

THE

GOSPEL

TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 53 June 2023 No. 6

June Camp Meeting

COME and WORSHIP With Us!

"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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CAMP MEETING TIME AT GOD'S ACRES

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

It is camp meeting time at God's Acres! This wonderful opportunity begins on Father's Day, June 18, 2023. The saints of God will gather together on the old campground to worship God and feast on His Word. Camp meeting is a special time for God's people to come together, enjoy the sweet atmosphere of His presence, and escape the humdrum and hassles of everyday life. During these few days, our souls can be renewed and refreshed. We can feed on the heavenly manna He has prepared for us. The Lord plans to enrich His people with greater understanding. He wants to challenge us to keep pressing toward the goal.

Dear one, as this world continues to worsen, we need all the instruction and guidance we can get from the Lord. Learning His ways and about the "old paths" is more needful today than ever before. The Hebrew writer instructed us not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together." It is by hearing the Word of God preached, believing and obeying it, that we can have victory in our souls. James gave sound admonition in James 1:22, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." This is not a time to relax or slack off in our living. It is time to "fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold on

eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12). The wise man said in Proverbs 23:23, "Buy the truth, and sell it not." In other words, get all you can get and do not let it slip away. Truth brings freedom and spiritual stability.

Camp meeting is designed with your spiritual welfare in view. Our desire is to provide a spiritual place for you to come. We encourage you, if at all possible, to make plans to attend the camp meeting. Join us and have your soul fed and enriched. We write these things to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance" (2 Peter 3:1). Living for God requires effort on our part. If you want to make it to Heaven, you will need determination and consecration. It is beneficial for you and your family to be in as many spiritual and uplifting services as possible. The sound, solid preaching of God's Word uncovers many tricks and snares Satan uses to deceive and overthrow the Christian. Knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures will enhance your experience and relationship with the Lord.

Walking in the light of God's Word convinces a lost world that Christianity is real. The radiant light shining forth from the child of God creates a hungering for salvation in a dry, thirsting soul. Brother Decker extends a special invitation for all to join us at camp meeting this year. If you have never been here, we are eager to meet you. If it has been a while since you attended, we desire for you to come back. We ask for your prayers for God's direction. His presence is needed in every service.



WHEN THE RAIN

STOPS

Brother Roger L. Decker

Revelation 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth

with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

John was on the isle of Patmos when he received a vision. Revelation 1:9 says, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." John was not martyred like the other Apostles, but he lived into his elder years.

In Revelation 11:1, the angel was given "a reed like unto a rod" and told to "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." The morning-time church once heralded the truth, but while she was in her pristine glory, she went into darkness.

We should never think this could not happen to us. We are not cast in concrete or permanently established to where we cannot fail. Only as we walk in the light are we secure.

In Daniel, Chapter 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, his spirit was troubled, and he lost sleep. He called his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell him the dream and the interpretation, but it was to no avail. The king was angered. In his wrath, he commanded all the wise men of Babylon to be destroyed. Daniel and his friends would have been included in this decree. Daniel requested permission from the captain of the guard to have an audience with the king. He asked for time so he could show the king the dream and the interpretation.

The Great Mountain

Daniel 2:31-45 reads: "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent,

stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and

became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

"And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest



The "Great Image"

the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall

not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

Daniel revealed the dream and the interpretation of the dream to the king. Four different kingdoms would rise, each overthrowing the previous kingdom. The stone that smote the image became a great mountain. That great mountain is a picture of the Church of God.

This stone became a great mountain on the Day of Pentecost. The Hebrew writer explained in Hebrews 12:22-23, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all,

and to the spirits of just men made perfect." He said you have come to that mountain, which is Mount Zion, a type of the Church of God.

"A Reed Like Unto a Rod"

John said in Revelation 21:10, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Revelation 8:8 says, "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea." What was the sea the church was cast into? Isaiah 57:20 tells us, "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." The church went into the hands of unregenerate minds.

The Church of God did not come from "mire and dirt," but her origin was from God. Revelation 21:2 states she came "down from God out of heaven." The Church of God is not a sectarian organization. Many Church of God congregations have been cast into the sea because of compromise, worldliness, and disobedience. They have become entertainment centers. They are no longer a visible representation of the body of Christ.

Revelation, Chapter 11, begins with the morning-time church and goes through the sounding of the seventh angel when the "temple of God was opened in heaven" (verse 19). The angel was given "a reed like unto a rod" to measure with. The rod signifies the Word of God. David said in Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The psalmist was saying the rod and the staff were a guide and protection for the sheep. The Word of God and the

Spirit of God represent the rod and the staff. They guide us and bring comfort and protection.

Revelation 19:15 says, "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." What is the sword? Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the word of God is quick [or alive], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

We are measured by our obedience to the Word of God. John was told to measure the temple, not the Old Testament temple, but the New Testament temple. Second Corinthians 6:16 says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

We, as the children of God, are the dwelling place of God. We actually carry God with us wherever we go. He is no longer in the Ark of the Covenant. He dwells in human beings. If you are a child of God, you bring God with you into the worship services. Revelation 21:3 says, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle [or dwelling place] of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Measuring the Altar

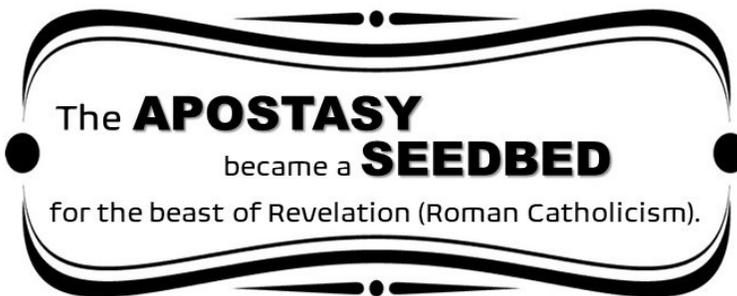
John was also instructed to measure the altar. Christ is the

altar by whom we approach God. The altar is a place to sacrifice, and Christ is our sacrifice. Sin cannot be covered by good works, church joining, or attending worship services. When you accept Jesus Christ as your sacrifice, you will turn from sin. You will no longer practice sin or continue to flirt with temptation. Many people get into trouble today because they still flirt with things they know are sinful.

Proverbs 15:8 says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." Proverbs 21:3 reads, "To

worshippers? During apostasy, the world loses sight of the true Church of God. For many, the Church of God has become another religious organization such as the Baptist or Methodist. Some have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren who have lost their reverence for the Church of God because they did not live the message. Their children heard the church and the pastor being run down until now they see the Church of God as just another religious organization. However, the Church of God is at the top of the mountain. She is not down amongst the

hills. She came down from God out of Heaven, not from the earth. She did not come from the minds of men. She came from the mind of God.



The Time of Apostasy

The angel said to John in Revelation 11:2 not to measure the court "without the temple." Why? He said, "It is given unto the Gentiles." Literally speaking, Gentiles were heathens; they were considered unbelievers. Spiritually speaking, it is the same. Gentiles are unbelievers. This was a time of apostasy in which seducing spirits and doctrines of devils were making their way in among the true people of God. Many fell away and defected from the truth.

The apostasy became a seedbed for the beast of Revelation, which came up out of the sea. It originated from a backslidden Church of God, a condition originating from the minds of wicked men. The devil went into religion. He knew he could work a greater deception when he pretended to worship the same God as the Christian. The Roman Catholic Church is complete darkness. Its power came from

do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice." Verse 27 states, "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" It troubles me to see people today in division, going wherever they want, walking against light, and yet talking about how God blesses them and hears their prayers.

The Bible says God does not hear a sinner's prayer unless it is a prayer of repentance. Great deception has come over those who are walking against light and understanding. God will not bless over the top of that. Acts 10:34 tells us, "God is no respecter of persons." What He requires of me, He requires of everybody. We are to walk in the light. Are you measured to all the light you have received? Are you obedient to the doctrines and teachings of Jesus Christ?

Why was it necessary to measure the temple, the altar, and the

If we stand in our own strength, our **VISION** will begin to **CHANGE.**

paganism, which is the worship of many gods. Roman Catholicism has many statues and many gods. The darkness of Roman Catholicism reigned from A.D. 270 to approximately A.D. 1530 when reformers, such as Martin Luther, got a glimpse of the Word of God. Light began to shine out once again in the Gospel Day.

The holy city represents the Church of God. Revelation 22:19 reads, "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." According to Revelation 11:2, the "holy city" would be trodden "under foot forty and two months," or twelve hundred sixty days. (Thirty days in a Jewish month times forty-two equals twelve hundred and sixty days. A day for a year equals twelve hundred and sixty years.) A day for a year, according to the Scriptures, brings us from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530, which was the time of Martin Luther.

Let us look at how we count these days. Numbers 14:34 states, "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise." This was spoken to the twelve leaders of Israel, one from each tribe, who were sent to search out the land of Canaan and were gone for forty days. Ten of them came back with an evil report. Two said, in so many words, "Let's take the land as we are well able." Unbelief is powerful!

The same rationale exists today when it comes to holiness. It is amazing how ones can change their view of what God can do. We are well able to overcome, but if we stand in our own strength, our vision will begin to change.

Many have lost their vision of the true church. They go from believing "we are well able to overcome" to "we cannot help but sin." Dear one, if you are not perfect in your soul, you are not going to Heaven. There can be no sin whatsoever in your soul. Sin cannot be cleansed after death. Sin must be repented of before eternity.

During this particular time spoken of in the Revelation, the "twelve hundred and sixty days" (or years), the two olive trees (the Word and the Spirit) were in a mourning condition because they did not have the leadership necessary to set a true Church of God before the people. Many never recovered from this apostasy. They went into a lost eternity to stand before a just God.

The Two Olive Trees

When I first became a pastor, I visited a brother in Oklahoma by the name of Brother Lawrence Chestnut. He has written many tracts and was the pastor of one of the largest congregations (more than a thousand) west of the Mississippi River. I sat in his office and talked with him. He was not pastoring at that time. In fact, the congregation where he attended had put him out. He told me he had let down on his preaching. The sisters began wearing make-up and jewelry. He tried to bring the standard back, but it did not work. He said the congregation dwindled to about two hundred and fifty. It had become worldly.

Brother Chestnut once preached at a camp meeting in Greenville, Tennessee, and said,

"Our forefathers would roll over in their graves if they knew we spent more time in public bathing than in worship." Needless to say, he was never an evangelist there again.

Apostasy is real. After people have been in the truth and go back into sin, they get comfortable in sin. They cannot break free so easily. If you flirt with the world, it will get hold of you because the spirit of the world is very strong. Once it gets its clutches on you, it has many vices to hold you. It is like an octopus with many tentacles. It reaches out and attaches itself to you. You cannot break free any time you feel like it.

The church went through more than a thousand years of darkness. Ones bowed to the Pope in Rome. The church became political. The Church of God went into obscurity. The Word and the Spirit were in mourning because they could no longer conduct true worship. Revelation 11:6 says, "These [the two olive trees, or witnesses — the Word and the Spirit] have power to shut heaven [where the blessings come from], that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."

Zechariah 4:1-6 reads: "And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?"

"Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

We need the two olive trees (the Word of God and His Spirit) to feed the Church of the Living God. The church needs rain from Heaven. We do not want the rain to be stopped. Rain is a blessing from God out of Heaven. We need rain personally, collectively, and universally. The rain has been shut off in many lives today.

Disobedience Stops the Rain

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 says: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee [God wants to bless us!] in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life,

and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." These are solemn words spoken by Moses on behalf of the Lord, "life and good, and death and evil." God's desire is for ones to choose "life and good."

Jeremiah 7:21-24 reads: "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning



burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward."

Heaven is shut up to those who are in disobedience. Isaiah 55:6-11 states: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and

the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 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."

What Should You Do If the Rain Stops?

Thoughts contrary to the Word of God will stop the rain, or the blessings from God. Psalm 24:1-5 says: "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

Ones have allowed things to enter their lives and they have grieved the Holy Spirit and the rain has been shut off. Ephesians 4:30-32 reads: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour,

Has the rain been SHUT OFF in your life?



and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice will shut off the blessings of God. There are ones who say they are Christians, but they are in bitterness of spirit. The commencing of anger in one's life brings wrath. Anger and wrath carried to their highest pitch produce clamor (a loud boisterous shouting and arguing). They are argumentative, always taking the opposite side of things. Evil speaking, blasphemy, injurious speaking, and hurtful words produce malice.

Has the rain, or the blessings from God, been stopped in your Christian experience? Deuteronomy 32:1-2 states: "Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."

What should you do if the rain stops in your life? Let us read 2 Chronicles 7:12-14: "And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up

heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

The Shower of God's Blessings

Deuteronomy 11:13-17 says: "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD'S wrath be

kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you."

When was the last time you had a good shower of God's blessings upon your soul? Is the fruit of your life dried up? Are you content to be only a member of the congregation instead of the church? If this is your experience, you need to do what the Scripture says and humble yourself and pray. True Christians have these two witnesses active in their lives.

The church is made up of people who allow the two witnesses to govern their lives. The two witnesses are needed to guide, help, bless in worship, and add to the church. If these two witnesses are inactive or dead, lying in the streets of your life, do not go on. The trouble with many people is they go right on in that condition. God wants you to stop and let the Word of God check you so you do not become deceived and lost in the end.

God is full of mercy, but not everyone receives it because many do not want it. If you only have a profession, it is not too late to repent. Do not go on and deceive yourself into becoming a churchgoer instead of a real witness for Jesus Christ. The Lord loves you. He wants the best for you. Has the rain been shut off in your life?

(Compact Disc TR-2770)

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

"HEARKEN DILIGENTLY unto my commandments . . .

[and] I will give you **THE RAIN**" (Deuteronomy 11:13-14).



How Much

Did You or Do You OWE?

Brother Allen Polston

Luke 7:41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Jesus addressed situations to help as many people as possible. Today, through the Spirit of God, God sends messages to help all who will open their hearts to receive Him. In this Scripture lesson, there were two very different people, but both had needs in their lives. We will always need the Lord's help, even after serving Him for many years. We may have heard many messages, have committed Scriptures to memory, and have many life experiences and testimonies to share, but we still need God.

Philippians 4:19 says, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." We will never

arrive at a point in this time world where we will not need to trust God. We will never store up enough grace to where we can coast on into Heaven. We must continue to tap into the grace of God on a daily basis. I am glad to report Jesus told the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Luke 7:36 reads: "And one of the Pharisees desired him [Jesus] that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." It was commendable the Pharisee manifested a desire for the presence of Christ. Jesus accepted his invitation. As He was in the Pharisee's house, some others came into the picture, and He began to deal with some needs.

We do not know all the Pharisee's motives, but it is a good thing when a person desires the presence of God. Jesus said we should desire the things we pray for. Prayer should not be merely a routine to meet an obligation. Life can be busy, and sometimes, if we are not careful, we can pray through a list with little thought.

Luke 7:37-38 says, "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that

Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

A woman of the city, whom the Bible says was a sinner, heard that Jesus was at the Pharisee's house. Her wickedness was obvious to all who knew her. She also had a desire to be where Jesus was. She came to do service. She wept and washed His feet with her tears, dried them, and poured ointment on Him. That was a good thing, but the Pharisee had a problem with the woman being there. We need to make sure we have the right attitude. It is easy to get all the outward things in place, and they are definitely important, but there are inward things we also need to keep in order.

Keeping the Inside and the Outside Clean

Matthew 23:23-26 states: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

The Bible teaches us to keep the inside and the outside clean. Some people have a real problem and find fault if the outward standard is not preached the way

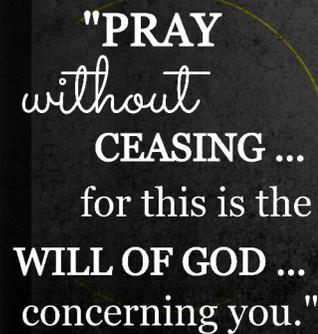
they feel it should be preached. However, they can verbally abuse their wife or mentally abuse their children in the privacy of their homes. That is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Godly living involves more than what is seen in the public arena. Godly living should occur behind closed doors in our homes in how we treat our families, our companions, and others. Some

have the attitude they can put on a facade in public, but when it comes to the treatment of their companion, it can be rough sometimes.

Two people from different backgrounds brought together in marriage can have some challenges. There will be some things a young couple will need to work through. However, there is no reason for anyone to be abusive verbally, mentally, or physically against their companion. We must watch our conduct. People can appear to have everything in place, yet, they are missing out on what is most important.

The Pharisee in our lesson invited Jesus into his home for supper. When this woman of the world came in, feelings began to rise within the Pharisee. We read in Luke 7:39, "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." He had her labeled correctly. The Word of God said she was a sinner. But there was an attitude working on the Pharisee.

This Scripture text is a picture of a person who has gone the extra mile to make a good appearance in public. The Pharisee attended to the outward issues, but he had failed miserably to attend to the inside. His heart was still unclean. Do not misun-



"PRAY
without
CEASING ...
for this is the
WILL OF GOD ...
concerning you."

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18



derstand the message. I am not saying the outside is unimportant; it is important.

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The cry of this modern, religious world is, "God looks on the heart." Religious people love to read 1 Samuel 16:7, and they misinterpret that Scripture. God does look on the heart, but man looks on the outside. We have a responsibility to affect our fellow man by the way we live and the way we dress.

The Corinthian writer said in 2 Corinthians 6:1, "We then, as workers together with him [God], beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Whatever is on the inside will definitely come to the surface sooner or later. A change of heart produces a change of action. True repentance is not limited to the mind. It shows on the outside too.

The Attitude of Rejoicing

Again, the Pharisee desired Jesus to have supper with him, and the woman, who was a sinner, found out Jesus was there and came to the house too. She began to engage in what appeared to be an act of repentance. What should be our attitude when someone comes to the Lord? Even if they do not fully make a move initially, the attitude of a true child of God is rejoicing. We ought to be glad when someone takes a step in the

right direction. The Word of God says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Philippians 4:4 reads, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." God teaches in His Word we have much to rejoice about. In Luke, Chapter 10, the disciples came back to Jesus

after they had enjoyed a measure of success. They were excited about the work they had accomplished. Jesus said in verse 20, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

Even though the devil and the circumstances of life may come in and press us down, and there are situations we must work through, there are reasons to rejoice in the good things of God. The song "My Surrender" in the *Evening Light* hymnal says, "I am glad that I heard the truth from his word, And now with my soul all is well."

Habakkuk 3:17-18 reads, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." One fruit of the Spirit is joy, according to Galatians 5:22. The Pharisee should have rejoiced in the woman who came to Jesus. She was heading in the right direction.

Luke 15:7 says, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." I have learned from pastoring a congregation and working with people, we need to

be long-suffering and patient. False religion has done an evil work in our world. It has influenced the masses and confused people's minds into thinking this or that false doctrine is true. In working with people, we rejoice in every step of progress made.

Have You Forgotten What God Has Done?

The Pharisee in our Scripture text was not manifesting the right attitude. He should have been thankful, but he was not taking this situation very well. I would have liked to ask him, "Have you forgotten?" That is a good question to ask. Is it possible to forget extremely important events or things that have occurred in our lives? According to the Bible, it is possible for people to forget things.

Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:5-9: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

Peter was saying, if you are not adding these godly virtues and attributes to your life, then you may have forgotten you were once in a condition where you needed kindness shown to you. If it were not for the grace of God, there is no telling where I would be. I may not be alive today. This applies to all of us.

We do not know where we would be without the grace of God. You may look at some peo-

ple and the direction they have taken in life and think, "I would never have gone down that path." You do not know for sure because, without God's power and grace, you could have been in any one of many sinful, wicked, or evil conditions today. Your life could have been in shambles. If it was not for God's mercy upon me, who knows where I would be? I could very easily be in eternity, lost without God. Many are already there without another opportunity to make things right. You could be there. Oh, we need to be thankful for the grace and mercy of God!

This same account is mentioned in Matthew 26:6-7, which



says, "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat." Had Simon forgotten he was a leper? He found fault with the sinner woman who had come to his house. Had he forgotten his own condition prior to the touch of God? Had he forgotten how he had been plagued in the past?

The Bible warns of a tendency for human beings to forget. The Scriptures tell us the children of Israel forgot all the hard labor placed upon them. The labor was ever-increasing, making it almost impossible for them to perform back in Egypt. They forgot the rigorous bondage they were once in when things got tough on their journey to the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 4:23 says, "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the

LORD your God, which he made with you." Deuteronomy 6:12 reads, "Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." Deuteronomy 8:11 states, "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes."

The psalmist said in Psalm 9:17, it is possible for nations to forget God. What is the message? We need to be careful not to forget where God has brought us from and where we could be today. We could have been raised in a totally different environment than what we were privileged to be raised in. We could have been exposed to terrible things. If not for the grace of God, we could be hopelessly lost! The Bible tells us in James 1:23-24, it is possible for a man to behold himself in a

glass and "goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." There is a tendency for us, as individuals, to let things slip from our minds.

The Importance of the House of Worship

God wants us to be faithful to come to the house of worship because God can remind us of the things we need to be reminded of. The psalmist, in Psalm, Chapter 73, was beginning to get discouraged when he looked at the prosperity of those who were not living for the Lord. It was getting him down until he went to the house of worship. Psalm 73:17 says, "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end." God began to faithfully remind him of some things. It is good for us, as often as we have an opportunity, to be in the house of worship. Our minds can begin to push the things of God off the scene, so we need to be

reminded.

Peter said in 2 Peter 1:12-13: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance." If the people in Peter's day, who lived not long after the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, needed to be reminded, surely we need to be reminded too. We need our minds stirred up. It is amazing how we can walk into the house of worship and God, through the songs, testimonies, exhortations, and preaching, can stir our memories to things we may have not thought of in a while.

God can bring back to our memory the message He is not overlooking sin. He will not allow it to be tucked under the rug, so to speak. Other things can be brought to our minds such as, God is no respecter of persons, and there is a hell to shun and a Heaven to gain. The individual in our Scripture text had forgotten his own situation.

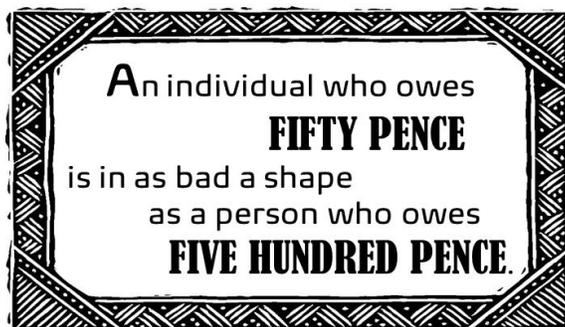
"Nothing to Pay"

Jesus said in Luke 7:41, "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty." In modern terms, five hundred pence would be about seventy dollars, and fifty pence would be about seven dollars. In essence, one owed ten times more than the other. It would seem appropriate that the sinner woman was the one who owed the five hundred pence.

I want to draw your attention to an even more important part of this lesson found in verse 42, which reads, "And when they had nothing to pay. . . ." The implication was the debt was due at

that time, not at a later time, and in both cases, they had nothing to pay. It does not matter if you owe some creditor five thousand dollars or five dollars if it is due and you have nothing to pay. In our minds, we may think, "Well, if I only owed five dollars, I could find a way to get five dollars." The message is, the debt was due. There were no extensions. Whether the amount is high or low, if you cannot pay your debt, you are in the same situation as everyone else.

The Pharisee seemed to think of his life and what he had ac-



complished. Jesus was sitting in his home. He probably felt his debt was minimal and this woman's debt, who was a sinner, was astronomical. Again, the message is, it does not matter how much you owe if you have absolutely nothing to pay.

We had nothing to pay as far as atonement, or payment, for sin. We had no way to rid ourselves of sin's debt. It makes no difference who you are, what you have accomplished, where you have been, or where you are going; you have nothing to pay that would be sufficient to rid yourself of sin. Someone may say, "I have engaged in less sin than most people" or "I have labored and received a good education." You had nothing to pay. Another may say, "I have earned a position in town and where I work." You may consider your status as better compared to most people, but you still had nothing to pay.

Your career, good morals, responsibilities in life, the restraints you may have manifested, and your pedigree or family background will never be sufficient to pay the sin debt. Thank God for all the good in your life. However, whether your debt is large or small, you have nothing to pay. An individual who owes fifty pence is in as bad a shape as a person who owes five hundred pence.

The devil is always trying to confuse us. He likes to twist the Word of God. Does this lesson tell you it is better to get saved after going out into the world and living a wild life of sin for a while? That is foolish and completely inaccurate. It is better to yield yourself to God as a young person and never venture out into the highways of sin. It is better to be obedient to the Spirit of God and the will of God from the very first time you understand as a young child. Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "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."

Jesus Paid Our Sin Debt

If you have gotten tangled up in the deep miry clay of sin, I have good news. Jesus is still in the saving business. If you have made bad decisions and gone the way of the world, I am glad to report Jesus still saves! For those who have not gone out into deep sin, the best policy is to seek the Lord early in life, walk with Him, stay with Him, and serve Him with all your heart. You will never be sorry, and God will pour rich blessings upon your life. It is best to get saved when you are young and stay that way. Serve God with all your heart. You could be a great witness for God and put treasures in Heaven

as a young person.

Jesus asked Simon this question in Luke 7:42, "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon answered Him in verse 43, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most." Again, that Scripture is not saying you need to experience sin and get saved from wickedness to love God with all your heart. If you do not go out into deep sin, thank God, you will not have to reap all those scars. However, your debt was the same. You had nothing to pay.

Every one of us could be lost in sin's bondage because we had nothing to pay. The good news is there was One who took care of the debt. One song says, "Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe!" Thank God, it does not matter how bad you feel you are or how far you

have gone or even if you have not gone very far at all, if you are not serving God, you owe a sin debt. I am glad to report a Savior has made a way for your entire debt to be canceled. If you come to Jesus, He will cancel your sin debt.

None of us had anything of any sufficiency that could cancel the debt we owed, but God sent His only begotten Son to earth. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Your sin debt can be canceled! The Gospel is a wonderful package of good news!

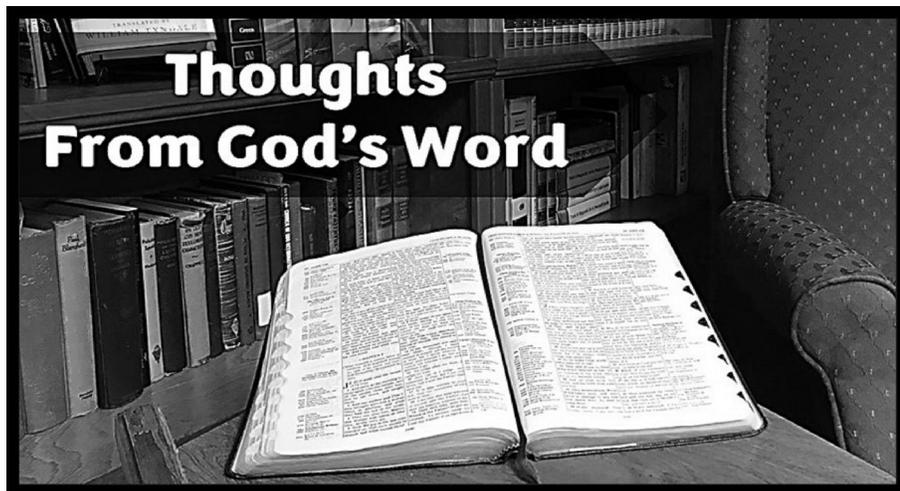
I want to encourage you. You can love God with all your heart and be a pillar in the Church of God. You do not have to ever go

out into the depths of sin, mess your life up, and deal with those results. Thank God, you can serve Him from your youth, with all your heart, and you can love Him supremely. Jesus paid our sin debt. We can all be saved from sin. That is wonderful!

If you are not a Christian, this would be a good opportunity for you to come before God and say: "Lord, I realize I don't have anything to pay for my sins. My good deeds and my education are not sufficient. Will You forgive me of my sins?" I am glad Jesus paid the price for our sins. Oh, how Jesus loves you and me!

(Compact Disc TR-797E)

**Brother Allen Polston is the
pastor of the Church of God in
New Castle, IN.**



"David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee." 1 Samuel 17:37

Have you gone through a difficult trial or situation, and you could see no way out or around it? No way for God to help you?

Exodus 6:1-8 tells of God giving

the Israelites hope, telling them He was about to deliver them from ALL their bondage. WOW! They should have been so excited! They were about to be free! But verse 9 says, "The children of Israel . . . hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."

It is easy to think the Israelites acted terribly, but I am sure most of us can think of a time when we may have acted the same way. God promised in His Word to never leave us or

forsake us. Yet, we sometimes forget all God has promised and what He has already done for us in the past because of what we are going through right now.

Looking back, things you went through may not seem as big as they did at the time. Look at what God did for David when He helped him defeat the lion and the bear in preparation for the giant Goliath. God will use what you have already gone through to prepare you for what is before you.

David could look back on the victories God had already brought him ("out of the paw of the lion, and . . . bear"), and it gave him strength for the fight against Goliath ("he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"). We can also use our past victories to give us courage for the battle we are facing now.

Sister Jennifer Spurlock

**Sister Jennifer Spurlock attends the
Church of God in Newark, OH.**



Trials are coming, but what are we doing with them? The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* says a *trial* is "the action or process of trying or putting to the proof, test." A trial gives proof if something is worthy. David wrote in Psalm 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

This Scripture is talking about shepherds taking their sheep to the lower end of the valley during the winter for more grass and warmer weather because it gets cold on the mountaintops. When summer comes again, they take the sheep back to the mountaintops, which involves going through deep valleys and gorges. Some can be five hundred feet deep, so it gets dark down at the bottom. In these deep valleys, the shadows overtake the light. It is dark, but only for a season. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

A trial is like a shadow; it gets dark for a season, but then you start seeing through the clouds again. A good artist knows you cannot draw a great picture without some shadows. Shadows add more depth. The greatest Artist of all, God, knows the same is true concerning our lives. If the painting of our life does not have shadows, or trials, we cannot live to our full potential for God. Trials can be hard to understand. When

I go through trials, I think: "God, why am I going through this? I don't understand." Trials are to make us more like Christ.

Romans 8:28-29 says: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Before time, God predestinated us to be like Jesus. He wants us to live as Jesus did and love as Jesus loves.

God is the Potter, and we are the clay. If you have ever worked with clay, you know it is extremely hard to work with. It takes work and pressure to form it into the shape you want. God wants us to be more like Christ, but it is going to take work and trials to make us more like Him. Trials are not fun. They can hurt and be irritating, but they will make us more like Jesus.

Trials restore faith. They cause us to depend more on God. In the midst of a trial, we can call on God and know He will be there. Psalm 34:4 says, "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." This Scripture says if we seek the Lord, He will hear us. If we have a clean heart, God will deliver us from our trials in His time. God will not pull us out of the battle because we think it is too hard. We have to keep fighting and

pressing through with God's help.

Hebrews 6:12 says, "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." We have to be patient. Our timing is not God's timing. God knows why we are going through the trial, and He knows how we can make it. We may not know why the trial is happening or when it will end, but we do not have God's perspective. God knows everything that will happen.

We do have God's promises. Isaiah 43:2 says, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee [God promised to be with us no matter where we go]; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." God promised to be with us through the hard times.

John 14:18 says, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." God promised He would not leave us. Trials cause us to be restless. They are hard, but God will not leave us comfortless. He will lead us. Hebrews 13:5 says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." God will not bring us to a river and say: "You find a way across. You figure out how to get through." He will walk beside us the whole way. I do not know about you, but my faith definitely increases when I read those Scriptures.

Trials help me to help others.

Sometimes when I am going through a trial, the devil says: "You're the only one with that problem. Don't tell anybody about that. That is too embarrassing." Many people go through the same trials you go through. Jude 3 says this is a "common salvation." Through our trials, we can help show others the end is near. If the trials end for us, they will end for someone else. We can show others how we got through our trials and encourage them to keep pushing.

Second Corinthians 1:4 says, "Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." God comforts us so we can help comfort other people.

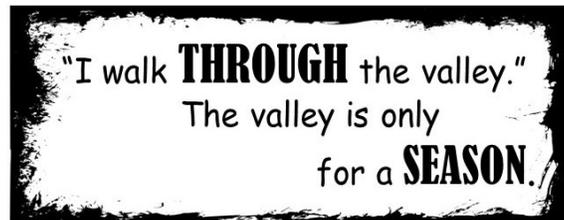
Why do we need to go through trials, and how can we get through them? First and foremost, we need to draw close to God. Sometimes, when we go through a trial, we want to pull away from God. A sinner turns to sin for his problems. He may turn to drugs, alcohol, and bad relationships, and those sinful things keep piling up. Eventually, they will blow up. You can only put so much air in a balloon before it pops. We need to draw close to God.

God has all the answers. He may not tell us the answers right away, but in the end, we will see the plan God has for us. When you go through trials, do not forget about God. Your human self may decide to pull away from God and be stubborn. You may forget to read and let up on your prayer life, saying, "I will pray a short prayer because I am tired."

James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." God wants us to walk step by step with Him. When you were little, you may have followed your dad's footsteps in the snow. You knew if you fell, he

would pick you up and protect you. You felt safe. When we go through hard times, we can follow God's footsteps and know we are safe. He will protect us.

We need to talk to God. Psalm 23:1-3 talks about how God leads and restores us. Verse 4 says, "For thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." David stopped talking *about* God and started talking *to* God. We cannot make it through the dark times unless we cry out to God. We can praise God in all things, but we must talk to God. God is the only way we can make it through the dark times.



Psalm 34:17 says, "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." God wants us to cry out. He will hear and deliver us in His time. You can tell God about your burdens and cares. God wants to know; He cares. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." We need to talk to God and tell Him what is troubling us. God is a great comforter.

Lastly, we need to keep walking. Psalm 23:4 reads, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The Scripture says, "I walk *through*." This shows us it is not a permanent place. We will not be in the valley forever. The psalmist said it is only for a season. The hard trial will eventually end, but it will be dark while it lasts.

We need to walk by faith and not by sight. Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." We may not see the

end, but we need faith that God's plan is for our good. God takes us through what brings Him glory. First Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." God will not put us through something just for the fun of it or to see if we can do it. It will be for His glory, and it will mold us to be more like Him.

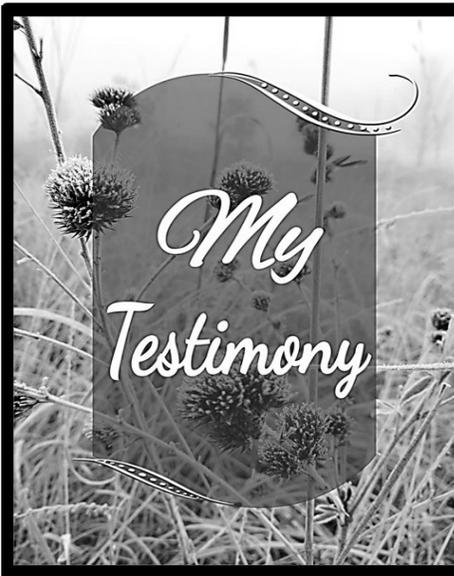
If you are hiking on a steep mountain, it may be hard and your legs may become tired. However, you keep walking so you can see the beautiful view and take pictures. You need to keep walking through trials, up the mountains and through the valleys, to see what God is molding you into. You cannot sit at the bottom and see. God wants you to see from the top.

Temptations are coming. James 1:2 says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers [many] temptations." It does not say *if* you fall, but *when* you fall into temptations. Be prepared. This is how life works. The clay does not come out of the bag in the shape you want it to be. It has to be molded.

Pearls are created by a single grain of sand making its way into the oyster shell through a crack. This irritation causes corroding over the sand that hardens to become a pearl. All oysters do not make pearls, only the ones who recover from the irritations and wounds. Our trials are going to hurt and irritate us. In the end, God can turn our hardships and hurts into treasures. He can make something beautiful from the hard times. When you go through the valley, you can make it by talking to the Shepherd and walking by His side.

Brother James Presley

Brother James Presley is a member of the Church of God youth group in Newark, OH.



Saved From the Depths of Sin

Brother Josh Kemp

I want to thank God for everything He has done for me. He has been amazing in my life. I am not worthy of all God has blessed me with: a family, belongings, and a job. I remember how the life of sin ruined me. I lived after the flesh and did whatever I wanted to do. The devil convinced me I could never get back to God. He also told me my wife would never go along with the standard of the church and become a Christian.

I developed bad habits I am ashamed of, such as drinking alcohol and using foul language. I was what some call a "functional alcoholic." I did not miss work, but I was always thinking about getting that next drop. My life became a raging sea and totally unsettled. My wife, Stacey, would ask me, "What is wrong with you?" I would answer: "You do not understand. I am unsettled, and I have no peace."

I was saved before, and I remembered having peace through trials. I still go through trials, but thank God, now I have a good wife, family, and church family who support me with their prayers. As Christians, we have an Advocate with God who helps us through our problems. While I was in sin, I had no peace or comfort, so I turned to alcohol to get some relief. I could not wait to kill

the pain by getting drunk. On the days I did not drink, I thought about drinking. I was so bound in sin and so helpless! I knew I was not raising my children right, and I felt like a failure.

One time I came to church during the camp meeting. As soon as I came through the church doors, I was under conviction. The devil had me so bound in sin. He told me I could not live a Christian life because my wife would never approve. The devil convinced me I had gone too far. I stood and bit my lip through the invitation. I was raised in the church and remembered hearing, if you spurned the invitation, you could become Gospel-hardened and God may stop talking to you. I made it a point to stay away from the church services. I did not attend for another year.

My life kept going down into a spiral. I was in deep sin and bound by country music. We would go to country music concerts, drink, and carry on. Yet, every worldly event during that year was a failure. One time it rained so much, the carpets in our camper needed to be cleaned because of the mud. Every situation we went through was an absolute failure. God was helping me to become sick of sin. When you get a divine revelation from God, you

become sick of sin.

The party scene was a disaster. It rained and was cold when it was supposed to be hot. I got drunk and did stupid things under the influence of alcohol, many things I cannot remember. Every time the sun came up, I told myself and my wife I would never drink that much again or I would never do this or that again. The next weekend, I was right back at a party and drinking again. I wanted to change my life, but I could not.

In the quiet times of driving to or home from work, God would speak to me. I felt the love He had for me as a father would if his child went wayward or as a shepherd for one lamb that was missing. In the quiet times, I remembered having peace when I lived for God. I remembered going through trials and tribulations, but the grace of God was with me. Back then, I always had God to lean on.

I finally hit rock bottom one weekend. I was intoxicated and acted like a fool in front of my family and my father-in-law. That was the turning point in my life. Sin had dragged me down so low. I started to listen to some Gospel messages, attempting to find a way back to God. The devil fought me all the way. One time while I was at the gym, lifting weights, the Lord started dealing with me and convicting my soul. My eyes began to tear up. I tried to conceal my weeping from the other guys. I had become so sick of my sinful life!

Young person, I pray to God you will never go that far. I am giving my testimony so you do not go out into deep sin as I did. Sin puts you under bondage. You can become so trapped, you do not know how to get out. Maybe you were raised in the church. You know you need to pray to God. So many thoughts will flood your soul. You need a drawing from the Holy Spirit and a vision

of Jesus Christ. When you hit the Rock, Jesus Christ, He will keep you in the low points of your life.

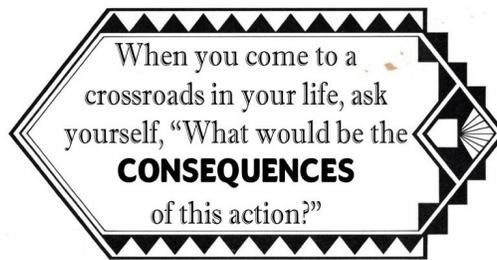
A brother from church sent me a text and told me he was still praying for me; he had not given up on me. I told this brother I could not believe how far in sin I had gone. He told me if God draws me, I must answer the call. I remember sitting in the sauna room at the gym. It was a good place to think. I was the only one there, and I started talking to God. I did not feel worthy to even lift my head to Heaven.

When I was a young person, the youth choir sang a song that says, "Give up and let Jesus take over." If you want the peace and love of God, you must give up your will completely. Give yourself over to the Lord and say: "I do not know what to do! God, what do You want me to do?" That is when the peace and love of God will come into your heart. God can give you the strength to live above sin.

I prayed to God and said: "Lord, I give up! I tried it my way, but now I want to do it Your way. I am tired of running. Help me!" The very day I prayed that prayer within my heart, God took away the desire for alcohol. The sinful desires were gone. The foul language went away. I did not know how I was going to live it, but I wanted to trust God.

My wife was not saved. She was not raised in the church. I did not know how I was going to tell her or how I was going to live as a Christian around my unsaved family. My mind went to a couple of brothers in the church who have unsaved companions and, by the grace of God, have stayed faithful for many years. I thought, "If God can help them, He can help me." I determined to live for God no matter what!

There is a song by The Perrys called "Find Me Faithful." One line in the chorus says, "Remind me in the hard times I have promises



to keep." When you get saved, you make a promise to God that you are going to live for Him. How many have said, "Lord, if You will do this for me, I will live for You and give You praise?"

When you come to a crossroads in your life, ask yourself: "What would be the consequences of this action? What will happen if I go here or get involved in that?" These questions can keep you from detouring away from the church, the truth, and the right way. They will help you stay faithful. Also, think about the promises you made to God and what He has done for you.

I made the determination to live for God no matter what. I did not realize my wife was seeking the change I made. God has changed my life and Stacey's life! He has restored me and surpassed any spiritual experience I have ever known before. Thank God! There are many things I battle in my day-to-day life. Some say they do not have a powerful testimony because they never went into deep sin, but I beg to differ. While God has done something amazing in my life, I have to endure daily temptations. Sometimes, they weigh me down and try to overpower me. I am harassed by the devil because of the scars sin left behind.

I am encouraged to see young people staying true to God and becoming young adults who stand up for Jesus. I want to encourage you to have a purpose in your heart when it comes to the things of God. Daniel 1:8 reads, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's

meat, nor with the wine which he drank." At a young age, you can work and live for God. You can have the same determination as Daniel. You can say, "It doesn't matter if this person backslides, I am going to stay true and keep working and striving for God."

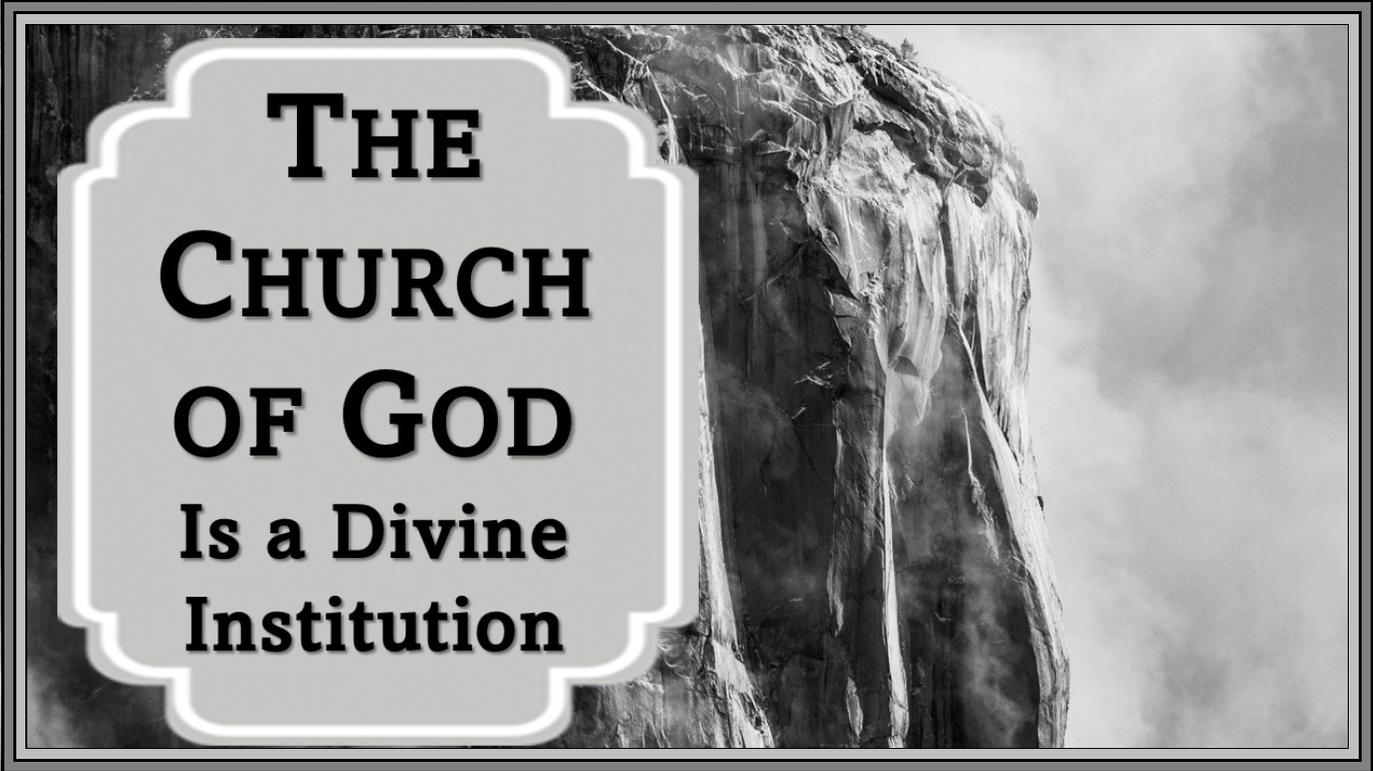
When you come back to God after being away from Him, He will bring you right back to where you failed Him. He is faithful to show you what you need to do to make things right and keep pushing forward. Many have given their testimonies, warning the youth about the bondage of sin and the scars it leaves behind. Yet, there are young people who still go out into sin, get away from the church, and scar their lives.

There is no guarantee you will get back to God if you go away. Only by His grace, mercy, and love was I given the opportunity to get back! Young person, do not give up living for God. If you get knocked down, get back up again and go forward. God's grace is sufficient. He can help and heal.

Sometimes, I think of what it was like to be among the crowd when Jesus was healing and performing miracles. People came to Him with the expectation of seeing amazing things happen. When I come to church, I believe God is ready to save people from their sins and restore those who have gone astray. The woman in the Bible with the issue of blood had to press her way through the crowd. She was sick. It was not easy, but she fought the crowd to get to Jesus. If you want to be saved, you must press your way past yourself, your friends, and your family to get to Jesus. He is waiting, and by faith, you can receive help.

Brother Josh Kemp

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THE CHURCH OF GOD Is a Divine Institution

Brother Alan Vossler

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou

shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

The Church of God is divinely built and divinely ruled. May God help us not to let the truth slip away or lose interest in it because it is familiar. Many institutions are *not* divinely built and divinely ruled. There is a distinction between the Church of God and Babylon, which is confusion.

Sometimes a horse or a cow will look over the fence and think the grass is greener on the other side. A cow may stick her head through barbed wire to get another nibble of grass from the other side. Sometimes, people look over the fence, spiritually speaking. They see Babylon has this program or that program. Why not reverse that thinking? Do they have the Spirit of God in their midst? Are their services anointed with the presence of the

Holy Spirit?

Jesus led into this passage of Scripture text with a pertinent and important question: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" It is one of the most important questions ever asked in history. I have six points I want to bring to your attention: confusion, question, confession, promise, power, and rival.

Dispelling Confusion

There was confusion back then, and there is still confusion today. Verse 14 of our text says, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist." Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. He had John's head taken off because of his wife, and he was antsy because he thought John the Baptist was raised from the dead. Mark 6:14 reads, "And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad;) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew

forth themselves in him."

Others thought Jesus was Elijah (a worker of mighty miracles), Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. Confusion was among the Jews. They should have known Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed One, from their history books.

Some say, "Jesus will make you financially successful if you ask Him." That is blasphemous to think you can snap your fingers and Jesus will give you what you want. That is the pinnacle of selfishness. The things of this world are peripheral and unimportant. Jesus is the Son of God, the Creator of the universe, and He came to save people from their sins. Jesus did not come so you could speak "gibberish."

We live in a day where all kinds of sinful activities are tolerated by false religion and nominal Christianity. They did not stop looking the other way at homosexuality, cohabitation, and all these other sins. They have let them in. The more people tolerate sin and worldliness in their lives, the lower their standard of living becomes. They are inversely proportionate one to another. God hates sin. We must maintain the spirituality the Head of the church [Jesus Christ] requires; it is not optional. Your opinion and my opinion do not matter to God. To survive spiritually, we have to do what the Head of the church has called us to do.

There is much confusion in our world today concerning what constitutes Christianity, the church, the Messiah, and who Christ is. If you are not saved and you do not understand everything, you can pray and ask God for help. If you do not understand salvation and you are sick of the world, one of the most effective ways to dispel confusion is to ask questions. Asking questions is a way to get answers. We live in a world that

thinks you should pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, so to speak. In some aspects, you need to be self-sufficient, but when it comes to your soul, you need to know the direction you are heading. You need God to help you find the right way.

A Divine Revelation

Jesus questioned His disciples, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Nicodemus was a teacher of the Jews, and he did not understand who Jesus was. Let us read John 3:6-10: "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? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

Jesus told Peter he did not get his understanding from "flesh and blood"; he got the revelation from the Father. Our Father wants to open our eyes to the truth. Thank God for the truth that is visible, available, and understandable. However, the more I study the Word of God, the more I realize there is more to be understood. God's Word is

eternal; I am temporal. God's Word is infinite; I am finite. I have limits; God does not.

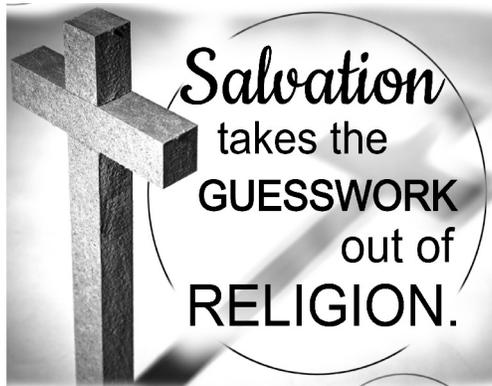
Salvation is an experience that takes the guesswork out of religion. There is no more "I hope so" or "I think so." You can *know* you are saved. You can come to an altar of prayer burdened by sin and leave a free individual. God is constantly drawing people. John 6:44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." Is the Spirit drawing you?

God's Spirit opens understanding. He opened Peter's understanding and Lydia's understanding in Acts 16:14. The Spirit of God wants to open our understanding to deeper, more wonderful truths in His Word. He is working to set men and women free from the bondage of sin.

Peter confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." One is truly blessed to have his mind opened to the knowledge of Jesus. You can have many possessions and much knowledge in this life. Some seemingly are "walking encyclopedias." They seem to know about everything. However, the greatest knowledge a man or woman can have on planet Earth is knowing Jesus as your Savior and having your sins forgiven. This knowledge is divine in origin; it is revealed by the Father.

The word *revealed* in the Greek means "to take off the cover." Some may say, "The fog is gone" or "the lightbulb came on." Salvation takes off the cover so you can see accurately and understand spiritual things. We do not understand it all at once. It is a process, and it takes time and effort to understand God's Word. Thank God, He takes the cover off.

I read a book called *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome* written by Charles Chiniquy, a former Roman Catholic priest who



was a friend of Abraham Lincoln. He had quite a journey coming out of the Roman Catholic Church. He saw a little light, and then he would go back into the Roman Catholic Church. Time after time, he would read his Bible and see a little bit of truth, then pull back to his religion. Finally, he saw the light and came out of the Roman Catholic Church and took a stand against it. Sometimes it takes time and effort for the covers to come off. We need patience for the ones God is working with.

The Gates of Hell Will Not Prevail Against the Church

Jesus promised, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [Jesus was not talking about building the church on Peter. Peter means *petros*, which is a stone. *Petra* is a foundation stone.] I will build my church." The promise is "I [Jesus Christ] will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What a promise!

A Church of God congregation walking in the light does not disintegrate into Babylon overnight. Steps are taken first. If we knew what some people were reading and viewing on the internet, it would take away the mystery of why they walk away from the Church of God. They walked away because of some adverse influence they allowed in their lives.

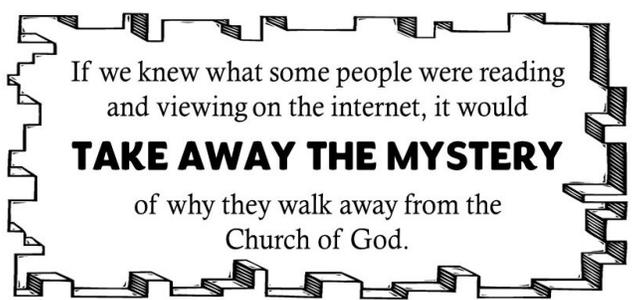
There are many adverse influences people are allowing into their lives. Some so-called Christian literature is absolute junk. Brother S. O. Susag wrote an autobiography called *Personal Experiences of S. O. Susag*. He was a Church of God preacher from Minnesota. He was a powerhouse for the Church of God, anointed by God's Spirit. Brother Susag dealt with many of the same things we deal with today. We need to be careful of what we

read and become involved in because many things are trying to overthrow the church.

The gates of hell will not prevail against the church. The phrase "prevail against" in the Greek means to "overpower." The gates of hell will not overpower the Church of God. They have no ability to prevail. King Saul was dethroned for violating God's command, and he reaped the harvest for it. He remained king for over a decade, he still had his position, but he did not have the anointing. What good is a position without the anointing? You have to do something to lose power. Samson lost his power; it did not just evaporate. He did something to lose it. What must we do to stay in a position where the enemy cannot overpower us? How can we live without losing out and giving up?

The enemy harassed Job, but he had limitations. We must realize the enemy has limitations. He cannot go beyond what our Savior says he can do. Romans 1:1 says, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Paul was a servant of Jesus Christ. The word *servant* means "a slave." The concept of slavery is so odious in our culture, we do not like to think about it. Nevertheless, Paul made himself a slave to the Savior. Jesus owned Paul. He told Paul to go here and preach there. That is the secret. Do exactly and accurately what the Lord tells you to do.

King Saul failed when he did not eradicate the Amalekites as God explicitly instructed. First Samuel 15:20-22 reads: "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and



have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

The Apostle Paul listened explicitly to the instructions his Savior gave him. That is the secret to spiritual success, and the secret to Satan not touching or overpowering our spiritual lives. We have a hope within our souls. We can finish the race with joy and confidence when we have a servant's, or a slave's, attitude. We can serve Jesus no matter what comes our way. The Church of God is built on obedience to the Lord.

The Keys of the Kingdom

Power, or strength, is our fifth point. Jesus told Peter He would give him "the keys of the kingdom." Keys are symbolic of the power or authority to enter or deny entry. Man does not possess the power to admit or deny admittance into the Church of God. Isaiah 22:22 reads, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open." This is a clear prophecy of Jesus being delegated the authority to open and allow in and to close and not allow in.

Jesus delegated authority to Peter. This is not to say Peter was the vicar of the church. He did not gain the authority to rule the church. When my pastor, Brother Decker, asks me to preach, it does not give me the authority to pastor the congregation. We need to know our parameters. If we get outside our parameters, things get messed up.

Acts, Chapter 2, is a picture of God giving Peter the "keys," or authority. He unleashed His power on Peter on the Day of Pentecost. Peter preached a message under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:16 Peter said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." In verse 41 we read, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

There is evidence when someone has the "keys," or the authority from God. It will manifest itself; it cannot be hidden. When Peter preached, three thousand souls were saved under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. There was nothing the Pharisees could do about it. God will do what He chooses. You can be with Him or against Him, but He is going to have His way. Having the keys is having strength.

Rivals to the Church of God

Jesus said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it [the Church of God]." That simple piece of information tells us there will be rivals and confrontations to the Church of God. Religion is a rival that stands and fights against faith. For example, Jewish Saul was a rival to the Kingdom of God. He said in Galatians 1:13, he wasted and worked against the Church of God.

When the preaching of the Gospel came forth and Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is at

hand" (Mark 1:15), the Jewish people should have listened. Paul said the Jews plainly had an advantage. They were given "the oracles of God" (Romans 3:2). Galatians 3:24 says the law was a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ. They should have assimilated right into the Church of God. Instead, they became rivals and worked against the church. Some Jews were saved, thank God, but many stood against what God was doing.

In Jesus' day, many Pharisees had a personal agenda. A personal agenda will always stand against the Gospel of Christ. I cannot have a personal agenda and faithfully minister the Word of God at the same time. God will not bless or anoint over any personal agenda. Sometime after the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile, when the sects of the Pharisees were developed, they were the best men in the nation. They were not the apostates Jesus dealt with. However, just because they started well does not mean they ended well. They became rivals to the Church of God.

Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and all other "isms" have set themselves as rivals to fight against the Gospel. Papalism displaced the truth with things borrowed from paganism, the great red dragon spoken of in Revelation. They wanted to Christianize pagan idols, events, and practices. They did not Christianize paganism; they paganized Christianity.

Any attempt to bring anything into the church unlike Christ will lead to rivalry. God will not tolerate forces competing, or working, against Him. Second Corinthians 6:17 reads, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." God says to come out and be clean. Do not mix in error with the truth. God does not want His church mixed up. God has called us out of falsehood, so we must, through great effort, maintain the course.

God has invested much so you and I can have the truth and live free from sin. Let us not treat the things of God loosely or lightly. They are of eternal, infinite value. Investments in gold, silver, bonds, and stocks have no value compared to what Jesus has invested. May God help us to maintain the course and keep our hearts and minds undefiled by what is going on around us.

Some people, who once had the anointing of the Spirit of God while preaching the Word of God, are not what they once were. They may look the same, but something is missing. The fire of the Holy Spirit is gone. They are not the same. May God help us to keep the freshness of the Spirit of God in our midst.

(Compact Disc TR-2775)

Brother Alan Vossler attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



**Lord, I have given my life to Thee.
Every day and hour is Thine.
What Thou appointest, let them be;
Thy will is better, Lord, than mine.**

Anna B. Warner



What Is Stealing Your Peace?

*"Now the Lord of peace himself
give you peace always by all means.
The Lord be with you all."*

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Have you ever had a neighbor who disturbed the peace with loud music or late-night parties, especially on a Saturday night? Maybe your only day to sleep in late was disturbed by loud trucks or motorcycles revving their engines close to your bedroom window. Have you ever waited patiently for a parking place, and someone pulls into it ahead of you? Perhaps a snowplow completely buries your car. How we deal with disturbances makes a big difference in how we influence our "world" (the people we associate with) and our inner peace.

Sin disturbs our peace. If there is sin in your life, you cannot enjoy peace unless you get saved and allow God to rid you of all your guilt and turmoil. Living a less-than-victorious life causes stress and disrupts the peace. Recurring failures in your life will keep you from having peace. You may need someone to agree in prayer with you to gain the victory God has for you. The old saying is, "You have not failed until you fail to get back up!"

Are you involved in too many projects or overextending yourself? It

is good to be busy, but easy for some to become TOO busy! When you have no time to spend with your spouse or children, bad things can happen. Talk to your spouse BEFORE you take on projects. Ask yourself how this project will impact your relationships. How will it affect your spiritual well-being? Will it require you to miss church? It is easy to get grouchy with one another when we are tired and stressed.

If you know your spouse is already stressed, do your best to relieve the situation, not accelerate it. This is not the time to bombard them with petty problems. Handle as much of the routine "stuff" as you can. Work with your spouse, not against them. If possible, finish projects one at a time until you are back on a doable schedule. You could try a family calendar with everyone's activities posted in a common place so nobody overlaps another's agenda. Pray about everything! Ask God if taking on a particular project is good for you and your family, as well as your spiritual life. Ask God to block it if it is not good.

Is your peace being disturbed by children who are out of control? Or maybe the children are IN control, but YOU are out of control! Every family and every child is different; so there is no set standard for everyone. Here are some good "one-minute" parenting tips that are worth a try. (Several authors have written books with this title). Catch a child doing something good, then look them in the eye and tell them what they did was good. Let them know how much you liked it, and give them a hug. One minute is all it takes! You can praise what is good and hope it will be repeated. When a child does wrong, look them in the eye, tell them you love them, but you disliked their actions, and what the consequence will be if it is repeated. It only takes one minute. If the action is repeated, you already know the consequence, and so do they.

Be careful how you word things. Make sure you do not say to your child, "I don't like YOU." It is the

ACTION you dislike, not the child. Jesus hates sin, but He loves the sinner. When it comes to discipline, make the consequence age-appropriate. A two-year-old child cannot sit still for ten minutes. Even two minutes may require you to stand beside him and remind him to sit still in time out. Taking a teenager's phone for an entire month may not work because YOU may want to call them to find out where they are! Look for something that will make them consider their actions. Do not make rash statements, such as, "I'm gonna kill you!" or "I'm going to send you to foster care!" Do not lie; be rational.

Be consistent with your discipline. If it is wrong today, it should be wrong tomorrow. Know the rules yourself before you try to enforce them. Do not make up the rules as you go. If you make up rules while playing a game, it causes frustration and confusion. How does this affect your children? If your children are older, talk to them. They may resist but keep talking, asking questions, and probing. Ask God for wisdom in dealing with your particular situations.

If someone gets saved, it affects the whole family. If a new truth changes your traditions, consider your children's feelings. They might not understand the new truth, but you are the parent. Brother Emerson Wilson taught, "Do not take away something without replacing it with something." When we got saved, we gave up worldly things, but God replaced it all with good things such as love, joy, and peace.

Ask yourself WHY your child is misbehaving. Are they tired, sick, bored, or needing attention? When you talk to them, explain your needs and listen to their needs. Give them something to do, such as chores, playdough, coloring books, or legos; be creative. Look for good role models. Ask for help, and pray for guidance. Disruptive children can and will disturb your peace.

Financial stress can disturb everyone's peace. It is EASY to get into credit card debt and VERY HARD

to get out! It takes sacrifice and self-control to put off buying a desired item until you have the money to buy it. Teach your children "money does not grow on trees" and the necessity to SAVE before buying certain items. Do NOT forget tithing!

Clutter—such as dirty dishes, laundry, toys scattered throughout the house, homework, school books and supplies in every room, missing keys, and piled-up mail—can also steal your peace. A clean kitchen always makes me smile. Bad habits need to be worked on. Stop procrastinating and do what needs to be done, and you will thank yourself later. Clean as you go. If you mess it up, clean it up. Get every member of the household involved. Mom cannot do it all. Dad needs to take care of his belongings. Keys or work badges need a designated place. The kids need to learn to clean up their own toys.

Form good habits. When you take off your coat, hang it up. Have a convenient place for hanging things. Dirty clothes need to go IN the basket, not BESIDE it. Little things make big work. It disturbs everyone's peace when you are ready to walk out the door and cannot find your keys, shoes, homework, Bible, etc. Organize your things neatly so they are easy to use. Teach your children neatness and cleanliness. Keep life simple. You do not have to keep EVERYTHING! I hate to dust; so knickknacks are extra dusting for me. If you like them, prepare to dust them. Declutter, organize, and keep what you have where you can find it. The list includes but is not limited to tools, groceries, clothes, information/papers, and MUCH more.

Another big peace disturber is issues or problems you need to deal with. They lie between you and your spouse like a sleeping lion everyone is afraid to awaken. Pray about when and how to approach the subject. Maybe you need to get away for dinner or an overnight trip so you can talk to each other without interruptions or little ears listening. I am in favor of date nights. Save your

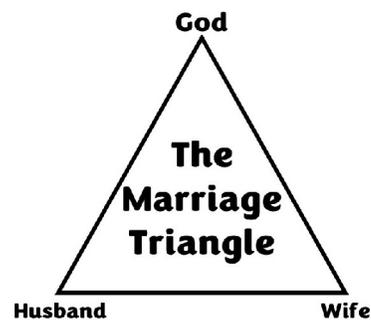
pennies, hire a babysitter, and go out to dinner. Take a walk or a drive, just the two of you, and TALK! It should not be a one-way conversation. Both of you should talk to each other and have a conversation. Communication is a two-way street.

Here are a few things to consider concerning conflict resolution. You could be the one who is right, or you COULD be wrong. Listen to what is being said; consider the other person's point of view. Ask God to help you understand where the other person is coming from and to show you if YOU are wrong. Give the other person time to digest the problem. They may not realize something is a problem for you. Be humble. When you are upset, you should lower your voice. "A soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1). Be polite. Even when dealing with your companion, you need to use your manners and not interrupt. There should be no name-calling. Keep it private; do not get into a disagreement in front of the kids, friends, or strangers, at church, or Walmart.

Married couples should find a time when just the two of them can talk. Stay in touch. Do not speak impulsively or thoughtlessly. Know what you are saying and why it is important to you before you say it. Put some thought into what is really troubling you. Choose your battles. Sometimes, you can find faults with everything and everyone (except yourself, of course). Some things are not worth the time and effort to be upset. Do not make statements such as, "I hate you!" or "I'm going to kill you!" or "If that's the way you feel, find a lawyer!" (Divorce is not a solution to any problem. It just creates more problems.) When you calm down, you will regret hurtful words, but the damage will have already been done. Keep your spirit right. Sometimes you may need to ask for forgiveness. It helps when you remember to weigh your words before you speak them.

You should use "I" statements to express how you feel without throwing blame on anyone else. For exam-

ple, "It makes me feel upset, angry, or frustrated when I clean the house, and within minutes, it looks like I never touched it." When you use accusatory words, it puts the other person on the defense immediately. An accusatory statement might be, "I clean the house, and within minutes, YOU trash it!" The focus should be on the problem, not the person.



Choose one problem at a time, and deal with it before moving on. Marriage is a husband, a wife, and God. Consider the marriage triangle. When a couple is further from God, the distance between husband and wife is greater. When they are closer to God, the husband and wife will be closer to each other. Jesus is STILL the answer!

Sister Joyce Corder

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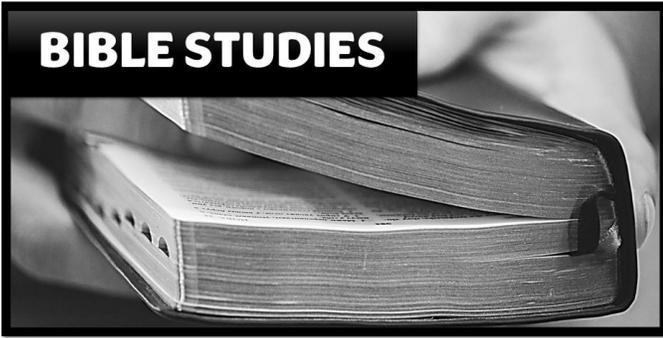
BEGONE, UNBELIEF!

Begone, unbelief, my Savior is near,
And for my relief will surely appear.
His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.

Since all that I meet shall work for my good,
The bitter is sweet, the medicine food;
Though painful at present, 'twill cease
before long,
And then, oh, how pleasant the
conqueror's song!

John Newton

BIBLE STUDIES



A BRIEF EXPOSITION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 3:12-15

Many people are errantly prone to relegate these verses to either the Day of Judgment or the eternal realm; however, they have no reference to either one. In the context, the Apostle Paul is speaking of "ye are God's building" (verse 9), that Christ is the "foundation" (verse 11), and we are instructed to "let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (verse 10). This is the premise upon which verses 12-15 are penned. The Apostle provided guidance to this Corinthian congregation (and us, by extension, since it is included in the sacred canon) on how to build our lives and congregations and how the faithfulness of the Lord assists us.

1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble.

According to verse 10, "every man . . . buildeth." Everyone is either building properly or improperly. This is why the analogy is used in verse 12 of substances that are durable and not durable. When ones "build upon this foundation [Christ] gold, silver, precious stones," these are durable substances that fire does not injure. "Gold" and "silver" are refined by "fire" (Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2). Not only can these first elements withstand the "fire," but they are also purified and made better by such. However, 1 Corinthians 3:12 proceeds in the analogy to mention "wood, hay, stubble." None of these items are durable; the "fire" consumes them. They represent "man's work" (verse 13), that which is unsuitable to put on the "foundation," or a life in Christ. These two categories represent either the suitable or unsuitable "work" of man.

1 Corinthians 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

When Paul wrote, "For the day shall declare it," he was speaking of "the day" when we are "God's building" (verse 9). The Apostle told what "day" enables us to be such in 2 Corinthians 6:2. It is "the day of salvation." This

is the "day" when the quality of "every man's work shall be made manifest." This verse continues, "Because it shall be revealed by fire." Jeremiah 23:29 declares, "Is not my word like as a fire?" So, the "fire" represents the "word." This is what reveals to us during this "day of salvation" (the Gospel Day) whether our "work" is durable and acceptable or unacceptable. It is based on the truth of God's Word.

The "gold" and "precious stones" (verse 12) are also seen in the items of which the church is constructed in Revelation 21:18-20. Verse 18 reads, "The city was pure gold," and verse 19 says, "The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones." Each of these symbolize various precious truths of which our experience and the church are comprised.

In this Gospel Day, the Lord is a "faithful and true witness" (Revelation 3:14), and through the "fire," or the Word, He will reveal "every man's work of what sort it is." At the Judgment, man will not be surprised about "what sort" his "work" is. The faithfulness of God and the message will make it known during this Gospel Day. Jesus gave a parable in Matthew 7:24-27 and told of "a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (*The Emphatic Greek Diaglott* says "the rock"). First Corinthians 10:4 tells us, "That Rock was Christ." Christ then speaks of the "house" being tried. This is essentially what is being described in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. This chapter goes on to speak of, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God" (verse 16), and in verse 17, he cautioned against "any man" defiling "the temple of God." Paul was speaking of our lives and making sure we "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

***1 Corinthians 3:14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.
15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.***

If our "work" is appropriate and lines up with the Word of God, it will "abide." However, "if any man's work shall be burned," in other words, the "fire" (the Word) consumes it, showing it is not durable, appropriate, or based in truth, "he shall suffer loss." For example, suppose individuals have an experience of salvation but have not been exposed to the truth concerning the church. They are in Babylon where they have been a faithful member, working to build that system up and lead people into it. They think they are doing a "work" for God, but in reality, they are doing a work for "the image of the beast" (Revelation 13:15). When they hear the truth of Revelation 18:4 and "Come out," the message (the "fire") has "saved" and delivered them from that system, but all their "work" was burned up by the truth and revealed for what it was.

The Apostle Paul is an excellent example of this truth. Jesus prophesied in John 16:2, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God

service." This prophecy was fulfilled, at least in part, by Saul of Tarsus. Speaking of himself, he said, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:6). Concerning the stoning of Stephen, Acts 8:1 says, "And Saul was consenting unto his death." Saul's "work" at this juncture in life was "wood, hay, stubble." Saul thought he was doing "God service," but he was not.

Verse 15 says, "He shall suffer loss [works that were not suitable or Biblically based]: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." The message reveals to him the

unsuitable nature of what he has allowed to work in his life. When an individual accepts that and conforms his life and "work" to the message of truth, it enables him to either get "saved," if he is not, or maintain being "saved" by measuring to the light that the "fire" brings.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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

"The Lord's Employ"

*When my sky is clear and bright,
When I find it dark as night;
Just to trust and do the right,
That's enough for me.*

*When my heart is filled with joy,
When the foe would fain destroy,
If I'm in the Lord's employ,
That's enough for me.*

William Henry

There have been times when the weight of life's problems has weighed down on me so heavily that, although still in the "Lord's employ," my heart was not in it. During those times, I have walked and prayed, telling God: "I need help. I cannot carry the load." God has never failed to move in so wonderfully. The burdens and problems are still there, but God is helping me carry the load. Ruby Bush was trying to carry it, not taking it to God, and she was not getting any sleep. I was just worrying and fretting. I was failing to do it the right way by asking God to help me carry those burdens.

I thank the Lord for helping me and being there for me. I thank Him for the Church of God! Sometimes when we go through hard times, the enemy tries to make us feel that we are all alone and nobody cares, that

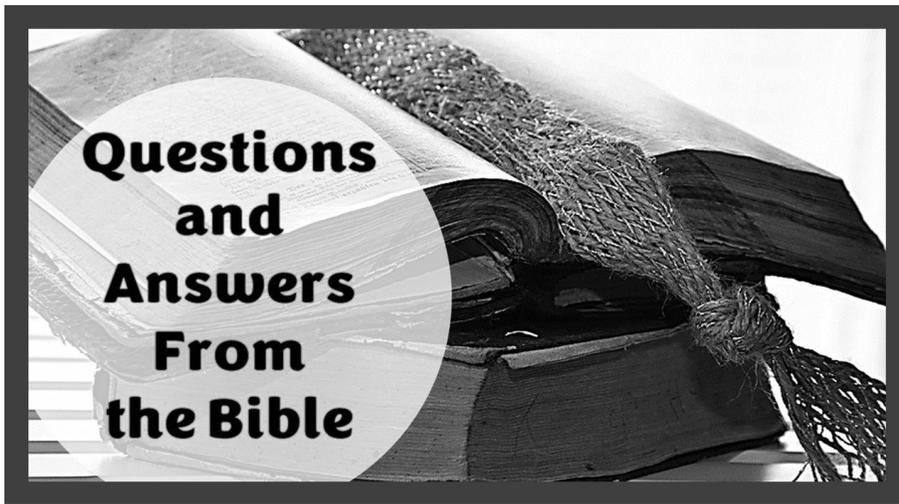
no one else has ever had a problem like this. However, it is a common salvation, and everyone has problems.

When we get to looking too much to "me" and "my problems," we cannot carry anyone else's burdens, and we really are not doing ourselves any good either. Thank God, He has helped me in those times. It is truly a walk of faith, not feeling. Often, when we do have feelings, we feel down, but thank God, He looked down on our humble estate. "*When the foe would fain destroy,*" thank the Lord, I kept in my "*Lord's employ.*"

Sister Ruby Bush

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IS THE THIRD HEAVEN AND PARADISE (2 CORINTHIANS 12:2 AND 4) SPEAKING OF THE SAME THING?

To be "rightly dividing" (2 Timothy 2:15) this passage (2 Corinthians 12:1-4), we must begin with understanding a larger, overarching premise. Time is but a slice cut out "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2). Prior to time was eternity, or "from everlasting" (eternity past), and subsequent to time is "to everlasting" (eternity future). Also, eternity runs parallel to time, for there are those who have passed off of the stage of action and inhabit eternity. We see a clear example of this with Moses and Elijah appearing with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-4; Mark 9:2-5; Luke 9:28-31). All three synoptic Gospel writers were inspired to record this account which brought two of those who inhabit eternity, Moses and Elijah, into view.

Christ allowed us to glimpse a view of eternity when He spoke of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). This is a not parable, for there is not a single parable where Christ used an individual's name as He did in Luke, Chapter 16. This premise of understanding, that there are two concurrent realms (time and eternity), is essential because there are many realities which span both realms. For instance, in Ephesians 3:15 the

Apostle Paul spoke of "the whole family" (singular); yet, he spoke of it "in heaven and earth." Although there is only one "family," it spans two realms — eternity and time. So it is with "the kingdom."

In Luke 16:16, Jesus taught that "the kingdom of God" is a present reality and that "every man presseth into it." Romans 14:17 tells us that "the kingdom of God IS" (a present-tense reality) and that it is a spiritual entity or experience: "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Yet, in the Apostle Paul's final Epistle, he wrote, "The Lord . . . will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:18). This reveals "the kingdom" also spans the two realms — time and eternity. So it is with "paradise."

Certainly, there is an eternal aspect that lies beyond this veil of flesh. Jesus proclaimed to the dying thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). This is the same place Jesus referred to in Luke 16:22 that Lazarus occupied and is referred to commonly as "Abraham's bosom." However, "paradise" spans these two realms as well.

When God placed man in the Garden of Eden, it was a paradise; yet, it was a place in time, not eternity. Thus, there is an aspect

of "paradise" that currently occupies time. The earthly paradise of "Eden" was lost because of man's sin, but everything that was lost through Adam has been restored by "the last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45), Jesus Christ.

Christ spoke to the congregation in Ephesus and encouraged them, "To him that overcometh [not speaking of an experience subsequent to death, but a victory obtained during life] will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7).

When we are "rightly dividing" Revelation, Chapter 22, we see a portrayal of paradise restored. It is a symbolic portrayal of the realities we enjoy currently in the church. (For a more detailed treatment, see Volume 6, Chapter 22, of *The Book of Revelation Explained*.) Therefore, "paradise" is a spiritual reality that spans the two realms of time and eternity as well. One day, when time is no more and it reels into eternity, these spiritual realities (which in truth are one — one family, one kingdom, and one paradise — but spanning two realms) will be one in one realm.

In 2 Corinthians, Chapter 12, the Apostle was speaking of "the third heaven" (verse 2), or "paradise" (verse 4), as a spiritual position where one is able to "come to visions and revelations of the Lord" (verse 1). In Ephesians 2:6, he referred to this ecclesiastical heaven as "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and this verse indicates the Lord "hath [a reality during time] raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places," a present spiritual reality we are privileged to enjoy now.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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

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For more information, contact: Pastor Roger Nethers @ 770-206-0786

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The camp meeting will be held at the Central Friends' Campground,
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Service times: Wednesday 7:30 p.m.; Thursday-Saturday 9 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.;
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For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Polston @ 765-521-8284

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The first service begins Monday at 7 p.m.
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July 30-
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Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055
Three services daily: 10 a.m., 3 p.m. & 7 p.m.
For lodging/camper reservations, call 740-345-1213
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or email: reservations@godsacres.us
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For more information, contact:
Pastor Roger L. Decker @ 740-344-2543

WHITE PINE, TN
October 11-15

Church of God at Douglas Lake, 185 Hwy 25E, White Pine, TN 37890
For reservations, contact: Bro. or Sis. Williams @ 678-215-1540
For more information, contact: Pastor Roger Nethers @ 770-206-0786

NEWARK, OH
December 27-31

Church of God, 675 N. Cedar St., Newark, OH 43055
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