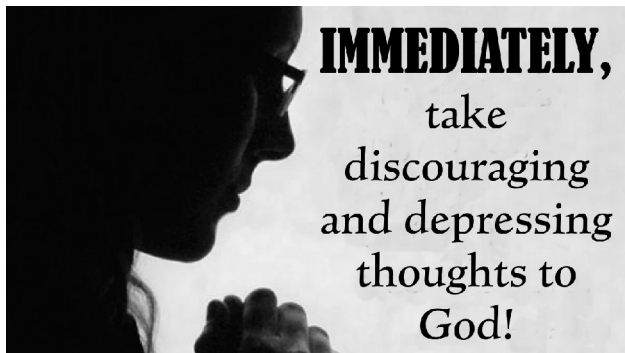
Keeping Your Thoughts on God

Depression comes from failing. You may have a bad habit you have been working on but do not have victory over it yet. It can cause you to become depressed. You need to deal with the reason you fail. It could be the way you are handling the temptation. Psalm 94:17-19 states: "Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul." We need to get our thinking straight.

Another version reads: "Unless the LORD had given me help,

I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death. When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your unfailing love, LORD, supported me." When he thought he was about to lose out with God, the mercy of the Lord was there. The psalmist had a multitude of thoughts, but comfort came.

Comforting thoughts come from God. We cannot afford to dwell on the wrong thoughts. Several thoughts go through our minds each day. God puts His thoughts there, too. They are thoughts of comfort and reassurance. We should not dwell on the



wrong thoughts. We are human beings, and wrong thoughts will come in. We will dwell on them if we fail to take them to God immediately. If you dwell on negative thoughts, a seed of depression and discouragement will come along. Take your thoughts to God immediately, and His thoughts will comfort your soul.

The devil's thoughts are depressing, but God's thoughts bring comfort. Psalm 42:5-11 says: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

"Yet the LORD will command

his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health [or the healing] of my countenance, and my God."

As bad as things can be, there is no room for despair because there is hope in God. God can turn things around. God is not only powerful; He is good. Again, verse 7 says, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." In that verse, the psalmist talked about sorrow engulfing his soul. It reveals to the reader that God will be there as He was in the past. Your soul can find the comfort it desires in the Lord.

Do Not Be Weary in Well Doing

Depression is not sin, but do not dwell there because it can lead to sin. It can lead you to quit serving God, which is exactly what the devil wants. When you become depressed, you may think it will quickly pass, but that does not always happen. You need to take it to the throne of grace, as the Bible says, and receive help in times of trouble. There is hope for depression. Psalm 130:7 says, "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."

God will be there for you. He has not forgotten you, even if

you are in a state of depression. There is victory at the throne of grace. Do not forget what God has done for you in the past. Psalm 78:7 states, "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." Always remember the Lord's promises. Psalm 119:49 reads, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope."

Dear soul, if you are in the grips of depression, take it to God. God will be there for you. Our Scripture text says in verse 9, "And let us not be weary in well doing." The well doing does not cause weariness, but the opposition against doing right can cause you to become weary. Continue doing what is right because it is right. Do not be a quitter. Do not throw up your hands in despair and say, "There is no use," because that is not true.

There is nothing too difficult for God to handle. Our help comes through the Word of God. The devil wants you to quit coming to worship services. Trials

can get rough. You may think you cannot stand it any longer, but the psalmist said in Psalm 30:5, "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Do not become weary in well doing. Do not dwell on negative thoughts. The devil likes to use negative thoughts as a tool because he knows he can make inroads with other things once you become depressed. Stand against discouragement and hope in God.

Isaiah 55:9 says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Think about the things of God. God is an encourager and a lifter.

(Compact Disc TR-2825)

Brother Roger L. Decker is the pastor of the Church of God in Newark, OH.

[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]

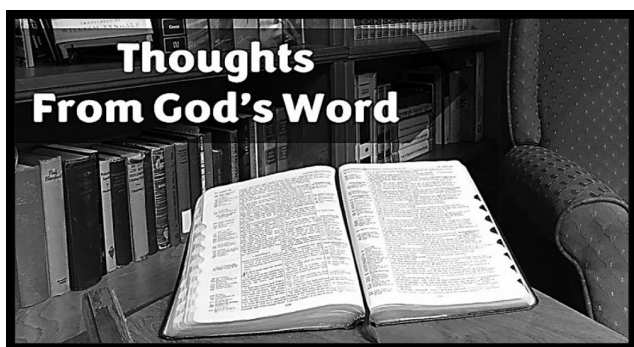
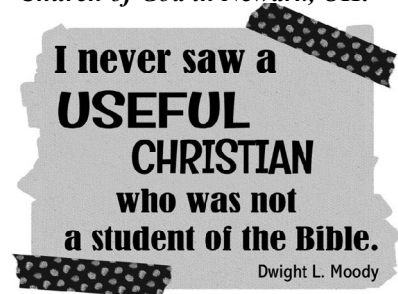
Brother Borders reiterates, "We love all the dear brethren everywhere" and "God wants the truth declared so we can gain understanding."

This is only a sample of what the Lord has prepared for you in this issue. You will discover God's love through the preached Word as you turn the pages. Isaiah 55:11 says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

God loves you. It is no accident how God carefully placed each message within. May you find peace in your soul knowing God wishes to spend time with you to firmly establish His Word within your heart.

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

James 1:22-24

Every morning when I get up, I have a routine of brushing my teeth and washing my face. I look in the mirror, and I comb my hair. In fact, before I go anywhere, I take a look in the mirror first, to make sure my face is clean and my hair is combed. This is something we all do. We all look in the mirror, maybe even several times a day, and if we have something in our teeth or on our face, we clean it up. If our hair is messed up, we comb it out.

The Bible is our spiritual mirror. We should look into it each and every morning, and if there is something that needs cleaned up or if something is out of order, we should fix it. That is a good way

to start our day. It is also good for us to take a look into the spiritual mirror before we go anywhere, before we see someone, and before we go out in public. We need to make sure our spirit is clean and right.

It is important to hear what the Lord is saying and do what He is telling us to do. If I see something on my face, but I do not take the time to wash it off, what good was it for me to look in the mirror? The same is true spiritually. I do not want to deceive myself by failing to clean something off my spiritual face before I go anywhere or do anything during the day.

Sister Annette Hupp

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Brother E. David Stegmeier

When the children of Israel made their exodus from the bondage in Egypt, a mixed multitude came with them. We read of the condition in Numbers 11:4. "And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?" In our day and time, there are those among us who do not want the manna God sends from Heaven. They are dissatisfied with the provisions God gives.

The mixed multitude caused problems and affected the Israel-

ites. They were unbelievers who left with the Israelites and became a source of grief to God's people. Today, ministers are responsible for ensuring there are no mixed multitudes among us. Messages should be brought that will bring a separation between the believers and the unbelievers.

A *miracle* is "a surprising and welcoming event not explainable by natural or scientific laws; it is assumed to be brought about by the work of a divine agency." Miracles are wonders, phenomena, and marvels. An *earmark* is "a distinguishing, characteristic mark or feature of something;

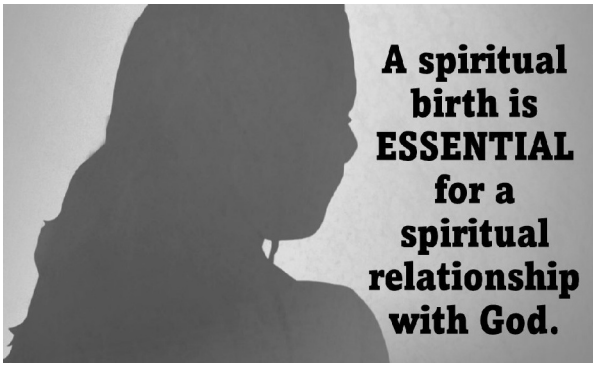
something marked in a distinguishing manner; earmarked."

Luke wrote in Acts 4:13, "Now when they [the Jewish rulers, elders, scribes, and Annas, the high priest] saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." All the Jewish religious leaders were shocked that Peter and John spoke confidently after healing the crippled man at the gate of the temple. Peter and John were set free because of the people. However, the rulers warned them to stop preaching about Jesus.

The best gift anyone can have is to be taught directly by Christ and the Holy Spirit. Peter and John were convinced Jesus was the Messiah who taught the truth. An honest conviction of truth is far more important in the ministry than human talent and scholastic learning. Peter and John gave this retort in Acts 4:19-20: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

"Ye Must Be Born Again"

John 3:1-9 reads: "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"



**A spiritual
birth is
ESSENTIAL
for a
spiritual
relationship
with God.**

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [a symbol of the Word of God] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?"

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, a ruling council of the Jews, came to Jesus seeking answers. Most of the Sanhedrin were hypocrites. John the Baptist called them "vipers" (Matthew 3:7). Christ recognized a genuine sincerity in Nicodemus, who came to Him "by night." Perhaps this Jewish teacher came to Christ at night because he was somewhat embarrassed. Most of his acquaintances did not recognize who Christ was, which was God in a fleshly body. Crowds surrounded Jesus during the day, so another conjecture could have been that Jesus was more available at night.

Nicodemus had some fundamental questions. He was well educated; however, he was willing to listen and learn more, which is an example to us. No matter how educated we are, we must come with an open mind and heart willing to receive greater understanding. Later,

Nicodemus stood up for Jesus and became a secret follower (John 7:50-51). During His trial, in verse 51 of the *Amplified Bible*, Nicodemus said, "Does our Law convict someone without first giving him a hearing and finding out what he is [accused of] doing?"

Nicodemus risked his position and reputation. The religious leaders of that day hated Jesus. They were not interested in finding the truth.

Before addressing Nicodemus' religious questions, Christ began with the starting point, "Nicodemus, you must be born again!" Being born again is a profound and essential truth, so Jesus began with the words "verily, verily," or "truly, truly!" As a physical birth is necessary for physical life, a spiritual birth is essential for a spiritual relationship with God.

Receiving a New Nature

An individual must be changed from carnal to spiritual to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The reign of Christ is godly and righteous. His subjects must be saved from their sins. The Kingdom of God is personal and not according to a nation or a specific race. When a person's nature is changed through repentance from sin and faith in Christ, that individual becomes a citizen of God's kingdom.

Jesus came to save us *from* our sins. The angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). *From* is a preposition used to indicate physical separation or an act or condition of removal. An individual who is saved or born again has been separated and

removed from sin. The preposition *from* shows the time and place when something begins.

Holiness begins where sin stops. God's people have been saved *from* their sins. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Since Nicodemus had not experienced the new birth, he was taking everything physically. He essentially asked, "How can a man who is old enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born again?" It would be an impossibility. The new birth would be by water (the Word of God) and the Spirit of God.

Nicodemus was acquainted with the Scripture text in Ezekiel 36:25-26, which states: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ephesians 5:26 reads, "That he [Christ] might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man [the man who has not experienced the new birth] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned [or understood]." Nicodemus was a natural man who had not been born again. An individual must repent of sin and believe the Gospel. He is born again through the Word of God and the Spirit of God when he accepts and believes the message of salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, the Apostle Paul wrote, "For by one

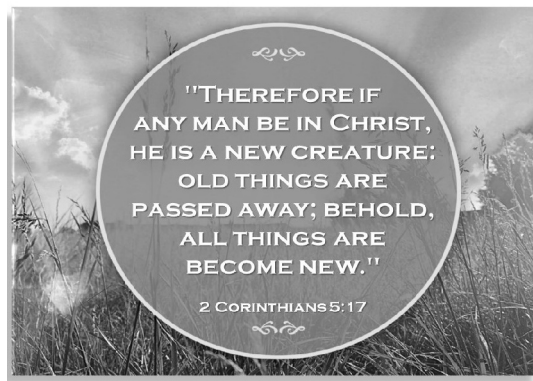
Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." When a person is born again of the Spirit of God, he receives a new nature. He is completely changed!

Becoming a Member of God's Kingdom

Mark Schwartz wrote in an Amish periodical called *Tagliches Manna*: "The new birth [made alive, regeneration, born from above, all are synonymous terms] gives us a new dimension of living that goes much further than reformation. A born-again [individual] enters a new world. [They go] from lust to holiness, from darkness to light, from death to resurrection. His will is changed, his purpose for living is different, and his life has new meaning. The lost has been found; the foreigner is now a citizen of God's kingdom; the stranger has become a member of God's household. 'But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Corinthians 15:57)."

When we came into this world, we were born of the flesh. In the experience of the second birth, we are born of the Spirit of God. Our first birth leads to physical death, but our new, or second birth, leads to eternal life. As born-again individuals, we relinquish any rights to our own lives and yield unto the authority of Jesus Christ. He now sits on the throne of our hearts. He becomes the King of our lives! The song entitled "Lead Me to Calvary" written by Jennie Evelyn Hussey says:

*King of my life, I crown Thee now-
Thine shall the glory be;
Lest I forget Thy thorn-crowned
brow,
Lead me to Calvary.*



*May I be willing, Lord, to bear
Daily my cross for Thee;
Even Thy cup of grief to share-
Thou hast borne all for me.*

*Lest I forget Gethsemane,
Lest I forget Thine agony,
Lest I forget Thy love for me,
Lead me to Calvary.*

The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Fanny Crosby wrote the song called "To God Be the Glory." It reads:

*To God be the glory, great things
He hath done;
So loved He the world that He gave
us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement
for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all
may go in.*

*O perfect redemption, the purchase
of blood,
To ev'ry believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly
believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon
receives.*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, thro'
Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great
things He hath done.*

A hymn written by W. J. Henry entitled "What a Change!" states:

*From the burden of sin
To sweet peace within,
What a change! What a change!
All my guilt washed away,
All my night turned to day,
O glory to God, what a change!*

*From the world and its strife
To a heav'nly life,
What a change! What a change!
From the broad way of sin
To a walk now with Him,
O glory to God, what a change!*

*From my sorrows and care,
Perfect rest to share,
What a change! What a change!
From the chains of despair,
His dear cross now to bear,
O glory to God, what a change!*

*What a change! What a change!
In my heart and my life what a
change!
Jesus saves me today, Takes my sins
all away,
O glory to God, what a change!*

Understanding Spiritual Things

The Lord uses natural things to help us understand this miracle of the new birth and to teach us spiritual truths. The new birth is likened to the movement of the wind (John 3:8). You can hear the wind and see its effects, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. Mankind cannot control the wind, but we can use its power. The new birth is much like the workings of the wind. God controls both; both are invisible, yet we can see the results. If an individual has been born again, there is a complete change. It is a transformation only God can perform.

A born-again individual hates the evil he once loved, and he now loves the things he once despised. That is not easy to

understand in our natural human minds. Just as Nicodemus had a hard time understanding the mission of Christ, individuals who have yet to experience the new birth cannot begin to know how it all works. You must be born again! Charles W. Naylor wrote a hymn, reinforcing the doctrine of the new birth. It is called "Ye Must Be Born Again."

*That heavenly Teacher, in words
that are plain,
This truth declared to men,
If ever they would to His kingdom
attain,
They must be born again.*

*No mere reformation your sins can
erase,
You cannot remove their stain;
If ever in heaven your soul has a
place,
Ye must be born again.*

*Good works will not answer, no
penance will do,
Morality, too, is vain,
For naught will avail but a creature
made new,
Ye must be born again.*

*In Adam we lost all our righteous
estate,
And would we it regain,
To Jesus must come and repent
ere too late –
Ye must be born again.*

*Ye must be born again,
Ye must be born again;
His words are true, He speaks to you,
Ye must be born again.*

Nicodemus asked Jesus, "How can these things be?" He needed the experience of the new birth. The understanding of spiritual things comes from the Holy Spirit, the Teacher. On another occasion, Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed

from death unto life" (John 5:24). The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

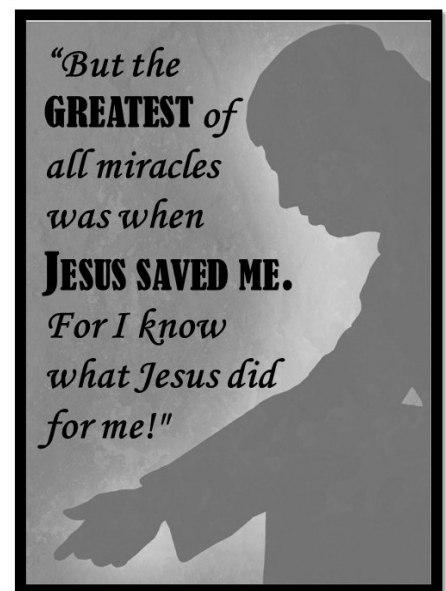
Brother Naylor Joles from my congregation was incarcerated in the Oregon State Penitentiary for sixteen years and seven months. Upon release, he lived an exemplary life. It was the result of a born-again experience.

The Greatest of All Miracles

If you confess and repent of your sins to God, He will forgive you, cleanse you, and receive you as a member of the family of God, or the Kingdom of God. You can experience a change of nature! The born-again experience is a miracle. It is the greatest miracle you will ever experience. In the song "The Greatest of All Miracles" by Squire Parsons, the lyrics in the chorus say: "*But the greatest of all miracles was when Jesus saved me. For I know what Jesus did for me!*"

When you confess your sins to God, the Word of God tells us something miraculously happens to them. The Prophet Micah wrote, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). The Psalmist David wrote in Psalm 103:11-12: "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." We have no church for you to join. When you are born again, you are automatically a member of God's church, the family of God.

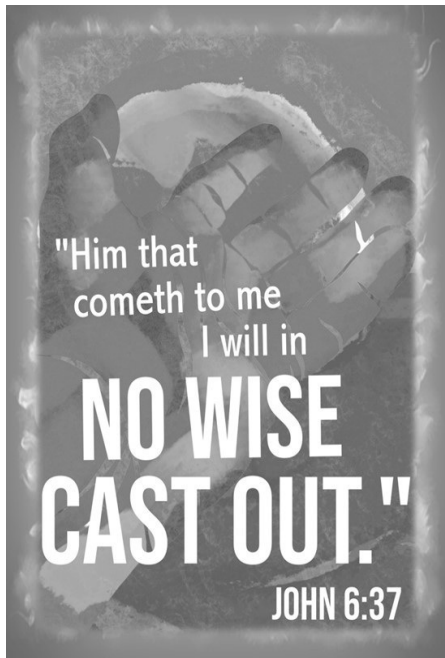
Some people hide behind false refuges. Salvation does not come through water baptism, passing a test from a church catechism, or joining a certain de-



nomination. These false doctrines will not give you a born-again experience. Isaiah wrote, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place" (Isaiah 28:17).

"Hail" is a symbol of the Word of God when it comes down in a solid form. "Waters" stands for the Word of God. When the Word is preached, it uncovers the "hiding places" and "refuge of lies." Luke recorded what happened on the Day of Pentecost. He brought out a truth when he said in Acts 2:47, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Charlotte Elliott was an invalid. She wrote: "My Heavenly Father knows, and He alone, what it is, day after day, and hour after hour, to fight against bodily feelings of almost overpowering weakness and languor and exhaustion, to resolve, as He enables me to do, not to yield to the slothfulness, the depression, the irritability, such a body causes me too long to indulge, but to rise every morning determined on taking this for my motto, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.'" One



night after a bitter tirade, she asked a minister, "If I wanted to become a Christian and to share the peace and joy you possess, what would I do?"

He said, "You must give yourself to God just as you are now, with your fightings and fears, hates and loves, pride and shame."

She responded: "I would come to God just as I am? Is that right?" She did, and her life was completely changed. Her special verse was, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Charlotte Elliott wrote about 150 hymns. She undoubtedly wrote the most famous invitational hymn ever written. Here are the words to the hymn she composed called "Just As I Am."

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse
each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, tho' tossed about,
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse,
relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*Just as I am, thy love I own
Has broken ev'ry barrier down;
Now to be thine, and thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

A contemporary song by Gloria and Bill Gaither expresses the miracle of the new birth. Notice the many changes in the people's lives in this song entitled "Go Ask."

*Don't ask me to explain for you
How one could start again
How hardened hearts could soften
like a child
Don't ask me how to reason out
The mysteries of life
Or how to face its problems
with a smile*

*Go ask the man who's found the way
Through tangled roads back home
to stay
When all communications were
destroyed
Go ask the child who's walking now
Who once was crippled and then
somehow
Her useless legs were made to jump
for joy*

*Go ask the one whose burned-out
mind
Has been restored I think you'll
find
The question's not as important as
before*

*Don't ask me if He's good or bad
I only know the guilt I had is gone
And I can't tell you any more*

*Don't ask me how to prove to you
Why I know God is there
Or how I know that He would care
for you*

*Don't ask me why Someone so great
Would choose to walk with me,
And trade my broken life for one
that's new*

*Go ask the child who's got a dad
To love away the hurt he had
Before this Man called Jesus touched
their lives*

*Go ask the one whose fears have fled
Whose churning heart was quieted
When Someone whispered peace to
all her strife*

*Go ask the man to tell you more
Whose life was just a raging war
Inside himself until the Savior came
I don't pretend to be so wise
I only know He touched my eyes
And nothing else will ever be the
same.*

Living a Life for God

When an individual is born again, his life begins to count for God. He can now accomplish something for Him. In sin, an individual wastes his years, living life in vain. The song "Wasted Years," written by Wally Fowler, reads:

*Have you wandered along on life's
pathway,
Have you lived without love, a life
of tears;
Have you searched for the great
hidden meaning,
Or is your life filled with long
wasted years?*

*Wasted years, wasted years, oh,
how foolish,
As you walk on in darkness and in
fear;
Turn around, turn around God is
calling,
He's calling you from a life of
wasted years.*

*Search for wisdom and seek
understanding,*

*There is someone who knows and
always hears;
Give it up! Give it up, the load
you're bearing!
You can't go on in a life of wasted
years.*

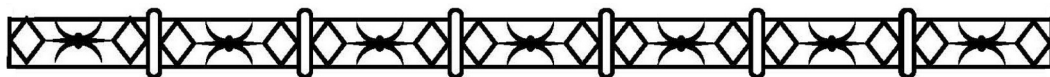
*Don't you know Jesus died for all
sinners,
He loves you and your guilt He
gladly bears;
Come to Him! Come to Him!
Your sin confessing
You can go on with a life of fruitful
years.*

Put something of value into your everyday life! God never created any human being to live a life of wasted years. Charles W. Naylor said: "Some men live a long time in a little while; others live only a little in a long time. . . . The value of life is not reckoned by its length but by its accomplishments."

The miraculous effect Jesus had on the demon-possessed man dwelling among the tombs is an example of what Christ came to do. Mark wrote, "And

they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid" (Mark 5:15). "[Jesus] went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

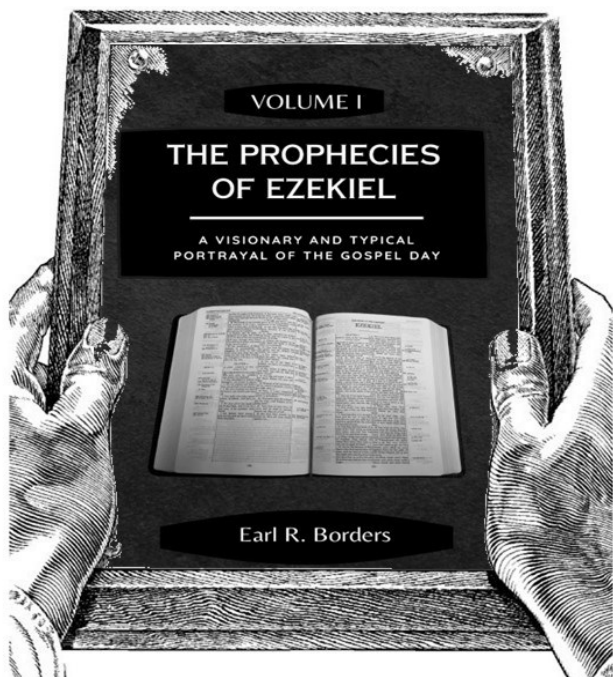
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THE PROPHECIES OF EZEKIEL

A Visionary and Typical Portrayal of the Gospel Day

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We encourage you to be a student of the Word and allow "the Spirit [who] searcheth all things" to take you into "the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10).



I remember the night I got saved. I am so glad I chose freedom instead of the bondage of sin! God has blessed me with more than I deserve. He gave me a wonderful wife who has been a great helpmeet to me spiritually and in every way. God knew the wife I needed, and I am thankful. He has blessed us with two wonderful children, a good home, and a job.

Some choices I made in sin will forever scar me. Our choices will either bring us closer to God or separate us from God. We all make choices every day. Some are small choices, such as what to wear, how to fix our hair, what to eat, and what to do after work or school. Then, there are big choices, such as buying a house or a car. Three big choices in life are serving God, marriage, and a career.

Choice is "an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities." It is estimated that adults make 35,000 decisions every day. From the beginning, God gave people free will to choose good or bad. God placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the middle of the garden to give Adam and Eve a choice. Genesis 2:9 reads, "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and

evil."

Without the free will of choice, there is no love. For example, if I had gone to Lindie, my wife, before we started dating and said, "You are going to marry me," without giving her a choice, there would be no love. I had to first win her to me by allowing her to choose whether she wanted to date and then marry me. When you seek a companion in the right way, through prayer, patience, talking to the one God has for you, and giving them the choice of liking you back, you can grow to love one another.

We are in a battle between good and evil. Which one will you choose? Genesis 4:3-13 states: "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

"And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his

brother, and slew him. And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear."

Jealousy and hatred got into the heart of Cain. God gave Cain a chance and a choice to do better with his offering. God accepted Abel's offering, which caused Cain to choose jealousy. It got the best of him, and he slew his brother. God punished Cain because of his evil acts. Cain told the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." The choices we make in life will have consequences we will have to deal with. Some will be more than we can handle, and we will need God to help us.

Let us look at someone in the Bible who chose to keep a good attitude, even though his brothers mistreated him. Genesis 37:3-4 reads: "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his

brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

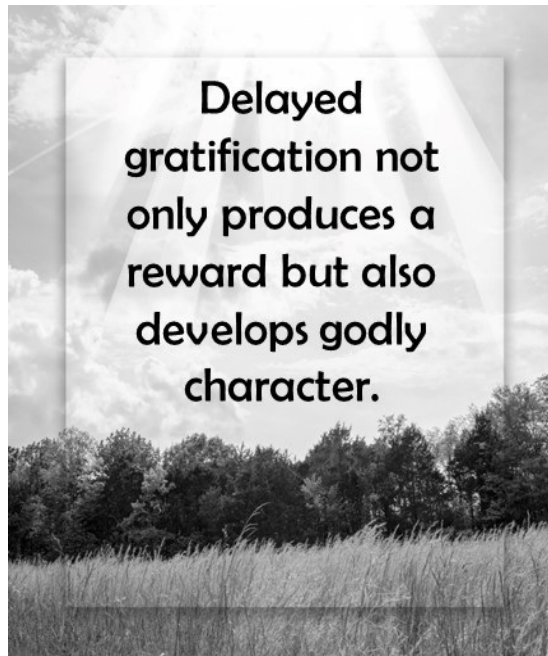
Genesis 37:18-24 states: "And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

"And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it."

Once again, jealousy and hatred got into the hearts of some brothers. Do not let jealousy get the best of you. Bitterness will eat at you and make you miserable. Choose to be happy for your friends and family when things are going well for them. Perhaps your friend has the perfect boyfriend or girlfriend you wish you had. Maybe they live in a fancy house with cool parents who go outside and play ball with them. We will be happier and go further in life if we choose to be happy for our brothers and sisters instead of becoming jealous. Joseph went through many trials. He was sold as a slave by his brothers, falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, and put into prison. Later in life, he

rose from that and became second in command to Pharaoh. His right attitude and faith in God paid off.

Consider the difference between instant gratification and delayed gratification. *Instant gratification* is "to forego a future benefit in order to obtain a less rewarding but more immediate benefit." *Delayed gratification* is "an act of resisting impulse to take immediate available reward in the hope of obtaining a more valued reward in the future; the



Delayed gratification not only produces a reward but also develops godly character.

ability to delay gratification." The ability to delay gratification is essential to self-control.

Esau chose instant gratification. Genesis 25:30-34 states: "And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his

way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

Esau was hungry, but his life was not in danger. He could have waited or gotten food from another source. He placed more value on satisfying his hunger than on the blessings of his birthright. A *birthright* is "a particular right of possession or privilege one has from birth, especially as an older child." Esau gave that up for some bread and pottage. What are you giving Jesus up for? Is it drugs, alcohol, bitterness, or selfishness?

Judas is another one who chose instant gratification. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. He quickly found out it did not satisfy him. He hung himself because he could not live with the guilt of betraying Jesus. Make sure you do not do something that could be hard for you to live with the guilt. If you become involved with drugs and alcohol, there is no telling what could happen. We need to guard our mouth. Words can cut deep, so we need to think before, not after, we speak. There is no deleting or editing words after they come out. We can apologize, but the hurt is already there.

Noah chose delayed gratification. Genesis 6:8 says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." The Lord chose Noah to build an ark to save animals and mankind. We do not know for sure how long it took him to build the ark, but some people think it took about one hundred years. Put yourself in Noah's shoes. No doubt, people were making fun of him and his family, and not too many offered to help. They probably thought he was crazy. These days, he may be called a "conspiracy theorist." However, Noah trusted God and did what God wanted him to do. All his hard work paid off abundantly! He was able to save

himself, his family, and every kind of animal from the Flood.

Delayed gratification not only produces a reward but also develops godly character. It requires one of the fruits of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 reads: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Delayed gratification requires longsuffering or patience. I like to invest money, but it requires patience. I do not invest in something and expect it to double or triple in value overnight. The reward comes over time. It is the same with Jesus. People expect God to take away all their problems overnight. Many times, God wants to see how serious we are. What kind of choice will you make when you get hit with a temptation or an obstacle?

When you get saved, your past will come up and stare you in the face, so to speak, to see how serious you are about serving God. You will have a choice of going forward or giving up. The decisions we make when we

are alone define who we really are. It is much easier to make good decisions when eyes are upon us. What choices do you make behind closed doors? Are you doing things you would not want your parents to know about?

I have learned it is better to live life as an open book rather than try to hide bad choices. It is better to go to your parents and God and talk about the things you struggle with because it will be easier to get victory over them. If you hide a problem, it usually becomes much bigger. You should get help and nip it in the bud. The choices we make affect not only us but also the ones around us, especially those close to us. Before you make a choice, look into the future and see how it will affect you and your brothers and sisters.

Here is a list of choices we should make as Christians. Choose love over hate, happiness over sadness, humbleness over pride, longsuffering over impatience, peace over conflict, praise over criticism, forgiveness over resentment, and Jesus over eve-

rything. Joshua 24:15 says, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." The best choice we can make is to serve the Lord!

I hope you choose to serve the Lord for the rest of your life. It is the best life. Do not let anyone tell you differently. There will be less regret and more satisfaction when you choose to serve God. Jesus gets sweeter every day, but sin tears you down every time.

Brother Jared Decker

Brother Jared Decker attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.

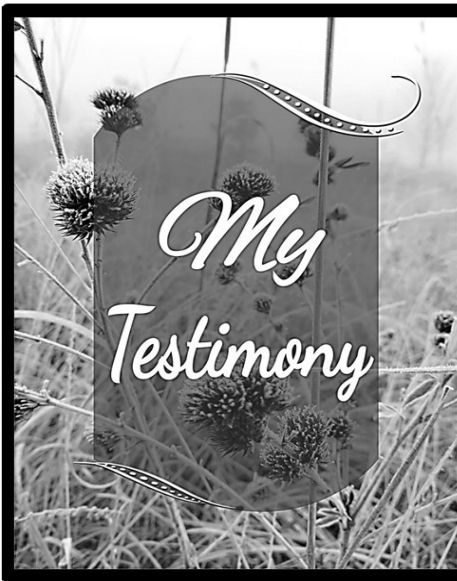
"THE DECISIONS WE MAKE WHEN WE ARE ALONE DEFINE WHO WE REALLY ARE."

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My "God" Journey

Sister Marie York

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

Ecclesiastes 11:9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.

When I was in high school, all the girls wore skirts way below their knees, and many had long hair. All the guys wore their hair short. The world has changed, but I am thankful for young people who proudly represent the Church of God holiness in how they dress and wear their hair. I am not using the term *proud* in the sense of foolish pride, but you can be righteously proud if your mind, language, and life are clean. You do not have to go to bed at night and think, "Oh, why did I ever do that?" I have found, in my own life, that regret eats at you like cancer, so do not do things you will later regret.

I was born into a very poor family. My mother was raised in the Hocking County hills of Ohio, and I think my dad was born around Ashville, Ohio. I say

"I think" because I do not know his background as well as my mother's. He died when I was five years old. I grew up listening to my mother talking about the farm she grew up on. She spoke of Dad, of course, but not as much, so I do not know as many details about him. One thing I love to tell about my dad is that he was a strict "teetotaler" regarding alcoholic beverages. He would not even drink root beer because its name contained the word "beer." Thank God I did not have to live those five years under the curse of drunkenness!

My father's family were very good people. I believe it was my great-great-grandfather on his side who was a circuit-riding preacher. One day, while riding his circuit, he tried to cross a stream where the current was strong from recent rains. As he crossed the stream on his horse, the current swept the horse away, and my great-great-grandfather drowned. I cherish the knowledge that he died in the service of the Lord.

My mother was raised by holiness parents. They believed in living perfectly in the will of God. I am so thankful for that background, as it made a tremendous difference in where my mother was willing to attend

church.

Before my father passed away, he was the janitor of an evangelical church one or two doors from where we lived. One of my few memories of Dad is when he cleaned the church entrance. When you went through the church's main door, there was a small entry area with steps going up to the sanctuary. I remember Dad cleaning those steps. It is not much of a memory, but I was with Daddy. All my memories of my dad are good, and I am so thankful for that.

My dad was not fundamental on holiness like Mother. Mom did not like the church where he was the janitor because it was cold, dead, and dry, so she would not attend church there. Dad did not like that. He said, "I do not think it looks good if you go to a different church while I work for this one." So Mom just stayed home. Staying home was not a good choice, but to her, it was better than going to a church that was dead, dry, and "plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12).

As I said, we were extremely poor, and after my dad died, we were more impoverished than ever and had to move into government-project housing. I was a "project kid" at five years old. The projects were in the heart of Columbus, Ohio, on the river, across the bridge from the downtown area.

There was a neighbor lady there (her name was Ina Phoer, pronounced "Fair") who had attended an Anderson Church of God congregation. However, this woman quit attending there because the Anderson Movement had let down on the standard. She started attending a Nazarene church on the west side of Columbus. I do not condemn her for that because I know she did not want to be in a backslidden Church of God congregation. However, I could never go back

to Babylon; I would worship at home first.

This lady invited my mom to church. Mom, my sister, Marlene, and I went to church with her, and we all went to the altar that morning (at that time, the Nazarene sect held a high standard of holiness). I did not know much about what I was doing, but it definitely changed the direction of my life! I am so thankful for that!

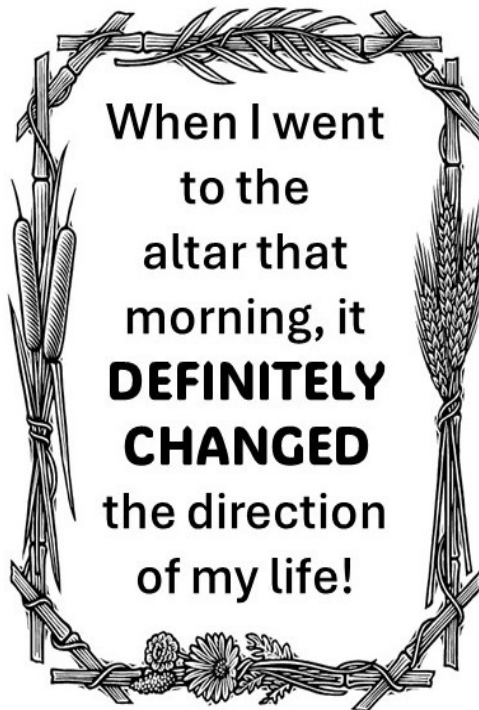
Over the years, as I grew up, we would go to a church here and then to a church there, but we never went to the ones my mom considered dead and dry. I know now that they were all dead, but some godly people were among them. At one time, Mrs. Phoer got permission to hold children's classes in one of the office rooms in the project. My sister and I started attending these (we thought very highly of her), and those classes kept me for a while.

Growing up without a solid church home and pastor, you wander around a lot. You do well, then you slip a little, then you do well, and then you slip a little. That was true during my earlier years. I knew how to be saved and what it meant, and I knew there were some things I should not do anymore. As I was growing up, I can thankfully say that most of the time, I was earnest about living for God.

When I was around eleven or twelve, I went to another Nazarene church on Columbus' west side, closer to home than where we first got saved. I was in children's church, a "bus kid," which is why I loved working in our bus ministry when I was able. At that Nazarene church, a dear woman led the children. One day, there was a circle on the floor (I do not know whether someone drew it with chalk or it had been there all along for such a purpose), and she asked: "Do any of you children want to give

your lives completely to God? If you do, step into this circle." I think I was the first one in the circle because that was my heart's desire.

Over the next few years, the devil played many tricks on me and fooled me a number of times. I did not live a holiness standard in my early teens. I wore pants and costume jewelry. When my older brothers and sisters brought a TV into our



home, I became a total TV addict. I ate and did my homework in front of it. I stayed up until the last show went off the air at night. Thank God it was not on all night long back then!

In my mid-teens, God began to clean me up. One day, He spoke to me and said, "You need to get rid of those pants." So, I went to my bedroom, gathered my pants from my drawers, took them to the incinerator, and put them down the chute. I did not ask my mom about it first—God told me to get rid of them, so I did. Mom did not mind. Then God said, "You need to get rid of your jewelry, too," so I took it to the trash. I buried it all deep

down into the nonburnable trash can.

Before the TV came into our home, I had spent much time thinking and meditating on the Lord. Sadly, the TV had become my god. So, in His cleaning-up process, the Lord said to me one day, "Look at yourself; just look at yourself!" I stepped back, as it were, and looked. I was appalled at what I saw! From that moment to this, I have never again watched television! Yes, in His faithfulness and love, the Lord worked on me in my mid-teens.

I want to mention that when I was still a small child, and we were wandering from church to church, or as Jeremiah 50:6 describes it, "from mountain to hill," we were invited to a Church of God congregation that was holding services in a tent. We loved it there, and as young as I was, I knew there was something different about that small, humble tent church. However, something happened among the leadership, and the tent came down. We were very disappointed and started wandering and searching from place to place again.

When I was seventeen, God worked it out for me to be invited to the Wayne Avenue Church of God in Columbus, Ohio, where Brother J. C. Wilber was the pastor. I was earnest, but Satan did not want me to find this glorious truth. Just before that time, the old deceiver tried to throw me a real curve!

The projects were for low-income people, and there were a lot of elderly as well as young families living there. In my later teens, I started washing windows for some elderly people. One day, I was cleaning for a lady who lived on the first floor. I was washing the windows outside when a woman approached me. She could tell by how I dressed that I was "holiness." This woman was also dressed modestly and asked me if I would like to go to

church with her. I asked her where she went. I was like my mom; I would not go just anywhere. She said she went to the Church of God, so I said, "Yes!"

Alas! The devil was setting a snare for me because of my ignorance! I did not know that the Pentecostal movement called themselves "Church of God." When I told the woman I would go, all I could think about was the little tent Church of God we had attended and how close we felt to God there. I did want to go!

When I walked into the building with her that next Sunday morning, it did not feel "right." Something was weird. I was young in my early Church of God connections, and I had not learned the doctrines of the Church of God and what made her different. I had no preconceived indoctrination except for holiness. I tried to be open-minded; I thought, "If 'tongues' are of God, I want to speak in them."

I went to their altar that morning, but God knew my heart. I am so thankful God knows our hearts! I prayed, trying really hard to say, "I am willing to speak in tongues if that is what You want." I finally said it (it was difficult), but thank God, He knew my heart! I got up from that altar, and the pastor stood there as I walked out the door. I was a seventeen-year-old young lady who had just come to his church. I had gone to his altar, and all he did as I passed through the door was give me a limp handshake. I felt ignored, and it hurt. He evidently did not think I had much since I did not speak in tongues.

How precious is God's tender care over His seeking children! A few days later, a man who had attended the little tent Church of God called my mom. He had learned I had gone to the Pentecostal church, and he told Mom he wanted to take me to church

the following Sunday. I gladly went with him and his wife because I could trust him. They took me to the Wayne Avenue Church of God. When I walked through the entrance, it was like a big door slammed behind me! I was never going anywhere else but to the true Church of God!

I spent seven years at the Wayne Avenue church, and it was during that time that I stepped foot on the God's Acres campground. As a writer, I am known as a "wordsmith," but this wordsmith did not have words to describe what a change it made in my life! I went to the camp meeting in June 1958. Brother J. C. Wilber was a powerful preacher. He knew the Book of Revelation and could definitely preach the Church of God's message of truth. However, meeting the people at God's Acres was a turning point for me. In case you are wondering, I still love it here!

Sometime not long after I started attending at Wayne Avenue, Brother Wilber called Brother Emerson Wilson to come and hold a revival. When Brother Wilson preached revivals, trios, duets, and quartets accompanied him to sing in the services. That is how I got acquainted with the Church of God people in Newark, Ohio.

Frequently, I went to Newark on Sundays. I rode the Lakeshore Bus that ran between the two cities then. God definitely arranged the bus schedule for me. I could get off the bus a block from the downtown church building in the morning and then get picked up by the bus to ride back to Columbus on Sunday night, right across the street from the church building. I became acquainted with the young people, spending Sunday afternoons going on visitation with them. I met my first husband here, and as they say, the rest is history.

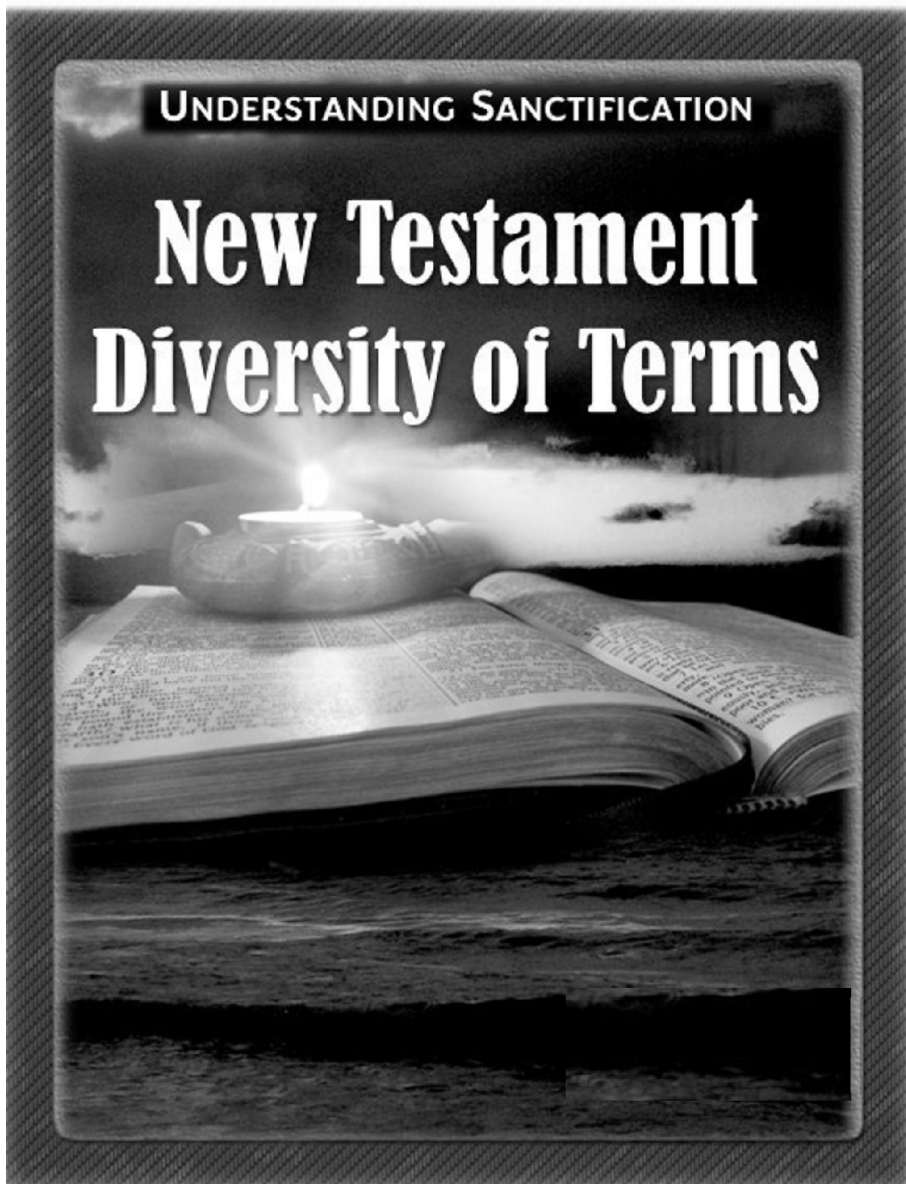
When I wrote the book *To*

Walk Alone, God gave me a real burden to write about the damage backsliding causes. Notice, I did not say the damage it *may* cause, but the damage it *does* cause. Only eternity will disclose it! Having been up and down and in and out in my own life, I am thankful I was never out far, and I was never out long! Do not let the devil tell you there is something out in the world for you. I know what he told me when I was young: "Just go out and have fun. Once you get your fill, you can return and be a good Christian." That is not true!

You might come back to God, but you will not come back without regrets! Your life may not be as dramatic as I wrote in the book. Someone may not die because of you, but there may be someone watching you who is just about ready to come to church, which could lead them to salvation. If you step away from God, that may never happen. Please, make your determination firm and final, and live your life for God! You will never, ever be sorry for that! I guarantee you will be sorry if you do otherwise.

Never leave the Church of God. Even if you are only out in sin for a short time, you will be sorry for the time you wasted and the influence you lost. Someone is watching your life. Someone may be just about ready to start asking you questions about your faith or thinking about coming to church with you. If you leave, the devil will tell them: "Living for God does not amount to anything. He (or she) decided the world was better than God." The world is not better! The devil likes to make it look good, but it is just as one song says, "Some day the party will be over." Do not take that chance!

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Brother Earl R. Borders

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

There is a commonality that unites these passages of Scripture text. The first place in the New Testament where the word *sanctified* appears is in John 10:36. John

17:17 is the first place in the New Testament where the word *sanctify* is employed. The word *sanctification* is first recorded in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 1:30. Sadly, there is much confusion concerning this vital subject, called sanctification. First Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "For God is not the author of confusion." Certainly, God never intended for His Word to generate confusion. We are admonished in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "study . . . rightly dividing the word of truth" to eliminate confusion.

We rightly divide the Word of Truth through study and allowing the Spirit of Truth to guide us "into all truth" as John 16:13 declares. Ephesians 1:17-18 tells us the Spirit enlightens our understanding so we can understand the truths contained within the Scriptures. In this portion of our study, we want to consider the New Testament diversity of terms pertaining to sanctification. In our previous study, we learned the words *sanctification* and *sanctifieth* do not appear in the Old Testament. The only words used in that vein in the Old Testament are the words *sanctified* and *sanctify*. Although they are two different English words, it is the same Hebrew word *qadash*.

The Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 1:20, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." We cannot isolate any given Scripture from the entire scheme of Scriptures or its context, or it will not be "rightly" divided. Every Scripture must be viewed in its context and in the harmony of all Scriptures. The doctrine of sanctification is no exception to that rule. We must look at the words used in their context.

The predominant overall definition of *sanctify* is "set apart," whether it means consecrated for sacred service, a dedicated facility, or a hallowed place. Many

things were sanctified many times under the Old Testament dispensation. In this lesson, we will consider three passages of Scripture text in which three different English words are employed, although there are four different English words pertaining to this subject of sanctification. The fourth word used is *sanctifieth* found in Matthew 23:17.

Greek Terms Pertaining to Sanctification

There are four English words pertaining to this subject. However, in the Greek, only two words are used in the New Testament. One is *hagiasmos*, used ten times in the New Testament. Five times it is translated as *sanctification*, and five times as *holiness*. First, let us look at the five times it is rendered *sanctification*. One is our text in 1 Corinthians 1:30, which says, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

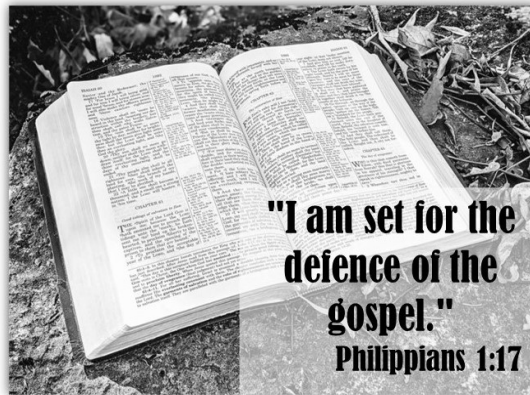
The second and third place the word *sanctification* is used is in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, which reads, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." Second Thessalonians 2:13 says, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

First Peter 1:2 is the fifth and final place the word *sanctification* is translated from *hagiasmos*. It states, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprin-

gling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

There are five places in the New Testament where the same Greek word *hagiasmos* is rendered as *holiness*. Romans 6:19 reads, "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness."

Romans 6:22 says, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the



end everlasting life." First Thessalonians 4:7 states, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." First Timothy 2:15 reads, "Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Again, the same Greek word *hagiasmos* is used five times as *sanctification* and five times as *holiness*.

The other Greek word is akin to it. It is *hagiazo*, and it is rendered in the *King James Version* as *sanctified*, *sanctifieth*, and *sanctify*. It is also the same word offered as *hallowed*. In Christ's inaugural message beginning His public ministry, the Sermon on the Mount, He taught about prayer. He said in Matthew 6:9, "After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." We could say, "*Sanctified* be thy name." In this Scripture, we discern God is considered sanctified.

The same Greek word *hagiazo* is also translated as *holy* twenty-eight times in the English version of the New Testament. As in the Old Testament, it is used broadly and has many various aspects. One of these verses is Revelation 22:11, which states, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

Does Man Have a Depraved, Carnal Nature?

Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood." We are not against any people anywhere. We are merely working to eliminate confusion by studying God's Word as instructed. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 1:17, "I am set for the defence of the gospel." Sadly, and I say it with love, there are those who advocate that the doctrine of sanctification is necessary because man has a depraved, carnal nature.

We know God does not have a depraved, carnal nature. We read, "Hallowed [or sanctified] be thy name." Certainly, this Scripture does not speak of cleansing or washing but of God's sacredness and separation. God is a separate personage from man.

We love all the dear brethren and are not attempting to be contentious, but we want to set forth the truth to eliminate confusion on this doctrine. When we rightly divide the Word of Truth, it is not Biblically sound to say that man is born with inherited sin or a carnal nature that needs

eradication and a cleansing or sanctifying work. These teachings do not stand the scrutiny of Scripture. John 10:36 speaks of Him "whom the Father hath sanctified." We can immediately dismiss from consideration any inbred sin or carnal nature that needed to be eradicated from Jesus' life.

Hebrews 2:16-18 states: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels [the nature of angels is totally different than the nature of man]; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore [or because of] in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Hebrews 2:14 says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Jesus took on the same flesh and blood that we have.

Brother F. G. Smith lived in the sixth seal. He did a tremendous work in his day, and we are deeply indebted to him for the truth the Lord revealed to him. However, he did not have the light in its fullness that is available in this seventh period of time. Thank God, we are privileged to have light and understanding today. In his book *Sanctification and Baptism of the Holy Spirit* (on page 8) speaking of the "Fall of Man," he wrote, "As a result, all have received an evil nature." He advocated that all have received an evil nature due to the fall of man.

If his statement was correct, Christ, who was "in all things . . . made like unto his brethren," would have had an evil nature. If Christ did not have an evil na-

ture, then one of two things must be true: either He was not "in all things . . . made like unto his brethren," thus, the sacred writer wrote an error; or we must conclude the teaching that man has an evil nature when he is born is incorrect. The Scripture is accurate. If Christ did not have a sinful nature, man does not have a sinful nature when born into this world.

In *Christian Theology*, Brother R. R. Byrum wrote (page 328), "Those who are sinful are sinful because their inner nature is sinful." If this is true and Christ was "in all things . . . made like unto his brethren," His nature would have led Him into sin. If man's and Christ's inner nature were sinful, Hebrews 7:26 would not be true, saying, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy,

Christ was "in all things . . . made like unto his brethren."

harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

Man is not predestined to come into the world with an evil, or sinful, nature. Christ came into the world holy, harmless, and undefiled. He did not have an evil, inherited, or depraved nature. If Christ was indeed "made like unto his brethren," then His brethren did not, and do not, have an inherited, depraved, or evil nature.

Jesus Sanctified Himself

Jesus said in our Scripture text, in John 10:36, "Him, whom the Father hath sanctified," then He said in John 17:19, "I sanctify myself." The same Greek word *hagiazo*, is used in both verses. Obviously, these verses do not

speak of any moral or spiritual cleansing because Jesus was holy, undefiled, and needed no moral or spiritual cleansing. Also, it is not dealing with sin or a sinful nature because Jesus did not have a sinful nature. Furthermore, when the Bible speaks of His sanctification, there was no application of blood. Some advocates teach both things must occur when sanctification occurs, but that is not so.

John 10:36 in *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says "him whom the Father set apart." *Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon* says "consecrated." Jesus consecrated Himself. He was set apart for a specific, sacred purpose. John 12:27 says: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."

The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 1:18-19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Hebrews 9:26 states, "For then must he [the antecedent of that pronoun is Christ] often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Jesus said in John 12:27, "But for this cause came I unto this hour."

Jesus came and was set apart to be our Redeemer, to implement the redemptive plan, and to be the sacrifice for sin. He shed His blood for the remission of sin. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself" (John 17:19). What was Jesus doing in Gethsemane? He was consecrating Himself to be set apart to perform this sacred

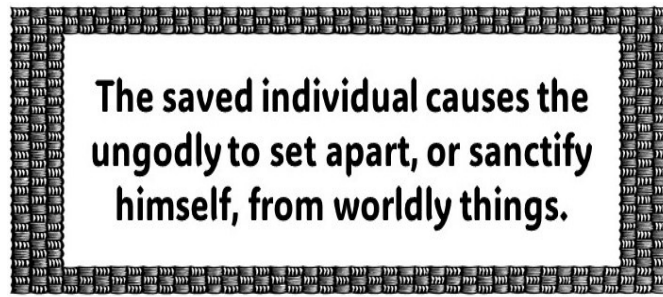
purpose.

Luke 22:41-42 says, "And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast [Jesus physically set Himself apart from the disciples for a purpose], and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Jesus consecrated Himself to the will of God. He withdrew Himself apart for a specific, sacred service. First Peter 2:21 says, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Jesus is our example in all things.

A Sanctifying Influence and Purpose

In 1 Corinthians 7:13-14, the Apostle Paul dealt with marital duties and obligations. He wrote: "And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, [Here Paul spoke of a wife sanctifying her husband. There was no water, cleansings, or blood applied.] and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband [here we read of a husband sanctifying the wife]: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy."

First Corinthians 7:14 in the *Amplified Bible* says: "For the unbelieving husband is set apart (separated, withdrawn from heathen contamination, and affiliated with the Christian people) by union with his consecrated (set apart) wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart and separated through union with her consecrated husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean (unblessed heathen, outside the Christian covenant), but as it is they are prepared for God [pure



and clean]."

If the wife is unsaved, the husband is sanctifying her as he lives a godly, holy life in the home. He brings a certain restraint and conviction to his wife. First Peter 3:1 talks about winning a companion "without the word" through the "conversation," or conduct, of the saved spouse. This separating, or setting apart, is a type of influence. An ungodly person is not free to engage in sinful activities when a godly person is present. How often have ones been in the workplace when someone uses a curse word and immediately apologizes for the sake of the godly person there? The saved individual is causing the ungodly to set apart, or sanctify himself, from worldly things.

First Timothy 4:3-5 reads: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats [talking about 'doctrines of devils' (verse 1)], which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Paul was talking about food being "sanctified by the word of God and prayer." To properly understand its usage, we must view it in its context.

Paul indicated in this passage that our food is consecrated when we pray over it. It is set apart for its lawful and intended use, which is to be taken into the body to supply nourishment and

strength. The purpose of food is to provide our bodies with sustenance. There is no spiritual function in food. When we offer thanksgiving to God and take in what He has created to benefit our physical frames, we are using it for the intended purpose God set it apart for.

In Genesis 1:28, when God created the animals, He said for man to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." One way to have dominion over fish is to have a fish dinner or eat a fish sandwich. First Timothy 4:3-4 lets us know all meats are "to be received with thanksgiving . . . and nothing to be refused."

A Change in Application

Matthew 23:17 reads, "Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?" Then, we read in verse 19, "Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?" The word *sanctifieth* in these two verses is the same Greek word *hagiazo*. *Thayer's Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament* not only defines it as "to consecrate, to separate," but also "to declare sacred, to hallow." These items were hallowed, or declared sacred, for sacred use, which was a ceremonial distinction because it was gold before it was sanctified and gold after it was sanctified. Its application or usage changed from secular to sacred once it was set apart or hallowed as sacred.

The same is true in verse 19. The gift went from being secular to sacred when given to God. In verse 17, it was sanctified by the temple, and in verse 19, it was sanctified by the altar. In other

words, when brought into what had already been declared as a sacred place or vessel, it became sacred or hallowed by the position it occupied. Its nature did not change. The sanctifying was not to change its nature, but its usage.

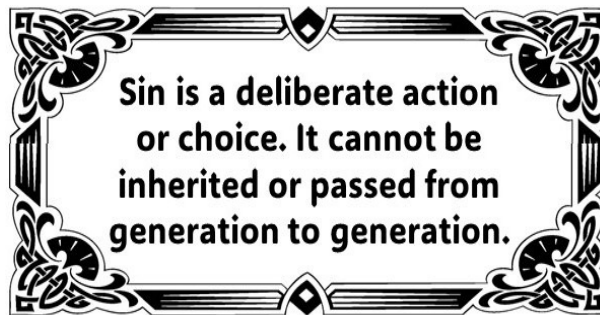
Again, we love all the dear brethren everywhere. We certainly do not make understanding of these truths a test of fellowship. Every man has to walk in the light God reveals to him. By the same token, God wants the truth declared so we can gain understanding. Ephesians 4:15 tells us we are to speak "the truth in love." This is how we are to clarify matters.

We are admonished in 1 Peter 3:15, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Here is an injunction to sanctify God, not for Him to sanctify us. John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit." Isaiah 57:15 states, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place." God does not need any cleansings or applications of blood; He is the One who inhabits eternity.

First Peter 3:15 in the *Amplified Bible* says, "But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy [and acknowledge Him] as Lord." We are to sanctify God and set Him apart as holy in our hearts. We trust you can see the three English expressions *sanctified*, *sanctified*, and *sanctify* are all the same Greek word *hagiazō*, and they have different applications according to their context. Building a doctrine around one Scripture or one usage of the word would be erroneous. In most cases, the predominant application is "to set apart, consecrate, or separate."

Set Apart as Sacred

In one instance, the gold was sanctified. In other words, it was hallowed or considered sacred. In Daniel, Chapter 5, Belshazzar had a drunken feast when God's people were in Babylonian bondage. Some scholars say the drunken feast lasted for months, and God let it go. Then, one day, Belshazzar said to bring in those vessels used in the temple in Jerusalem. He crossed the line because he took things that were sanctified, hallowed, and dedicated for sacred use and used them to worship his false gods.



The finger wrote on the wall, and Belshazzar quickly sobered up. None of Babylon's wise men could interpret the handwriting. Babylon's preachers still cannot interpret God's Word. The queen said in verse 11, "There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers."

When Daniel came, the first thing he said to the king was, in so many words: "You should have known better. You saw what happened to your grandfather." Daniel gave the interpretation in verse 27, saying, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." Belshazzar took and wrongfully used those sacred, sanctified vessels set apart

for sacred, singular use. It brought the judgment of God down, and it will still cause judgment today.

In most cases, the word *hagiazō* means "set apart, consecrate, or separate." None of these occasions address any cleansings or applications of blood. The traditional teaching says man is born with a depraved, inherited, sinful, carnal, or Adamic nature. Even after being saved, he still has a root of inbred sin in his heart that needs to be eradicated by a second work of grace. Then the Holy Ghost comes, and he is Spirit-filled. We say this with

love and kindness, but that is a misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches. First, there is no sinful nature to be eradicated. Nowhere do the Scriptures indicate sin can be inherited.

Ezekiel 18:1-4 reads: "The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

Sin is a deliberate action or choice. It cannot be inherited or passed from generation to generation. God places the soul at the time of conception. Galatians 2:17 asks, "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" Ezekiel said to use no "more this proverb." Do not say the fathers sinned and the children inherited it because it is not so.

A Progressive Work

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, *sanctification* denotes a spiritual

attribute incorporated into the redemptive plan. According to verse 31, it is designed to glorify God.

The words rendered as *sanctification* and *holiness* directly speak concerning our spiritual experience. *Strong's Expanded Dictionary of New Testament Words with Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary* says, "Sanctification is thus the state predetermined by God for believers into which in grace he calls men and in which they begin the Christian course and so pursue it." It is not *who* is predetermined, but *what* is predetermined.

One writer penned in the *Pulpit Commentary* (volume 19, page 28), "When our sanctification is complete, we shall be like Him." The writer quoted 1 John 3:2-3: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: [Why? We are not finished products.] but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Sanctification is a progressive work.

Again, there are five occasions where this Greek word, *hagiasmos*, is used and translated as *holiness*. Romans 6:19 speaks of yielding "your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Yielding your members is an event not completed once or twice, but repeatedly. It is an action performed many times daily. Romans 6:22 talks about becoming "servants" and bearing "fruit unto holiness." Being a servant and bearing fruit is a continual process. It says in 1 Thessalonians 4:7 that God called us "unto holiness."

First Timothy 2:15 speaks of continuing "in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Faith, charity, and holiness are not something you participate in once or twice, but they are ongoing

activities in the Christian life by choice. Because *holiness* is the same Greek word translated as *sanctification*, this verse could say, "Continue in faith and charity and *sanctification*." Sanctification is a continuing process.

Hebrews 12:13-14 says: "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace [denotes action] with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." These verses are not talking about the Second Advent because at that appearing, "every eye shall see him" (Revelation 1:7). People will see the Lord here and now through a holy life. It says to "make straight paths for your feet," indicating a continuous walk. Holiness is something we follow. It is a continuous way of life.

Notice in our Scripture text in 1 Corinthians 1:30, the Apostle Paul associated sanctification with other attributes. We are to continue to progress in righteousness and wisdom. We should have more wisdom now than when we started living for God. It is progressive, as sanctification should be. It is not something we get once and for all or twice and for all. When people think sanctification is a one-time work and begin struggling with things, the enemy is right there to say, "You are not sanctified." The accuser of the brethren starts working on them.

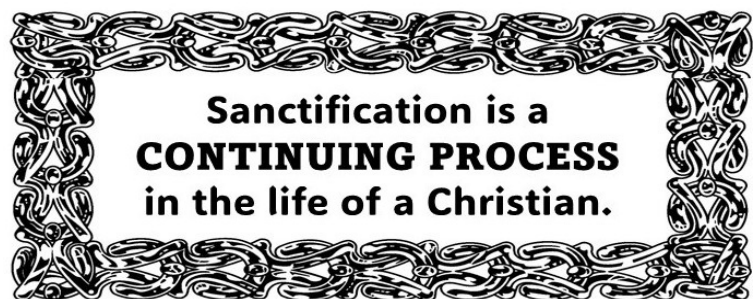
These Scriptures reveal the ongoing nature of sanctification in the life of a saint. We are to

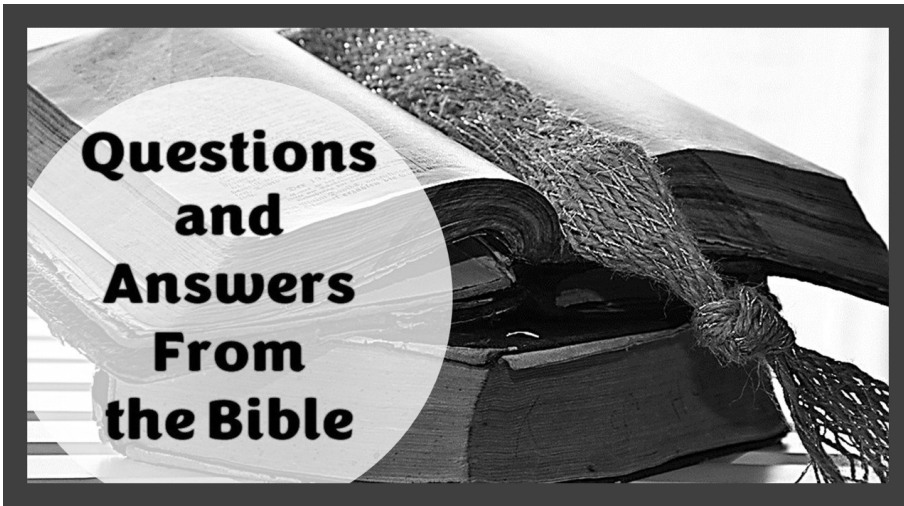
maintain and advance in a life of holiness by setting ourselves apart. I was not raised in the truth, and I did not know some things were wrong until God began to teach, sanctify, and help me separate from those things. I could not live today the way I lived the first day I got saved and be clear with God. I rejoiced when I got saved. It was wonderful, but now I know more. Knowledge brings responsibility.

Consecration, setting yourself apart, is an ongoing process. We trust you can see, these two Greek words rendered as four English words denote different meanings according to the context used, but none indicate what is taught in many religious circles. God desires for the confusion to be cleared away concerning this vital Biblical doctrine of sanctification.

God desires for all to live sanctified lives. You cannot be saved if you will not be sanctified. You will not stay saved if you do not live a sanctified life. However, sanctification is not a one or two-time work. It is an ongoing, progressive, continual experience enhanced with knowledge that brings responsibility and requires more action and consecration. We trust you have a greater understanding of Old Testament sanctification and New Testament terms and what they denote concerning sanctification.

Brother Earl R. Borders is the pastor of the Church of God in Summersville, WV.





IS THERE AN ORDER WITH SATAN AND DEMONS?

When considering the organization of the hierarchy of evil, remember, God is a God of order (1 Corinthians 14:40). Likewise, "Satan" has "his kingdom" (Matthew 12:26), and it has an orderly hierarchy. Satan is referred to as "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4) and "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The Greek word is *archon* ("first in rank") and translates twenty-two times in the New Testament as "ruler." He is "the god," "first in rank," or "ruler."

"First in rank" indicates there must be other ranks. Matthew 12:24 speaks of "Beelzebub the prince [*archon*, meaning 'first in rank'] of devils."

Ephesians 6:12 tells of "principalities ... powers ... the rulers of the darkness of this world ... spiritual wickedness [wicked spirits; Greek center reference]." One noted scholar wrote, "The words which Paul uses ... are all names for different classes of these evil spirits." So "Satan" and "his kingdom" are highly organized. There is a "god," a "prince of devils," then "principalities ... powers ... rulers of the darkness." Thus, "Satan" has agencies at his disposal.

When we look at these agencies of "his kingdom" (or the hierarchy of evil), it should be mentioned that, as created beings, God is still the Ulti-

mate Sovereign. We see this in His ability to decide, control, and dispense spirits. Concerning King Saul, 1 Samuel 16:14 says that "an evil spirit *from the LORD* troubled him." First Kings 22:20-23 tells of the Lord deciding and dispensing "a lying spirit" to "go forth" and cause the "prophets" of Ahab to lie to him so he would "fall at Ramoth-gilead."

Let us consider specifically the expressions and operations of devils, demons, and spirits. In the *King James Version*, the English words "demon" and "demons" do not appear. These expressions came into usage at a much later date. The terms "devils" and "spirits" are commonly used. The word "devils" is employed more in the Gospel accounts, whereas the term "spirits" is commonly used in the Epistles. I think much of the reason for this distinction is due to the predominant audiences to whom they were written. "Devils" was a word more familiar and commonly used amongst the Jews. Most of the Epistles were written to Gentiles, and the word "spirits" was of a more common understanding.

Brother Earl R. Borders

Brother Earl R. Borders is the pastor of the Church of God in Summersville, WV.

Upcoming Meetings

December 6-12 — PHOENIX, AZ

REVIVAL: Church of God, 3450 West Grovers Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85053

Service times: 7 p.m. nightly; Sun. 10 a.m. (children's Sunday school), 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders from Summersville, WV

December 13-17 — SIERRA VISTA, AZ

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Service times: Wed.-Sat. 6 p.m.; Sun. 1 p.m.

Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders from Summersville, WV

For more information, contact: Pastor Nathan Harding @ 740-268-4020

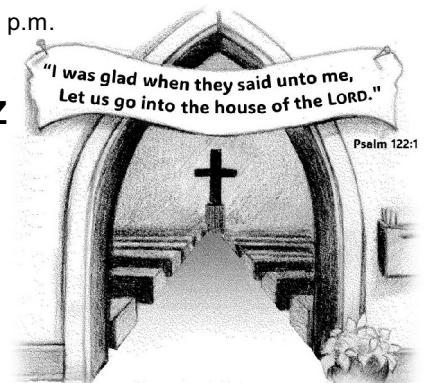
December 27-31 — NEWARK, OH

CAMP MEETING: Church of God, 675 N Cedar St, Newark, OH 43055

Three services daily: 10 a.m., 3 p.m. & 7 p.m. (The first service begins Wednesday at 7 p.m.)

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