THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER

Unity & Truth

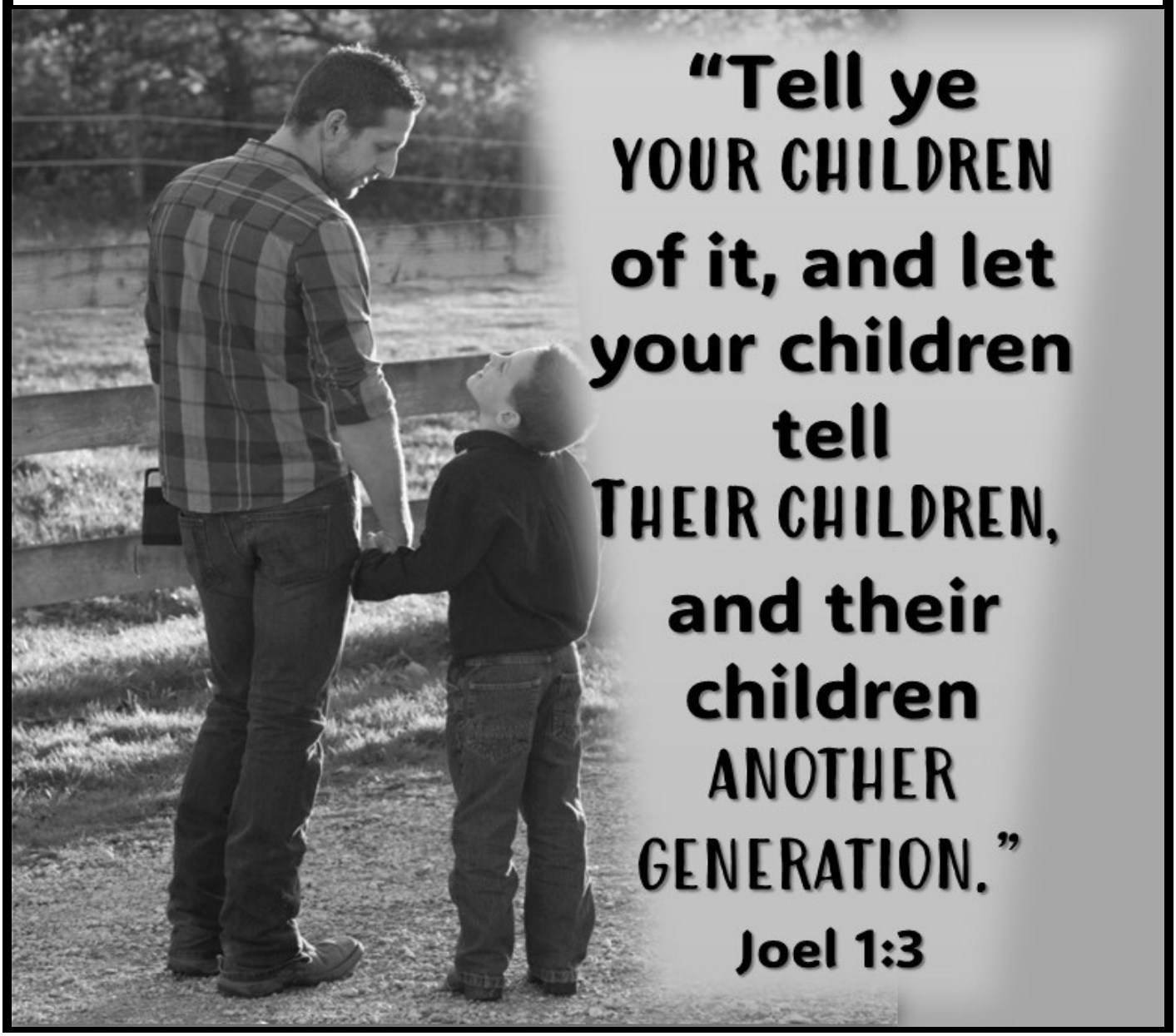
Justification

Sanctification

EZEKIEL 34:12
JEREMIAH 32:39
REVELATION 10:7
MATTHEW 24:31

SOUNDING FORTH THE SEVENTH AND LAST TRUMPET

Vol. 54 March 2024 No. 3



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

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PRAYER: If you need prayer, please phone or write:
Roger L. Decker, Pastor
83 Decrow Ave.
Newark, OH 43055
Email: pastor@godsacres.us
Phone: 740-344-2543

Print Shop Phone: 740-345-1312
Websites: GodsAcres.org & GospelTrumpeter.com
Email: subscribe@godsacres.us

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; Galatians 1:13; John 17:11)

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For Such a Time as This

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

With great anticipation, the saints gathered this past December for a camp meeting at God's Acres. Brother Roger L. Decker asked the congregation to fast and pray in preparation for this meeting. God poured out His Spirit as He heard the prayers of the saints and honored the meeting with His presence in a magnificent manner. The meeting began on Wednesday evening with a welcome and invitation to all as the choir sang "God's Wonderful People." The song says:

It can be just anywhere
Two or three are gathered there
That the Spirit of the Lord will be there too.
There's no fellowship so sweet
There's no thrill that can compete
With the thrill I feel whenever God's children meet!

Psalm 133:1 says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Unity is essential to a victorious camp meeting, and victory prevailed throughout!

Brother Earl R. Borders was the evening evangelist and beautifully brought a challenge the first night entitled "How Is Your Desire for God?" Many made their way to an altar of prayer as the Spirit of God touched their hearts.

Brothers Abraham Burton, Aurelius Raines, and Allen Polston delivered their hearts' burden each morning. Every message provoked an invitation for a closer walk with God, as David pleaded in Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Much good was accomplished throughout the short week. As prayer service began each new day, the saints petitioned the Lord for unsaved souls, healings, and His presence to lead in every way. Having Brother E. David Stegmeier from Canby, Oregon, with his dear wife by his side, sharing the bountiful "meal" God had prepared, was a blessing. Although very ill, Brother Stegmeier resolutely delivered the burden upon his heart on Sunday morning. It was an encouragement to the saints!

Brother Reggie Stegmeier brought lessons in the afternoon on the Christian home. Winter Bible School for the children went from Thursday to Saturday. Sister Karen Wilks and many others labored to bring the children lessons, games, and crafts. Sister Karen told the story of two brothers (one saved and one unsaved). The saved brother's charity and compassion influenced the other to repentance. Sister Tammy Green said, "The story's general theme was making good choices and giving to others, but mostly the big change God can make in a life!"

[continued on page 11]

Wasted Years

Brother Roger L. Decker

Joel 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

3 Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

4 That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpiller eaten.

5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

6 For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

9 The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests, the LORD'S ministers, mourn.

10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.

The Prophet Joel began his prophecy by saying: "Hath this been in your days?" Or, in other words, "Have you ever seen this before?" Adam Clarke's commentary states the prophet "begins very abruptly; and before he proposes his subject, excites attention and alarm by intimating that he is about to announce disastrous events, such as the oldest man among them has never seen, nor any of them learnt from the histories of ancient times." The field was wasted by the locusts, who ate up all the green grass, herbs, fruit, and leaves from the trees. The Chaldean army trampled through the land with their horses. The land was destitute. Nothing grew, and it was dismal for the inhabitants.

I realize the prophet was talking about natural things that came upon Israel. However, I want to use this text as a similarity to things that have come upon people, spiritually speaking. My wife and I visited New York and drove by the house where I was raised. I told my wife I could cry looking at that house. We were not the richest people, but we cared for what we had. The roof was down to the tar paper. Weeds grew around the bank. The barn and everything around it was dilapidated. The entire eighteen acres were in shambles. It reminded me of a poem called "Those Wasted Years" by Theodore W. Brennan.

I looked upon a farm one day,
That once I used to own;
The barn had fallen to the ground,
The fields were overgrown.
The house in which my children grew,
Where we had lived for years –
I turned to see it broken down,
And brushed aside the tears.

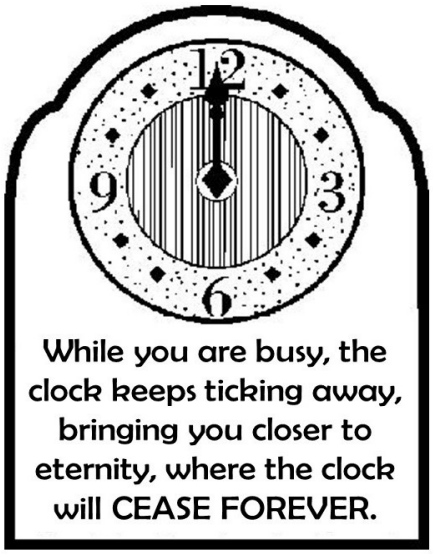
I looked upon my soul one day,
To find it too had grown
With thorns and nettles everywhere,
The seeds neglect had sown.
The years had passed where I had cared
For things of lesser worth:
The things of Heaven I let go
When minding the things of Earth.

To Christ I turned with bitter tears,
And cried, "O Lord, forgive!
I haven't much time left for Thee,
Not many years to live."
The wasted years forever gone,
The days I can't recall;
If I could live those days again,
I'd make Him Lord of all.

Some people's lives consist of wasted years. You may live sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, or even a hundred years with nothing to present God except selfish living. A song written by Wally Fowler and sung by Red Foley has sobering words. It is titled "Wasted Years."

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

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



The Seasonal Pleasures of Sin

In our Scripture text, all the things God provided to sustain the natural man were destroyed or weakened by insects or neighboring nations. God, the origin of natural and spiritual life, stood back and allowed it to happen. Those things that took place, naturally speaking, are happening spiritually in people's lives today. Many are wasting their time, which is precious. As you get older, you realize how precious time really is. You should not waste your time, money, health, and influence on things of no value. While you are busy, the clock keeps ticking away seconds, minutes, and hours, bringing you closer and closer to eternity, where the clock will cease forever.

Consider the prodigal son. Luke 15:13 says he "wasted his substance." Working in a hogpen was not on his mind when he left his father's house. He was thinking about having a good time and living a life of pleasure. No one leaves the church thinking their condition will be worse than when they served God. Instead, they leave with these thoughts: "I am going to be all right. I can take care of myself. If I pick up habits, it will not be like before." Little do they realize that when people leave the body of Christ, they change masters. They are now under the dictates of the flesh and Satan.

There is another side to the pleasures of sin, and that is the reaping. The Bible says sin is pleasurable, but it is seasonal. When pleasure turns to habits and ruination, it crowds out the good life and takes over completely. Does anyone ever think about the wasted years they have spent? Think about the years you spent in sin before you were saved. I spent twenty-seven years in sin before I was saved. They were wasted years. The first nine years of my marriage were trouble. I wasted my time on sin, drinking alcohol, gambling, and spending too much money. Many times, like the prodigal, I spent all. I have no desire to go back, but I look back with regret and sadness. I would not have had to endure the reaping if I had listened to God.

Psalm 40 was written to the chief musician, a Psalm of David. Verses 1-5 state: "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

Nobody wants to vaunt or brag about the years spent in sin; they are wasted years. It will not end well for someone who backslides. Many know what will

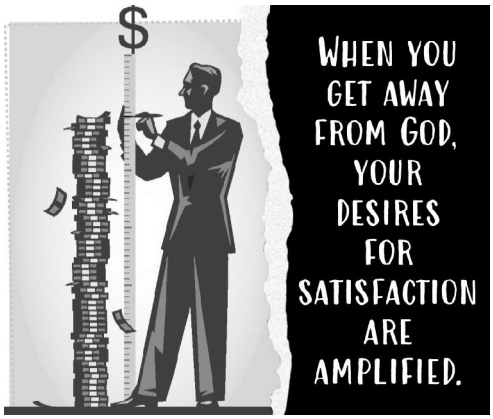
happen if they stop serving God. They may have heard it preached over and over. There is seasonal pleasure in sin, but whatever you sow, you must reap. However, when someone backslides and gets away from God, a spirit takes hold of his mind and overrides those things he knows.

Overcoming the Flesh

The Scriptures make it plain what happens when someone loses out with God. Proverbs 14:14 reads, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." This Scripture is not dealing with someone who slips and falls; it is dealing with the heart, someone who wants "his own ways" or own desires. God will give you all the desires and lusts you want. You will be "filled" or influenced by your wants and desires. If you want drugs, God will oblige you.

Drugs are becoming more and more available as time goes by. They are in our schools and throughout our country. They are coming across the border as fast as they can. At first, it was marijuana, coke (cocaine), and heroin, but now they are even more advanced. Now, there is meth and fentanyl. Some people who used to know God left Him with the thought of trying some of these drugs, thinking they could come back to God once they became sick of them. (The devil always works to tempt you to try it, just to see what it is like.) They find it does not work that way. When you get away from God, your desires for satisfaction are amplified. Many people get so filled with their own ways that they are in bondage, and they cannot step out and walk to God anymore. Something has smitten them. They are bound with habits, and God is no longer their satisfaction.

The flesh is powerful. You are deceived if you do not think so. Jesus had to pray three times to overcome the flesh. We read in Matthew 26:36-44: "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.



"And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words." Three times, Jesus said the same words.

The Apostle Paul was close to Christ. He wrote thirteen New Testament books. What did he say about the flesh? He said in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27: "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. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it [it does not want to come] into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Castaway in *Strong's Concordance Dictionary* means "unapproved, rejected, worthless, a reprobate." The flesh can cause you to become a castaway. Numbers 14:33 states, "And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness." The Israelites wasted forty years journeying in the wilderness, which was so unnecessary.

Judas, the Betrayer

Luke 6:12-16 says: "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor."

Judas was called to be an Apostle. Matthew 10:1-4 reads: "And when he [Jesus] had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his

brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him."

Judas will never be known for casting out devils or unclean spirits. He was one of the twelve sent out with power to cast out devils and heal the sick, but he will always be known for the betrayal. Those were wasted years. Judas did not face God as a man of God who cast out devils but as a betrayer. He did well at one time. His name was mentioned as one of the twelve. Nevertheless, beside his name are these words, "Who also betrayed him."

Ezekiel 33:11-13 says: "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."

When people hear the name King Saul, they do not think about his victories, and he won some victories as the leader of Israel. Instead, they think about his rebellion and disobedience. First Samuel 15:3 says, "Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." King Saul did not fulfill that command.

Verse 9 states, "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." King Saul did some good things, but all the good he did as a leader of Israel was nothing but wasted years.

What Will You Profit If You Lose Your Soul?

Some people refuse to be saved and hold out for their own way. They may sit in a Church of God congregation for years. Those years are wasted years. Matthew 16:26 says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 8:36 says the same thing. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The world, the devil, and a man's flesh oppose salvation. Your soul was made for God, and only God can satisfy it. Your soul can never be united to God or happy until you are saved from sin. He who is saved from sin and united to God possesses the utmost thrill that the human soul can enjoy, either in this world or the coming world. Salvation is the most important thing in life. Luke 9:25 says the same thing a bit differently. It reads, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"

Proverbs 29:1 states, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." What was the proverb writer saying? If a man is reproved over and over with no response, he can expect something to come on him suddenly, and there will be no remedy. Only God knows what it will be.

Maybe you hear certain names, you cannot think of anything good. They have wasted their time while they were here on this Earth. For example: Cain slew his brother; Pharaoh misused the children of Israel in Egypt; Ahab continually rebelled against God; and Jezebel had a great influence over Ahab. When the name Samson is mentioned, many think about Delilah and how he lost his Nazarite vow instead of thinking about all his victories. Although Samson repented, the time he spent with Delilah was wasted, and it brought sudden destruction.

Again, the Scripture reads in Proverbs 14:14, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." We see this Scripture fulfilled in the lives of many today who are filled with their own thoughts, desires, lusts, and ways of doing things. It only brings wasted years. The songwriter said, "Oh, how foolish."

When I think of the time I spent in sin, I would to God I had not done those things. I have to battle memories in my mind I would not have if I had lived for God at an early age. The life people spend in sin is wasted years. You can sit in a Church of God congregation wasting your life, but sudden destruction is coming if you do not make a move. You will go before God with nothing to present Him but a sinful life of wasted years.

(Compact Disc TR-2968)

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

Sister Becky Foster

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.

8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?

9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.

10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him. Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.

12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.

13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.

14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.

15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging.

16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

After the great fish swallowed Jonah, he "prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly" (Jonah 2:1). The fish vomited Jonah out onto the dry land, and Jonah headed for Nineveh to do what God had asked him to do. It did him no good to run to Tarshish to try to escape because, in the end, he did what God asked.

In this lesson, I would like to focus on Jonah 1:12, which in the *Amplified Bible* reads: "Jonah said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you.'" Five words stood out to me in this verse: "It is because of me." The *King James Version* says, "For my sake." I feel that God would have us look at this thought because it is serious.

There is a poem written by John Donne entitled "No Man Is an Island." The first line says, "No man is an island, entire of itself." As we go through our life here on Earth, we need to consider that every action we do and every attitude we display affects other people. The mariners on that vessel with Jonah had no idea that what was about to happen to them was due to Jonah's choices because he was running from God.

I am, quite possibly, the most independent person you will ever meet. I would rather do things myself than ask for help. However, there comes a time when we all need help. The older I get, the more I see how much I need God. We sometimes have to learn hard lessons about how frail we really are. It is important to listen to God and do what He tells us to do. He will provide the help and grace we need for any task He gives us.

You Cannot Hide From God

If I claim to be a Christian in the Church of God, not only do my actions affect my testimony and witness for God, but they affect the testimony and witness of all others who claim to be the Church of God. Consider this: if you claim to be the Church of God and you do something that does not represent the Church of God, those looking on will say, "Someone is wrong there."

When we, as God's people, carefully weigh our actions and attitudes, we will all conduct ourselves in the same way and have a cohesive standard. We cannot be haphazard Christians. The word *haphazard* means "random, chaotic, incomplete, not thorough, not constant, and not consistent." You cannot decide to be a Christian today, but tomorrow, not act like a Christian because you are with different people. If you are a Christian, you are a Christian every day in every situation, no matter who you are with. If you are Church of God, you are Church of God all the time. All your actions and attitudes should reinforce that to everyone you meet.

In our text, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach to the people. God sends us places for a reason. The people in Nineveh needed salvation. God told Jonah, someone He should have been able to trust, to go to Nineveh to deliver God's words to the people. However, Jonah took a different path, traveling instead to Joppa to get on a ship headed in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Although Jonah hid in the bottom of the ship (verse 5), God found him where he was. You cannot hide from God. Jonah should have known that, yet he went "down into the sides of the ship." No doubt, he went as far as he could, thinking he could get away from the Lord.

Verse 4 says God sent a strong storm to rock the ship. The mariners thought they were in danger of being wrecked and were afraid. Verse 5 says, "Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god [lowercase 'g']." (Yet today, people have many gods. However, I serve an uppercase "G"—God!) When the mariners' prayers failed to calm the storm, they began throwing wares overboard to lighten the load. During this time, Jonah "was fast asleep" in the bottom of the ship. Sometimes, when people disobey God, things may go normally for a while. Jonah might have thought: "I am hiding from God. He does not know where I am." Jonah was deceived. He went down to the bottom of the ship and fell asleep, not knowing that the mariners up on deck were frantic.

"Why Hast Thou Done This?"

It is important we do what God tells us to do because if we do not carry out God's will, it can cause people to become frantic. The point of this lesson is that it is not just about us. There are other people involved. If Jonah had never run away from God and boarded that ship to Joppa, those mariners would have never been a part of this story. Jonah brought them into this story by boarding their ship. He threw them into turmoil because he did not do what God told him to do.

Again, verse 5 says, "Then the mariners were afraid . . . and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them." Jonah was asleep in the bottom of the ship the entire time. The captain went looking for Jonah and, when he found him, said, "Arise, call upon thy God" (verse 6). Notice the uppercase "G." The captain must have recognized something different about Jonah. Telling Jonah to call on his "God" indicated he knew Jonah believed in the true God.

In essence, the captain told Jonah, "We need you to call on your God and see if He will have mercy on us." How did the captain know who Jonah's God was? (As Christians, we dress and act differently than the world. There are things people notice about us, letting them know we are Christians.) Whatever it was, Jonah's look was one way, but his actions were another. Faithful people of God do not run *from* what God tells them to do. They run *to* God for help with what He asks them to do.

The sailors looked for someone to blame for the situation they were in. Verse 7 says, "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots." Today, people may flip a coin or draw sticks to see who gets the short stick, but Christians do not need to do these things because God reveals them to us. The Spirit of God will show us who is in the wrong. In Jonah's story, God controlled the casting of lots. Jonah drew the short stick, and the mariners instantly wanted to know everything about him. They asked him in verse 8, "What is thine occupation?" They were asking: "What do you do? Who are you? Where do you live?"

While the sailors were questioning Jonah, the storm raged, and the ship rocked. They were frantic. I can imagine them grabbing hold of his shirt, jerking him back and forth. They were in Jonah's story, a place they would not have been if Jonah had obeyed God. Do you think they knew how a man of God should

have acted? Jonah told them in verse 9, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."

Verse 10 tells us: "Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them." They asked him why he had fled from God. Even those mariners understood you should not flee from God when He asks you to do something!

Our Actions Affect Others

What about how we act? Can we do anything to cause people to have observations such as: "I know Christians should not do that. I know Christians should not go there, dress that way, or act like that. I thought they were a Christian." Do you only act like a Christian when it is convenient or when it will not make you stand out? Do you only act like a Christian when you want to?

The mariners wanted to know how to stop this. In essence, they were saying: "How can we get out of this? We do not want to be part of your story anymore, Jonah! What can we do to get out of this situation?" Verse 11 reads, "What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous." They wanted to know how to appease Jonah's God.

Verse 12 says Jonah told the sailors to throw him into the sea, and it would be calm. "It is because of me." Some people have the attitude, "I can do whatever I want," and it is true, you can. Jonah did what he wanted to do, but there were consequences! You can do what you want for a while, and everything might seem to be going well. We do not know how far Jonah and the sailors traveled before the storm

came. It must have been okay for a little while. Jonah had time to fall asleep. Then, it started getting rocky. It is no different with us. You might do your own thing for a little while, but eventually, you will be found at the bottom of the boat (so to speak), waking up to a terrible storm.

The sailors' lives were saved, the storm ceased, and everyone went on their way. However, what happened up to that point that could never be repaired? This shipping vessel had been carrying wares, and to lighten the load during the storm, the sailors had to toss those wares overboard, and they were lost. Who was waiting and depending on those wares? Because Jonah disobeyed God, not only were the mariners' lives in danger, but supplies were also lost.

The ripples go out quite a way whenever you throw a rock into the water. Think about whom your actions and attitudes are affecting. We may never know all the people we have affected with our actions and attitudes. We need to think about the results of our actions and always be conscious of them. When something bad happens due to our actions or inactions, how sad to realize, "It is because of me." By the grace of God, we can save ourselves from much turmoil by doing what God asks us to do. We do not want to take the chance of what might happen if we disobey God. We are not an island to ourselves. Everything we do and every way we act affects those around us.

Making Wrong Choices

There are other stories in the Bible about people who did not do what God asked them to do. Joshua, Chapter 7, tells us about Achan, who disobeyed God. He buried stolen treasure under his tent in the middle (just as Jonah went down into the middle of the boat, thinking he would be safe). Like Jonah, Achan must have forgotten that God can see down into the deepest recesses. You cannot escape from God. Achan's actions first brought about the loss of Israelite soldiers at Ai. That was bad enough, but when Achan's sin was found out, his sons, daughters, livestock, and even his tent were put in the valley with him.

As Achan and his family were stoned for his transgression against God, do you think Achan realized, "It is because of me"? What a serious warning to parents concerning the dangers of making wrong moves. Our pastor often says, "Do not move and leave a Church of God congregation to live where there is not one." However, many have done just that, and as a result, whole families have been lost. The dad and mom could say, "It was because of our choice." Was the better job truly worth it? We must weigh everything in the light of eternity, asking ourselves, "Is it worth it?"

Sadly, many people today are making wrong choices. When they get into bad situations, they realize: "It is because of me. It is because of what I did. It is because of my choices." Sometimes, people do not pray about what

they should do. No one knows what is best for you more than God does. So why not ask Him what to do? Why not ask Him whom to marry, what job to have, where to live, and what congregation to be a part of? There are many Church of God congregations, but God knows where you will fit the best and where you can do your best work. Ask God to direct you.

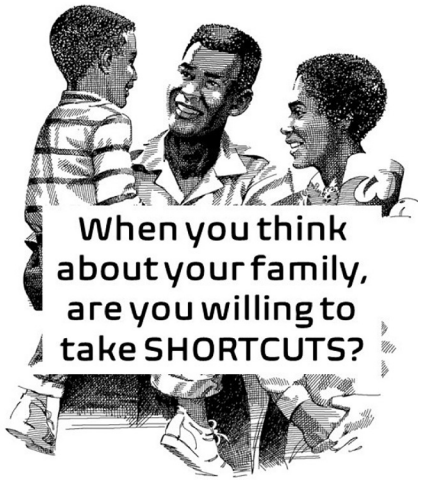
Our everyday actions and attitudes affect more than just us. When we obey God and do what He tells us, seeds are sown, and God controls the crop. It is easy to miss opportunities to witness. I see people in the store checkout line who are on their phones the entire time. I make it a point to be off my phone while in the checkout line. The cashiers have a hard job, and they need a friendly face. They need someone to chat politely and ask them, "How are you today?" I do that.

My kids used to say, "Mom, do you know them?" I do not know them personally, but they are a soul. Seemingly, everyone in the world is grumpy these days. Therefore, if you are not grumpy, you will stand out and cause people to wonder, "What do you have that makes you not grumpy?" We need to let God shine through us. We rarely know the struggles people face. We need to be the sunbeam they need to see.

Following God's Plan

Young person, smile at the kids in the hallway at school. Invite that person who has no one to sit with at lunch to sit with you. When they see you pray for your lunch and your happy disposition, it will cause them to wonder what makes you different. When you are on the job and the people in the break room are telling dirty jokes, you need to check your witness if they do not stop when you walk in. There should be a difference when you are present, or something is wrong with your witness. As Christians, our job is to be a light for God—all day, every day.

God had a specific list for Noah concerning the type of wood and the length and width of that wood. Noah followed God's instructions to the letter. Genesis 6:22 says, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he." What if he had not? What if Noah had said: "Gopher wood? Gopher



wood is hard to get and difficult to saw through. I do not want to use gopher wood. I am going to take this little shortcut. I will not do *exactly* what God said. I will *kind of* do what He said. I will build a big boat, but I will make it out of something else." Maybe that "something else" would not have floated as well as gopher wood. Perhaps he would have made a smaller boat that would not have held all his family and the animals.

Noah saved his entire family by doing exactly what God said to do. When you think about your family, are you willing to take shortcuts? Are you willing to risk doing it your way? Your family should be precious to you, and your goal should be to make sure they are safe. Noah wanted to ensure his family was safe, so he followed God's plan precisely. It is so important that our actions be one hundred percent what God tells us to do. The story of Noah could have been so different. If Noah had not followed God's commands, could that have been the end? It might have been.

Noah followed God's plan, "according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Genesis 6:22). Was it easy? Was he made fun of? Did people question him: "What is wrong with you? What are you doing?" I imagine Noah answering them, "I am doing what God told me to do." When we obey God, will we get made fun of? Possibly. Will people understand what we are doing? Probably not. We must remember why we are doing it—to save our family, make Heaven our home, and take as many people with us as we can.

God Makes the Difference

In Daniel 1:8, "Daniel purposed in his heart" to do what was right. What if he had said, "I will eat or drink whatever the king wants me to; I will do whatever the other guys are doing"? Daniel had to determine, "I am going to do what God tells me to do." Did it make him look different? Did he stand out? Yes, he did. Was it easy? Probably not. However, knowing God is on your side makes all the difference.

The three Hebrew boys' obedience to God has given us the incredible story of deliverance from the fiery furnace. Not even the smell of smoke was on them. Think about that! When you walk by a campfire, the smell of smoke permeates your clothing and hair. They stood in the fire and came out without the smell of smoke on them. How? They did exactly what God asked them to do.

What if Daniel had stopped praying at his window? What if he prayed just once a day instead of three times to avoid getting in

trouble? Would we have the story of his deliverance from the den of lions? He survived that night because he did exactly what God said. He may have even used a lion for a pillow that night. Only someone doing God's will can go through something like that. Only one living a life dedicated to God can have that testimony.

Consider this: did Jesus want to die on the Cross? In the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me" (Luke 22:42). Did He want to do it? Was it easy? No. Think about where we would be if Jesus had not carried out the will of His Father. What if He had been like Jonah and run away? What if He had said: "I'm not doing that! I have never sinned"? Yet, Jesus thought about you and me. It was not all about Him. He willingly died for us. Think about how different our lives would be if He had not done what God asked Him to do. Daniel, Noah, the three Hebrew boys, and Jesus successfully did what God wanted them to do. God stays with us when we do what He asks. It takes God with us. He makes it possible and bearable. He enables us to do His will.

When we successfully carry out a task God has given us, we do not say, "It is because of me." Instead, we say, "It is because of God; I can only do this because God lives in me." We have to stay with God. He is the One who makes these things possible. We cannot carry out God's will without His help.

How Is Your Influence?

God sometimes gives us a hard thing to do so that we will lean on Him more. When you say, "God, I cannot do this by myself," He tells you: "You are right, you cannot. That is what I am trying to teach you. You need Me." We must be reminded it is not us but Him working through us that enables us to do what we do. Keep in mind that no man is an island to himself. At some point, it will be said about you, "It is because of you." Do you want someone to say, "I am a Christian because of you" or "I am in this big mess because of you"? Which story do you want yours to be?

The March 2023 issue of *The Gospel Trumpeter* had a personal testimony by Sister Alexa Green of the Newark congregation. Sister Alexa recalled in her testimony how she met her (now) husband, Brother Cody, when they went to school together. His life witnessed to her. She started coming to church, and she got saved.

Many years before she met Brother Cody, I was her third-grade teacher. What if Brother Cody had not lived a godly life in front of her? What if I had not? What if his actions and attitudes had not matched mine when she found out we both attended the Church of God? Her dad was also one of my husband's first customers in his business. Sister Alexa knew us through that avenue as well. So many influences led up to her getting saved. However, if even one of us had not followed God's leading, her story may have had a completely different ending. If our actions and attitudes had not been in the will of God, she may have been confused and not desired to have what we have.

We do not know who we are affecting, but we know we are not an island to ourselves. Our actions and attitudes affect those around us. It may not be easy, but we must stick with it. We cannot run away like Jonah because God will always find us. In the end, Jonah obeyed the Lord. It would have been much easier on him, the mariners, and the people waiting on those wares if Jonah had done what God asked him to do from the beginning. Consider your actions and attitudes. Can it be said of you, "It is because of me"?

Sister Becky Foster attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.

[Camp Meeting Report cont. from pg. 2]

Youth services took place each evening before the main service. Various speakers brought messages on topics such as, "You are Valuable," "Loneliness," and "First Things First: The Importance of Keeping God First and Foremost in Your Life." The youth also heard an encouraging, personal testimony from a young married couple who recently returned to the Lord. They said, "The peace and joy we feel in our hearts are hard to describe, but it is amazing!"

The camp meeting could be summed up with this Scripture in Ephesians 1:16-18: "Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Each message was delivered, as Brother Borders' message on Saturday night, "For Such a Time as This." He brought clarity on this great and high calling, and each portion of the meeting brought wisdom, revealed sound truth, and strengthened souls. The saints were afforded the riches and glory of His inheritance for such a time as this!

For information on obtaining a copy of the camp meeting messages or songs, please see page 27.

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

It is not a good feeling when you realize you were tricked by a scam. Scammers use a variety of ways to steal a person's money or identity. They are becoming more advanced in their efforts, and we need to be cautious. According to an online dictionary, a *scammer* is "a person who commits fraud or participates in a dishonest scheme." Scammers prey on a person's good intentions. There are many types of scams. The goal is to steal your money or identity in a way that makes it hard for you to get it back.

I lost my Facebook account to an online scammer. I was tricked by a message sent to a business page I managed. The message read: "*Important notification: Dear Page Admin, we hope this message finds you well. Your Facebook account is scheduled for permanent deletion due to a post that has infringed upon our trademark rights. We made this decision after careful consideration and in compliance with our intellectual property protection policies. If you believe this is a misunderstanding, we ask that you please submit an appeal to restore your page before removing it from Facebook.*"

There was a link to click on that said, "*Request review and appeal*." Of course, I clicked on it, thinking I needed to appeal a decision Facebook had made to remove my account. Then, I was asked to sign back in, which gave the scammers my login information. Once they had that, they signed in to my account and changed the email and phone number associated with it, which locked me out.

The ultimate scammer is the devil. He is constantly working through a variety of ways to steal your soul's well-being and destroy your eternal welfare. John 8:44 says the devil "is a liar." He wants to deceive you. John 10:10 reads, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." These Scriptures tell us the devil is a liar, a thief, and a murderer of souls.

The enemy is sneaky. He has many tricks, disguises, and resources. Matthew 7:15 says He will "come to you in sheep's clothing," pretending to be something he is not. Matthew 24:24 reads, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." The enemy is looking for a way into your heart to get your spiritual password so he can steal your access to the Heavenly Father. He cannot get in without your permission. You need to be aware of his tactics and recognize he is a scammer.

If you are a child of God, doing all you know to keep your relationship with God, there is nothing anyone can do to take it away. John 10:29 lets us know, "No man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." My account was stolen, but I gave away my information. I can blame the scammer, but ultimately, it was me who made the decision to be deceived. You cannot blame anyone but yourself, not even the devil, if you give up your salvation. This is a good lesson on how we constantly need to be watchful. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray."

I tried everything imaginable to get back into my stolen account but to no avail. Then I came across these Facebook tips on recognizing a scammer:

1. **Slow Down**: Scammers often try to create a sense of urgency or threaten you with losing your account or other actions. Take the time to ask questions and think it through.

2. **Spot Check**: Scammers often mention a problem to encourage you to act. Do your research to double-check the details before clicking links or downloading files. Does what they are telling you make sense?

3. **Don't Send**: Scammers often pretend to be from a familiar organization; they may use the employee photo they stole from the internet to convince you. No reputable organization will demand payment on the spot.

Slow Down. Think it through. The Gibeonites tricked Joshua into thinking they were from a far country when they were next-door neighbors. Joshua 9:14 says he "asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD." No doubt, Joshua wished he would have slowed down, not acted too quickly, and talked to God first before making a covenant with the Gibeonites.

Second Corinthians 2:11 says, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." I was ignorant of the devices the scammer used against me and acted too quickly. Sometimes, fear can cause you to move on a situation without thinking it through or stopping and talking to God about it. There have been times when fear of what will happen next has caused me to do or say something I later regretted.

Second Timothy 1:7 says, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Sudden fear can take over your mind and actions if you are not careful. It has happened to me. We cannot see the future, so we can become anxious about it. You may think: "I'm afraid I will be single for life. This person is showing interest in me, and if I don't act soon, I will be without a companion." The scammer is trying to steal your secret relationship with God.

Fear can cause impatience. When you get impatient with your situation, you feel you need to act and help God. But God does not need your help; He needs your obedience and trust. Consider Abraham. God promised him a son, but instead of waiting for God, he took it upon himself to help God, and he had a son with his handmaid, Hagar. This caused much trouble throughout many generations.

First John 4:18 says fear has torment. We need to cast out fear, or it will torment our minds. I have been tormented by fear to the place it has ramped up my anxiety. Fear can keep you from being able to function. You become rash in your decisions; you fail to think things through. This fear does not come from God; it comes from the scammer who wants to steal your joy and contentment.

Psalm 56:3 says, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." *Slow Down*. Take a deep breath, meditate on the Scriptures, and ask God to help you. Psalm 34:4 says, "I sought the LORD, and he

heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." The number one tactic of a scammer is fear. Isaiah 41:10 states, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee." Joshua 1:9 says: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest." Multiple Scriptures say this because God knew we would need to be reminded.

It is embarrassing when you move quickly and realize you are out of order. The Bible tells us how not to be ashamed or humiliated. Psalm 119:6 says, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Give God a chance to move on a situation. When you wait on God, trust and obey Him, you will not be ashamed. Psalm 25:3 states, "Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause."

Spot Check. Does what the enemy is telling you make sense? Check it out. Do your research. Does this match with God and His Word?

Sometimes, the enemy will put thoughts in your mind about another person that are not true, such as "They don't like me" or "They are being promoted ahead of me." Maybe you will get the urge to tell someone what you think about a particular situation. Be careful of speaking your mind. Our minds can imagine untrue things. The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 10:5 to cast down imaginations.

Daily Bible reading is important because knowledge is powerful. First Timothy 2:4 says God wants "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." The only way to get knowledge is to study the Scriptures. Listen to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, and then "think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Now that I know how the scammer tricked me, whenever I get those messages wanting me to act quickly or my account will be removed, I can see how preposterous it is. It does not move me because I recognize it to be a scam. We do not have to be tricked by the enemy of our souls.

Revelation 12:10 says the enemy is an accuser of the brethren. He will overwhelm you with the thought you have done something wrong. The scammer convinced me I had somehow violated Facebook's standards, and I was going to lose my account. Turns out, I lost my account because I believed a lie instead of the truth. God does not work that way. If you do something wrong, He will tell you specifically what it is and how to take care of it. He will not leave you in the dark or pressure you with fear. Luke 1:74 reads, "That he would grant unto

us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear."

Don't Send. The enemy is a pretender. Be aware of his lies and deception. Matthew 15:13-14 talks about "blind leaders of the blind." Some people try to persuade you to abandon the truth. They want to trick you into following them, and they are leading others into darkness. If you are blind, you can easily be led into the ditch the enemy has for you. You need eyes to see. John 3:3 says you cannot see without being born again. Revelation 3:18 says, "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

When you get the urge to do something quickly, ask yourself, "Is this real or fake?" For every true and real, there is a fake and a counterfeit. We do not need to be deceived if we have both the Word and the Spirit. Our eyes can be opened to the truth if we are connected to God. Jesus said in John 15:5,"I am the vine," and we need to abide in Him. When we are connected to the true Vine, the false vine will have no hold on us.

Someone may say something to cause you to question another person's character. It may be a legitimate concern, or it could be they want to tear down someone's good name. Stop and think about it. Do not make a rash move before praying first. It does not hurt to observe, but also, time has a way of revealing the true character. You can discredit or lose confidence in a person because of what someone said about them. There may be no truth in it, or maybe it is all under the blood.

We need wisdom. James 1:5 says if you lack wisdom, you can ask God, who gives it liberally and will not scold you for asking. Philippians 4:6 says not to worry about anything, but to pray about everything. You can talk to God. He will never make you feel bad or stupid. He cares, and it is better to get your direction from Him than to lean to your "own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

When someone hits you, your immediate response is: "Ouch! That hurt!" Often, a desire to retaliate overwhelms you, and you immediately want to hit back. Be careful! When someone offends you, talk to God. He can help you handle it in the right way. *Slow Down*. Think it through, and take a deep breath. *Spot Check*. Does retaliation make sense? Will it help the situation? *Don't Send.* You cannot take back words after you have spoken them.

The enemy wants to lock you out of your relationship with God. Once you realize the devil is scheming, you can immediately rebuke him. Keep yourself from being fooled by his deceitful tricks. Remember, he cannot steal your salvation. If you lose out with God, it is because you decided to give up. You were in a place where you failed to recognize the devil was working.

The words the scammer used to trick me seemed genuine. I thought I had to act quickly and do something. I should have paused and taken a deep breath. Our physical lives are the breath we take in. Our spiritual lives consist of the Holy Spirit living within our hearts. Sometimes, we need to stop, take a deep breath (or take in the Spirit), and let God guide and direct us.

The good news is that if you were tricked by the devil, you can go to God, and He will forgive you and restore your relationship with Him. Unlike Facebook, God is approachable and merciful. He wants to restore you and help you get back into your lost account.

Sister Annette Hupp

Sister Annette Hupp attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.

"Careful and Troubled"

"Careful and troubled," is that true of thee?
"Careful and troubled," why should'st thou be!
Faith in His wisdom, thy Savior desires;
Trust in His guidance, He always requires.

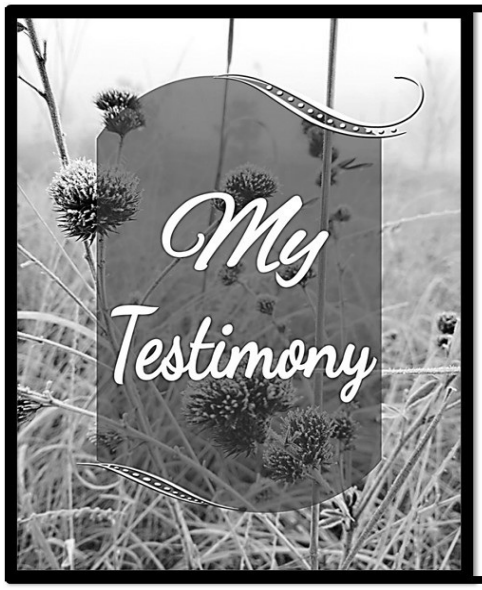
"Careful and troubled," but that is not "trust";
"Trust" means to leave it all, happen what must.
"Trust" means to live free from worrying care,
Casting on Jesus thy burden to bear.

"Careful and troubled" dishonors His love;
Do not His past dealings all faithful prove?
"Careful and troubled" dishonors His power;
Will not His strength hold out, hour after hour?

"Careful and troubled" just means "unbelief";
Thou wilt not trust Him, and that gives Him grief
"Careful and troubled" just means "disobey";
"Bring here thy burden!" "I will not," you say.

And yet, "He careth, He careth for you";
Have you not tried it and found it is true?
Have you known one of His promises to fail?
Haven't you proved that His strength does prevail?

Alter thy motto: then, "trouble" no more;
Go to the Old Book of heavenly lore.
"Careful for nothing," there written I see,
Savior, I thank Thee; make that true of me.



I Recommend the Lord

Sister Almeda Cummings

My desire is to glorify God because the good things have come from the Lord. I was once young too, and I want to help young people. I have told my Sunday school class of girls what I have learned, even if it embarrassed me. I will share my shortcomings to help others. I have a burden on my heart for the children of the church. I often ask, "Why do we lose our young people?"

I was born on March 12, 1944. I owe my wonderful foundation to my Christian parents. I had a godly father and mother who lived for God. We lived in a travel trailer because my dad was an evangelist who traveled around the country and held revival meetings. Dad pastored in a few places, but his burden was evangelistic work.

I was tenderhearted. It is awesome when you are tenderhearted. You cannot wear the altar out. When you need to pray, go pray. I went to the altar frequently. In the middle of the night, if I got troubled about something, I would go into Mom and Dad's bedroom and say: "Mom, Dad, would you please pray with me? I think I might have done something wrong." I am glad I had a tender heart because God could work with me.

I was six years old the first time I went to the altar and got saved. As long ago as that was, I still remember how God dealt with me. I cannot remember where it was or who the pastor was, but Dad was probably the evangelist. I thought, "I am the worst sinner here." I still remember the conviction God brought to me. When God deals with you, you want to move. He loves you and wants you to be saved. It is a privilege when He calls you to Him. If you do not listen, it will become harder for you to hear Him.

I started singing with Mom and Dad when I was about five or six. I remember standing on a little stool to sing. In later years, I outgrew my mother. She was small, and I took after my dad's side. We used to joke and say Mom needed the stool instead of me.

I want to stress how important godly parents are. If you have godly parents teaching and leading you in the right manner, you should continually thank God for them. My parents taught me how to pray. We prayed all the time and about everything. My children say, "Mom, you automatically say, 'Let's pray.'" I was taught prayer is the answer and that God did not make us smart enough to take care of ourselves.

We need God and His divine direction. You are guaranteed to mess up if you try to guide your own life. I will tell you a funny story. Cars were made to run on gas, not diesel. Once, I put diesel in the tank of our vehicle instead of gas, and we could not go very far after that. God made us to run on holiness. When you do not live for Him, you will not operate properly. You will wonder why everything is going wrong and you feel all mixed up. It is because you are not allowing God to control your life. I recommend the Lord. He will give you the best life!

I learned how to pray and trust God for healing. My mom and dad lived by faith. No pay was promised when God called my dad to go out and work for Him. He went by faith. Dad started by doing the singing with an evangelist. Later, he preached in revival meetings. Whatever was taken up in the offering was his pay. They had to share the money if there was a minister and music. All those years growing up, I never knew we were poor because God always supplied our needs.

My dad was affiliated with what was called the Church of God movement. They had compromised, but my dad did not. Attending a good Church of God congregation with a good youth group and spiritual leaders is important. If you have that, you are, of all people, most blessed.

I always had a heart that wanted to please God, but it takes more than a desire. You must put the desire into action. Looking back on my life now, I am glad God did not take me when we were in the movement. I had influences working on me, but God was merciful! The song says, *"All the way my Savior leads me."* He sees our hearts. He sees if you want to live for Him and will work with you. I am amazed at His awesome patience to work with us because He said in 2 Peter 3:9 He is "not willing that any should perish." That is a big statement. God wants all to be saved. That does not mean He will let us get by with wrong.

There was no homeschooling back then, but I did school by correspondence for the first three years while we traveled in the travel trailer. Dad helped me with it. When I was ready for the fourth grade and my brother was ready for the first grade, Dad took a pastorate in Granite Falls,

North Carolina. When I was in the sixth grade, we moved to Tennessee. Dad traveled and did evangelistic work while Mom stayed home with us in Tennessee. The church there had compromised. Again, it is important to attend a good Church of God congregation.

While we lived in Tennessee, the young people who were my friends at church were not true Christians. The wrong friends can influence you. You may think you are stronger than your friends, but they can affect you. I do not feel I did well during that time, spiritually speaking. God was merciful, and I know He protected me. I could have royally messed up my life during that time, but God! My dear momma was on her knees praying for me, too.

When I was a sophomore, we moved to Kansas, and my dad pastored there. I grew spiritually. We had a good congregation there. My dad held a tighter standard of dress than most of the Church of God congregations we were associated with. I am so thankful he did. I met my first husband, Brother Conger, there. He was my children's father. We had six children—Sheri, Tammy, Andy, Alayna, Victoria, and Nicholas. I am thankful for them.

In 1963, before I married Brother Conger, my dad and I traveled together for three months. He said: "Almeda, we are going to go to Newark, Ohio. I heard there is a campground there where the white people still shout." I thought that sounded good. The services were in the old barn (when it was up the hill where dorm eighteen is now). I still remember how I felt when we went there that night. The choir marched in, and they were all modestly dressed.

The church I had been affiliated with had let down on the standard. My dad preached the standard, but I often felt like the odd person out because I lived the standard my dad preached while many others did not. (I thank God I did not want to change it.) When I saw that choir in 1963, I thought I had died and gone to Heaven. It was what I had searched for all my life.

I married Brother Conger in December 1963. We lived in Nebraska for a year and a half while he finished college. That was not a good place to be because the church there had compromised. You are so blessed if you attend a good Church of God congregation where the truth is preached, the pastor holds the standard, and the people live it. Compromise affects you. I remember being in this congregation. I could see what others were doing was wrong, and I thought: "They are

letting down. They are not doing right." However, it was affecting me. There were places where I let down and did not realize it until I moved away from it. Thank God for being true to me. God's purpose and will is for "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

I kept telling Brother Conger how great it was in Newark, Ohio, but he did not believe me. God worked it out for my mom and dad to move to Newark in 1965. Brother Conger had to bring me home to visit my mom and dad. As we left the winter camp meeting in 1965, Brother Conger said, "We are moving here." He had been staunch about staying in Nebraska, but praise God, we moved to Newark, Ohio, on June 1, 1966. That was one of the greatest days of my life. I was pregnant with my daughter, Sister Sheri.

After we moved here, everything was not great. Sometimes, we think everything will be great for the rest of our lives if we live for God. That is not so. We had financial hardships. Brother Conger went from job to job. I remember having ten dollars a week to spend on groceries. I lived through it, and I am not deprived. God has always been there through all my struggles.

One day, I remember feeling so depressed because we did not have any money, and we had just had a baby. We lived in the first house on Greenfield Avenue, next to the Goodwill store. The house had awnings over the windows. While praying in my bedroom, I saw a little bird on that awning. God told me, "If I can take care of that bird, I can take care of you."

When God speaks to you, it is the greatest thing ever! There is nothing better than for you to have a relationship with God where He speaks to you. It is awesome! I love it when He speaks to me. He would speak to us more if we would just get quiet. Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God." Many times, we have plans and things to do. We are looking at stuff and talking, but God has something He would like to say if we are still.

We were not rich, but God helped us stretch our money, and I am thankful I did not have to go to work. I could stay home with our six children. Brother Emerson Wilson, our pastor, preached that women needed to stay home and care for the children. Brother Conger believed in it before we moved because his mother worked. He told me before we were married: "You will never work outside the home while we have children. If I have to, I will work two or three jobs so you can stay home with the children." He did not have to hear the message; he already saw it.

Brother Conger and I sang together, and then we added the children with us. My dad died in 1971 at the early age of fifty-three. My mom lived with us for eight years. What a precious privilege it was to sit under Brother Emerson Wilson. He was a prophet of God. You could feel God

when you were near him. I grew so much spiritually while sitting under his preaching.

Probably the hardest year of my life was in 1987, when Brother Wilson, our pastor, was sick. There was trouble in the congregation, and Brother Wilson died on April 11, 1987. I could not believe God would let him die. I had prayed and prayed for him. I thought: "He is a mighty man of God, and God will not let him die. We need him." I was so depressed when I got up the morning of the funeral, but God said to me, "Am I dead?"

I said, "No."

He said: "Then come on. Keep going for the Lord. I am not dead."

Four weeks from the day Brother Wilson died, my husband, Brother Conger, died of a brain aneurysm on May 8, 1987. I had five children still at home. Sister Sheri was married. Nick was three, Victoria was seven, Alayna was fourteen, Andy was sixteen, and Tammy was eighteen. The devil likes to speak to you when you are in hard places. He said: "God really loves you, doesn't He? He took your husband, and you still have children to raise. You will have to go to work, then who will take care of your children? Who will train them right?"

I said: "Devil, I do not believe you. I do not understand why my husband had to die young, but I know God loves me. You will not feed me lies." God took care of us. I did not have to go to work. Thank the Lord!

I became the choir director on the last of July of that same year. I remember thinking: "I cannot take one more thing. I am going to lose my mind!" I felt like going out in the backyard and screaming. I had never been a choir director. I had helped with a youth choir several years before, but I thought, "I cannot do this." Brother Decker often prayed for me before I went out because I was afraid. God would calm me down, and He helped me.

Life has difficulties, even if you live for God. However, if you stay with God, He will help you. He will never let you down. God helped me so much in 1987. We had a church split, and people left. I want to give you some counsel. Do not listen to any talk against your pastor. You will hear it preached like a fire alarm going off. If you get an attitude toward the pastor, he cannot feed you, and you will be committing spiritual suicide. If you cannot be fed, you will die. If you have a problem, go and talk to the pastor.

People do not like submission. It is the same problem we had when we were children. Ephesians 6:1 says, "Children, obey your parents." Have you ever had a problem obeying your parents? I had trouble. Likewise, we must stay behind the pastor and be submissive. Submission is a keyword in living for God. We cannot have our way if we are going to live for God.

In 1998, there was another church split. I thought I knew what was happening, but I wanted to hear it from God. I can still remember the place, by my couch in the living room, where I said, "God, I feel like I know what is going on here, but I want to hear from You." He spoke so plainly. Young people, hearing from God is better than hearing from the president or anyone else. God brought me the story of Solomon and the two women in 1 Kings, Chapter 3. Both claimed to be the mother of the living baby. God said to me: "The church, the true mother, will never do anything to hurt the babies. The true church will do nothing to destroy the church."

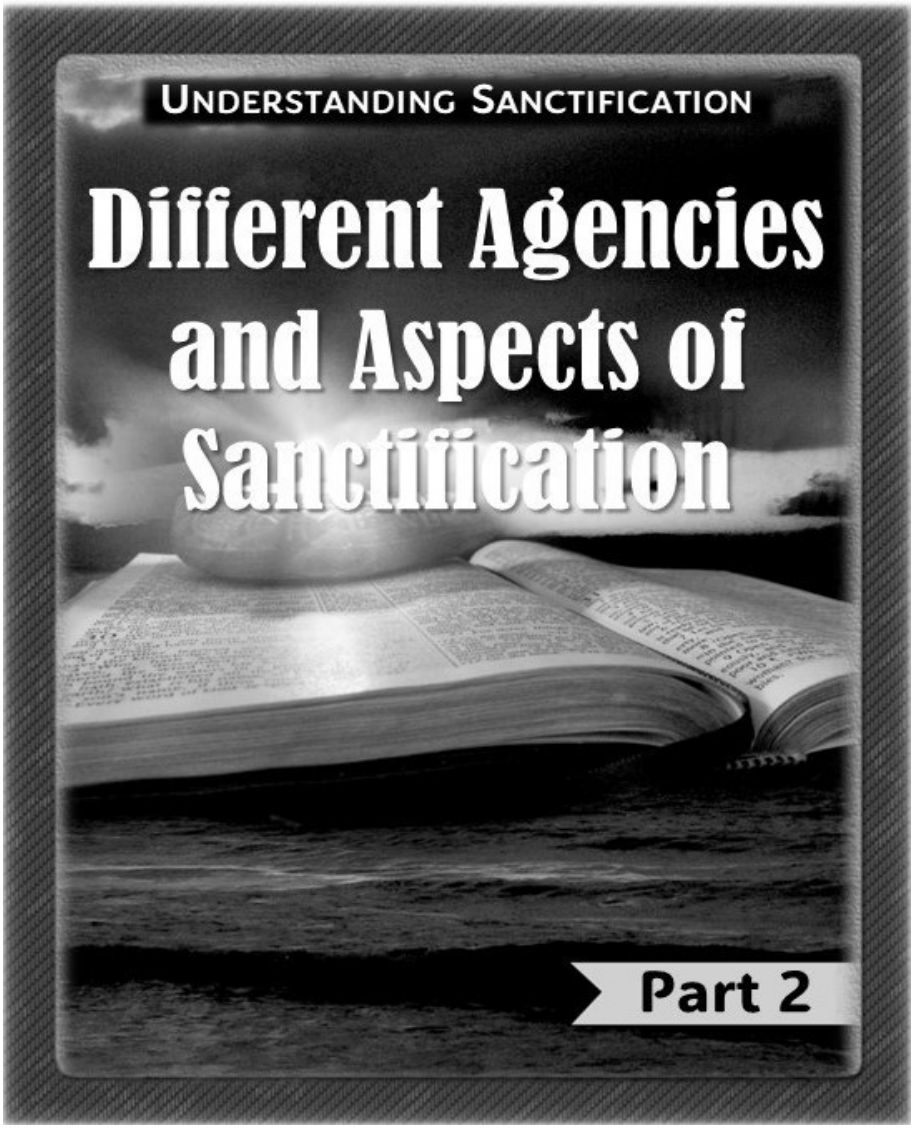
It is not about me having my way; it is about God having His way. We must stay behind the pastor. Do not be a part of anything or anyone working against the pastor. If somebody talks to you against the pastor, you need to say, "I do not want to hear it." Romans 16:17 says to "mark them" and "avoid them." It is dangerous, suicidal talk, spiritually speaking.

In 1989, God was so good to give me another husband, Brother Ronald Cummings. He was such a good father to my children. God's plan is perfect. We had almost thirty years together. I thank God for that.

I am in a different spot in my life now. In January 2022, I had a heart attack and had a stent put in my heart. While I was in the hospital, the doctors found out I had cancer. I have found myself in another difficult trial, but the same God who has seen me through before will see me through again. God promised He would never leave or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He does not say we will never go through a hard place, but He does promise to stay with us. If God is with you, you can make it through.

I am proud of young people who live for God. I love to hear them pray and sing. Those things will help you grow. My admonition to everyone is to stay true to God. If you fail (because you *can* fail), get up one more time than you fall, and you will make it. Make up your mind. I have had failures and struggles, but I tell God, "I cannot live without You." You can conquer with God. You do not have to be destroyed. You can make it because of God. It does not depend on your strength or my strength. I have felt weak ever since I had my heart attack. Thank God, He has really helped me. Sometimes, we have to move out by faith. I recommend the Lord. He will be the best thing that will ever happen to you.

Sister Almeda Cummings attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.



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.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

2 For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3 For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication:

4 That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour;

5 Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:

6 That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

7 For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8 He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.

24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

CORRECTION!

In the February issue, the first sentence of the last paragraph on page 21 should have read, "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."

I DID NOT intend to imply that was the position of all dear brethren who advocate this doctrine. I would NOT intentionally misrepresent any dear brother's position. I sincerely apologize for the error and accept all responsibility for this printed misstatement.

Brother Earl R. Borders

In our previous study, we began considering different agencies and aspects of sanctification. We learned sanctification is positional and has three aspects. It works in pre-conversion, conversion, and post-conversion, or progressively. We focused primarily on pre-conversion and conversion. In this study, we will look more closely at post-conversion, or the progressive nature of sanctification.

One writer stated: "I do not find anywhere in the Scriptures where sanctification is a progressive experience. It is a definite second work of grace." Many dear brethren hold to the traditional teaching of sanctification and may not understand the message we are setting forth. We are in no way disparaging them or casting aspersions on their character or experience whatsoever. We are merely, as the Apostle Paul said, "set for the defence of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17).

God desires His Word to be rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15). The only way we can rightly divide is to do as Jesus taught in John 16:13 and allow "the Spirit of truth" to "guide" and give us an understanding concerning the Word of Truth. We must be certain we are not merely holding to accepted tradition. John 17:17 lets us know the truth is "thy word."

Tradition is easy to embrace. It reminds me of a story about a young bride whose husband asked her to bake a ham. She cut off part of the shank and then put the ham in the oven. Her husband asked, "Honey, why did you cut off part of the ham?" She said, "That is how my mother always made ham." Her husband wanted to know why. She called her mother and asked: "Mother, I'm making a ham, and I cut off part of the shank like you always do. My husband wants to know why we do that."

Her mother answered: "Well, I am not sure. That is the way my mother always cooked ham. You should call your grandmother and ask her." So, the young bride called her grandmother and asked, "Grandma, why did you always cut a part of the shank off the ham before putting it in the oven?" Grandma said, "It was because I didn't have a pan big enough to put the whole ham in." A tradition was passed from grandmother to mother to granddaughter without any thought. Upon examination, there was no need for the tradition to continue.

Sadly, many we dearly love and have confidence in are merely following a tradition that has always been taught. May God help us open our minds to what the Bible teaches.

God's Word Is a Mirror

Let us examine our Scripture texts in conjunction with other texts. In John 17:17, Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." The word "sanctify" comes from the Greek word *hagiazo,* which means "to set apart for God." The sanctifying agent described in this verse is the "truth," or the Word. There is no mention of any type of blood cleansing, but rather a work done by the Word. Is it a subsequent and instantaneous work? I submit to you, it is *not* an instantaneous work.

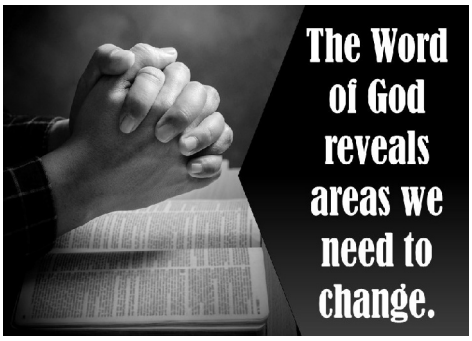
Second Corinthians 3:18 reads, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The expression "we all" is universal. Second Corinthians 1:1 says the Apostle Paul was writing "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints." Paul was addressing the saints in the Church of God. So, in this third chapter, "we all" speaks of the Church of God, the saints, or those who have been saved.

Again, the Apostle Paul said in verse 18, "With open face beholding as in a glass ['mirror'; *The Emphatic Greek Diaglott*]." James 1:21-23 states: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted *word*, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the *word*, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the *word*, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass." The context reveals the "glass" (the mirror) is the Word.

"Glass" is an Old Testament term. Before the priests entered the Tabernacle or the temple, they had to wash in a laver full of water made of brass. (Read Exodus 30:18.) Exodus 38:8 says, "And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." The women polished the brass so it would shine until it became a looking glass or a mirror. Moses was instructed to take those "looking glasses" and make the "laver." When the priests came to the brazen laver, the first thing they saw was their reflection, or how they looked.

James used the looking glass as a type, or an illustration, of the role the Word performs. God uses His Word to enable us to see ourselves. We have the most difficulty seeing ourselves. We can see shortcomings and faults in others, but often we cannot see our own. James 1:24 states, "For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." When he spoke of "the engrafted word," he was talking about taking the Word in and making it a part of us.

Ezekiel 2:8-10 reads: "But thou, son of man, hear what I say



unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll [some renderings say 'scroll'] of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

Ezekiel 3:1 says, "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel." Verse 4 tells us, "Speak with my words." This "roll," or scroll, represented God's Word, and Ezekiel was told to "eat" (ingest, digest, and make it a part of him). We are instructed likewise. Jeremiah 15:16 reads, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."

John was instructed in Revelation 10:8-11: "And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

What John ate enabled him to prophesy, or preach. This "book" was in his "mouth sweet as honey." The "book" is the Word of God (Psalm 119:103). When God enlightens the eyes of your understanding, when you hear the truth preached and it becomes clear, it is "sweet as honey." When you enter the workforce or a hostile environment, it can become bitter when you have to stand for it. Nevertheless, God's Word needs to be ingested.

Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). You are "filled" by feeding on the Word.

Conforming to the Image of Christ

James 1:25 states, "But whoso looketh [present and continual tense] into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth [present and continual tense] therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." *Doer* means "to be constantly doing." The *Amplified Bible* says, "Looks carefully into . . . and perseveres in looking into it . . . an active doer." The verbs used here denote continual action. We are continually to look into the glass, or the Word of God. It is an ongoing, continual process, not a singular event in post-conversion.

Second Corinthians 3:13 reads, "And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished." When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he had to wear "a vail." Today, many of Jewish stock and others have "a vail" on when they read the Word of God. They cannot clearly see it. Paul stated in verse 14, "Which vail is done away in Christ." (Remember, Paul was addressing the Church of God.) In verse 18, we have an "open face" because no "vail" covers our eyes. We can clearly see into the glass, or the Word of God.

Next, we need to establish what "the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18) is referring to. In the truest sense, it is not an *it* or a *something*; it is a *Someone.* Hebrews 1:1-3 reads: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past [the Old Testament dispensation] unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days [letting us know we have entered into the last days] spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

God's Son, Jesus Christ, is "the brightness of his glory." Second Corinthians 3:18 could read, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [the Word of God] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image [of Jesus Christ] from glory to glory." How are we changed "from glory to glory"? John 1:16 reads, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace ['one grace after another'; the *Amplified Bible*]." There are not just one or two works of grace, but many works of God's grace in the life of a saint.

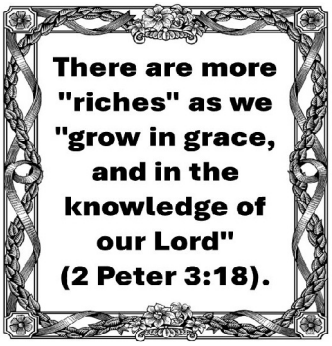
The Word of God is held before us as a mirror, and as we see the image of Christ, we see areas we need to change to conform to His image. We can be changed from "glory to glory" by the Spirit of God, bringing us the grace of God. It describes post-conversion sanctification as becoming increasingly set apart and more

Christ-like.

Let me give you an example. I was raised in Kentucky, the second-highest tobacco-producing state in the union. I smoked cigarettes. Almost everyone I knew smoked, including my parents, grandparents, teachers, and even Sunday school teachers. When I was first saved, I was in a sectarian religion, and the folks there misquoted a Scripture, convincing me it was okay to smoke. After I heard the truth and was saved, I continued to smoke because I did not realize it was wrong. However, there came a time when the mirror of God's Word was held up before me.

One day, I read 1 Thessalonians 4:7, which says, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The manager of the store I worked in was a chain smoker who had smoked for years, and his fingers were stained yellow and brown from the nicotine. As I read that Scripture, God gave me a vision of his fingers and said, "Is that unclean?" God showed me to lay those cigarettes aside. The mirror of His Word brought understanding. It caused me to become more conformed to the image of Christ.

I cannot imagine Christ smoking a cigarette. The same Spirit of God who enlightened my understanding through His Word gave me grace, allowing me to set that habit aside. Titus 2:11-12 says, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us [grace teaches us] that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." The Spirit, or the grace of God, showed me smoking cigarettes was ungodly. Then I took hold of the Word and went from "grace to grace." A work of grace came to me and presented me with the ability to make a change, and I went "from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). It works that way throughout our experience.



If you reflect on your experience, you may recall things God showed you along the way you did not know or see at the beginning. As the mirror of the Word was held before you, and the Spirit enlightened the eyes of your understanding (Ephesians 1:17-18), you saw the glory of the Lord, or the image of Christ, and you saw a shortcoming in your life. Second Corinthians 7:1 reads, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." We are changed by the Spirit of the Lord, who brings understanding and grace to help us become more set apart for God.

Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have redemption through his [Jesus Christ's] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Real salvation is a rich experience, but there are more "riches" as we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord" (2 Peter 3:18). It is a wonderful experience. Redemption provides access to the riches of His grace! Ephesians 2:7 says, "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Grace was not for those under the old dispensation. It was for "the ages to come." In Ephesians 3:8, the Apostle Paul called them "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Paul used the terms "riches of his grace" and "the unsearchable riches" of His grace. It is not a misuse of the Scripture because he had been contextually talking about the "riches of his grace." The word *grace* used in Ephesians 1:7, 2:7, and other Scriptures is the Greek word *charis*, which means "the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life." This grace continues throughout our entire experience.

Let us read what the Lord told Paul when he prayed about "a thorn in the flesh." Second Corinthians 12:9 says: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Paul was well into his experience with the Lord, yet he received the work of God's grace in his life. God's grace will work throughout the entirety of our salvation.

The Work of the Word

Ephesians 5:25-27 is all one sentence. It states, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it [the church] with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The word "sanctify" in the Greek is *hagiazo*, which means "set apart for God." The sanctification in this text is the setting apart that comes with the cleansing at conversion. It is the work of the Word.

The Word of God has cleansing power. Psalm 119:9 reads, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." Jesus said in John 15:3, "Now ye are clean through the word

which I have spoken unto you." These verses reveal the position of the Word in conversion.

When did Christ present the church to Himself? Christ instituted the church on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 33. A bridegroom marries his bride on a given date at a specific time, and they become husband and wife. The Day of Pentecost is when Christ presented the church to Himself and became the Husband. That is when the cleansing and setting apart took place. In Ephesians, Chapter 5, the Apostle Paul compared Christ and the church to a husband and a wife. First Corinthians 15:24 says, "Then cometh the end ['his coming'; verse 23], when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." When the end comes, Christ will present the church to His Father, not to Himself.

Christ presented the church to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, holy and without blemish. A person becomes holy and part of the church when that individual is saved, and "the washing of water by the word" does its work. How does this occur? Jesus told Nicodemus about a born-again experience in John 3:5, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water [This is not talking about a baptismal pool. There is no power in a baptismal pool to wash away sin. It is 'the washing of water by the word.'] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

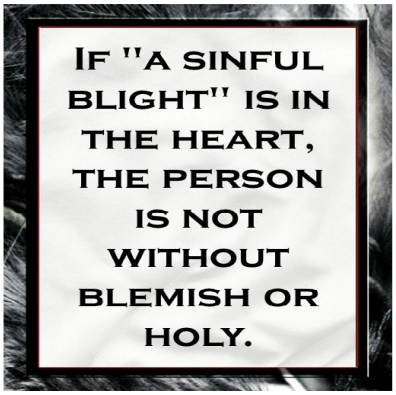
It takes two things to get saved. The Word is the mirror that reveals our condition, and the Spirit of God uses the mirror to convict and convince a person of sin. When an individual becomes convinced and convicted of sin and repents, the Word and the Spirit do a work that births the believer. Conversion incorporates taking away all past sins and making the person a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). They become holy (Ephesians 5:27).

An individual with inbred sin in his heart would not be holy. Someone may say, "They have sin; they just do not know about it yet." Where there is no knowledge of sin, there is no sin (Romans 4:15). One songwriter said, "*There's a sting of guilt, and a sinful blight, That will keep you from ent'ring in.*" That verse refers to a supposed Adamic, carnal nature, or inbred sin. If "a sinful blight" is in the heart, the person is not without blemish or holy. Again, the Scripture says it is "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing," referring to what the Word does in conversion.

First Peter 1:22 states, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit." Verse 23 says, "Being born again . . . ." The water [the Word] and the Spirit enable you to be "born again." Conversion is being set forth in these verses of Scripture found in Ephesians, Chapter 5; 1 Peter, Chapter 1; and other Scriptures we have studied.

Possessing Your Vessel in Sanctification

In 1 Thessalonians, Chapter 4, the Apostle Paul addressed the "brethren" (verse 1). He was not writing to the world, but to the saints of God. He said, "Ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." That does not sound like something you do once or twice. In verse 4, the Apostle penned, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." The *Amplified Bible* says, "That each of you should know how to possess (control, manage) his own body in consecration (purity, separated from things profane) and honor." It is an ongoing



process, or practice, to control and manage your vessel.

Verse 7 says, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness [the Greek word *hagiasmos* is also translated as 'sanctification'; verses 3 and 4]." We could say, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto *sanctification.*" Verse 10 reads, "And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." If sanctification were an instantaneous, subsequent work, how could you "increase [it] more and more"?

Verse 11 states, "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you." Consider the verbs. First, Paul said, "*Study* to be quiet." Is that something you do once or repeatedly? Next, he said, "*Do* your own business." Are you tempted to get involved into someone else's business? Is that something you have to work at? Can you get a one-time experience and never have to worry about studying to be quiet or doing your own business? Paul said, "*Work* with your own hands." We use our hands constantly. The context shows these are not one-time events, but progressive, ongoing, and continual.

Verse 12 says, "That ye may *walk* honestly toward them that are without." That is how you should live your life. It is not a one-time occurrence. You should

be honest and do honest work before other people. They should see you paying your bills, not running from them. (If a man runs from his bills, he has no business participating in the services or being in the pulpit.) Sometimes, when the money is due, you cannot pay. I have been there. Do not avoid it. Go to the person or business you owe and tell them you need more time to pay what you owe. Acknowledge the debt; do not run from it.

These verbs Paul used require continual action on our part. Again, verse 4 says, "Every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour." "Possess" is continual. I own my car. It requires maintenance. I have to change the oil and rotate the tires; that is a part of maintaining my car. Possessing your vessel "in sanctification and honour" requires maintenance. Again, the *Amplified Bible* uses the terms "possess, control, and manage."

Perfecting Your Faith

Second Timothy 2:21 says, "If a man therefore purge himself from these." One version states, "Keeps himself clear of these." Another rendering says, "Keeps himself clean." Notice the tenor of the text. Verse 22 says, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace." These are not things you can do instantaneously or singularly. Faith has to grow and be perfected. Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" That is why our Scripture text in 2 Timothy 2:22 says to "follow." You need to continue to develop and perfect your faith, enabling it to grow.

The same is true for charity, which is *agape*, the Greek word for divine love. First John 4:17 says, "Herein is our love made perfect [or complete]." Verse 18 reads: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." Your love has to be perfected. It has to grow and develop. Some people will try your love. You need continually to sanctify and set yourself apart in a greater way to love the unlovable.

Galatians, Chapter 5, speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. Every one of these attributes comes in seed form. When a child is born, he has all his natural senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch), but they are underdeveloped. They must be developed and perfected as the child grows. A baby can touch but cannot automatically become a pianist and perform a symphony. There may come a time when she can. Some can sing in a service, and in a few minutes, a piano player or guitarist can play along because he has developed his ear. So it is with spiritual qualities. The fruit of the Spirit must be perfected, developed, or sanctified more and more, and set apart for sacred use.

Isaiah 26:3 states, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." Peace is another attribute that has to be perfected. Second Timothy 2:24-25 states, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves." These are all ongoing qualities we must engage in to be more set apart for God.

Another passage portraying progressive sanctification is 1 John 3:1-3. It does not specifically employ the word, but one word it does use is in the same family of words as *hagiazo* and *hagiasmos*. It says: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God [now, we have been regenerated], and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

The statement "doth not yet appear what we shall be" does not refer to the general, physical resurrection. John was speaking to those who are already "the sons of God." The Greek word for "purifieth" is *hagnizo*, and it is from the same family of words translated "sanctify" and "sanctification" (*hagiazo* and *hagiamos*). One definition of the Greek word rendered "purifieth" is "sanctify" (*Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words* with *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary*). The Apostle John was talking about the work of sanctification.

Some connect these verses in 1 John with the resurrection at the end of time. Philippians 3:21 says, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." That event does not require anyone to "purifieth himself." When the physical resurrection occurs, our bodies will be changed regardless of how we have lived. This Scripture refers to a progressive sanctification. Acts 24:15 tells us "the just and unjust" will participate in the general resurrection. You can do nothing in the sense of the physical resurrection to alter its literal, physical effect by purifying yourself. You can alter your soul's destiny, but you cannot change any aspect of the physical resurrection.

The Continual Working of the Grace of God

Why is sanctification a continual or ongoing process? One

writer penned: "We believe in sanctification. We believe it to be a second experience, a second work of grace, a cleansing and a purging of our carnal nature." Brother R. R. Byrum, in *Christian Theology* (page 450), said, "The doctrine of sanctification as a second cleansing, rests upon the idea that depravity remains either in whole or in part in those who have been truly regenerated." The traditional sanctification teaching is premised on the need to purge, cleanse, or eradicate the carnal nature of man because it has sin within it. This doctrine makes it appear that man's nature may be completely eradicated at the time of sanctification.

If this were true, why did Paul write, "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 castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27)? If Paul was sanctified and the carnal nature completely eradicated, why would there be a constant necessity to keep his body under? One rendering says, "I keep on," indicating a continual effort. We have fleshly desires to contend with, even after we are saved. No experience can eradicate fleshly human desires. If we could eliminate them, we would not have temptation.

James 1:13-14 reads, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted [saved or unsaved, sanctified or not, 'every man is tempted'], when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." The Greek says "inordinate desire." God gives every individual his fleshly desires to be serviced in a rightful manner. God put sexual desires in both men and women for the reproduction of the race. God said in Genesis 9:1, "Be fruitful, and multiply." The enemy tempts an individual to exercise a lawful desire in an unlawful manner, which is the nature of temptation.

The desire to drink is essential to life, but the enemy will try to get you to fulfill that desire in an unlawful way by drinking alcoholic beverages. We would be immune from temptations if we had no desires. First Peter 2:21 tells us Christ is our example. Hebrews 4:15 states Christ "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Thank God, temptation is not a sin because every man is tempted, even Christ.

On Sunday morning, when the alarm clock goes off, your human desire is to stay in bed. The flesh says, "I do not feel like getting up and going to church this morning." The enemy wants you to give in to your fleshly desires. That is how he tempts you. No experience will eradicate human nature or temptation.

First Corinthians 9:27 says, "But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it" (the *Amplified Bible*). By the grace of God and the power of the Spirit, we must tell our flesh, "I don't care what you want to do; this is what we're doing." I was told of a brother who believed he was so sanctified that he was no longer tempted by sin. This is how the power of deception works.

James 1:14-15 states: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." There is no sin until there is a conception. In the physical, a man or woman cannot conceive a child by themselves. They have to come together. It is the same with sin. Temptation is not sin, but when your will embraces the temptation, then it becomes sin. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." When you have knowledge of sin and your will embraces it (you know it is wrong, that you should not do it, but you still do it), or you know you should do it and you do not, then it becomes sin. All sin is a willful act or transgression. That is the Biblical definition of sin.

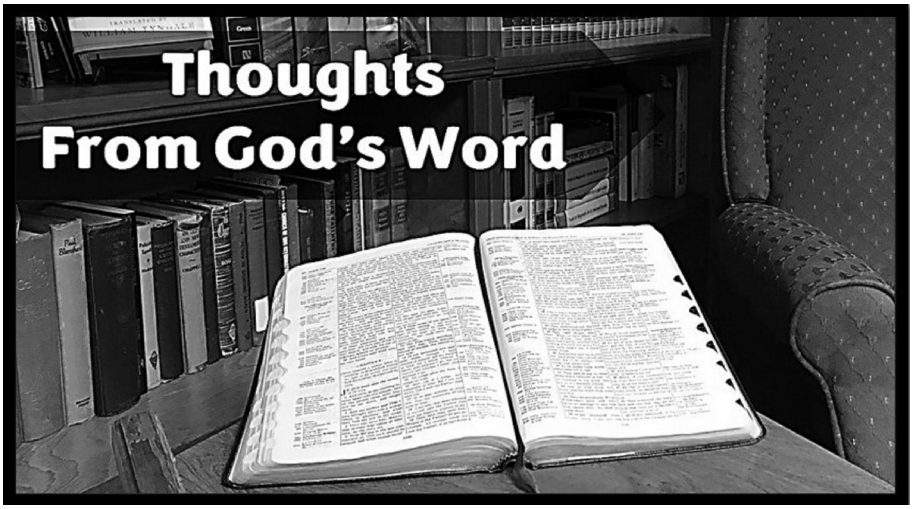
We will contend with our human nature throughout the duration of our lives. God can give the power to overcome the temptations. When a person is in sin, the flesh dominates the spirit. When you get saved, thank God, the Spirit is able to defeat the flesh. There is a continual working of the grace of God in the life of a saint of God.

I trust you can see this post-conversion, progressive nature of sanctification is not a singular experience. The grace of God is not one work or two works. It is designed to work throughout the entirety of our experience.

Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." As God enlightens our understanding concerning the Word, He holds before us as a mirror, and we see "the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18), the image of Christ, and our need to be more conformed to His image.

John 1:16 says, "And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." The Spirit of God takes us from "glory to glory," and we become more set apart and sanctified. We are sanctified if we walk in all God has revealed, but we must continue to receive "grace for grace" as understanding comes to us through the Word and the Spirit.

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



Ephesians 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

Over twenty years ago, I did not have a clue what this verse of Scripture meant. You could not have told me I would be living a whole new life today: a life of hope instead of despair, a life of peace instead of turmoil. When life handed me what I thought was the final blow, the world could not relieve the feelings of doom that pounded me daily. So I turned to what I had turned away from—the Word of God.

I felt as David did when he recorded Psalm 18:5-6, which says: "The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears."

I truly had never felt so low and so helpless. It was then I heard a voice calling for me to come and listen to the peaceful words that were endeavoring to enter my heart. Those words so beautifully said to "awake" to a new and better way.

In a spiritual sense, I was like Lazarus, encompassed in a tomb with an enormous barrier keeping me from coming forth and living as I ought. Jesus brought literal life back to a deceased Lazarus. Why is it so hard to believe Jesus can bring a new and better life to us? Jesus said in John 11:11, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

Friend, you can replace the word "him" with your name! One day, Jesus said, "I must go and wake Gerri Lynn out of the sleep that keeps her unaware of all I have planned for her life!" John 10:10 says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." That is exactly what He offered and what I received!

When I allowed Jesus to take His rightful place in my life, I was awakened. All things were new to me, and life took on a whole new meaning. The Word of God came alive as I read and studied the Scriptures and became acquainted with my Heavenly Father.

Since that day, I can assure you, this experience is as real now as it was when He first spoke to my heart. The only difference is the awakening light, which brought me new life, is clearer and brighter every day I live for Him.

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

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

Revelation Chart Study

Eleven lessons by Brother Steve and Sister Sheri Strelecky explaining the symbols on the Revelation Chart. The study includes audio/video presentations, handouts, answer keys, and slides.

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3. Smyrna
4. Pergamos (Part 1)
5. Pergamos (Part 2)
6. Thyatira
7. Sardis
8. Philadelphia (Part 1)
9. Philadelphia (Part 2)
10. Laodicea (Part 1)
11. Laodicea (Part 2)

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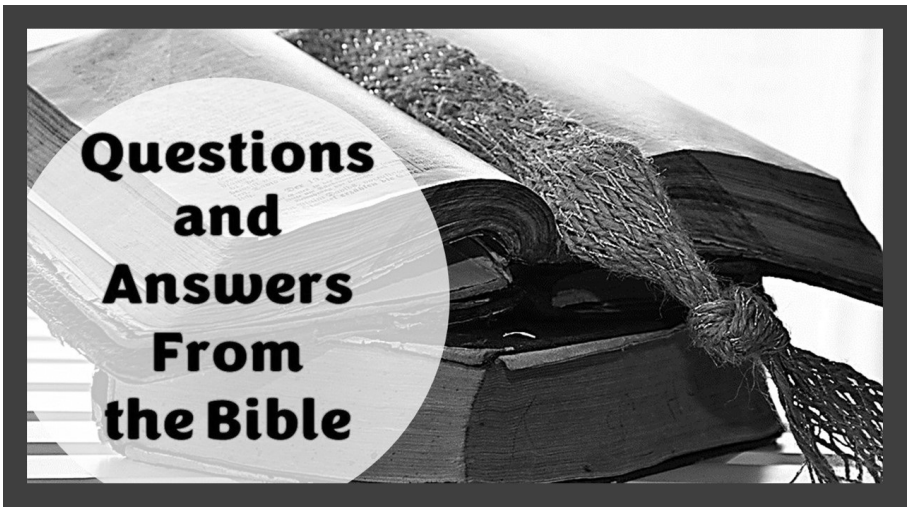

What Is the Significance of What Jesus Said in Matthew 26:29?

In instituting the New Testament ordinance of the Lord's Supper, Jesus made a proclamation that, sadly, has not only been difficult to understand with casual perusal, but even subject to erroneous teaching. This exclamation is recorded in all three synoptic Gospel accounts; thus, attaching the importance of divine inspiration to this utterance.

In Matthew 26:29, Christ said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." This is also recorded in Mark 14:25 and Luke 22:18.

To be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), we must allow "the Spirit of truth" to "guide" us (John 16:13). We must lay "precept upon precept; line upon line" and go "here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:13). If we allow the Spirit to "mate" up the Scriptures, for "his spirit it hath gathered them" (Isaiah 34:16), then every obscure or unclear passage of Scripture text can be clarified by other portions of God's Word.

This expression must first be viewed in the greater context. In each instance, the expression concerning the "fruit of the vine" (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18) is related to "this is my blood of the new testament" (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). The statement concerning "this is my blood" was not intended to be taken literally for as Jesus spoke these words, His blood had not yet been shed. It was still coursing through His veins. He was referring to what it represents. Thus, we must consider what the "blood" (or the "fruit of the vine") represents.

Jesus instructed His disciples, "Drink ye all of it" (Matthew 26:27), and He declared, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life" (John 6:54). This "blood" represents that which has a "life"-giving quality. What did the Old Testament Scriptures say concerning the "blood"? Deuteronomy 12:23 says, "For the blood is the life." In this New Testament dispensation, Romans 8:10 tells us, "The Spirit is life," and 1 Corinthians 12:13 reveals we "drink into one Spirit."

In the verses under consideration, Jesus spoke of the "fruit of the vine" as "when I drink it new." He was speaking of a new wine that would be available "in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25). Joel 3:18 prophesied of "in that day," speaking prophetically of this Gospel Day, "the mountains shall drop down new wine and the hills shall flow with milk." These are prophetic expressions revealing the benefits of the New Testament dispensation. The "milk" alluded to is "the sincere milk of the word" (1 Peter 2:2). The "new wine" is what the disciples were accused of drinking on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13).

The Apostle Peter explained this was the fulfillment of the prophecy of when God said, "I will pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29). So the "new wine" represents the Spirit. When "the kingdom of God" came "with power" (Mark 9:1), the Spirit was poured out. God's people drank Him in (1 Corinthians 12:13), and "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:4).

Jesus said He would drink this "fruit of the vine . . . with you" (Matthew 26:29). When Saul of Tarsus "persecuted the church of God, and wasted it" (Galatians 1:13), Jesus confronted Saul on the Damascus Road and said, "Why persecutest thou *me*?" (Acts 9:4). In Matthew 25:40, Jesus taught, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*." First Corinthians 12:12 says, "The body [or 'the body, the church'; Colossians 1:18] is one." Though it is comprised of "many," it is "one body: so also is Christ." Understanding the spiritual principle that Christ and His body are "one," when they drank this "new wine," He, in essence, drank it with them!

The reality of our text is a spiritual reality. Christ's drinking of the new wine (representing what His blood produced) speaks of the church His blood purchased and the Spirit that instituted that church on the Day of Pentecost.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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

2023 Winter Camp Meeting Recordings

Message #	Date	Message Title	Minister
TR-3129	12-27-2023	How Is Your Desire for God?	Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3130	12-28-2023	Charity—The Highest Virtue	Bro. Abraham Burton
TR-3131	12-28-2023	The Christian Home: Submission	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
TR-3132	12-28-2023	Enlarge My Heart	Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3133	12-29-2023	The Trap of the Strange Woman	Bro. Aurelius Raines
TR-3134	12-29-2023	What Will Become of the Church?	Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3135	12-30-2023	Staying Saved & Encouraged During the Low Times	Bro. Allen Polston
TR-3136	12-30-2023	The Christian Home: Self Sacrifice	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier
TR-3137	12-30-2023	For Such a Time as This	Bro. Earl R. Borders
TR-3138	12-31-2023	What Is Wisdom? Where Can It Be Found?	Bro. E. David Stegmeier
TR-3139	12-31-2023	The Christian Home: Sensitivity	Bro. Reggie Stegmeier

TM-485	2023	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #1
TM-486	2023	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #2
TM-487	2023	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #3
TM-488	2023	Winter Camp Meeting Songs #4
	2023	Winter Camp Meeting Choirs Songs
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April 8-14 — NEWTON, KS

Revival: Church of God, 400 North Meridian Road, Newton, KS 67114
Evangelist: Brother Earl R. Borders, Summersville, WV
Services times: Monday-Saturday 7 p.m.; Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 7 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Brandon R. Gonzalez @ 316-217-2696

April 22-28 — SUMMERSVILLE, WV

Revival and Fellowship Meeting: Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evening Evangelist: Brother Roger L. Decker, Newark, OH
Services times: Monday-Thursday 7 p.m.; Friday 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m.;
Saturday & Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Meals will be provided by the local congregation following the services on Friday-Sunday.
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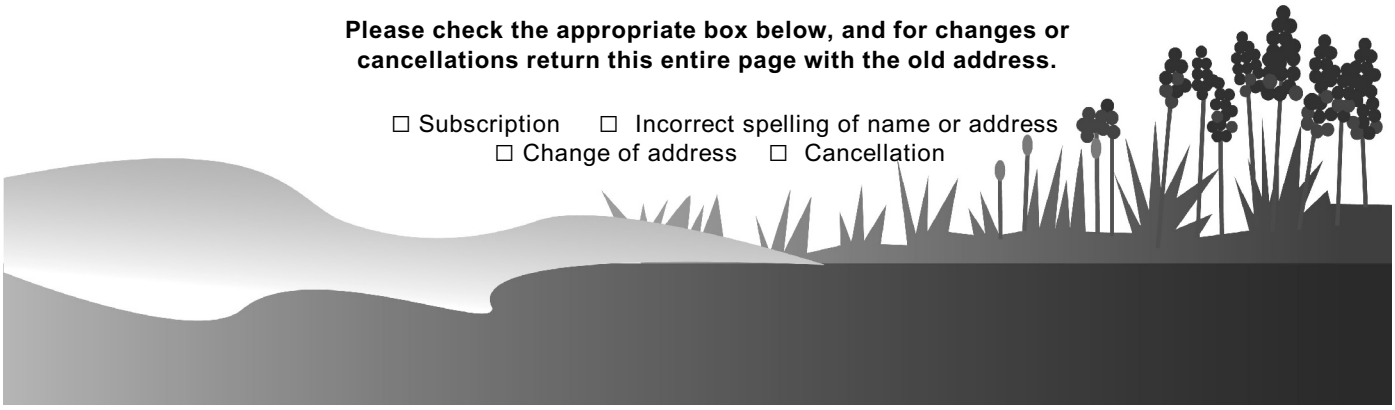
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