

# THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER



SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 54 February 2024 No. 2

**“LET US RUN WITH PATIENCE**

**THE RACE**

**THAT IS SET  
BEFORE US.”**

HEBREWS 12:1

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

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

Brother Roger L. Decker . . . . . Editor  
Workers Too Numerous to Mention

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN**

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 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**

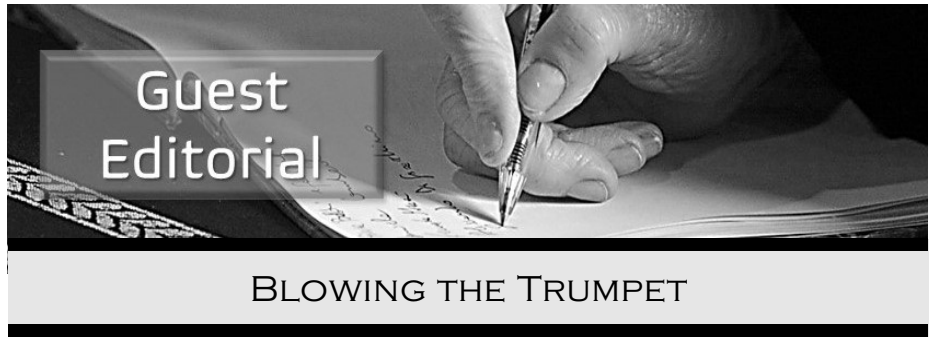
- Jesus organized it (Matt. 16:18)
- On a good foundation (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11)
- Christ governs it (Eph. 1:22-23; Isa. 9:6)
- God admits members (1 Cor. 12:13-18)
- Sin puts you out of it (Rom. 11:22; Ex. 32:33)
- The saved only are members (John 15:2-6)
- Membership is offered to all (Rev. 22:17)
- 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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How swiftly time passes as we are now entering the second month of the year 2024. Many people take inventory of their lives, financial status, and health at the beginning of a new year and make plans for the coming year. Sadly, too few take an account of their eternal future. Jeremiah 8:20 reads, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." God offers an investment of everlasting security for all mankind! First Timothy 2:4 says, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." In God's great faithfulness, He sounds the trumpet through the preached Word. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain" (Joel 2:1).

God calls to the lost through the sobering message "Being Lost Forever" by Brother Roger L. Decker. He delivered the burden of his heart with this vital truth: "The thought of hell, or being lost, is a joke to some people . . . [but] it is to be feared; it is serious." As every soul has an appointment with God, the purpose of this message is to stir up the mind. Brother Decker reminds the reader that eternity is close to us all. Rejecting salvation is so dangerous, especially because no one knows when their last opportunity will be. It takes God's Holy Spirit to draw you, and God sent the Gospel to help you prepare for eternity. Will your choice be to accept or reject?

"The Spirit of Balaam," by Brother Mike Miller, reminds us that choices affect our outcomes.

Brother Miller paints a picture of how dangerous it is to try to reason with God: "Balaam did not want God's answer, so he tried to reason with God. When God gives us instructions, we need to stop, listen, take heed, and quit reasoning. God does not change." We must leave this condition of compromise alone. Brother Miller relays how God destroyed Balaam. We are not living our lives to ourselves. Our lives will always affect others.

"Controlling Self" in the "Especially for Young People" section is a message for all youth who face many obstacles and choices. Brother Ethan Bremer reminds us we live in a self-obsessed world, stating, "We deal with self the moment we wake up." He also said: "Self, or your flesh, is the person you see in the mirror daily. It is your responsibility to deny and control self." Brother Ethan lists various avenues the devil may use to lure one into questionable places. He stated, "I am thankful we are not alone in this daily battle—God is there to guide us."

Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are led to greater truths. One will find this in studying along with Brother Earl R. Borders as he continues to bring clarity on the subject of "Understanding Sanctification" by "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Brother Borders reminds us: "God never sent His Word to bring confusion. If confusion enters, there is another spirit working." He brings to light that sanctification is a positional and progressive work.

*[continued on page 17]*



# Being Lost Forever

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

*Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

*22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

*23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

When I was younger and did not know better, I commented about being lost or going to hell. I recognize now how foolish and wicked I was. Since I have matured in the things of God, I put away childish thoughts and expressions. First Corinthians 13:11 reads, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things." I used to think telling somebody to go to hell was funny. Some say it in fun or as an expression of anger. You

may have heard someone say it or made the statement yourself when you did not know better.

I used to say, "If I go to hell, I will have lots of company." Have you ever made that statement? How foolish! If you have terminal cancer and are in tremendous pain, would it help to be with other cancer patients who are experiencing the same pain as you? Could you comfort one another? That would not ease the suffering.

Other statements people make concerning hell: "We will have a party down in hell" or "We will be shoveling coal to keep the fire burning." Luke 16:23 says if you go to hell, you will be "in torments." The thought of hell, or being lost, is a joke to some people. They consider it a fantasy. They think preachers are trying to scare people into getting saved. Hell is not a myth or a scare tactic. Those who are there would to God they had gotten serious about living for God when they were alive and able. It is no longer a joke to them. They wish they had listened to the message and obeyed

it. If only they would have taken heed instead of playing around on their cell phones.

Being lost is something to avoid joking, laughing, or boasting about. It is to be feared; it is serious. You need to realize that there is no second chance once you are there. Think of all the opportunities you have now to be saved. In this life, you have mercy. There is no mercy in hell. No one will be concerned or have enough clout to get you out. Even Jesus will turn against you. When speaking about the rich man who went to hell, Jesus described how awful it is so you and I can take heed of the warnings.

## "A Great Gulf Fixed"

Luke 16:26 says, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Another translation makes it more plain. It reads, "Besides all of this, there is a deep ditch lying between us so

that those who want to cross over from here to you cannot do so, nor can anyone cross over to us from where you are."

Our world has great gulfs, such as the Gulf of Mexico and the Persian Gulf. You can travel from one side to the other, but not so with this "gulf" (Luke 16:26). It is "fixed," or settled. Where you are when you die is where you will stay throughout eternity. You can never cross to the other side. In hell, there will be torment, loss of comfort, and separation from God.

Perhaps you have been physically lost at some point in your life. Maybe you wandered away from your mother or father as a child and got lost at a social event. It is frightening for a child to be lost. It is a terrible feeling to be lost while driving in a car. Before GPS was invented, we had to rely on road maps. In hell, you cannot get back on the right road because you missed all the signs pointing you in the right direction.

The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 35:8, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." People in hell cannot say they never knew or heard about the right way.

Isaiah 55:7-11 states: "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 water-



eth 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."

Verse 11 from the *Amplified Bible* reads, "So shall My word be that goes forth out of My mouth: it shall not return to Me void [without producing any effect, useless], but it shall accomplish that which I please and purpose, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

### The Torments of Hell

If you go to hell, no one will be searching for you. They could not find you if they wanted to because it is utter darkness forever. The Bible makes it very plain what activities are going on in hell. They are *not* smoking cigarettes, drinking beer or whiskey, using drugs, partying, chasing women, laughing and joking, having a good time, texting, checking their emails, calling someone, or playing games on their cell phones.

Luke 16:23 says, "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." They are "in torments," and there will be no drugs, alcohol, or medication to ease their minds.

The rich man was "in *torments*" (plural). He was doing what Lazarus did, the one he turned away and would not help in life; he was begging. The rich man was not used to begging, and he received the same answer he gave the beggar.

The rich man's mind was functioning properly. He could remember; he did not lose his mind or wonder where he was or if he could get out. Luke 16:25 says, "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." No doubt, the rich man was asked to remember the many times God tried to draw him to repentance. Finally, God left him alone. I would not call that a good time in hell.

The older I get, the more I think about eternity, leaving this world, and going to another. The Bible tells us we have an appointment with God. You can read obituaries in your daily newspaper. Death comes to all and affects all people—babies, teenagers, children, young married couples, large families, ones on vacation, and older folks. Some die soon in life, others later in life, but all must succumb to death. Hebrews 9:27 states, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Death is appointed. The word *appointed* means "selected, fixed, prearranged, allotted, and chosen." It is all set up. Somewhere on the calendar of time, my name and your name are written down. We do not know where our names are on the calendar because we did not put them there; God did. The intent of the message is not to scare you into getting saved. The message is brought to stir up your mind. This world is not your home, but you will be judged by what you

do in this world.

If I could scare you into getting saved, then the devil could scare you into thinking you cannot live for God. He always tells people they cannot live it, which is a myth. Dear one, believe the Word of God. Mark 16:15-16 reads: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth [the Gospel] and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Your fate in eternity depends on whether you believe the Gospel.

### **A Lost Soul – Gone Forever!**

Have you lost something of great value? Luke 15:8-9 speaks of a lost coin. It states: "Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it [she did not give up looking for it], she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost."

Let us read the Parable of the Lost Sheep in Luke 15:4-7: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

In both parables, a search was made—one for a sheep and one for a coin. When they were found, there was great rejoicing.

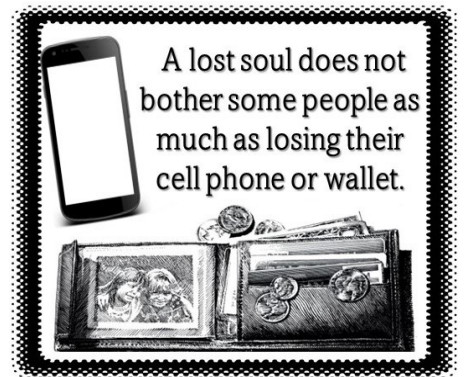
The sheep and the coin were still on this earth. Both were able to be found. There is no search made for a soul lost in eternity. The sheep and the coin were lost under the control of human hands, but the soul is lost because of unbelief. Things lost on this earth, whether they are coins, sheep, or other tangible things, can still be found. When you leave this body and go before God, you will either hear Him say, "Enter in" or "Depart from Me." It will be fixed, settled, and final.

If you have lost your wallet or purse, you may have automatically panicked and began searching. You retraced your footsteps. Just the thought of replacing your license and other valuable things and stopping your credit cards can make you panic. What if you lost your cell phone? You would only rest once it was found. You would have someone call your number to hear it ring or vibrate.

Losing valuable, tangible items can be frightening, but losing your soul throughout the ceaseless age of eternity is even more dreadful. A lost soul does not bother some people as much as losing their cell phone or wallet. If you are lost in eternity, there is no finding you. No one can go into hell, recall a soul, and bring it back to life. It is gone forever, never to get out. We can suffer torments in many ways, but the torments of hell will be forever.

### **Eternity Is Close**

I listened to a testimony from a man who held an important position in a company working on high-tension power lines. When a storm arose, and the winds were strong enough to take down those high-tension wires, his responsibility was to help repair those lines. When he went up to fix the lines, the



power was supposed to be shut off at the substation. One time, while he was working on the lines, the power had not been shut off. He grabbed hold of those high-tension wires, picking them up off the ground, and that was the last thing he remembered doing.

The man said he got a glimpse into hell. He felt waves of tremendous pain come over his body. He cried out to God for mercy. The driver of the ambulance was also the undertaker, and he had covered his body with a sheet and pronounced him dead. His boots and clothing were burnt off him, and his skin was hanging. While he was under that sheet, he started groaning, and it scared the others who were with him. They pulled back the sheet, took him to the hospital, and he lived. He became a Church of God minister. He went through many surgeries. They grafted skin onto his face. He testified he had a vision of hell, and he did not want to go there.

I cannot make the message serious enough. If you are not taking life seriously and are playing church, you will face reality someday. Sooner or later, acceptance or rejection will be the final call. Eternity is close for all of us. Time goes by fast. It seems like yesterday I got my driver's license, got married, and then joined the military. All that is just a memory. Time moves on, and the older you get, the faster it seems to go. Some people do not

live to be as old as you or me, but all will face eternity. Please be sober-minded enough to consider your soul. If there ever was a time we need to be serious about the hereafter, it is now.

Consider the wars going on in the world. Ones go into eternity daily—children, teenagers, and adults. One soul after another is leaving this world. Evil is becoming more prevalent. Hideous crimes are being committed as sin increases in the hearts of unbelievers. Second Timothy 3:13 says, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

Ones who are unsaved have every intention of getting saved someday. No doubt, if you are unsaved, you have the thought, "I want to be saved before I die." There are ones lost in eternity who had the same thought. They did not want to die lost but kept turning down the invitations. They put off salvation, not knowing when the hour of death would come. Death hit them when they did not realize it was coming. It was closer than they had imagined. They always intended to get saved, but they waited too long.

### Rejection Is Dangerous

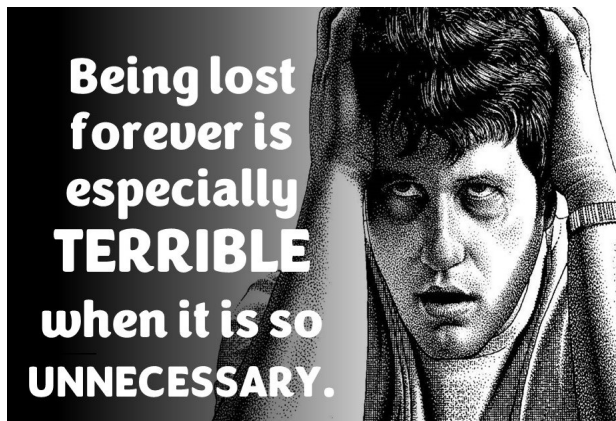
What about the thief on the cross? Many will point out that he got saved at the last hour. It shows the mercy of God. However, do you believe he sat in a Church of God congregation with plenty of chances to get saved and still waited until the last moment? Of course not! Do you think he understood the plan of God and had already turned Jesus down several times? Or was this the first opportunity he had to come face-to-face with Jesus Christ?

Rejection is dangerous, espe-

cially not knowing when your last opportunity will be. Rejection places one in the spotlight of judgment. Consider what the wisest man in the Old Testament had to say. God gave Solomon wisdom, so in reality, this is God speaking through him. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He, that being often reprov'd [or rebuked] hardeneth his neck [or refuses], shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy [without a cure or any help]."

Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 reads, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

enough time in hell, and He will allow them to enjoy Heaven. That is not so. Luke 16:24 reads, "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." He was tormented with a flame that does not burn up the soul, but instead, it torments the soul. This flame does not burn out and end; it is a flame that torments. The rich man would not have wanted water if the flame burned out. Torment is agony, torture, distress, pain, suffering, and anguish.



Being lost forever is especially **TERRIBLE** when it is so **UNNECESSARY.**

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Some synonyms for *everlasting* are "never-ending, ceaseless, endless, eternal, and unending." Hendrik Willem Van Loon said this about eternity: "*High in the North in a land called Svithjod, there is a mountain. It is a hundred miles long and a hundred miles high, and once every thousand years, a little bird comes to this mountain to sharpen its beak. When the mountain has thus been worn away, a single day of eternity will have passed.*"

Some feel God will, at some point, think people have spent

### Answering the Call of the Gospel

One Sunday night, D. L. Moody was preaching in a large circus tent near the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. He was preaching from Luke 19:10, which says, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." After he finished, a little boy was brought to the platform by an officer. The boy had been wandering in the crowd, lost. Mister Moody took him in his arms and asked the crowd to look at the lost child. He said, "The father is more anxious to find the boy than the boy is to be found, and so it is with our Heavenly Father."

At that moment, a man with an anxious face elbowed his way to the platform. The boy saw him and went running into his father's outstretched arms. The multitude witnessing the scene let out a mighty cheer! Mister Moody cried out, "So will God receive you if you will only run to Him today."

I trust you will take the message seriously. Being lost forever is especially terrible when it is so unnecessary. We all have an

appointment with death. We do not set it up or know when it will be. Revelation 20:11-15 states: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of

fire. This is the second death [or eternal separation from God]. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Is a few moments of pleasure worth everlasting torment? Is it worth a few drinks, some pot, meth, or heroin? Just the thought of being lost should make your whole being shudder. Be wise! God gave you one soul and put you in charge of it while you are here on this earth. Do not be foolish and throw away your opportunity for salvation. You do not know how many chances you have to repent and make things right with God. God may speak to you many times, but you do not know when He will stop talking to you. When God sees in your heart that your mind is

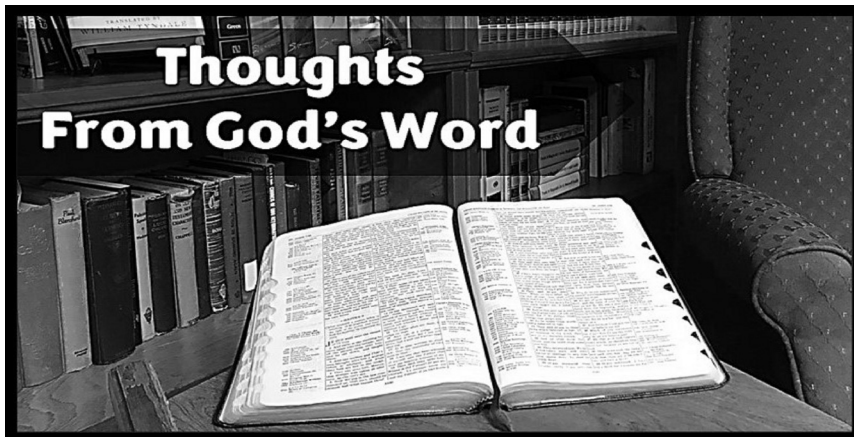
made up not to serve Him, He will leave you alone.

It takes God's Holy Spirit to draw you. One brother testified he sat in a Church of God congregation for many years, and God never spoke to him. Finally, God did, and he answered the call. Dear one, you would be very wise to take advantage of the Gospel. God sent the Gospel to help you get ready for eternity. You are going there someday. You would be unwise if you refused the Gospel. You have that choice, but you would be making a terrible mistake.

(Compact Disc TR-2798)

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*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*  
James 1:12

The Word of God gives examples of ones who had their faith tried. Some lost finances, health, and family. Job suffered the loss of his wealth, children, and health, but Job never blamed God foolishly. It is tempting to blame God when going through hardship or loss, asking, "Why would God allow this to happen?" Is this not for the trying of your faith?

God promised Abraham a son, but he had to wait until he was one hundred years old. Then, God asked him to sacrifice his son to prove his love and obedience to Him. Abraham loved God supremely and did not hesitate to obey. When Isaac questioned his father, Abraham said, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8).

Our greatest example is Jesus Christ who was tempted and tried in all points but without sin. His faith was tried by the devil with food, possessions, tempting God, and false worship.

Jesus willingly left Heaven to

come into the world by a lowly birth. He knows what it is to lose family and friends. Mark 9:12 reads, "The Son of man . . . must suffer many things, and be set at nought [lost or ruined]." Christ willingly gave His life, enduring crucifixion, to reconcile us back to God through salvation. Jesus was obedient unto death.

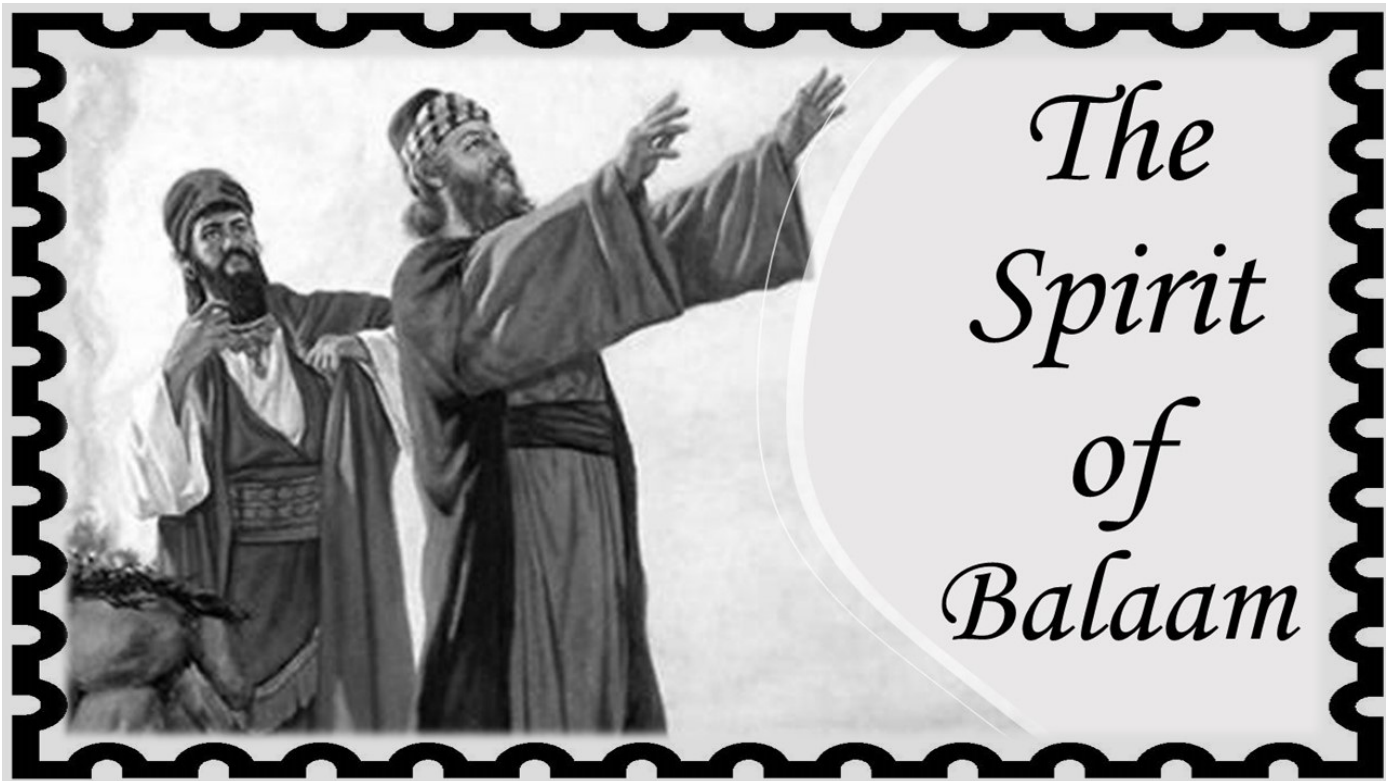
The Apostle Paul's faith was severely tested. He said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

How is your faith being tried? Are trials, tests, hardships, sicknesses, afflictions, and losses causing you to lose your faith in God? Do you blame God foolishly? God should always take first place in your life. Abraham became God's friend when his faith was tried. He proved to God that he loved Him supremely.

Sister Susan Hogan

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**Sister Susan Hogan attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.**



# The Spirit of Balaam

Brother Mike Miller

*Numbers 22:1 And the children of Israel set forward, and pitched in the plains of Moab on this side Jordan by Jericho.*

*2 And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites.*

*3 And Moab was sore afraid of the people, because they were many: and Moab was distressed because of the children of Israel.*

*4 And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.*

*5 He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:*

*6 Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: per-*

*adventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.*

As Israel moved closer to the Promised Land, they pitched their tents in the plains of Moab. The king of Moab was not happy they were there. He wanted to eliminate them, so he called for Balaam to curse them. Saints, some people feel the same about us. They do not want us around because we have an influence and bring conviction on them by the way we live.

The king of Moab asked Balaam for help to eliminate the Israelites. Numbers 22:9-12 states: "And God came unto Balaam, and said, What men are these with thee? And Balaam said unto God, Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, hath sent unto me, saying, Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt, which cover-

eth the face of the earth: come now, curse me them; peradventure I shall be able to overcome them, and drive them out. And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."

This should have been the end of the conversation for Balaam. There should have been no more discussion after God said, "Do not do it." Did he listen to God? God said: "Do not go. These are My people, and they are blessed." Verses 13-14 say: "And Balaam rose up in the morning, and said unto the princes of Balak, Get you into your land: for the LORD refuseth to give me leave to go with you. And the princes of Moab rose up, and they went unto Balak, and said, Balaam refuseth to come with us."

At first, Balaam refused to go. However, verses 15-19 read: "And Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they. And they came to



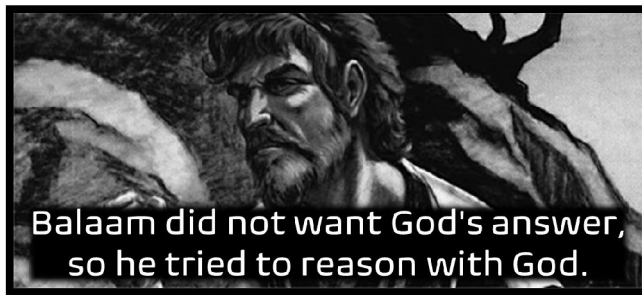
Balaam, and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this

people. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more."

### **The Dangers of Reasoning With God**

Balaam already knew what God wanted. God made it clear to him. Why was there more discussion? Sometimes, God tells us something, but we do not like what He has to say. Balaam did not want God's answer, so he tried to reason with God. When God gives us instructions, we need to stop, listen, take heed, and quit reasoning. God does not change. God told Balaam not to do this, but he thought of all the prestige he would get. He started to play around with ideas in his mind, and they enticed him. "God said not to do this, but let me ask Him again. Let me get more clarity and reason with God some more."

God was serious, but Balaam did not like what God had to say. If God is dealing with something in your life, you may not like it, but you need to measure to it. Balaam played around with God. It is dangerous to play around with God. Numbers 22:20 states: "And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee,



**Balaam did not want God's answer, so he tried to reason with God.**

that shalt thou do." God always gives us a choice. Balaam wanted his own way, so God told him to do what he wanted. He may have thought: "God gave me permission. I can go. I got what I wanted."

Verse 22 reads: "And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him." God told Balaam not to go, but Balaam went, and God was angry with him. When God tells you something, you need to obey Him. Do not turn around and ask, "God, is it okay if I do this?" when He already told you not to do it.

It was good that Balaam was riding on his donkey that day. His donkey had more vision and understanding of the things of God than he did. The angel of the Lord stood as an adversary against Balaam. Verses 23-29 say: "And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

"And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn

either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done

unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee."

### **Are You Consumed With Having Your Own Way?**

Balaam was so consumed with his desires, pleasures, and ways that did not stop and think about how an animal was literally having a conversation with him. There was no reasoning with Balaam. His donkey saved his life, yet he beat it three times. He took his aggression out on his donkey because he wanted his own way. Could you become so consumed with having your own way that you would backtalk a donkey if it started talking to you? Balaam should have collected his thoughts and said, "Did a donkey just talk to me?" His anger was so strong because he wanted to go. He had his own mission, something he wanted to do. How dare God stand in the way? This lesson is a warning for us.

Numbers 22:30-32 states: "And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou

**Balaam was so bound to get prestige that he did not care who he hurt in the process.**



smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me." Again, God warned Balaam. The direction he was heading was perverse. Think about the chances Balaam had.

Verses 33-35 say: "And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. [In other words: 'If it were not for your donkey, you would be dead. I had no interest in harming your donkey. You are the one I have a problem with.'] And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again. And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak."

Balaam still wanted his own way after all that. He should have turned around and said: "I am leaving these people alone. I could have been killed." People often get into terrible situations by getting around those who have a bad influence on them, and who could have caused their death, yet they still want to hang around them. Take the warning—leave them alone! God's Word never changes.

In Numbers, Chapter 23, Balak, the king of Moab, took Balaam to a high place so he could see the Israelites and curse them. Balaam could not curse

them because God said they were blessed. The king took Balaam to another location for him to see them and curse them. Balaam blessed them instead. This happened three times, and the king got mad.

### **Balaam's Advice**

Numbers 24:10-14 reads: "And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

"And Balaam said unto Balak, Spake I not also to thy messengers which thou sentest unto me, saying, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the LORD, to do either good or bad of mine own mind; but what the LORD saith, that will I speak? [In other words, 'I cannot do anything beyond what God has told me to.'] And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people shall do to thy people in the latter days."

Balaam could do nothing against Israel then because God blessed them. However, he told Balak in so many words: "Let me help you if you want to overcome the children of Israel. I will give you some advice on how to beat them." There was a reason God did not want Balaam to get involved, why He told him to stay away from the situation, and why He sent an angel against him. In his heart, Balaam was so bound to get prestige that he did not care who he hurt in the process. Even though God said, "Do not do it; My people are blessed," Balaam did not care about the

blessed people of Israel. We know he did not care for God's elect because he advised Balak on how to destroy them.

What was the advice? Numbers 25:1-3 says: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel." Balaam told Balak the Israelites were too pure and holy, but he could destroy their holiness by bringing in Moabite and Midianite women to intermingle with their men. Balak took his advice, and Israel started changing their hearts and desires from a pure and holy nation to compromising and doing ungodly things. Suddenly, the blessed people of God turned away from Him and started serving other gods.

Deuteronomy 23:3-6 states: "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever."

The spirit of Balaam is a dangerous spirit. If we are not careful, we can get entangled with it. We must not seek "their peace nor their prosperity." We are to leave this condition of compromise alone. It wants to come into

the camp. God said not to get involved with it. It may seem God is blessing those with a compromising spirit, but God said to leave their prosperity alone. This is not my opinion; it was written in the Bible before I came into existence. We are to leave it alone forever.

### "Cannot Cease From Sin"

The children of Israel were a blessed people when they went into Moab, and Balaam could not curse them. How did their enemies get to them? They started allowing sinful things to creep in. We need to take the warning today. If God says, "Leave it alone," then leave it alone. If God is showing you some things you need to get rid of, then do it. Playing with God has serious consequences far beyond yourself.

Balaam wanted his own way, even if it meant going against God. We should not go our own way; we should follow God's directions, even if we may not like it or it hurts the flesh. Second Peter 2:14-15 says: "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." Many people do not want to cease from sin. Balaam did not want to hearken to God or keep from having his own way.

Many times, I have counseled ones and told them what God said they needed to do, yet they still chose to go their own way. They did not want to heed what God had to say. Some have said, "I know what the Bible teaches; I am just waiting for God to show me." If you know what the Bible teaches, you already know what to do because it is God's Word.

What was Balaam's way? His own way! He did what he wanted to do for the honor. How much recognition does Balaam have in the Word of God? He may have received his earthly praise, but God wrote his name and used it as one we should take note of *not* to follow. Balaam has a reputation. We have to be careful of "following the way of Balaam." We can study the seven churches in Revelation and see that we still deal with what they dealt with.



### Casting Stumbling Blocks

Revelation 2:14, speaking of the church at Pergamos, says, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." The spirit of Balaam was working in the Pergamene congregation, casting stumbling blocks before the people of God. They were being enticed and led astray.

God sent a plague on the children of Israel because of Balaam. He was not happy. God is not pleased with those who are not straight with Him. We cannot do whatever we want and say we are of God. The spirit of Balaam causes a stumbling block among the people. Some say: "You do not have to measure to that. You will be okay. God understands."

God understood Balaam. He knew He would not change Balaam's heart.

God told Balaam not to go and curse God's people, but he kept asking God. It was as if he was praying, "God, I really want to do this." Finally, God said, "Then go." God sent an angel to kill Balaam, but thankfully, he had a faithful donkey. It was a miracle this donkey could speak to him. God opened Balaam's eyes, but he still wanted to go. When will some people learn? The Scripture says they "cannot cease from sin." They may pray, "O God, forgive me." Then, they are back doing it again. The spirit of Balaam is still prevalent today. Jesus called it "the doctrine of Balaam."

Revelation 2:20, which was written to the church in Thyatira, says, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." This was the same type of spirit as Balaam. They were sacrificing to false gods and committing fornications. He used the name "Jezebel" this time. Here is the danger. Verse 21 reads, "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not." God tried to work with them, but they would not listen. God tried to work with Balaam, but Balaam would not listen. What is God working on in your life, but you are refusing to listen to Him? You need to get the victory by the grace of God and get it settled with God because your actions affect others.

Verses 22-23 state: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I

am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." What is the danger? God is essentially saying, "I will kill your children." In other words, "I will take your spiritualness away from your children." Our young people need older people to set examples. What do you think the children will do if we are determined to have our own way? Our example is teaching them. We could be a stumbling block to our children.

### God Sends Warnings

The spirit of Balaam took the purity out of the people. It made them look no different from anyone else, and God sent a plague on them. It was not a one-time occurrence; it continued to happen. Revelation called it a "doctrine," a spirit that gets hold of people who want their own way and will not listen to God. They want to do whatever they want to do. They want to serve whatever gods they wish to serve. They may say they do not serve other gods, but they put other things above God. They may say they are not committing spiritual fornication or adultery, but they are flirting with the world. They desire worldly pleasures more than anything God offers them. Shame on you if you gain more satisfaction from the world than from God! That destroyed the children of Israel, and the world wants to destroy us today.

These truths are simple and commonly preached. They are preached as a warning to help us, not hurt us. I love and care for people. I want to see everyone make it to Heaven, but I know how the devil works. As a watchman, my job is to warn you. What you do with the warning is up to you. God sent warnings to Balaam. Balaam had the choice to do what he wanted. God will bring warnings to you, but you

have the choice to do what you want.

Years ago, I had a polo shirt I really liked. I thought I looked good in it. God told me to get rid of it. I thought, "There is nothing wrong with polo shirts." I had other polo shirts. I said, "God, are You telling me to get rid of all my polo shirts?"

He answered, "No, just that one." Why would God want me to get rid of a polo shirt? I love God and do not always understand everything He tells me to do, but I know He has a reason. I put the polo shirt in the garbage and wondered for about three years why God had me get rid of that polo shirt. Finally, God said: "Remember that shirt I told you to get rid of? Every time you wore it, you went out as *you*, not *Me*."

Think about that. I wanted people to see me and not Christ when I wore that shirt. That one polo shirt was a bit tight, and I thought it showed off my muscles. I wanted people to see how good I looked in that shirt. God got jealous and said, "I want people to see *Me*, not *you*." I could have had my way and kept that shirt, but I loved God more than a piece of material. I have many other shirts I can wear. Our attitude should be that we want people to see Christ in us. We should dress so people can see Christ and not us.

### The Destruction of Children

This doctrine, or spirit, is dangerous because it affects our children. They see how we act, and they follow suit. Joshua 24:14 says, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD." Joshua was conversing with the people who were supposed to represent God. He told



them to put away their false gods and serve the Lord. Today, ministers tell people to put away their other gods and serve the Lord "in sincerity and in truth." This is still the message today.

Verse 15 begins, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD . . ." Is it wrong or evil for you to do what is right? Do you think it is bad to have to do this or that? Serving God should be something in your heart you *want* to do. God is so good. He wants nothing bad in your life. Is serving God a hardship for you? Verse 15 continues, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

When Joshua finished talking to the people, they all agreed to serve God. I am glad for faithful men of God like Joshua, who say, "As for me and my house . . ." Church, that should be our answer because we love God. "Me and my house" are not going all those other ways. We are going the pure and holy way.

Judges 2:10 states, "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." The Israelites were too busy with themselves, doing what they wanted to do, and not taking time to teach their children. They were too busy complaining and murmuring, and their children never saw God. Their children were left without an opportunity to get to know God.

Think about all the works and miracles God did for Israel throughout all their generations. Yet, they were too busy serving

other gods and doing their own thing. While they finally turned back to God, devastation took place in the process. Destruction came to their children. The Bible says in Judges 2:11, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim." They served the spirit of going out, serving other gods, and committing fornication with the world. They wanted pleasures of the world more than the things of God. Other things were more important to them than worshipping God. They preferred worshipping false gods and false ways rather than serving the living God. They mixed with the world instead of keeping their

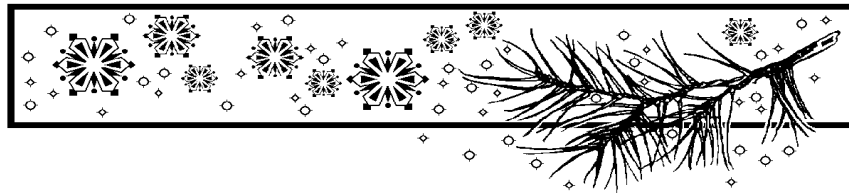
salvation pure and holy, and God brought judgment on them.

God is no different today. The spirit of Balaam is still prevalent: "I do not care what God says. I am going to have my own way." May God help every one of us. If there is something in your life, and you feel this spirit getting hold of you, ask God to help you drive it out. God brought destruction to Balaam. You are not living your life to yourself. Your life affects others. Consider one another.

*(Compact Disc TR-2862)*

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## What a Mighty God We Serve!

When it came time to renew my driver's license last year, I was concerned I could not read the eye chart as I was having some problems reading. Being a widow, I live alone. I drive an hour to church (one way) and do my own grocery shopping and banking. So without a driver's license, I would be in trouble.

I do not have a problem with driving, although I am not comfortable driving at night in the rain. Knowing the Lord cares about every aspect of my life, I started praying about it. I asked my pastor and other saints to pray with me. During this time, the Lord brought Scriptures that gave me assurance He would give me victory.

The week before I went to renew the license, I was cleaning a bedroom bookcase when I found my mother's old coffee table Bible. It is a big Bible, too big for study and very heavy. It was in my mother's house, and my grandmother had lived with her from time to time. Grandma was a wonderful Christian woman who read any and all Bibles and most often wrote in those Bibles. After my grandmother died, I know no one was looking at that Bible. When my mother died two years ago, that Bible came to my house to be stored on the bookshelf.

The day I found it, I casually laid the Bible aside, thinking to look it over later. But that night, the Lord inspired me to open it. It fell open to the Book of Amos, a minor prophet in the Old Testament. To my absolute joy and amazement, there in my grandmother's beautiful

script handwriting were these words: "Read this without my glasses. Praise God!!!" It was dated December 16, 1966. The Lord had spoken to me from Heaven, confirming again He would be with me. All the fear was gone!

The next week, when I stepped up to do the eye chart, my vision was not any better than before, but the Lord was with me. I passed the test and received my driver's license. God is so good! Fifty-six years ago, my grandmother was apparently having trouble with her eyes, and the Lord came to her rescue. It was significant enough for God to impress her to write those words in that Bible. And I believe no one has opened that Bible since my grandmother wrote those words.

WHAT A MIRACLE! That was truly God! I asked Him why He had done such a wonderful, marvelous thing for me. After all, I had already prayed through and had the confirmation that I had the victory. His answer to me was, "So you would KNOW that NOTHING is impossible with Me."

If you have burdens and loved ones you are praying for, do not give up. My grandmother died in 1979. She did not see me come back to the Lord, but today I am saved, walking in His marvelous light, and praising Him for all He does. What a mighty God we serve!

Sister Betty James

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*1 Corinthians 9:24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

*25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

*26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

*27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

We deal with self the moment we wake up. Young people deal with it at school. Some deal with it at work. Self, or your flesh, is the person you see in the mirror daily. It is our responsibility to deny and control self.

We are living in an extremely self-obsessed world. In 2013, *selfie* was the word of the year. On average, there are 92 million selfies taken each day. If you took a selfie and uploaded it as your profile picture on a social media site, you are among four percent of the population who did that today. Most selfies are taken on a cell phone. Ninety-five percent of U.S. teens aged thirteen and up have a smartphone. We can learn much about self through our cell phones.

Cookies are files created by websites you visit. We can learn a lot about someone and what

they have been searching for by their cookies. Cookies will bring up ads for you. Recently, my girls wanted to go deer hunting with me, so I searched for a deer blind. Now, the ads pop up on my phone for deer blinds, hunting scopes, and other things related to my search. Cookies revealed what I had been searching for on my phone.

If ninety-five percent of the U.S. teens and eighty-five percent of the world's population have smartphones, that is where the devil will work. Statistically alone, the devil knows a smartphone is a great place to access most of the world. He has access to the internet, along with everyone else who has smartphones.

Smartphones are not bad. However, there are many places where you can get into trouble. One thing the Lord worked with me on is the time spent. There may be nothing wrong with getting on your phone to shop or look for something, but how much time are you spending? Social media is another avenue people spend their time on. There are many dangers involved with social media sites, such as Instagram and TikTok. The pictures you see while searching for something can get in your mind and be stuck there forever.

*Self-gratification* is "the indulgence or satisfaction of one's own desires." We are in an age of instant gratification. If you have

Amazon Prime and you need something, you can pull out your phone, order it, and have it delivered almost immediately.

One word associated with the definition of self-gratification is indulgence. The word *indulgence* started with a false teaching in Roman Catholicism, which says if someone does a good act or pays money to the Pope or the priest, he can receive indulgences to help reduce the punishment of purgatory. When I think of indulging in something, I think of food or a hobby. We all have something we like to indulge in. It could be a hobby, and there may not be anything wrong with your hobby as long as it is kept in its place.

Second Samuel 11:1 says: "And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem." The first problem David had was, he "tarried."

How often do people get in trouble because they are tarrying somewhere they should not be? Maybe they are idle. One saying is, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." I would take it further and say, "An idle *mind* is the devil's workshop." Failing to keep your mind focused on the things of God will get you into trouble. God will keep you

during temptations, but if you put yourself in a compromising situation, you are walking in your own strength at that point.

Verses 2-3 say: "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman." David had a choice. He could have shaken himself and thought, "I need to be where the kings are supposed to be — at the battle."

David made the wrong choice and put himself in a bad situation. The devil sent an "ad" before him. None of us are strong enough to handle an ad set in front of us by the devil when we are not where we need to be. It does not matter how spiritual you are; if you put yourself in a situation or place you are not supposed to be, things will come to you that you cannot handle in your own strength.

One summer, our family went on a nice vacation to Lake Erie, Ohio. It was a wonderful weekend, and the weather was nice. We rode a ferryboat across the lake to Put-in-Bay. We realized we were out of place when we arrived, especially on the July Fourth weekend. We got on a train to tour the island. We knew we were in a bad situation when the tour guide said, "You need to have your family off the island by four o'clock." We were all dressed modestly; from what I could tell, we were the only people on that island dressed modestly.

God protected us because we did not know what we were getting into. God's grace was sufficient. I could have decided to take another trip around the island to check out some side alleys, look into the outdoor tiki bars, and take in some sights. I

would not have had God's grace at that time. I would have gotten myself into trouble.

What about self-control? How many exhibited self-control or plan on having self-control on the next holiday? Every New Year, the world tries to impose self-control through New Year's resolutions. On average, eighty percent of New Year's resolutions fail by the second week, which greatly indicates how weak our flesh is. If you fast, you will see how quickly your flesh gets weak. By eight o'clock in the morning on the days I fast, the peanut butter and jelly sandwich in my lunch box always looks



better.

You may try to go a few hours without your phone but then decide, "There has to be something important, an e-mail or a text I have to check on." We can become attached to our phones. Shutting off your phone can sometimes be more difficult than going without food. Certainly, we cannot control self in our own strength.

Consider some things we need God's grace to help us control. The first one is our tongue. James 3:7-8 says: "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea,

is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." No man can tame his tongue. It takes God's help to control it. When I talk to those I associate with in the world, I appreciate the effort they put forth when they are around me to watch their words, but in themselves, they cannot help it. They have no power to control their tongue.

What about a temper? God has worked with me on my temper. I cannot say, "I inherited a temper from my grandfather." That is no excuse. God can help us, and I am thankful God has helped me with this. I have learned through the years to remove myself completely from a situation or place that may be fine for someone else. One thing that seems to rile me is Facebook posts. It is intriguing to click on the comments and start scrolling through them. Once you start reading them, it is easy to jump into that "mud pit." It is not a battle I need to have, so I must remove myself.

One children's song says, "Oh, be careful little eyes what you see." What about your eyes? If I had made another trip around the island while we were on vacation, I would have put my eyes in a place they should not be. Social media can be dangerous. Many pictures that come across the screen are unfit to look at. I cannot put myself in that situation; I must abstain.

The song continues, "Oh, be careful little ears what you hear." One thing I battled in high school was worldly music. Anyone who has been in a pre-game locker room knows the music that is played there. During football, we listened to a pre-game CD filled with jams to get us pumped up for the game. If you look into the lives and backstories of some artists, even if the lyrics were okay, you would realize they are

extremely dark. Many artists in rock-and-roll music practice witchcraft.

One guy I used to work with would go to rock concerts with his buddies. They went to a concert in Columbus, Ohio, called Rock on the Range. It is bad when someone accustomed to going to concerts tells you a story about how they felt uncomfortable. One time, while at a concert, the entire crowd got a weird feeling. They found out the band members were practicing Satanists. They were essentially at a satanic church service during this concert. That music is full of darkness.

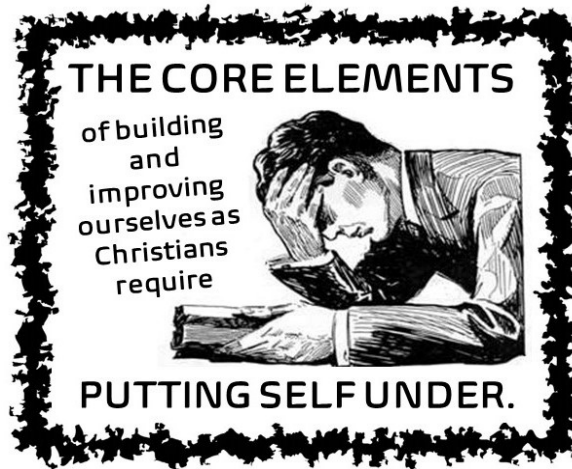
What about our hands and feet? The song says, "*Oh, be careful little feet where you go.*" Young person, you may get invited to a party. Others may know the stance you have taken, and they may say, "You do not have to drink; just come along and hang out." That is a lie. By associating yourself with those parties, you are putting yourself in a situation you should not be in. Also, what kind of example would you set by partaking in or even being around the behavior that will most certainly be displayed at a party where there is drinking? God will not decide for you. You must decide, "No, I am not attending the party."

We all have an influence. As a parent, I influence my kids. I can sometimes see myself in my kids. My son sometimes displays a temper. He gets mad if something does not work and calls it "a piece of junk." I assume he has seen his dad in the garage, which puts a check on me. I have little feet and little eyes watching me. We would all be surprised if we knew who was watching us.

Several years ago, I got a Facebook message from someone younger than me. I had never hung around this person, but he

said he had watched me. He said he was thankful for the stance I had taken in high school not to go to parties, get involved with girls who did, and drink alcohol. I had no idea he had been watching me through those years. It was nothing in myself, but God helped me.

What about self-improvement? There are many topics on self-improvement. One thing I find interesting is the World's Strongest Man Competition. One man, Brian Shaw, is a four-time World's Strongest Man Champion. He is 6 feet, 8 inches tall, and weighs 440 pounds. He consumed seven meals a day that consisted of twelve thousand



calories. He said some of the hardest work he did was eating, which he did to build up his body, or flesh.

I am certainly not referring to building up this flesh when I mention self-improvement. How much more important is it to improve our spiritual selves? Improving yourself as a Christian will require effort on your part. The basics are brought up frequently — church attendance, getting into the Word, prayer, Sunday school, and workdays. These are all vital core elements of building and improving ourselves as Christians. It requires putting self under.

On Sunday mornings, my bed seems more comfortable. It is

always the perfect temperature and easier to sleep in on Sundays. When you have children, the devil fights on Sunday mornings. The children can wake up at six on Saturday morning, but on Sunday morning, they could probably sleep until noon if you let them. It takes effort to get to church sometimes.

When you miss church services, you become worn down. This world will degrade you and wear the sharp edge off your Christian experience. I heard stories of my grandpa putting an edge on a knife so sharp, you had to use caution when washing it. Young people, you spend all week at school or work. This world will dull your experience, and you need to put forth effort to keep it sharp.

I relate well to analogies, and this analogy has always stuck with me. I worked on a drilling rig for one of my first jobs. The long, iron drill bits go up and down and beat the ground to drill a hole. We are like those drill bits out in the world, and we can get worn out of gauge after some time. When a drill bit gets worn down, the driller pulls the bit out of the hole and sticks it in the fire. We have to pull ourselves out of this world and get to church. We must pull ourselves away from whatever we are doing, which could be our phones, and get into the Word and pray. Sometimes, it takes a lot of effort to pull ourselves away from these things.

I watched the driller stick the drill bit in the forge and put the heat on it to soften it. Sometimes, it got so red hot that sparks came off it. When the driller pulled the drill bit out, he laid it on the anvil. While it was red hot, the driller and I would each get a hammer and take turns hammering and beating on that bit, shaping it back to size. It is like coming to church. When you



come to church, you get under the heat. I am thankful for a pastor who is willing to put us in the fire. He gets his hammer out and starts working to get us back to size. I learned that the bigger the drill bit, the hotter the fire, the bigger the hammer, and the harder you needed to hit it to get it back to size and gauge.

You can see places, and it is a shame, where the fire is not hot, and there is no hammering on the bit. Self and flesh start to shine through. Self does not like heat, and it does not like the hammering. Some drill bits the driller pulled out would have a crack in them. He had to cut it straight off and start over. Sometimes, it took several heats and lots of beating to get it to gauge. I am thankful that God does not give up on us if we get a crack. God puts us in the fire and beats us back out to size. The driller I worked for never gave up on a bit. Some bits gave us much trouble, and sometimes, we had to cut them off a few times to get to the good metal, temper it right, and beat it back out to size.

The final point I want to bring is selflessness. Matthew 4:18-20 states: "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fish-

ers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him." They dropped their nets and left "straightway," or immediately.

I love fishing. If someone came to me while I was fishing and said, "Hey, let's leave right now," that would be hard for me. The first thing self says is, "I do not want to do this." This flesh wants its way. Sometimes, this flesh does not like cooperating and getting out of the way. The Christian walk requires us to have less of self. We cannot control self on our own. We must put forth the effort to do our part, and God will help us.

Christians are in a daily battle with self. Certainly, my biggest struggles in life have been with myself. The world gives us a hard time, but self likes to get in the way. I am stuck with myself, and you are stuck with yourself. I am thankful we are not alone in this daily battle; God is there to guide us.

First Corinthians 10:13 says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I am thankful it is a "common" salvation. I would not want anyone to go through some of the struggles I have gone through, but it is encouraging to

know others have gone through what I have, and they made it. You can make it, too!

One song says: "More than anything in my life I've got to make it. I've got to know my name's inscribed in the Lamb's great Book of Life. I want to hear Him say: 'Well done! Enter in my child, you've won.' More than anything in my life I've got to make it." I pray this message was a help to you. I am thankful the Lord has helped me.

Brother Ethan Bremer

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*Brother Ethan Bremer attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.*



[Guest Editorial continued from pg. 2]

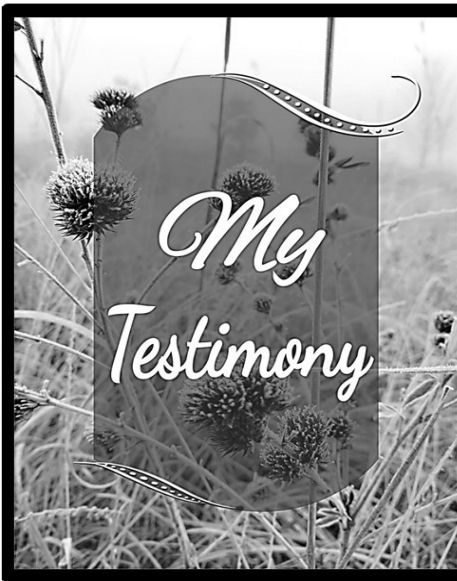
The trumpet is heralding to all mankind: the lost, the youth, and the confused. Isaiah 28:17 says, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." The trumpet is blowing, and the alarm is sounding. Thank the Lord!

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

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

**ANXIETY** never  
**STRENGTHENS** you for tomorrow;  
it only **WEAKENS** you for today.



# Faith as a Mustard Seed

Sister Kathy Wells

I want to thank the Lord for always being there throughout my life for every problem and question I have. If you want answers, it is best to stop and listen to what God tells you.

There was a time when my hands were a bloody, cracked mess. They were gross. Both hands, in the palms, were split open because they were so dry. All the dryness caused me to itch like crazy. Rubbing a piece of cement, rock, or wire brush on them felt wonderful.

I went to a doctor who took a skin biopsy, and the results showed I had eczema, which can be caused by an allergic reaction. The doctor prescribed cream and pills. I also tried aloe and home remedies and even rubbed salt on them. These remedies worked for a while, but my hands dried and cracked again. I tried wearing cotton and plastic gloves. I would sweat in the plastic gloves, so I put on the cotton gloves. When I took off the cotton ones, the seeping from my hands stuck to the gloves, which ripped the cuts open again.

Taking care of my hair was challenging because of the strips of skin ripping off my hands when I washed it. I had blood in my hair, and I had to comb it out.

Brother Decker, my pastor,

asked my husband and me to take care of the laundry during camp meetings. I questioned him about my hands. I said, "I will have blood all over the towels and sheets."

He said, "God can take care of your hands." He had prayer, and I agreed God could take care of my hands.

Matthew 17:20 reads, "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." When I read that Scripture, the words "mustard seed" jumped out to me. I went to the store and purchased some mustard seeds.

Mustard seeds are tiny, and the Bible says we are to have faith the size of a mustard seed. It does not say, "Faith the size of a peck or quart of mustard seeds." Our part is little compared to what God does. All you need is a little faith, and God can help you.

During this time, a sister was struggling with life in general. I felt impressed to mail her a mustard seed. After I sent her the mustard seed, God said, "You need the faith of a mustard seed

for your hands." God had saved my soul and changed my horrible life. I knew all the processes I had been through, and the faith of a mustard seed could definitely take care of my hands.

Brother David Watson and others stopped in while we were working on the laundry at a camp meeting. Of course, they wanted to shake my hand. I thought, "Gross!" Brother Watson prayed for my hands, and it was an awesome moment. He told me to write the date in my Bible and claim the healing, and I did.

The healing did not happen immediately, but I believed God healed my hands. They had always hurt, but they got better. Some people looked at them and thought I was crazy because they did not look healed. The pain and itching went away. God healed my life and my hands. Now, I can open jugs of laundry soap and a little can. I can fold sheets and towels in the laundry room without pain or blood. They are so smooth now, and I am thankful!

God can heal you. Many young people have questions about whom to date and marry and where to work. Some say, "There is no one for me." We are all human, but God can help us. If you pray, have faith as a mustard seed, ask, seek, and knock, you are doing your part by communicating with God. If you want results, take it to God.

The devil cannot take your salvation away. You are responsible for keeping it. I thought of the word *claim*. How do you claim something? When I had the mustard seed, I wondered what to do with it. When you get a locker at a bus stop or a post office box, you get a claim ticket. When you get salvation, you have to claim it. Do you want to keep it or give it back? You have to work at it to keep it.

You choose to do what you want with your life. It is your

fault if you do not have salvation. I do not like to hear someone say it is mom's, dad's, my girlfriend's or boyfriend's fault. No, you chose not to have salvation.

Do you have friends? Do you have a boyfriend or a girlfriend? Do you FaceTime or talk to them? Some may write notes or verbally communicate. Some send an email or a text, but you *do* communicate with your friends. Someone may say, "My friends never call me." Well, did you call them? It is the same concept with salvation. Do you talk to God? When did you surrender completely and tell God everything? He already knows, but He wants you to tell Him and ask Him questions.

Tell God what bothers you. Read the Bible, even if you do not understand it. It will stop the devil from attacking you. When the devil says, "You are not reading and praying, so you must not

have salvation," he is trying to take it from you. He cannot; you have to give it up. God will not force you to be a Christian. He loves you and wants the best for you, as your parents want the best for you.

God loves you more than any friend could love you. God always listens and will never repeat to others what you tell Him. Your friends may tell others your problems and take it out of context. That is why you should talk to God and tell Him what is bothering you.

Some of your friends may leave the church and go to what they call a fun or better way. Instead of talking about them, pray for them. It is alarming what some get involved in, and they think their life is better now. Do not put yourself in the pit the devil has for you. The devil has many tricks. He will get you to leave with them if you give up your salvation. If you are in-

involved in a bad relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend who mistreats you, God wants to help you get out of that.

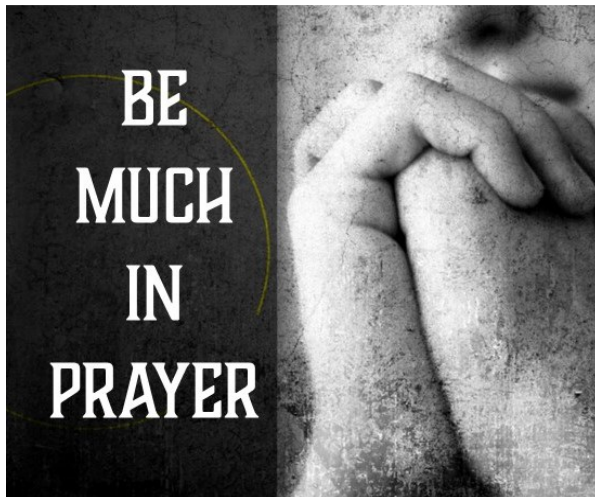
The life the devil has for you stinks. He wants his people to get tattooed, get body piercings, smoke, and shoot drugs with needles. You will look like the devil when he is finished with you. Sin stinks!

Claim your salvation. Keep hold of it with God's help. It is a good, happy, and clean life. You are in a battle, but you can be an overcomer. Keep on the winning side. I cannot stress it enough: salvation is your choice. Salvation is real. If you are a Christian, keep living for God. If you are not, pray and ask God to show you your need.

Sister Kathy Wells

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*Sister Kathy Wells attends the  
Church of God in Newark, OH.*



Be much in prayer, in this dark hour,  
For great are Satan's wiles;  
Far worse than persecuting power  
Are his seductive smiles.

And error comes in such disguise—  
Smooth-tongued and circumspect—  
That none but truth-enlightened eyes  
The monster can detect!

And fair profession, hand in hand  
With evil, stalks abroad  
But to deceive. Oh! who can stand,  
Save those who trust in God?

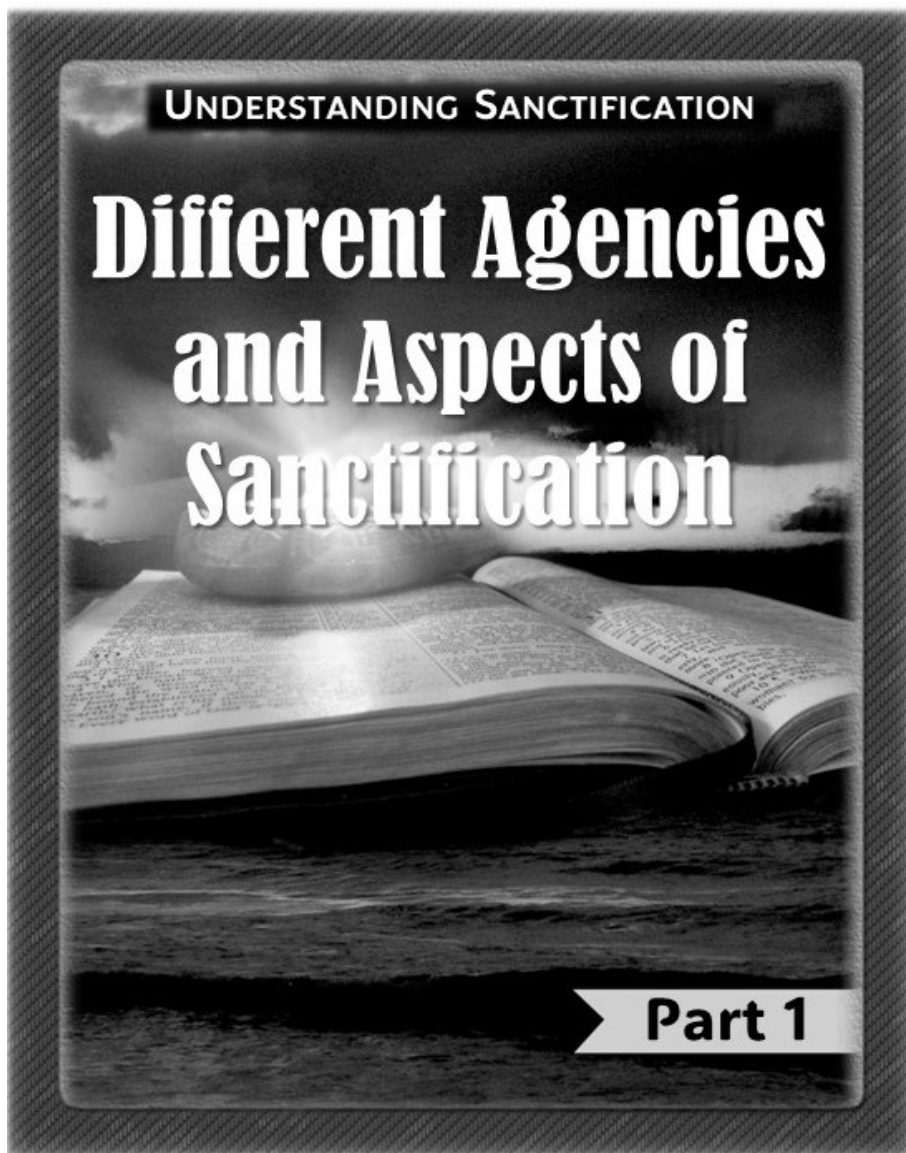
Be much in prayer, 'mid all thy joys,  
So shall their depths increase;  
For lack of watchfulness alloys  
The very sweetest peace.

What power to stand is gained by saints  
Who love to "watch and pray"  
And who escapes the desert taints  
In this defiling day?

Be much in prayer for laboring ones,  
Who in the Master's name,  
And with the Master's message, run,  
His mercy to proclaim.

The harvest's great, the workmen few,  
And naught of time to spare;  
Iniquity increases, too—  
Remember this in prayer.

Author Unknown



Brother Earl R. Borders

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

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

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

*Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

*Hebrews 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify*

*the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

*1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

*Jude 1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.*

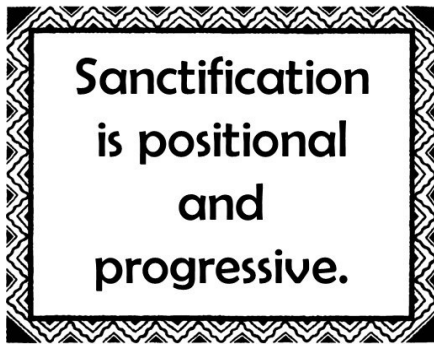
When considering these passages of Scripture texts concerning the vital doctrine of sanctification, it

is necessary to establish some Biblical principles first. The Prophet Isaiah instructed in Isaiah 28:10, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Verse 13 says, "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."

The word translated in our English as *line* is the same Hebrew word used later in this chapter in verse 17, which reads, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place." The employment of the word *line* in conjunction with the word *plummet* reveals these verses speak of an implement used in building.

When we are "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), it will be complementary and compatible, not conflicting or confusing. First Corinthians 14:33 tells us, "For God is not the author of confusion." God never sent His Word to bring confusion. If confusion enters, there is another spirit working. When we study as instructed and lay "precept upon precept, line upon line," we can apply one truth upon another as a building process, and they will fit perfectly.

Three different English words are employed in the five Scripture texts we read: sanctify, sanctified, and sanctification. Four of these five passages are translated from one Greek word, *hagiazō*. According to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, *hagiazō* is defined as "to separate; set apart." We must keep sight of that definition because it is one of the prominent definitions of the word *hagiazō*. Our Scripture text (1 Peter 1:2) uses the other Greek word, *hagiasmos*.



**Sanctification  
is positional  
and  
progressive.**

We must consider each of these terms in their context to be "rightly dividing the word of truth." You will fall into erroneous conclusions when you isolate a Scripture from the context or the greater scheme of Scriptures. Second Peter 1:20 says, "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

We can liken this to how one fellow read his Bible every day. He played, what I call, Bible roulette. Whatever place the Bible fell open to was his verse for the day. One day, his Bible opened to the Scripture in Matthew 27:5, which says, "And he [Judas] . . . went and hanged himself." He thought, "That can't be the Scripture for the day." So he closed his Bible and opened it back up, and his eyes fell on the Scripture, "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). He opened the Bible a third time. This time, his eyes fell on the text, "That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). When you take things out of context, it can be misleading, misapplied, and inappropriate. You cannot privately isolate any truth in God's Word, or you will take it away from its intended meaning.

One dear writer said, "We are sanctified by the blood." One of our Scripture texts does say, "Sanctify the people with his own blood" (Hebrews 13:12). However, we read an array of other Scriptures that let us know there are other agencies and aspects concerning sanctification. We read: "sanctify them through thy truth" (John 17:17); "sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18); "sanctification

of the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:2); and "sanctified by God the Father" (Jude 1). Sanctification is broader than a singular expression. The Scriptures clearly teach sanctification is positional and progressive.

### **Reverting Back to Old Judaism**

Our Scripture text in Hebrews 13:12 is the only Scripture in the New Testament that expressly states, "Sanctify the people with his own blood." Let us examine this passage and look beyond this verse and consider the context. First, we need to know to whom the author wrote this Epistle. Hebrews 1:1-2 reads, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." The author clearly referred to the Old Testament dispensation when he spoke of "time past." Conversely, verse 2 says, "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." These "last days" commenced a new era, speaking of the New Testament dispensation.

The Hebrew writer addressed those who came up under "the fathers," or the leaders of old Judaism. We see this expression employed by Jesus in Matthew 23:32, when He said, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." Verses 27 and 29 both read, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Verse 37 says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Jesus also addressed those who came up under "the fathers," or the leaders of old Judaism.

The Hebrew Epistle was written to Jewish converts who were tempted to defect and revert back to old Judaism. Hebrews 10:35-39 states: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." They had a false, errant expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. He did not come according to their preconceived misconception.

Hebrews 6:4-6 says, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened [past tense], and have tasted [past tense] of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers [past tense] of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted [past tense] the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." The Greek word for "fall away" is *parapipto*, which means "to apostatize or defect from the truth." We must be careful to avoid building extra Biblical expectations, or going beyond what the Scriptures teach.

One fallacy *some* have gone so far as to teach concerning the two works of grace doctrine is when the carnal nature is eradicated in an individual, he is sanctified and beyond temptation. That would provide them with a better experience than what Jesus had. Hebrews 4:15 reads, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in

all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." No experience you can get will take you beyond being tempted by sin.

Building an expectation up in your mind (because of a misconception of some Scripture) that does not occur will allow the enemy to move in with disillusionment, disenchantment, and depression. It was happening to those Jewish converts in the Book of Hebrews. Christ did not come as imminently as they thought He should, so they were reverting to old Judaism.

### Grace Came by Jesus Christ

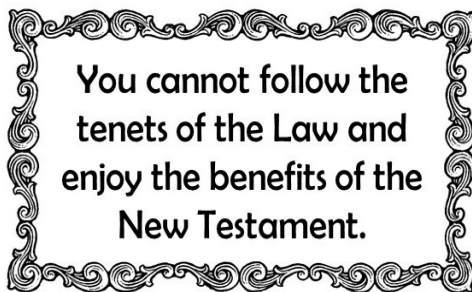
Hebrews 12:18 states, "For ye are not come unto the mount [speaking of Mount Sinai] that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest." Exodus 19:18 says, "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." The Law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai in the Old Testament dispensation.

Hebrews 12:22-23 reads, "But ye are come [present tense] unto mount Zion, 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 firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." These are all different expressions denoting various aspects or facets of the one and self-same church. The writer was telling them not to revert back to what was instituted on Mount Sinai.

Hebrews 13:9 reads: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited

them that have been occupied therein." Again, the Law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai, the mountain "that burned with fire" and could not be touched. John 1:17 says, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Man could not experience the life God ordained by grace until Jesus Christ came.

The Greek word for "grace" is *charis*. *Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* says it is "the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life." Ephesians 2:8 reads, "For by grace are ye saved through faith;



and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Grace came by Jesus Christ. Prior to Jesus Christ's Advent, man could not enjoy an experience of grace that changed his heart, spirit, and nature.

*Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (volume 2, page 236) comments on the phrase "divers [or different] and strange doctrines" (Hebrews 13:9). It states: "Refers to the various phases of one radical error. The denial of the Messiahship of Jesus and of his Messianic sacrifice as superseding Judaism." They believed Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient, and they needed to go back to the old temple and offer animal sacrifices again.

One of the most prevalent words in the Book of Hebrews is "better." We have a *better* covenant, *better* sacrifices, and *better* promises. What Christ came to institute superseded what old

Judaism had to offer mankind. These Hebrew converts were following misguided thoughts and were returning to various Old Testament doctrines and external Jewish practices that did not profit them. There was no merit to change man in those Old Testament practices.

Hebrews 10:4 reads, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." These sacrifices were instituted under the Levitical Law for a time for a purpose. Hebrews 10:1-2 tells us: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered?" If those sacrifices had an efficacious value, they would have only needed to be offered once. They merely satisfied that particular time's requirement without any value regarding changing man's nature or heart.

### Christ's Redemptive Work

Hebrews 13:10 states, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* says this about verse 10: "The writer now makes it clear that those Jews who persist in adhering to the first testament sacrifices can have no part in the blessings of the New Testament. The two testaments are mutually exclusive." You cannot follow the tenets of the Law and enjoy the benefits of the New Testament. The Old Testament was full of offering meats, literal altars, and multiple sacrifices. The New Testament provides grace, a work on the heart that can change the life.

Hebrews 13:11 states, "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the

sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp." When they slew those animals in the Old Testament, the high priests would take the blood into the camp, but the bodies were left outside the camp. The Hebrew writer compared the Old Testament practices with verse 12 when he said, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify [or set apart, separate] the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Jesus was sacrificed outside the city of Jerusalem.

*Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* says: "Jerusalem was the center of the apostate Judaism that crucified the Messiah and continued the temple sacrifices in defiance of God's plainly revealed will. When the Jew would leave the temple sacrifices in order to place his faith in their fulfillment to the crucified, risen Messiah, he would necessarily be separated, thus set apart from that Judaism, which he had formerly espoused. The word sanctify in the Greek means to set apart for God, thus our Lord becoming a sacrifice under the jurisdiction of the New Testament and as an outcast from Israel set apart from the first Testament in Israel, the Jew who places faith in Him and consecrates that person to God, it was with His own blood He did this."

This passage in Hebrews 13:12 speaks of Christ's work to sanctify (the Greek word is *hagiazō*, which the *New Analytical Greek Lexicon* defines as "separate") and set apart the people from old Judaism and its practices. Hebrews 9:26 says Jesus was our sacrifice. So, it is talking about the redemptive work that Christ did to bring salvation. This has nothing to do with a subsequent work of grace.

Hebrews 13:14 reads, "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In Judaism, there was no continuing

city. This Epistle was written in the proximity of A.D. 63-69. In A.D. 70, Jerusalem was desolated. Matthew 23:37-38 states: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

### **Deliverance From Dead Works and Sin**

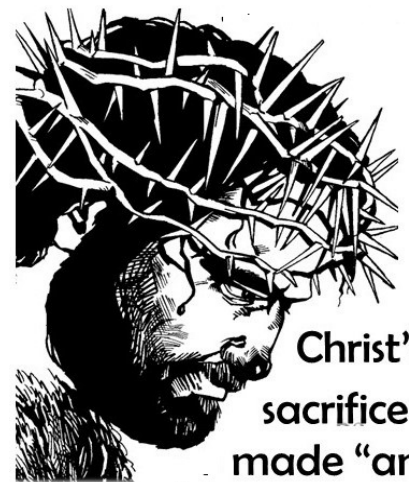
Matthew 24:1 says, "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple." The temple was a magnificent structure that took forty-six years to build. It was made of marble with gold between the marble stones' layers. Verse 2 reads, "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Verse 15 says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)."

Daniel prophesied in Daniel 9:27 and said, "He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Desolation was poured out in A.D. 70 under Prince Titus and the Roman army. The Book of Hebrews was written before Jerusalem was destroyed (A.D. 63-69). The Hebrew writer let Jewish converts know soon there would be no more altars or sacrifices. It had been written that the city of Jerusalem would be desolate and its spiritual function obsolete.

Hebrews 10:9-10 says: "Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will,

O God. He taketh away the first [covenant or testament], that he may establish the second [covenant, or testament]. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Again, Christ came to institute the redemptive plan of salvation, which would separate or remove them from old Judaism. *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (volume 2, page 175) says, "Here the word sanctification refers to the placing of the believing sinner into the status of a saved person."

Hebrews 9:14 asks, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal



**Christ's sacrifice made "an end of sins" (Daniel 9:24).**

Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This verse speaks about the purging from the dead works of old Judaism and enabling an individual to serve the living God. Under the old economy, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin. Jesus came to do a work and offered Himself as a sacrifice to take away sin. His sacrifice remains, and it replaced all those Old Testament sacrifices. It made "an end of sins," which Daniel 9:24 prophesied.

We read in Ephesians 2:11-13, "Wherefore remember, that ye

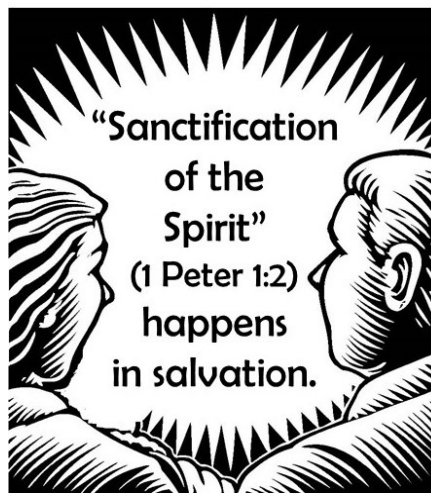
being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Not only was the Jew through the blood of Jesus Christ able to be delivered from dead works and sin to serve the living God, but thank God, the Gentiles could also be made free from sin. Jesus took away the first covenant so He could establish the second.

### Becoming One of the Elect

Our Scripture text (1 Peter 1:2) speaks of the "elect." It pertains to the person. How do you become the elect? "Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Peter spoke of a sanctification that applies the blood of Jesus Christ to enable us to become obedient and one of the elect. Do you become the elect in a second work of grace? When do you become obedient? It all happens in salvation.

First Peter 1:1 tells us the Apostle Peter was addressing "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." First Peter 2:10-11 reads: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Peter wrote to "strangers and pilgrims," such as you and me, in this time world.

Verse 12 says, "Having your



conversation [or the Greek word means 'conduct'] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Peter was writing to the Gentiles who "had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." Now, they were part of the elect because of mercy. They received that "through sanctification of the Spirit." The Greek word for sanctification here is *hagiasmos*, and *Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* tells us in this verse, it means "separation to God."

Sanctification is positional. These verses portray pre-conversion sanctification, or personal preparation. "Sanctification of the Spirit" brings a person to a position of obedience. It is the work the Spirit of God does to convict and convince an individual of sin, leading them to a position where they will repent and have faith in the blood of Jesus. The sprinkling of blood remits the sins of the past and, through the Spirit of regeneration, enables them to be set apart from sin and come to a position of obedience. The Holy Spirit brings a person to obedience and makes them part of the elect.

Second Thessalonians 2:13 reads, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord,

because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." This is the work the Holy Spirit does according to John 16:8, when Jesus said, "He will reprove [or the Greek word means 'convince and convict'] the world of sin." That is how the Holy Spirit begins to set people apart to lead them to an experience of salvation.

### "Partakers of the Inheritance"

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 15:16 and 18: "That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. . . . For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed." It is the work the Spirit does through conviction, convincing the sinner of his need to repent and become obedient to God so his life can be changed. This happens pre-conversion.

All three Scriptures speaking of "sanctification of the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; and Romans 15:16) refer to pre-conversion. Sanctification is progressive and perennial in the life of the saints. Sanctification by Jesus' blood shows the implementation of the redemptive work, the plan, and its effect on the person.

Acts 26:17-18 reads, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Paul was relating what Christ spoke to him



on the Damascus Road before his conversion, what his role was to be. It talks about being "sanctified by faith." Notice the word he correlated that with is "inheritance."

The Greek word for *inheritance* is only translated this way twice. Colossians 1:12-14 states, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be [a present tense experience] partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." This shows the third feature. Hebrews 13:12 speaks of the plan. First Peter 1:2 speaks of the person. This verse speaks of the participation. We are "partakers of the inheritance of the saints." The inheritance we receive is deliverance from sin.

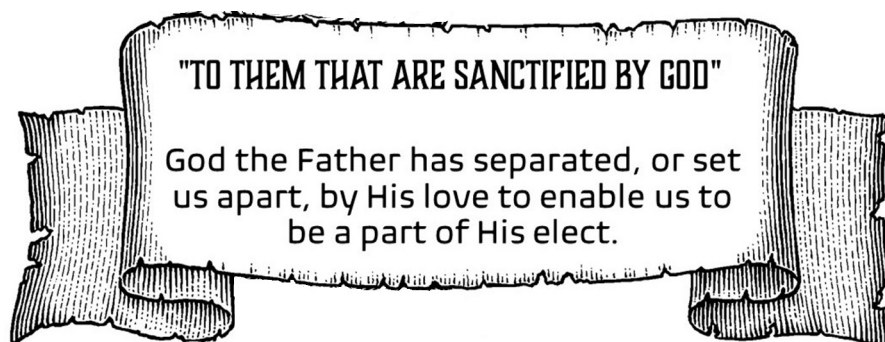
Again, Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith." We see a picture of what occurs at conversion. The Apostle Paul's commission in Acts 26:18 was to "open their eyes." Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." When you are born again, your eyes are opened, and you can see spiritual things. It happens when you get saved. All these verses concerning sanctification substantiate that sanctification is positional.

We trust you can clearly see what is advocated as a subsequent, definite second work of grace is incorrect by rightly dividing the Word of Truth and laying "precept upon precept; line upon line" (Isaiah 28:10). Through studying the Scriptures

in their context and with the entire scheme of the Scriptures, they show that sanctification works pre-conversion, at conversion, and post-conversion.

### The Beloved of God

Our final Scripture text in Jude 1 says, "To them that are sanctified by God." Scholars tell us the word "sanctified" used in this text in the oldest manuscripts reads "beloved." *The Pulpit Commentary* says "three of the five primary uncials (the Vatican, Sinaitic, and Alexandrian)" all render this as "beloved." *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Bible Commentary*, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, and *The Expositor's Greek New Testament* all ren-



der it as "beloved."

*The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* states: "Some of the better manuscripts, however, give beloved in God." In other words, God the Father has separated, or set us apart, by His love to enable us to be a part of His elect. Again, it is not speaking of something subsequent; it is reverting back to the work done through regeneration.

Second Corinthians 13:14 reveals the role of the Triune Godhead in the redemptive plan. It reads, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." John 1:17 states, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Jesus made grace available to all men everywhere. John 3:16 says, "God so loved the

world." First John 4:8 tells us, "God is love," speaking of what the Greek word *agape* describes as divine love. God made the commitment to man. He is the originator of the plan. Christ was the implementer of the plan, and the Holy Ghost is the administrator of the plan. Jude wrote "to them that are sanctified by God the Father," telling us we are the beloved of God.

Sanctification has a three-fold nature. In this lesson, we have studied sanctification predominantly at pre-conversion and conversion. Our next study will examine how the progressive aspect of sanctification operates perennially throughout our experience. We trust the Spirit of God through the truth in the Scrip-

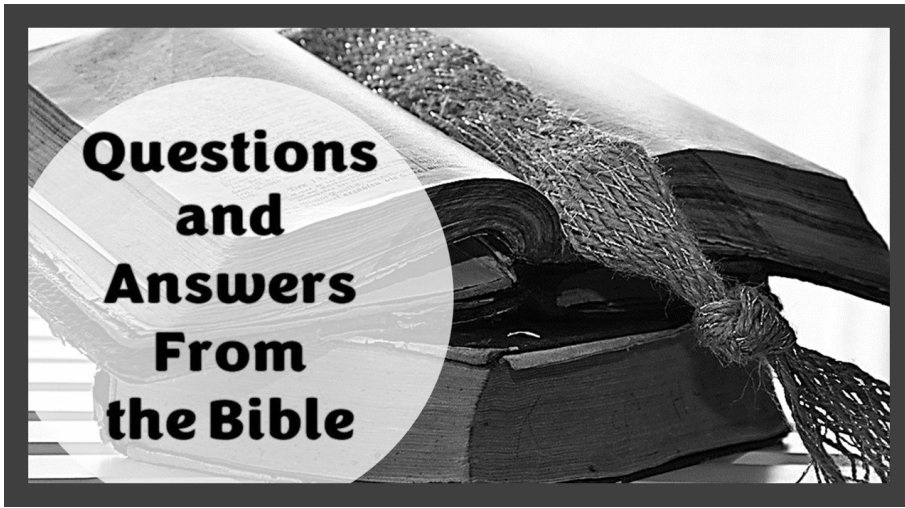
tures we have studied thus far has provided a clearer understanding of the different agencies and aspects of sanctification.

We encourage you to study as the Berean saints did in Acts

17:11, which says, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." When they heard something preached, they studied it to see if it was true. The truth will stand examination and scrutiny. If the Spirit of God will reveal truth to one, He will reveal truth to another if he will honestly seek and inquire. We need to be Bible students and study with an open mind and "an ear to hear what the Spirit saith" to ensure our positions will stand Biblical scrutiny.

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## WHO ARE "THE ANGELS THAT SINNED" (2 PETER 2:4)?

It is important not to isolate 2 Peter 2:4 from its context. Verse 1 relates, "There were false prophets among the people." The Apostle Peter was reminding them, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; . . . there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). He then proceeded to prophesy, "There shall be false teachers among you" (verse 1), and "many shall follow their pernicious ways" (verse 2).

In verse 3, Peter revealed their motivation ("covetousness") and their manner of operation ("feigned words"). Then, he spoke of "the angels that sinned" (verse 4). The subject under discussion had been "false prophets" and "false teachers" (verse 1). Verse 10 says it is "chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the

lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled." Contextually, the Apostle Peter was exposing those who were caught up with the spirit that produced the morning-time apostasy. He referred to these as "natural brute beasts" (verse 12).

When considering the expression "the angels," there is a natural tendency to assume this refers to celestial beings. The Greek word for "angels" is *aggelos*, and it means "a messenger, by implication a pastor" (*Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words with Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*). It is used in various Scriptures (especially in the Book of Revelation) to denote a ministry (God's messengers). (Read Galatians 4:13-14 and Revelation

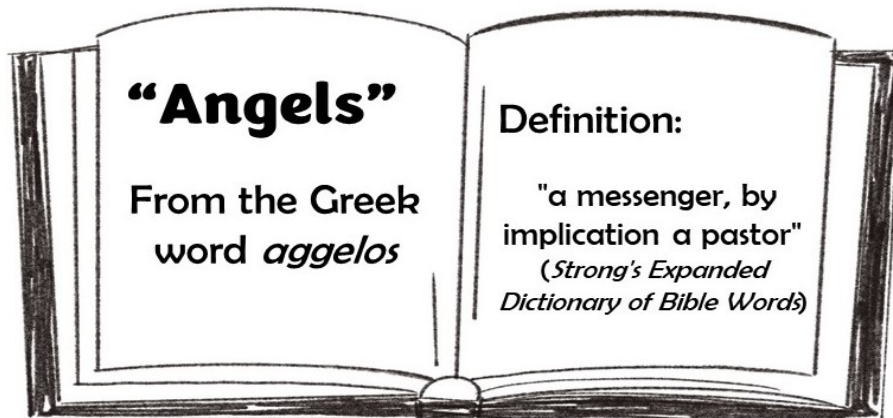
22:8-9.)

The word "sinned" indicates this verse is not referring to celestial beings. There can be no sin without temptation. James 1:14 says, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [the Greek word means 'desire'], and enticed."

The avenues of "lust" that are appealed to and tempt one to sin are "the lust of the flesh, . . . the lust of the eyes, . . . and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). To be tempted, one must have "flesh" and "eyes." The "flesh" is a product of the earth. (Read Ecclesiastes 12:7.) Celestial angels are "spirits" (Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 1:7, 13-14). Certainly, "angels" can take on a human form, but they are not human. They are "spirits" and hence exempt from temptation. Thus, celestial angels could not have "sinned."

The expression "God . . . cast them down to hell" (2 Peter 2:4) is akin to Jesus' words in Luke 10:18, which states, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." This is speaking of the devil and his false teachings being cast from an exalted position when understanding of the truth came to men's minds. Jesus said, "The spirits are subject unto you" (verse 20). What brought this about? "The Lord appointed other seventy also" (Luke 10:1), and through "preaching the gospel" (Luke 9:6), people received understanding. Satan and his falsities lost that exalted position in men's minds.

The word translated as "hell" in 2 Peter 2:4 is the Greek word *tartarus*. This is the only place that Greek word appears in the New Testament. It came from Greek mythology and was regarded by the ancient Greeks as a subterranean region, doleful and dark. It was supposedly where the Titans, who rebelled against Zeus (the mythological father of gods and men), had been cast (*Thayer's Greek-English*



*Lexicon* and one noted Bible study series).

Peter's usage of this unique word ("hell," *tartarus*) conveys that as the Lord instructed the true prophet in Isaiah 58:1 to "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet," the Lord allowed a true ministry to expose the falsities of the "false teachers" by crying out the truth and not sparing on the message. Thus, these "angels" (false ministry) were "cast down." They and their teachings were shown to be as false as Greek mythology and Zeus!

Peter prophesied in verse 2, "Many shall follow their pernicious [that will destroy or ruin; *The Thorndike Dictionary*] ways." Verses 12-23 of this chapter describe the works and effects of these "false teachers." However, the Apostle was speaking to the judgment of God upon wrong when he spoke of these "angels" (verse 4), "bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (verse 5), and "turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes" (verse 6).

The common element of these verses is that wrong will not stand. God has a way of showing

His judgment. So He does in verse 4 with these "angels."

After the "angels" are exposed as being as "false" as mythology, 2 Peter 2:4 says that they are "delivered . . . into chains of darkness." Their "darkness" is what holds them in bondage! Second Thessalonians 2:10-11 reads, "Because they received not the love of the truth . . . And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion." These "angels" are "false teachers" because they are not honest-hearted, do not have "the love of the truth," are deluded, and their own "darkness" holds them bound as in "chains."

Jesus said in John 12:35, "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." Jude 13 speaks of this same condition and calls them "wandering stars" ("stars" represent the ministry; Revelation 1:16, 20). It also says "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness."

They are in the greatest darkness because of their spiritual position and condition. It is the "blackness of darkness." Jesus said in Matthew 6:23, "How great

is that darkness!" Second Peter 2:4 reveals one under such a delusion and in such "darkness" will be in that sad state "unto judgment," that day when "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Romans 2:16).

The Apostle conveyed in 2 Peter 2:4 that these "angels" were a ministry who, once "the Lord . . . bought them" (verse 1), had "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," but "they are again entangled therein, and overcome" (verse 20).

These "angels" were men living on this earth. The verse in question does not say anything about them being in Heaven. The "hell" they were cast into is an expression denoting the exposure of the low level and mythology of their falsities. It has no connection to the hell to which the lost goes ("hell," or hades; Luke 16:23) and ultimately Gehenna (Mark 9:43).

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