

THE GOSPEL TRUMPETER



Vol. 56 April 2026 No. 4

"He was
wounded
for our

TRANSGRESSIONS

... and with his stripes
we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).



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

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

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN

- A personal God (John 4:24)
- A divine Christ (John 1:1, 14)
- An infallibly inspired Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- Salvation from sin (Matthew 1:21)
- The new birth (John 3:3, 5-7)
- A holy life (Luke 1:73-75; Titus 2:12)
- Sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
- Unity of God's people (John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3)
- Divine, physical healing (James 5:14-16)
- The ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34)
- Eternal life (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43)
- The Trinity (1 John 5:7-8)

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS
PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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One of my most memorable classes in school was learning the art of pottery. There was just something about that lump of clay and the possibility of creating whatever I desired. It was in my hands, and this creation would come from my thoughts and my mind.

Clay is unique, and there are several types, each having specific characteristics. A professional potter would be familiar with the properties of each particular lump of clay he is working with to produce a certain product. Earthenware clay is heavy and porous and is used in making things such as flowerpots or tiles. It is fired in a kiln at a temperature around two thousand degrees. On the other hand, porcelain—a delicate and more flexible clay—is used for products such as fine china or figurines. It is fired at a heat over three thousand degrees.

In preparation, kneading or wedging clay is necessary to remove air pockets and to align the particles for strength and consistency. The potter then places the clay on the wheel. As it begins to turn, even steady pressure guides the clay until it is centered. When the potter can no longer feel resistance and the clay glides smoothly as it spins, masterful hands begin

to shape and form the intended creation.

After a period of drying, the clay must be put through a firing process. As the kiln slowly comes to temperature, each stage of heat begins to change the properties of the clay into a hard, durable creation. How important it is for the potter to know how to regulate the heat for each intended piece of work. In her book, *Science for Potters*, renowned ceramic artist Nancy Bloomfield explains this crucial process: "Ceramics must be fired to make them durable. Potters need to know the processes taking place in order to be able to control the outcome."

A valuable lesson can be gained in this short study as a correlation of a potter to that of God our Heavenly Father—the great Potter of all mankind. Isaiah 64:8 says, "But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." When we are saved, God gently works with us, ever guiding us into the center of His will. It is then that God's Holy Spirit begins to form us into a new creation. Second Corinthians 5:17 tells us, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become

[continued on page 19]



Brother Roger L. Decker

2 Timothy 3:1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

In these five verses, the Apostle Paul listed some very gross sins. He began the chapter by saying three words to get the reader's attention. "This know also [or in addition to what I said before]" These sins were already preva-

lent, but Paul was doing his best to help the church stay pure, sinless, without spot, and presentable to the Lord. "Perilous [troublesome] times" were coming. These sins were going to increase and become prevalent in the lives of those who professed to be the church. How do we know? Verse 5 says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," speaking of church members, not the world.

As sin increases in the world, it affects many in the church. Paul cried out against these things coming against the church. He was not talking about these sins coming on the world because the world was already steeped in them. He warned about sins being hidden right among the congregations of the Church of God, creating "a form of godliness," but leaving them powerless.

I want especially to highlight the first of these sins — "lovers of

their own selves." This sin is mentioned first because it serves as a springboard for the rest. What is a lover of self? It is a life centered on self. It is composed of the Greek word *philautos*, which means "fond of self; selfish; lover of self." We have within us a human nature, and unless we put it in its proper place, it will exalt itself, desiring its own way, which is against the right way. As Christians, we are taught to obliterate self. When our human nature takes us out of God's will, it quickly destroys our Christian witness.

The Peril of Self

Let us look at some Scriptures concerning self. In 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul wrote: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let

every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Paul was the principal founder of many congregations throughout Asia. He started the congregation at Corinth.

Paul knew where his trouble would come in his walk with God. It was not in the perils he mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:26. "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren." Paul went through all these different perils, but he did not say that any of them "almost took me under." No, he was more concerned about his own self.

Dear church, the battle is with self. Your real problem is with yourself. Paul was beaten and thrown into prison, but he was able to pray and sing songs (Acts 16:25). God brought him out with great victory. He knew he must win the battle against self, or he would become a Church of God defector. Many people do not want to admit their main problem is with self.

First Corinthians 9:24-27 reads: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 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 [I keep self where it belongs], and bring it into subjection [Why?]: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should [defect from the truth or] be a castaway."

In these Scriptures, the Apostle used the example of an athlete—particularly a runner—to make his point. He said this person is "temperate in all things."

Although he mentioned running, it could apply to any sport. Rigorous training, discipline, and personal sacrifice are essential. Paul compared all the training, dieting, and physical effort that went into the ancient Olympic Games to receive a corruptible prize to the temperance we need to receive an incorruptible prize. Also, when someone joins the military, he undergoes weeks of rigorous training to prepare for combat.

Then Paul brought up the body or self. Self rises against the will of God. Self wants you to relax your efforts. Self affects your desires and vaunts itself. Paul said, "I keep under my body" because it does not want to be kept under. Somebody has to watch self and keep it under. Self wants to be at the forefront.

Why do people struggle with staying saved, settled, and grounded? They love themselves too much. They love themselves more than they love God. The hardest challenge you will ever deal with in life is yourself. Paul did not say, "I must stay away from the perils," but he did say, "I must keep under my body."

Let us consider King Solomon. First Kings 11:1-3 states: "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites [every one of these 'ites' were enemies to Israel]; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in [so-called] love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."

Solomon's heart was easily turned because he was already out of the will of God. Solomon

lived in the old dispensation of time, but the command to leave these foreign women alone came not from his earthly father but from his Heavenly Father. What controlled Solomon's life? His flesh had complete control over him. The desire he had for these foreign women overrode the will of God, and they enticed him to build altars to the gods of some of Israel's worst enemies.

King Ahab's Selfish Choices

King Ahab in the Old Testament was a very wicked king. He married a pagan girl named Jezebel, who helped lead him into idolatry. He was spineless when it came to doing the right thing. It makes a difference who you marry. Your future will be shaped by the one you date in preparation for marriage. Jezebel's influence on King Ahab took him deeper and deeper into sin. Dear one, do not think you are so strong that you cannot be influenced by your companion. Ahab did not do well when he married Jezebel, and he certainly did not do well after.

First Kings 16:30-33 reads: "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians [enemies of God], and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."

In 1 Kings, Chapter 20, things did not go well for King Ahab. Benhadad, king of Syria, gathered an army together with thirty-two other kings. Messengers were sent to Ahab, king of

Samaria, from Benhadad, with a message: "We are going to war against you. We want your gold, silver, wives, children, and everything else that is good, or we will take you out." Ahab agreed to Benhadad's message. Benhadad was shocked that there was no resistance. So he sent another message to Ahab saying they wanted to first view the kingdom to see what more they could keep.

Benhadad pressed Ahab to go to war with him. Basically, he said, "Give me the whole land, or I will come to battle against you." Ahab did not like the second message, so he did not agree to it. So Benhadad declared war. God sent a prophet to Ahab who informed the king, "Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD" (1 Kings 20:13).

Ahab gathered his two hundred and thirty-two footmen together and went out against the Syrians. Meanwhile, Benhadad, along with the other thirty-two kings who were in a league with him, got drunk. They were overconfident and arrogant. While they were drinking and partying, Israel ambushed and defeated them.

The prophet warned Ahab to stay prepared because within a year, Syria would gather enough strength to come against him again. The Syrians returned the next year for battle in the valley, but they stirred God. In 1 Kings 20:28, God said, "Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD." The battle took place, and Samaria slew one hundred thousand Syrians in one day.

Benhadad escaped, surrendered, and spoke peaceably to

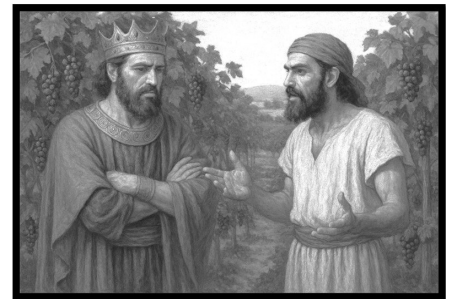
Ahab, making promises. He impressed Ahab by declaring, "The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria" (1 Kings 20:34). So Ahab allowed Benhadad to live, which was a bad move because God wanted him killed.

"Heavy and Displeased"

God sent a prophet to Ahab. First Kings 20:42-43 says: "And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria." Ahab went home angry and sad after the prophet spoke to him. Ahab always failed to follow through with God's commands.

First Kings 21:1-4 says: "And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread."

Ahab was already in a bad mood, but he was in a worse mood when Naboth refused to



King Ahab and Naboth

sell him his vineyard. The Law forbade Naboth from selling his inheritance. Numbers 36:7 reads, "So shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: for every one of the children of Israel shall keep himself to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers."

Ezekiel 46:18 states, "Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession." From a worldly point of view, Naboth could have made a good business deal by selling his estate to Ahab, but Naboth had a conscience.

Ahab returned home "heavy and displeased" after battling Samaria and because of what Naboth had told him. Disappointments caused him to be upset. Self had taken complete control over Ahab. He was chastised by the Lord, which displeased him, and Naboth turned him down. No doubt, he was so angry he could not even think straight.

The flesh can completely take over a situation. When you get upset, self can take over, and you are a prime candidate for the enemy to come in, which is exactly what happened to Ahab. Naboth turned him down; so Ahab pouted. He turned his face toward the wall and refused to eat his food. Love for himself took over, and his flesh showed displeasure. The desire to have



King Ahab and Queen Jezebel

his own way came to the forefront. Angry and pouting, Ahab acted like a little child. Jezebel, his wife, came up with a plan. Right at the time when he was in a pouty mood, the devil came along.

First Kings 21:5-7 says: "But Jezebel his wife came to him [she babied him], and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife [comforted him and] said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel [are you the man in charge of Israel]? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

Divine Judgment

Ahab knew the Law. He knew there was no way Jezebel could give him Naboth's vineyard lawfully. Yet he did not stop her. Why? He wanted that vineyard at any cost. Jezebel reminded him: "You are the king. No one is more powerful than you in this entire kingdom. Get up, eat some bread, and change your countenance because I will give you the vineyard." Jezebel made him think he was right and Naboth was wrong.

Naboth meant nothing to

Jezebel. It was all about what she and the king wanted. So she devised a plan to give Ahab what he wanted by having Naboth killed. Ahab did not investigate Jezebel's plan. Although the direct orders for Naboth's death did not come from him, Ahab said nothing. By his silence, he was an accomplice to murder, and God witnessed all of it.

The crime Ahab and Jezebel committed was more black because of the pretext of religion. They involved a fast in their plan. Letters, sealed by the king's seal, were sent to the nobles, proclaiming a fast and accusing Naboth of blasphemy against God and the king. Jezebel's plan worked. Ahab attained the vineyard, but it brought divine judgment upon the royal family. God saw everything, and He sent a prophet to Ahab.

First Kings 21:17-20 states: "And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD."

Second Timothy 3:2 says, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy." Self completely took Ahab over to the place where God brought divine judgment down on his entire family. The prophecy came true.

Luke 12:16-21 reads: "And he

spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

This parable is full of the words "I" and "my," but ends with the expression, "thou fool." Here was a man who was full of ego and in love with himself. His treasures were earthly, and they were his number one priority in life.

Controlling Self

Second Timothy 3:4 says, "Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Many people love to please themselves more than they love to please God. They are fond of pleasures, love to be entertained, and always want to be where the action is.

Sports are a god to some people. Football, baseball, and basketball become their top priorities. They can name every player on their favorite team but cannot name the twelve disciples. The flesh loves to be entertained. For some people, it is all about them and what they want, and if what they want interferes with what God wants, they will stick to what they want. They want good times and parties. God will allow you to do what you want, but always keep in mind that a payday is coming. You will receive

wages for what you do, and the wages of sin are not worth the pleasure.

Isaiah 53:6 reads, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way [desires, thinking, and pleasures]; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." God puts desires within you, and the only way they can be controlled is by the One who gave them to you through His Holy Spirit. God gave you many wonderful attributes. You can think for yourself, but your thoughts must be kept in check by the Spirit of God.

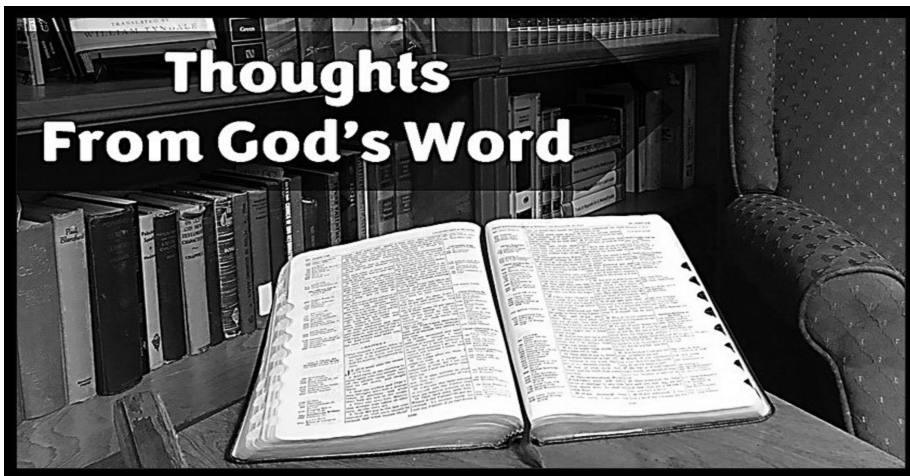
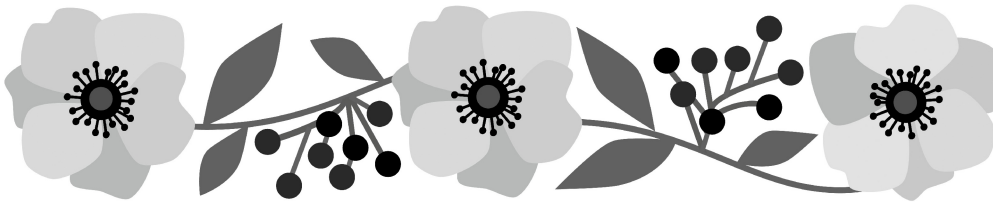
Paul said, "Lovers of their own selves." From that sin grow all the other gross sins. Instead of attending church services, many prefer to do other things. They could be saved, but there are other things they want to do. If that is your situation, you will give an answer to God at the Judgment. What will you tell Him? Was the way too hard? Did you have other things you felt you had a right to do? You may be healthy and doing well now, but judgment is coming. Down the highway of life, something is coming that you cannot handle

on your own. The only One who can take care of it for you is God.

Where have you placed God in your life? Church of God, the battle has been—and always will be—keeping self where it needs to be: under control. God gave you a controller for self—His Holy Spirit.

(Compact Disc TR-3200)

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



Reville Not

Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.

1 Peter 2:23

Have you ever been accused of something you did not do? Has anyone ever insulted you with hurtful words? Maybe you have felt a condescending tone in mean, hateful things said to or about you. What did you do

about it? What should you do about it? Your first response may be to plead your case. You may want to talk back with hurtful words of your own. When that happens, think of Jesus. Peter told us He is our example, and that we will also suffer as Jesus did.

First Peter 2:23 says, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

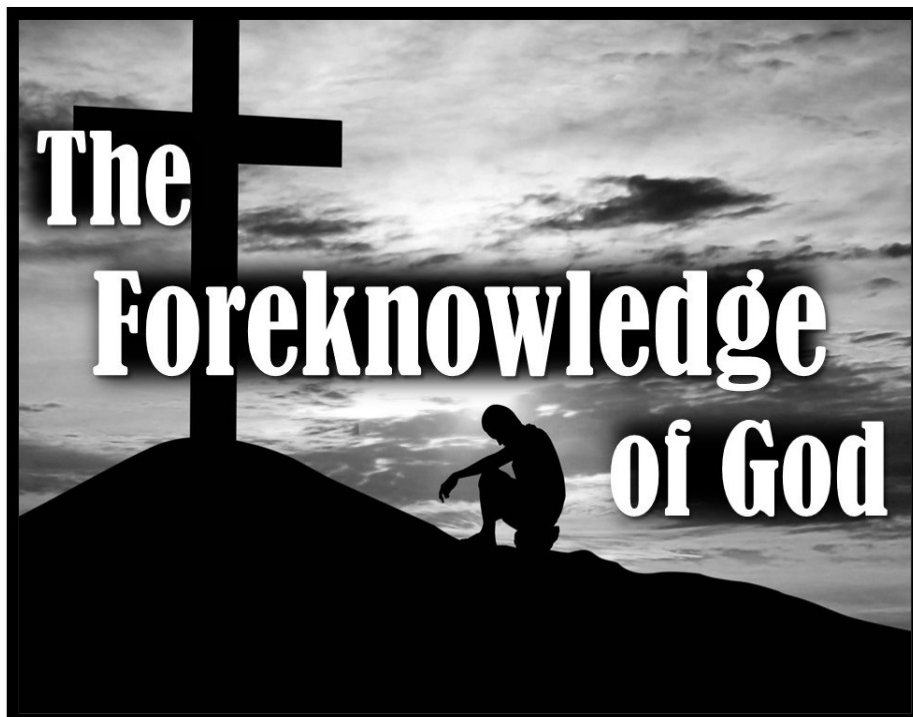
Jesus was humiliated and treated shamefully. He was abused both verbally and physically. Yet He did not fight back. He did not threaten anyone by saying things like, "You are going to answer for this" or "Someday, you will get what's coming to you." No, He committed it to God. That is what we must do!

When we commit our hurts and sufferings to God, we show others a better way to handle things. This is the light that can shine through us, drawing others to what we have. It shows our total and complete confidence in God. He will take care of us, and we never have to take things into our own hands.

We are only able to do this with God's help. So, if you are struggling with the pain of mistreatment or things out of your control, ask God to help you commit all things to Him.

Sister Annette Hupp

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



Brother Larry Dishman

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

Many people confuse the foreknowledge of God with predestination. I am thankful for God's foreknowledge. I thought about my family. My parents had ten children. When my mother was carrying her fourth baby, as she lifted David (the baby at the time) out of the baby bed, her womb burst. My father took her to the hospital immediately, but the nurses did not seem to understand the situation. They just thought she was a young lady having a baby. My mother knew something was wrong.

When the doctor arrived, he told my father that my mother's womb had burst and the baby was dying. The doctor said, "We will definitely lose the baby and possibly your wife." He performed surgery, and the baby was born dead. After the surgery,

the doctor told my mother: "You will never be able to carry any more children because I had to completely remove your womb. However, I saw something I have never seen before—something that looks like a new womb, about the size of the end of my thumb."

A little over a year later, another baby was born. My mother had six more babies in the years following her surgery. God can do anything, can He not? God knew all of this would happen through His foreknowledge. God saw the trouble my mother would have and put another womb in her so she could have more children. God is so good. He foresees things. We would be surprised if we knew the tragedies God has already looked ahead and saved us from.

Is divine election unconditional? According to the Bible, election is based on God's foreknowledge of those who repent and believe the Gospel. Therefore, salvation depends on personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Many people struggle to understand God's fore-

knowledge and predestination, so I want to illustrate it. Suppose a schoolteacher told his students on the first day of class that some would pass and some would fail the course they were about to take. He then explained what would be required for them to pass.

At the end of the school year, just as the teacher had said, some passed, and some failed. Since the teacher predicted the outcome at the beginning, does that mean he caused each student to pass or fail? No, not at all. He simply knew that some students would not apply themselves, so he could make that prediction.

Likewise, God predestinated, even before He made this world, that the church He built would be holy and conform to the image of the Son of God. Therefore, it is up to each individual to do the things necessary to be found in Christ and to have genuine salvation. God did not have the idea way back in the council halls of eternity to look into the future and decide to save this one and send that one to Hell. He leaves the choice to each individual. God allows each person to make decisions based on their own free will.

Free Will, Not Forced Will

The weatherman may say there is a one-hundred percent chance of rain tomorrow. If it rains, it is not because the weatherman said it would. The weatherman predicted the rain based on certain conditions he observed in the atmosphere.

Let me give you another illustration. Imagine a man, whom we will call John, has a decision to make. He has two choices: A or B. John has no idea what he will choose, but he has complete power over his choice. However, God, because of His foreknowledge (or absolute knowledge), already knows that John will

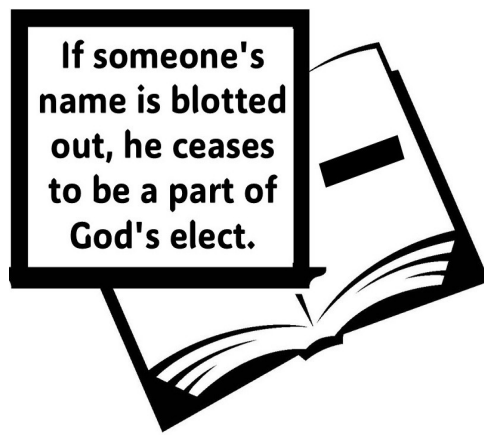
choose B. Does John still have free will to choose? Can John choose A or B, or is he predestined to choose B? Is John foreordained to do what God knows he will do? No, John freely chooses B as God, in His eternal view, knew he would do.

God can look into the future and know the choices we will make, but that does not mean we are like robots with no ability to choose. God has foreknowledge of all future events, but He has not foreordained them. He knows what will happen, but He does not determine everything. Isaiah 46:9-10 states, "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Man has free will and can make his own decisions, but his will can be inhibited. For example, no one can will himself to be a foot taller or to have his eyes change color. Some have taken free will far beyond its Biblical proportions and have fallen into error.

Foreknowledge is not the same as predestination. Foreknowledge is not causative; knowing a future action is not the same as causing it. God predestinated a people, based on their faith and repentance, for Himself to bear His name. God foresees certain people will repent by faith through their self-determining power. This differs vastly from what Calvinists believe. Therefore, foreknowledge is not to be confused with the predetermined will of God. God has a predetermined will, but He does not predetermine the actions of created beings.

God has true foreknowledge. His knowledge is not based on an individual's past decisions, but He knows what someone will do



before he does it. Did you know that we all have a certain level of foreknowledge? It is extremely limited and faulty at times, but we can know what someone will do in a particular situation based on their past actions.

For example, you may know the ways of your husband or wife and how he or she may react to certain situations. Parents know their children well enough that when something happens, they know what their child's attitude will be and how he will most likely react to certain situations. That does not mean our spouses or children have no free will in the matter.

Knowing what decision someone will make is not the same as *forcing* a person to make that decision. Calvinists falsely teach that God forces certain individuals to be saved, but that is far from the truth. From God's eternal vantage point, God knows what you and I will do and what will happen as a result of our choices. God may directly cause some things to happen, but He will allow you the freedom to make your own decisions. He knows what your decision will be, but that does not require fatalistic control over the universe, as Calvinists would have people believe.

God's Elect

Who are the elect? If you fail to rightly divide the Scriptures

(2 Timothy 2:15), you will be misled. 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." Calvinists use this passage of Scripture to say that the elect can never be deceived because of the words "if it were possible."

The words "it were" are italicized in the *King James Version*. Italicized words indicate that there were no direct equivalents in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek manuscripts. They were added by the translators to improve the flow of the text. I like that the words they added are italicized because we can read the verse without them: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

It is possible for the elect to be deceived. Every saved individual is a part of God's elect. No Scripture in the Bible says, "Once you are God's elect, you will always be God's elect." You must meet God's conditions to become God's elect, and you must continue to meet His conditions and walk in the light of His eternal Word to remain a part of God's elect. Peter, Paul, and John spoke about being the elect, election, and elected, which mean picked out, selected, and chosen.

God chose us. Some people say, "Once chosen, always chosen." Well, Judas was chosen, but he sinned. According to the Old Testament, his name, which was once in the Book of Life, was blotted out when he sinned (Exodus 32:33). If Judas, who was one of the twelve disciples, could have his name blotted out, then anyone's name could be blotted out.

If someone's name is blotted out, he ceases to be a part of God's elect. The Bible clearly teaches that a person's name *can*

be blotted out. Revelation 3:5 reads, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." If you fail to overcome as a Christian, your name will be blotted out of the Book of Life.

Peter quoted Isaiah 28:16 when he said, "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:6). The elect are chosen by God. Christ is the Elect One. Isaiah 42:1 says, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

Members of Christ's body, the church, are elected in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was God's elect. Isaiah 45:4 states, "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect" The elect are members of a corporate body, and individuals may become a part of that body. God knew beforehand there would be a corporate body known as Israel, but this does not mean He particularly specified the individuals who would make up that body. The Bible tells us that non-Israelites could, by agreeing to the terms of the covenant, become part of the elect body.

Galatians 3:29 says, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." We can become partakers of the divine blessings God has promised to the nation that descended from Father Abraham. This is crucial to our understanding of the church as God's elect.

Just as God knew there would be a corporate body called Israel, He knew there would be a corporate body called the church. Individuals who wished to be part of God's elect nation could

do so by agreeing to the terms of the old covenant. Today, individuals can become part of God's church by complying with the terms of the new covenant. What are those terms? Repent, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and be born again. That is what makes an individual a part of God's elect body.

"Whosoever Will" Can Be Saved

Calvinists say the elect are particularly chosen and marked for salvation long before they are born. They say God selected them unconditionally. This is far from the truth. God does not elect people unconditionally. God elects people when they meet the conditions for real salvation. God will never force His will on anyone.

In John 4:23, Jesus said, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." God is looking for something in human creatures. He responds favorably to those whom He knows will worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is a vastly different picture from the Calvinists' depiction of God. They say He arbitrarily predetermines who will worship Him and who will not.

In Romans 9:1-5, the Apostle Paul said: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came,

who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

Paul earnestly sought the salvation of his fellow Israelites, the majority of whom rejected Jesus Christ. Would this suggest that Paul believed he could proclaim the good news of the Gospel, and it would result in the salvation of those who were lost once they heard it? If so, would this mean membership into the elect body has not been predetermined and is therefore conditional? It absolutely does.

Paul showed by the heavy burden and continual sorrow he carried that he believed through his travailing for souls, ones could be born into the body of Christ. In Romans 9:3, he said, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Repentance through faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ is what causes a person to become part of the elect. God did not predetermine or predestinate who would be saved and who would be lost. Revelation 22:17 says, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

If you are not a Christian, you have a choice. God has not predetermined or predestinated that you be lost, no matter where you have been or what you have done. It is the will of God for every individual to be saved. First Timothy 2:4 tells us, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

From the beginning of time until now, mankind has always had a choice. God set it up this way back in the Garden. Adam and Eve had a choice to obey or disobey God. They were not forced to sin. They made the choice. Choice was available then under the Law, and choice is available now in this new covenant.

Thank God, salvation is for "whosoever will." I am glad God

did not fix who could be saved and who would be lost back in eternity. I might have been left out. God has given each of us a choice; therefore, we are each responsible. How can anyone preach and teach that Christ only died for the predestinated, and those who are not predestinated cannot be saved, even if they wanted to be, because the blood was not shed for them to be saved?

Choosing Your Own Destiny

If predestination is true, why would God send the unsaved to Hell throughout eternity? They can do nothing to change their destiny if it were determined back in the council halls of eternity that they were to be lost. The truth is, everyone who leaves this world unprepared to meet God can look back and say: "I had an opportunity to be saved. I remember the church services I sat in. God spoke to my heart and dealt with me. I could have gotten saved."

If you were predestined to go to Hell and had no choice in the matter, you would have no regrets for making wrong decisions. One torment in hell will be when people realize, "I am here, not because of someone else's choosing, but because I chose this path." You have the choice of where you will spend eternity. No one can make that choice for you. You are responsible for your choices. It is wise to make the right choice when it comes to your soul's salvation.

Let me explain it like this. Suppose John Doe lives in Mobile, Alabama, but he has been invited to attend a banquet in Columbus, Ohio. The host for the banquet sent John Doe a ticket for a seat on a bus scheduled to depart Mobile, Alabama, at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday and arrive in Columbus at 12 p.m. on the day

of the banquet. The destination has already been predetermined.

As soon as John steps onto the bus, he becomes part of this predetermined trip. His ticket assures him he has a seat on the bus, and his destination is certain. However, if John Doe throws away his ticket or loses it before his departure, or if he gets off the bus between Mobile and Columbus, he will not arrive at the destination originally intended for him.



God has a "ticket" to Heaven for everyone to get on the ship of Zion. He leaves no one out. We are scheduled to arrive in Heaven at an appointed time. I cannot get off anywhere I please if I intend to make it to Heaven, and neither can you. If you depart the ship before it reaches the destination, you will not make it into God's Heaven. If you throw away your "ticket" before boarding, you will forfeit your place on the ship and lose the privilege of participating in that predetermined journey.

Are you going to forfeit the "ticket" God has given you? He made a way for you to be saved through His Son, Jesus Christ. I am glad it is this way. I would have a hard time looking into the

casket of one of my children, regardless of the circumstances, if they had left this world unprepared to meet God, thinking in my mind, "My son or my daughter could not have been saved if he or she wanted to be because the blood was not shed for him or her." I would have a hard time dealing with that.

We can have faith in God. The Bible says in Genesis 18:25, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God always does what is right. If a loved one leaves this world unprepared to meet God, it was never because God was unfaithful to his soul. If you leave this world unprepared to meet God, it will not be because you had no opportunities to get right with God or because He did not love you.

God does love you. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Through a born-again experience, you can become a member of His body and a participant in His election. All who refuse the terms laid out in the Word of God will miss Heaven and end up in Hell.

Men and women have the God-given right and ability to choose. What about you? Have you chosen to be part of God's elect? Every individual has the awesome responsibility of choosing their own destiny. Have you chosen the right path? Are you walking with God? Are you saved by the grace of God?

(Compact Disc TR-2119)

Brother Larry Dishman is a Church of God evangelist from Hurley, MS.



The majority of Christians see each other on Sundays and Wednesday evenings at church. They come in, take their seats, maybe sing in the choir or sing a special, and listen to the preacher. They do their respective roles in the services. They sing and pray, and if they are feeling bold, will throw in an "amen" or "hallelujah." When the service is over, they chat with their friends, and then they are out the door and back home for some much-needed rest because, in their opinion, they have done their share of work for God. They feel no need to read the Bible or pray during the week because of all they did in the services and that God understands.

We hear numerous times how people lose their faith in God by becoming inactive and failing to do the things that keep their spiritual lives in check. They start focusing on what makes their flesh happy. This has always been a trick of the devil. Sadly, he has prevented many from doing what God has called them to do, and they end up missing Heaven. Samson was an example of this.

Judges 16:16-18 says: "And it came to pass, when she [Delilah] pressed him [Samson] daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death; That he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's

womb: if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand."

Samson let his guard down, and he lost his gift from God. We must always be in God's will because we may be the only chance someone has to come to Christ. People in the world do not judge you while you are in a church service. They are watching and observing how you react to certain situations and how you treat others. Most of us have unsaved loved ones we would like to see saved. The best way to get them on track is to be an example.

Recently, I learned this lesson. Some close family members stopped coming to church, leaving me with a big decision. I could either continue living the way I knew I should or do what I wanted. Thankfully, I made the right decision. I kept coming to church. Through it all, it taught me the importance of shining my light.

You may never know the impact you have on those around you. Some people have come to me and told me I am doing an amazing job serving the Lord. I

do not say this to lift myself up, but to show what a surprise it was to go through a hard trial and realize many people were watching me and receiving a blessing. Some people I hardly knew have said to me: "Thank you for continuing to serve the Lord. It's a blessing to see you in church."

People are depending on you to keep living right. You may not see an impact at the current moment, but God's plan is perfect. God will put you in a position to benefit His work, and He will never fail you. While in a large group, many would rather blend in with the crowd. "Maybe if I act like everybody else and play along, no one will ask me questions about God. Then I will have no need to worry about the stress of answering incorrectly." This is the opposite of what God wants us to do. He did not call us to blend into the world and fit in with the crowd.

Deuteronomy 14:2 says, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." God's people are set apart from the world. We are to be the example for others. If we hide the gifts God has given us, we will be like the fool who buried his talents.

Matthew 25:14-30 reads: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and

delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

"His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the

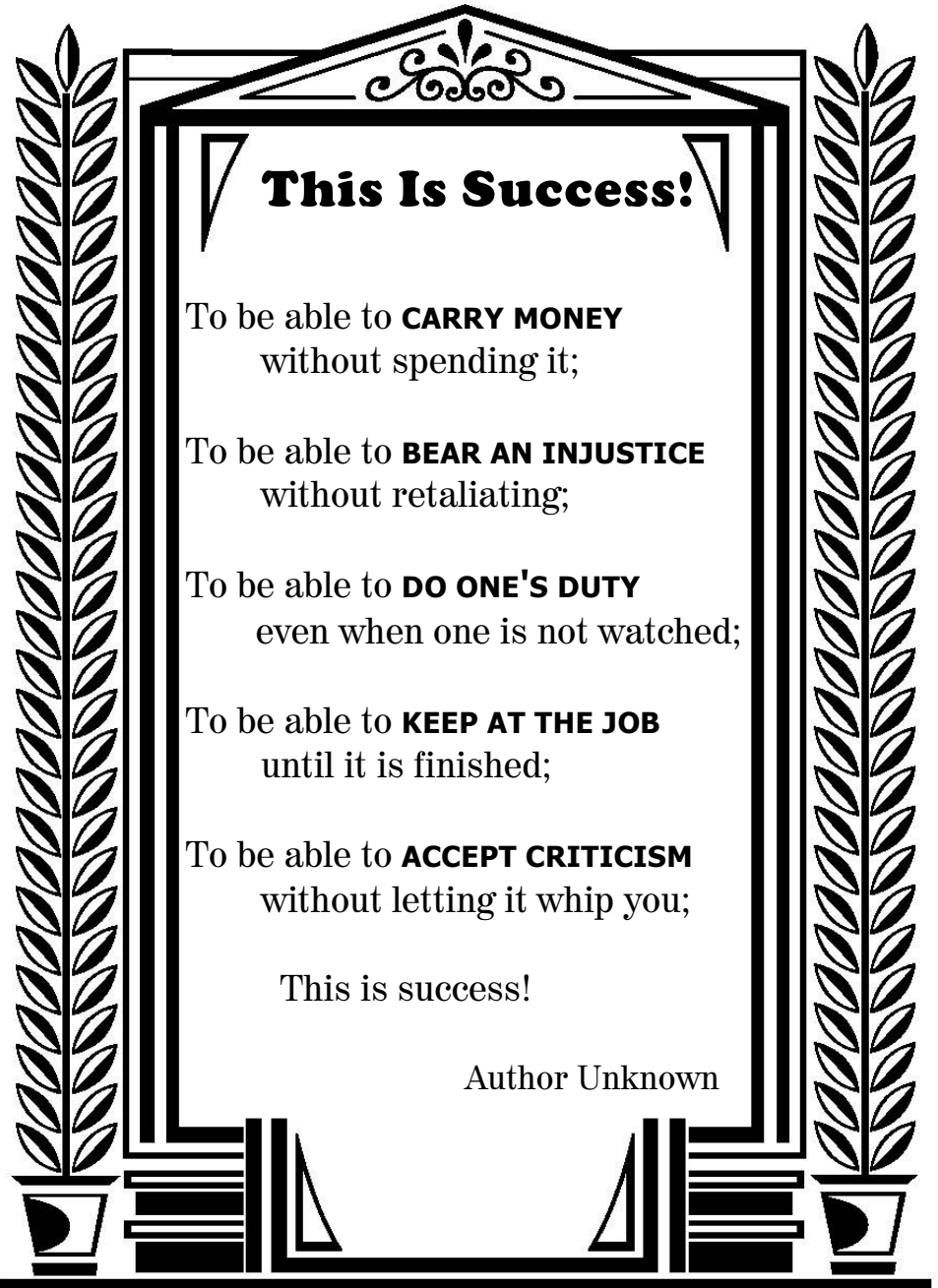
exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

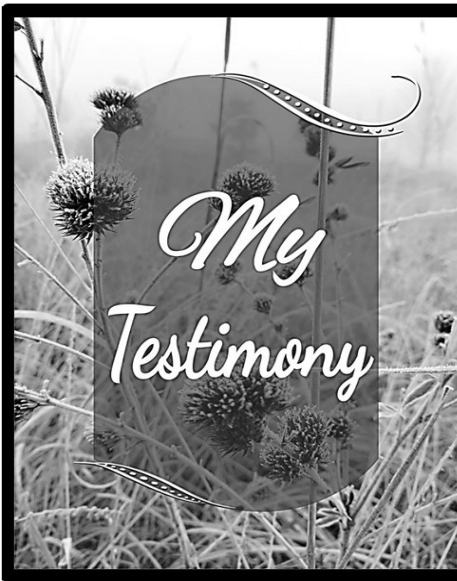
We are called to share what God has given to us. It does no

good to only share our blessings in church. Many people may never read the Bible, but they will read our lives. We must always live to the full knowledge we have been given so those around us can have the best opportunity to experience God for themselves.

Brother Colton Carr

Brother Colton Carr is a member of the Church of God youth group in Newark, OH.





Take Heed Lest You Fall

Sister Ida Conley

1 Corinthians 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

I know what Christ did for me, and talking about it puts me in a very vulnerable position. God did not save me to keep my testimony quiet. If I help just one person, then that would be great.

I was born into the Church of God congregation in Springfield, Ohio. Growing up, church was all I knew. My parents were extremely committed. Whenever the church doors opened, we were there. No matter how many weeks a revival lasted, we were there every night. I never knew any other life until I graduated from high school and got away from God for three years. Over the span of those years, I lost all my self-worth. I cared nothing about myself, let alone anybody else.

My mom would come to see me and say: "Ida, So-and-So prayed for you in prayer service. Come to church with me."

I would say: "You go back and tell those people I don't want or need their prayers. I am not coming to church anymore; I don't need church." I was very nasty to my mom.

Then I remember her backing off. She stopped asking me to

come to church with her and telling me what was going on in church. I asked her one time, "Mom, don't you want me to come to church with you?"

She said: "Ida, if you want to come to church, you know where the church is. I will be here to help you."

I remember going to a bar. It was just sad. I knew a lot of people who I thought were my friends. I was bound by dancing. I really enjoyed dancing and being involved with the live bands. The music was so loud that it seemed as though I could lose myself easily. The devil got me more and more involved in sin.

The apartment complex where I lived at the time would turn up the music full blast, and the whole neighborhood would be rocking. It was the thing to do around there. I would be so high on drugs; yet the Lord was faithful to me. Deep inside, I would hear Him say, "Ida, someone's praying for you right now."

I can remember a time when I was unable to enjoy the music. No matter how loud the music was or how much I was under the influence of drugs, I could no longer enjoy it. Someone asked me: "What happened? You were just dancing a minute ago." The Lord took away my joy.

Once I was given a ticket after being pulled over for speeding. Since I had no job and no way to pay the fine, the court suspended my license. I was living with my aunt, and she received a check once a month. One day, she woke me up and asked, "Hey, will you take me to cash my check so I can pay the rent?" The bank was just outside the apartment complex, but I dragged myself out of bed and took her to cash her check.

As I was pulling out of the bank, I noticed a policeman. I had this feeling he was after me. When I pulled back into the apartment complex, he pulled in behind me, and all of a sudden, his lights turned on. He came up to the car, and said, "Ma'am, I don't mean to scare you or anything, but did you know your license plates are expired?"

I said, "No, thanks for telling me."

He asked, "Can I see your license, please?" I knew my license was under suspension, but my aunt said, "Oh yeah, she has a license." We were really close to our apartment, so she ran inside and brought out my old license.

When I lived with my parents, I lost my physical license, so I got a new one made. They failed to tell me that if I ever found my lost license, I should throw it away. Not knowing it was illegal to keep my old license, I had been using it for an ID (identification). The policeman ran my name through his system and found a warrant was out for my arrest because I failed to pay for my traffic ticket.

He said, "I'm sorry, but I have to take you downtown." So there I was in a police cruiser over a traffic ticket I had not paid.

My aunt said, "I'll be right there for you." I knew the agreement we had with our friends. We were in an area where you could get busted at any time for anything if you were in trouble. "If I get in trouble, you'll be there

for me. If you get in trouble, I'll be there for you" was the mutual agreement. I just knew she would be there for me.

They took me to what they called a holding cell until they could decide what to do with me. It was super dinky. There were ten to thirteen girls in there at once. We were smashed in, side by side.

My aunt came to the jail. I thought for sure she had come to get me out. I could see her on the other side of a window. I had to pick up a phone to talk to her. She said, "Ida, I'm sorry, but I don't have any money left from my check, and you're just going to have to stay in here." She hung up the phone, waved at me, and walked out.

I was on the inside looking out, and there was nothing I could do about it. I felt utter hopelessness. The person I thought was my friend used me. I thought: "I am not calling my mom and dad. I do not want to admit I am in trouble and need their help."

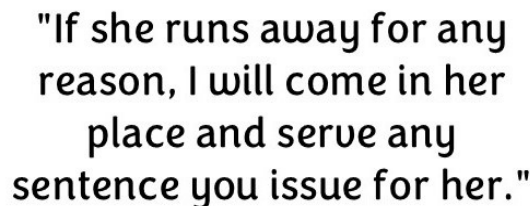
A court hearing was scheduled for the next day to determine my plight. I had to go upstairs and change into jail clothes. First, I had to take a shower in front of a lady officer who was watching me to make sure I did everything right. Then, I was sprayed with this stuff to make sure I did not have any bugs. I had to carry my own mattress, pillow, and other things to my cell. They were really heavy, and I thought I was going to drop them all. They offer you no help. Their motto is, "You got yourself in trouble, and this is just part of the payment."

The cell they took me to held ladies who were there for prostitution, sitting half-dressed, wrapped in sheets, and kicked back to relax. They were being held for six months. I remember standing and looking at them.

One of them said: "Oh, come on in here, honey. We won't hurt you."

My thought was, "I'm in here with prostitutes for a traffic ticket I didn't pay for." To them, jail was a part of their lives. They had children and families, but they seemed not to care. I remember crying all night long.

The next morning, someone came for me at about 7 a.m. It was early, but I was so thankful. They handcuffed me to another girl who was also appearing in court. She had a five-thousand-dollar bond on her for grand theft. She said, "Are your hands cold?"



"If she runs away for any reason, I will come in her place and serve any sentence you issue for her."

It was wintertime, so I said, "Yeah." So she gave me one of her gloves that she had stolen. She had the other one on her other hand, and we put our handcuffed hands together in a pocket because we were bound together. It was awful.

All the inmates sat in the front row in the courtroom. I kept turning around, expecting to see my aunt and all my friends. I just knew they were going to be there for me. My court hearing was at 9:30 a.m. Every time I heard the door open, I turned around, expecting to see my friends. When it was just about time to start, I heard the door open again. I turned my head around really fast because I just knew it was going to be my aunt. In walked my mom and dad.

Tears started streaming down my face because Mom and Dad were there again, and I had not even called them. When I was in

jail, I decided not to call them. There was a phone in my cell, and I could have easily called, reversed the charges, and told them what had happened, but I chose not to. If there were any people I could depend on, it was my parents. It was as if the love of God flowed from them.

When it was my turn to go before the judge, I pleaded guilty to driving with a suspended license, but not guilty to having two valid driver's licenses. (I did not realize that was wrong.) The judge was ready to sentence me, but they had to give me another court date because of my plea. He said: "I gave you one chance.

I don't think I can trust you if I let you out again. I'm going to keep you in jail until your next court hearing." My heart just dropped.

All of a sudden, my dad said: "Your Honor, I'm Ida's father. Can I speak to you, please?"

And the judge said, "Yes, sir, you can come forward."

My dad went before the judge and said: "Your Honor, I would like to take Ida into my custody. If she runs away for any reason, I will come in her place and serve any sentence you issue for her. I don't want my daughter to go back to jail." I stood there with tears streaming down my face. I had ignored my parents because I was too proud to call them from my jail cell. Yet here was my dad, pleading for mercy on my behalf. (That is what Christ did for me. He took my place at Calvary when I was the one who deserved the punishment. I should have hung on the Cross for my sins, but He let me go free!)

The judge agreed and let me go home with my parents. I was so relieved. I needed help, and my parents decided not to cast me out when I needed them the most. In the meantime, I found out I was expecting a baby due to

my loose living. My court date was three months away. I could have been in jail during that time, but God had mercy. All the devil wants to do is destroy your life.

I called an abortion clinic, and they said: "Honey, we understand. Girls get into this situation all the time. It only costs a hundred and fifty dollars, and it will be over in three minutes."

I thought, "This is my way out." No one knew I was pregnant, but I could not find the money anywhere, and I could not borrow it from anybody. All this time, I was carrying this secret inside that I was pregnant.

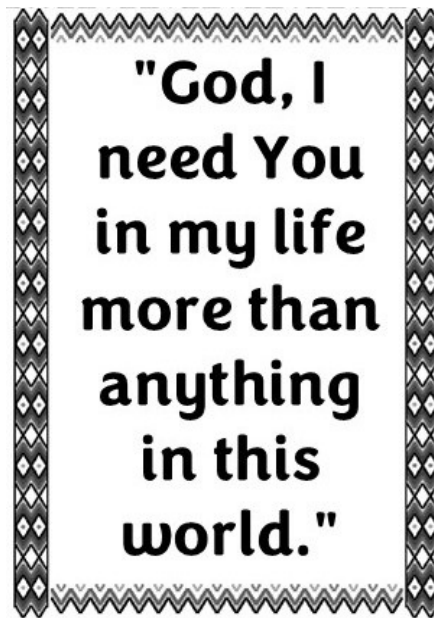
I remember Dad getting ready to go to Sunday school one Sunday morning. I said, "Dad, if you'll stay home and wait for me, I'd like to go to church with you this morning."

He said, "Very well, I'll wait."

When I went to church that morning, after the congregational songs, a sister got up and sang, "Is Not This the Land of Beulah?" I thought: "No, I'm not in the land of Beulah, but I want to be in the land of Beulah. I want peace of mind." By the time she finished singing, tears were streaming down my face.

The Springfield quartet sang, "I Am With Thee." I thought: "Lord, I want You with me more than anything, not just because I'm in trouble now and going to have a baby, but because if I don't have You, I'm going to end it all." (I had already called a Suicide Hotline when I could not find enough money to have an abortion. I had a razor blade sitting by the phone. I had done that twice, and each time someone came in, so I hurried up and hid the razor blade. It was like the Lord would not let it happen.)

That morning in church, I said: "God, I need Your help more than anything. I need You in my life more than anything in this world." I knelt down at the



altar and poured my heart out to God. I kept saying, "Lord, please, please forgive me for taking Your name in vain and all this other bad stuff I have done."

When I got up from the altar, I did not feel saved. I went home and told my dad, "Dad, I don't think God can forgive me for all I have done."

He said, "The Bible says, 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins' (1 John 1:9)." He would quote all these Scriptures. I did not feel a big joy, but the Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). So I kept claiming these promises.

I struggled for two weeks. "Lord, have You saved me? I want You to save me." I got down and prayed again, and all of a sudden, the Lord flooded my soul and let me know I was truly His child! He let me know that this time when I came back, I had to prove to Him that I meant business and was willing to serve Him. When He knew I meant business, He came in and flooded my soul. He gave me a good experience, and it kept me for many years.

I did not know what to do about this baby, so I went to my pastor. He said: "I think you

should get up and tell everybody what happened yourself before you start showing. That way, they'll know from you, and there won't be any gossip. God will show you when it's time."

During one service, I can remember thinking, "Now's the time." The pastor was about to get up to preach, and I said, "I have something to say." I got up before the congregation and let everybody know what had happened.

I said, "I don't blame my Sunday school teachers, my mom, or my dad. Everybody did their best. I am in the shape I am in today because I walked away from God. He didn't walk away from me. I left Him." I apologized, and the Lord really used my testimony. People started coming to the altar.

If you are discouraged and feel your only escape is to give up, be encouraged. The devil shows no mercy. He wants to destroy the Church of God kids' lives more than any others because they know more truth. I am thankful for what God has done for me. What happened to me could happen to anyone if you fail to keep Christ in your life. I pray you will just consider these words.

On June 8, 1985, I married into the congregation in Newark, Ohio, from Springfield, Ohio, right before the June camp meeting. I remember going into the choir room, and Sister Helen Henry's group was practicing a song. One member of the quartet was missing, so they asked me if I could sing that particular part to help them practice. I chimed in, and from that time on, I sang with Sister Henry in the quartet.

In 1987, Brother Emerson Wilson (the pastor in Newark) died, and the congregation was devastated. I remember well all the prayer services we had, asking God for direction. Then Brother Roger Decker got up one

service and said, "I believe God has put the mantle on me." God had called him to be our pastor. Most of the congregation were supportive, but many were not, and they decided to leave and no longer worship with us. Put yourself in that situation. It was difficult seeing many people you grew up with and were attached to stop coming to church. They decided to worship somewhere else; it hurt so bad.

I sang in every service with Sister Henry for fifteen years. As a congregation, we were again in the midst of a huge battle. During this time, I was going through other trials in my personal life. It seemed like the enemy was coming in from the left and the right with "fiery darts" (Ephesians 6:16). I felt overwhelmed by my problems. What about me? How will I make it until tomorrow? How will I make it to the next Wednesday? My own personal problems caused me to become more and more depleted. I was afraid of what would happen next, and I was getting tired. I had no more strength left.

When God allows a saint of God to go through a trial, the devil will always show up. He attacks when we are weak and tired from the battle. Similar to when you are physically sick with a cold, you go through the process, let it run its course, and you get over it. At times, you may become so sick that you need to go to the hospital and take antibiotics. You may need intensive care.

We can get to those points, spiritually speaking, where we become so sick and depleted. That is where I was, but no one knew it because I came to the services with a smile on my face, sang, and raised my hand. No one knew that deep down inside, I was spiritually sick.

While studying my Bible recently, I looked at what the Bible

says about lukewarmness. How hot is your commitment to God? With everything going on around me, I had my hands up, metaphorically speaking, but I was not digging deep enough into my prayer life or Bible reading. I was trying to figure it out on my own because I had to go to work, and I had four children to take care of. The list of excuses would go on and on as to why I felt I had no time to really delve into the things of God. Therefore, I was not spending enough time with God personally, and I had gotten into a lukewarm place in my life.

That is exactly how I would explain what happened to me. I remember thinking: "How in the world did this happen? You sang in every service for fifteen years." I could not see what was happening, but when I look back, I can say, "Yes, I wasn't reading my Bible and praying as much as I needed to."

The devil does not care what it takes to get you away from God. Something happened to my daughter while at church. She got in the car and started crying. I was angry because she was so upset. I thought, "I can't take any more of this."

The next day, I called Sister Henry and said: "I'm not coming back to church. I'm taking a break." She was devastated. She met me at a restaurant and bawled her eyes out. She said: "Would you please reconsider? Would you please talk to Brother Decker (the pastor) about this? I'll go with you."

I said, "No, I'm done with it." I thought I needed to get away to get my mind straight. When I looked back at where I left, I was so far from the shore. I was lost and could not get back. God and the church were over there, and I had drifted all the way over here. I did it to myself. I am not proud of it, and my children suffered because of it.

This time, I did not do drugs

or hang out in bars. I married one of the nicest guys you will ever meet. He takes really good care of me. We have a nice property in Hocking Hills, and we own a boat and a nice camper. We have no issues with each other, and we live a good life. I really had no problems, but I had a desire to be saved again.

I started watching the services online, and God began dealing with me deeply. On the way home from work, I would talk to God. I did not know where to go. If I were to get saved, where would I go to church? The Bible says to forsake not "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

After you have been away for so long, you see different churches pop up. There are so many groups that call themselves the Church of God. As I cried and talked to God about it, He gave me a Scripture in a very vivid way. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). God said, "You go back to what you know." It was just so simple.

If any of you who were raised in the church get lost in life, go back to what you know, to how your parents raised you. There is no confusion in that. As a mom and a grandma, I am so thankful I can point my children and grandchildren to the guiding light, "a city [church] that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14).

I knew where I needed to go, but that was not enough to make me commit. I had gotten into a bad habit of vaping. It does not have a smell, so you can pretty much use it in the bathroom at work, school, or wherever. No one will ever know you are using it. I am talking vulnerably and plainly. Vaping is very, very addictive because of the nicotine in it. Whereas, "I'm not going to smoke because I don't want to

smell like a pack of cigarettes," now you can vape, which eliminates all those problems.

A doctor once told me, "I would rather you vape than smoke." So, I left the doctor's office, purchased a vape, and never smoked again. I wanted to get saved so badly, and I knew I had to get rid of the vape, but I could not.

As time went on, a message was sent to me from Sister Henry's daughter, Letitia. She said: "Mom would like to see Ida. She's been talking about her." I was at work, and my heart sank. I told my employer: "I need to go. My close friend is passing, and I need to see her."

When I got home, my husband was on the lawnmower. I said: "We have to go to Newark right now. Sister Henry is not doing well. The family has asked me to go see her." So my husband got off the mower and brought me to Newark.

I knocked on the door of Sister Henry's house, and Letitia answered it. When Sister Henry saw me, she said, "Well, look who's here—Sister Ida!" It put a lot of conviction on my heart when she called me "Sister Ida." I went over and sat down on the bed next to her and grabbed her hand.

She said, "I am not going to be here much longer."

I said, "That's what I heard."

She said, "I can almost see God," as she was reaching out her hand.

I said: "Isn't that great? That's why you've been living for God all these years. It is exciting that you get to go home."

She said, "I'm so excited!"

Conviction fell on me right then. She was such a good example. I got close to her face and said: "I'm so sorry. I love you. Please forgive me."

She said: "I forgive you. I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to pray to God

every day I have left on this earth for you to get saved."

I said: "I appreciate it. Thank you."

She said: "My song is on the wall. I told the kids I want it to be sung at my funeral. Go and look at it." It was the song that says, "*I'll walk on, Lord, walk on in faith, for I know there's a brighter day coming.*" She asked me to sing it for her. (I thought: "I am a sinner. I cannot possibly sing this song, or I might be struck by lightning.")



When I sang it to her, she said: "Oh, that's beautiful. I love you so much." The love she showed me when she could have been so angry with me for leaving was the most sincere love. There was no questioning her love for me. When I went back home, I could not sleep. It was terrible. I kept waking up and thinking of her, knowing she was praying for me. I tossed and turned. I knew she prayed for me because God was convicting me.

After she passed, I came back for her funeral and went to the graveside service. I felt so lonely and sad. After the service, they let doves go. As I was walking around the tent, Sister Dishman spoke to me and said, "How are you doing?"

She gave me a hug, and I told

her, "I'm under so much conviction that I can't stand it."

She said, "You must do something about it now."

Brother Dishman spoke up and said, "Sister, you need to do something about this if God's been dealing with you."

I said, "This isn't the right place; it's Sister Henry's funeral."

He said: "I can't think of a better place. Chairs are set up right over there with some soft greenery." I walked over, knelt down, and poured out my heart to God right beside the casket. When I stood up, I felt like somebody had taken a heavy cloak off of me. The conviction I had been carrying was gone.

I looked around and saw Damon, Sister Henry's son. I said, "Damon, I'm sorry."

He hugged me and said: "This is exactly what Mom would have wanted. She wanted one more soul, and you were it." It has been wonderful ever since.

I share my testimony as a warning. First Corinthians 10:12 says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." What happened to me can happen to anyone.

You may think, "No, I am way too involved in church; I am a strong Christian." Those are the ones the devil works hard to get. No one around you may know or see the issues or weak spots in your life, but the devil will attack you. When he does, it will not be one little shove. He will push you. The fiery darts will hit you in the front and in the back. It will feel like you are being hit spiritually everywhere you turn.

People in the world can be so cruel. They do not care about you; it is a dog-eat-dog world. People will make fun of you. I dealt with it when I was at school, and I can only imagine it being worse now.

I am so blessed because God has changed me and saved me from a life of sin! My life now,

compared to what it was when I was in sin, is different as day is from night. I appreciate the fact that God is always there throughout the day.

Often, when I am at home, I feel the devil is on the other side of the glass of grace. He is on one side, and I am on the other. He is just staring at me, saying: "You do not really need to do this. You could let it go. Everyone around you is used to you living a different way. It would be okay to just go back to the old life."

But I tell him: "No! God has saved me, and I am going to stand in the light God has given me."

I really appreciate how God helps us to get to the church services. Sometimes I start feeling sick, or my husband starts feeling sick, or we worry about our pipes freezing while we are gone (excuse after excuse). Then, I pray: "God, please help! I really, really want to be at church today. God, please make it possible for me to be at church." Every time, God makes it possible. I appreciate the fact that God understands me, and He works miracles!

I work at the Hocking Hills Lodge, and we are required to wear a uniform of pants and one of their shirts. After I got saved, I went back to work with my pants on because I was too afraid. One day, some Amish people came in. They looked so godly compared to me. I wanted to go to them and say: "I just got saved. It is so good to see you!" But I felt I could not do that because I was wearing pants. This was a huge deal for me, but God is good.

The next morning, I got up for work and put on a skirt. When I came out with a black skirt and the lodge's shirt on, my husband asked: "Are you going to work with that skirt on? What do you think they will say to you? You might lose your job, and we need that income."

I told my husband: "I do not

know what will happen, but this is what I am going to do because God told me to. I feel this is the way a child of God should look while at work."

I went to work and told my supervisor: "I just want you to know, I will be wearing a skirt from now on because I gave my life to God. I am going by the pathway God has raised me in. He has told me to go back to that path. I hope this is okay." My supervisor said she would have to talk to someone from HR (Human Resources).

I said, "Okay, let me know what she says." The whole day passed, and she did not come back to talk to me. Finally, I asked her, "Did you talk to HR?"

She said, "It is okay as long as you look appropriate."

I am just so thankful God worked that out because I was so afraid of failing to do what I should be doing. I thought I might lose my job, but God has made me stronger through it.

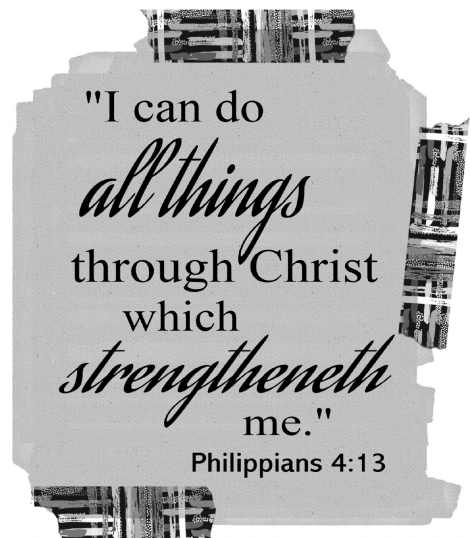
I pray my testimony will speak to your heart. I do not want to see anyone lost. You may meet the descriptions of what I talked about. You may feel weak spiritually, and no one really knows because you come to church with a smile on your face. Maybe you are not as happy as you once were. When you are weak, the devil can take you out with one small issue in your life. Then he will stand there and laugh at you.

I am learning something new every day. God is training and teaching me. I appreciate the love of God and how good He is to me. He heals my body, gives me what I need, and talks to me every day. Often, I wake up and pray: "Thank You for another day of life, Lord! I need Your Holy Spirit to be very, very close to me today. Go before me, Lord. Let me know what is ahead."

God has answered every prayer. I give God all the glory

for where I am in life right now. Thank You, Lord.

*Sister Ida Conley attends
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*[Guest Editorial continued from page 2]
new."*

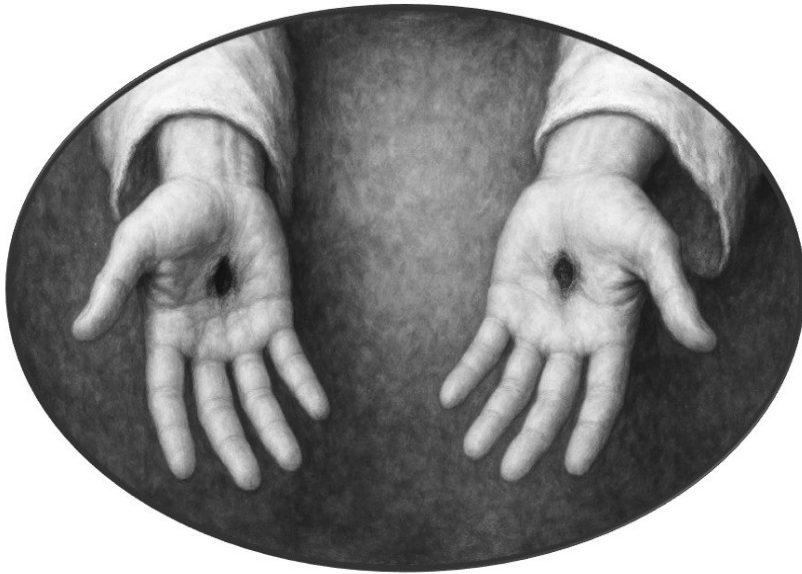
Each "lump of clay" in the Potter's hands is unique. God, in His infinite wisdom, knows exactly how many times around the wheel it must turn, the perfect pressure to apply, and the fire it must endure. "Have Thine Own Way, Lord," a song written in 1906 by Adelaide Pollard, beautifully depicts a heart willing to submit to the will of God. Verse 1 says:

*Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter,
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me
after Thy will,
While I am waiting,
Yielded and still.*

Dear one, may you realize your uniqueness in the Potter's hand and allow Him to form you into a vessel of glory, fit for His use. May God bless.

Sister Gerri Lynn Bremer

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the Church of God in Newark, OH.*



Scars

Brother Steve Strelecky

Romans 15:1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

4 For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in a world filled with hopelessness; I am thankful we can have hope. Verse 2 of our Scripture text from the *Amplified Bible* reads, "Let each one of us [make it a practice to] please his neighbor for his good, to build him up

spiritually." With the help of the Lord, we want to build up our brothers and sisters, spiritually speaking.

Many people have visible scars from injuries, possibly from a burn or a cut. We all have scars, and usually, a story behind them. I have a scar on my forehead. Every morning when I look in the mirror, I see this scar. When I was three years old, I ran into a concrete block wall. I have a scar on my hand from where I was pounding t-posts in our garden. I have a scar on my finger where I nearly cut it off. I actually use this scar as a teaching tool for what *not to do* and what *to do* when it comes to safety. I have a scar on my elbow from a bicycle accident, a scar on my knuckle, and a scar on my hip where I had a hip replacement.

We have stories for our scars. Whatever story is behind your scars, it reminds you of the experiences you had and the pain those wounds caused when they happened. Every time you see your scars, you may be reminded of not-so-pleasant experiences in your life. Sometimes, you may

wish you could remove those scars and take away the painful memories they have caused. We will carry our scars for the rest of our lives. As long as I live, I will remember the happenings and the pain from every scar.

Scars carry painful memories of the past, and they can deter us from making the same mistakes again. Accidents often occur at the beginning or end of the day, and usually on Monday or Friday. I remember the day I lost the end of my finger. I worked at a welding shop. A construction company was putting in a new highway, and they needed something fabricated right away. It was at the end of the day, and I was in a hurry to get home, so I was not paying close attention. I put a piece of metal in the shear the wrong way, and my finger got caught between the guard and a piece of a half-inch plate. I can remember thinking to myself, "Don't do that again!"

As visible scars can be seen, the results of our experiences produce scars on the inside that no one can see except us. We know they are there. Sometimes, scars left by sin are visible, but often they are on the inside, where no one ever sees them. They are reminders of our past, things that happened while we were in sin. Imagine a smooth board. Think about every screw or nail driven into this board representing a sin in your life. Every time you commit sin, you put another screw or nail in this board.

The Scars of Our Savior

Isaiah 53:5-6 says: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him

the iniquity of us all." Thank God, our Savior was willing to die for our transgressions, and we no longer need to live in sin. How great a price He paid for my sins and your sins! The scars and stripes He bore were the means for our salvation. We should never be ashamed of Jesus. He has done so much for you and me. One song says,

*If it wasn't for Jesus,
Where would I be?
Bound up in sin and misery.
But He loosened my shackles
And then set me free.
If it wasn't for Jesus,
Where would I be?*

A story is told of a high school senior named Sharon whose mother's face was horribly disfigured and scarred. Her mother came along on Sharon's senior trip. As Sharon met with a group of her classmates, her mother happened to walk by. One of her classmates said, "Who is that old, ugly, scarred-faced woman?"

Sharon said, "I don't know."

When they got home, Sharon's mother called Sharon into the living room. She had overheard Sharon deny knowing her, so she shared her story with her daughter. "Sharon, your father deserted us and left me to raise you by myself. When you were a very small infant, still in the cradle, a fire broke out in the apartment we lived in. When the flames broke out, I was in the bathroom. I saw the flames engulfing the room you were in, so I took a wet towel, ran into the room, wrapped you in the wet towel, and carried you to safety.

"My clothes caught on fire, and my hair was in flames, but I proceeded until you were safely out of the building. I was in the intensive care unit in the burn clinic for a number of weeks and unconscious for several days. I finally was able to come home,

but it was a long time before I could function again. My scars are from the love I had for you. You are ashamed of me, but the scars you are ashamed of are the scars that saved your life."

Sharon began to weep. As tears ran down the cheeks of her mother, Sharon said: "I am sorry I was ever ashamed of you. I will never be ashamed of you again."

God has done so much for us. Knowing that Jesus paid the price for our sins, how reluctant are we to give the answer we ought to give when we get pinned down by someone or asked a question about our faith? How often do we really stand up for Jesus after all He has done for us? No doubt, we could all do a better job of standing up for Jesus and witnessing for Him.

Isaiah foretold of the great suffering Christ would endure because of our sins. May God help us appreciate His great sacrifice. A story is behind every scar. The scars Jesus bore on His body tell a great story of the love He has for us. It is the greatest love story of all. Isaiah 52:14 says, "As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men."

Reminders of Our Past

God can forgive sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, take them away, and remember them no more. Consider the board filled with screws or nails. We can take them all out, but what remains? Holes are left in their place. Those holes are like scars. Unless you use wood filler, those holes will stay there forever. It is like the scars left by sin. Even though God can forgive you, the scars will remain. Like physical scars, we will carry the marks of sin for the rest of our lives as a reminder of our past.

One brother who spoke during a youth service at a camp

meeting said that, after talking about his past, he and his wife would need to go pray. Why? Those wounds were so deep, and mentioning them again reminded them of the hurts caused by sin. His scars were a reminder of a painful past, but God used his testimony to help others. Although talking about our sinful past can feel like reopening an old wound, I am thankful that God can use it to help someone else.

We ought to be willing to share our testimony with others, even though it might be painful. When we share with others what God has done for us, how He took away our sinful past, we can help someone else who may be dealing with some of the same things we dealt with. Brother Haylock preached a message a few years back entitled "Nothing Just Happens." People are put in our pathways so we can help them. Things do not happen by coincidence. God ordains situations and puts people in our pathways because He knows we have something to share that can help them.

Scars are a reminder of where we have been, but should never determine where we are going. Scars are identifying features, but we should never allow them to define who we are. Many people have emotional wounds that run deep. They carry painful memories of their youth or from the wrong choices they have made. Some emotional scars have been left by tragic events in their lives.

Some people have suffered from verbal, physical, or mental abuse. They may try to conceal their emotional scars from others or pretend they are not there. No matter how much I want to ignore the scar in the middle of my forehead, it is still there. It is a part of me and my identity. Many who suffer from emotional abuse suffer in silence and try to deal with the hurt on their own.

The Role of Forgiveness

Second Corinthians 1:3-5 in the *International Children's Bible* says: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy. And he is the God of all comfort. [I am thankful God can be everything to us. When we need comfort, He is there to comfort us. When we need strength, He is there to strengthen us. Whatever we need, God can be our all in all.] He comforts us every time we have trouble, [Many times when we get into trouble, what are we the most reluctant to do? Ask for help. We tend to think, 'Oh, I can handle this.' However, that is not what God intends for us.] so that we can comfort others when they have trouble. We can comfort them with the same comfort that God gives us. We share in the many sufferings of Christ. In the same way, much comfort comes to us through Christ."

When physical wounds heal, scars seldom hinder us from going on with our normal lives. However, the emotional scars can often hinder us from forming relationships with God and other people. What do many people do when they are hurt? They build walls, trying to find a safe place because they do not want anyone else to hurt them. Walls can render us incapable of establishing relationships. They can hinder our walk with God. Thank God, He can give comfort when our scars trouble us.

God can heal the hurt we have suffered, but we must play an active role in our healing by forgiving the one who caused the hurt. In Matthew 6:15, Jesus said, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Again, we must play an active role by giving our hurts to God and forgiving the one who has wronged us.

After God has forgiven us, we must forgive ourselves. I have dealt with many who believe God has forgiven them and that the one they offended has forgiven them, but they have a hard time forgiving themselves. If you fail to forgive yourself, it is very difficult to move on and prosper in this life, in the things of God, and in the work of God.

If we fail to forgive, bitterness can work in our lives. It is like an infection in a wound that is open and running. It looks and smells bad. If left untreated, it can lead to extreme measures to try to heal it. If left untreated for too long, it can result in death. If unforgiveness and bitterness are not dealt with, they lead to spiritual death. Getting rid of an infection in an open wound is unpleasant. Sometimes it requires scrubbing the area to remove the infected tissue. It is painful. Just as physiological wounds to the body are painful during the healing process, emotional wounds and a wounded spirit are painful during the healing process.

Parents have an awesome responsibility to make sure their children are emotionally and psychologically equipped for life. I have worked with many students who dealt with great emotional hurts. If children are hurting, learning is the last thing on their minds. Many students deal with many issues outside of school. If we fail at raising our children, there are no second chances.

Parents have one opportunity with the lives entrusted to their care. We have an impact on who our children become. We need God's help as parents to raise our children right. I realize we can raise them right and do everything we know to do, but they have the ability to choose when they reach adulthood. We should take that element into consideration, or we will become discouraged if our children go astray.

Dealing With Painful Memories

Speaking from my own experience, the wounds I suffered as a child have played a great part in shaping and molding my identity. Because of that, I was determined, with God's help, to do some things differently in raising my children, in my relationship with my wife, and in my relationship with God. By the grace of God, I am still working on these things.

Memories can come back like a flood. It is only by the grace and help of God that we can overcome these things. If I allow past events to overcome me, they will hinder me in my relationship with God, my wife, my children, and the students and young people I work with. The list could go on and on.

You can allow wounds you have suffered to do one of two things. (1) Work great harm. It is easy to play the blame game. "I am who I am because of ..." and make excuses for the way you are and never allow God a chance to heal you. (2) Work great good. You can choose to give your hurts to God, allow Him to heal them, and use them as an opportunity to help others. By the grace of God, that is what I have chosen to do.

The key is to allow God to heal the wounds. When we fail to turn our scars over to God as we ought, they can color our view of life. If you look through the lens of hurt, it will affect how you treat others. We are not an island by ourselves. In Luke 4:18, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

There will be times in our lives when a painful scar or

memory will resurface. What should we do? We need to take it to God. Do not allow the painful experiences of your past and wrong choices to defeat you or render you unfit for God's service. God can use your mistakes and the pain you have suffered if you are willing to open up about them. They can encourage another weary traveler along life's journey.

If we let Him, our forgiving, patient Lord who saved us, will turn those ugly scars into beautiful stars. Our hurts can help

someone else along the way. Maybe someone you know is hurting. God can use whatever pain or heartache you went through to lead them to God. Our painful circumstances can help someone else along the way.

Again, if you are hurting, take it to God. Do not try to carry that load all by yourself. Many people try to carry the load on their own, and the burden has pushed them down. God can lift your burden. Whatever pain you are or have suffered, whatever scars you have, God can help you carry the

load and heal the hurts.

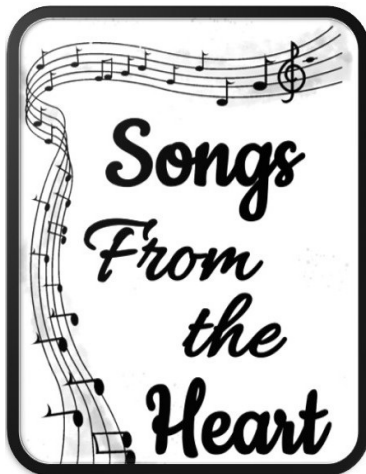
I appreciate what God has done for me. He has saved me and taken away many hurts. He has allowed me to use my scars as a witness to others. As I work with people, I can identify somewhat with them and what they are going through. Again, nothing just happens. If you have a need, take it to God in prayer.

(Compact Disc TR-2085)

Brother Steve Strelecky attends the Church of God in Newark, OH.

A Child of God

by B. E. Warren 1907



*Praise the Lord! my heart with His love is beaming,
I am a child of God;
Heaven's golden light over me is streaming,
I am a child of God.
Let the saints rejoice with my raptured spirit,
I am a child of God;
I will testify that the world may hear it,
I am a child of God.
Let a holy life tell the Gospel story,
I am a child of God;*

*How He fills the soul with His grace and glory,
I am a child of God.
Saved from sin today, every band is riven,
I am a child of God;
Thro' the tests of life I have peace from Heaven,
I am a child of God.
I am a child of God,
I am a child of God;
I have washed my robes in the cleansing fountain,
I am a child of God.*

It was inevitable that the positive preaching which brought out this movement should be hard on conscientious people. The judgments of God do move the hard-hearted and ungodly sometimes; they almost always make the going very uncomfortable for the tenderhearted and eagerly obedient, especially when they are yet young in the way. Out of the inner conflicts of scrupulous folk, however, God has a way of creating beauty and helpfulness.

Precious in His sight must be the carefulness to please Him that brings agony when doubt is thrown upon the relationship of the soul to its Maker. No wonder He makes use of these inward turmoils to bless the world. Witness the effect of *Pilgrim's Progress*, to mention only one great work conceived in the matrix of inner struggle.

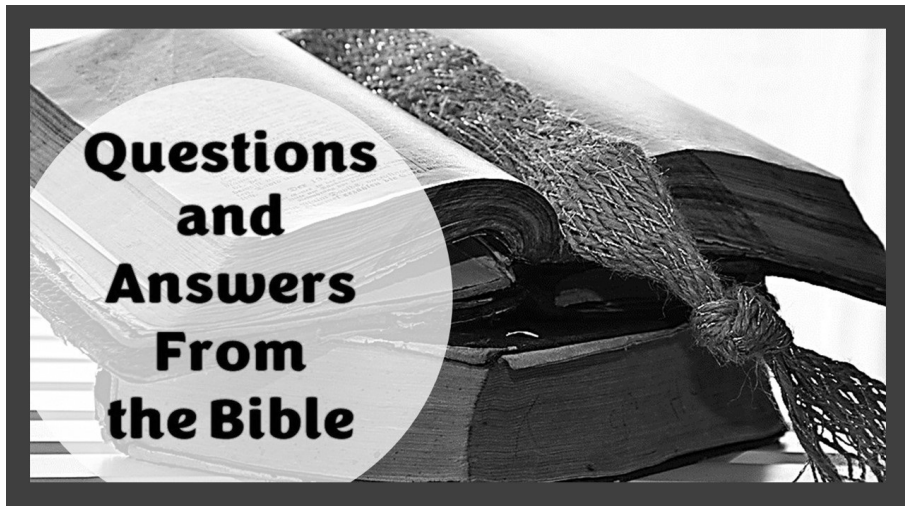
"A Child of God" was born of such mental warfare. No wonder it has been an encouragement to thousands and has become one of the most used of our songs. Its origin is thus described by its author: "In the early years of my Christian experience I had often to struggle to re-

sist the buffeting of Satan's accusations. Again and again, this dart was hurled at me: 'You are not saved; if you were, you would not feel so bad.' At one time, an enemy seemed determined to overthrow my soul.

"Suddenly, one of God's promises came to my help: 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him' (Isaiah 59:19). Some words of D. S. Warner came in with the promise: 'I have so much confidence in God that I would feel perfectly safe to hook my little finger over the least of His promises and swing out over the infernal regions.'

"Immediately, my spirits began to lift, and I took a firm hold on another promise: 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it' (1 Corinthians 10:13). Every doubt fled away, and my happy soul began singing, 'I am a child of God.'"

Archie A. Bolitho



HOW WAS THE KING JAMES VERSION TRANSLATED?

To answer this question requires the consideration of other underlying questions. The first one is, What necessitated the development of the *King James Bible*? Contrary to what some may think, it was not the lack of an English Bible but due to the fact that there were several English versions in use. In England, the Church of England was the established state church, and the king was its head, even as he is today.

Among the versions being used was the *Tyndale New Testament*, translated in A.D. 1525. Unfortunately, William Tyndale was put to death in A.D. 1536. At the time of his death, he had only translated fifteen of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, and it had to be finished by others.

Tyndale's translation was included in the *Coverdale Bible* (1535), the *Matthew's Bible* (1537), the *Great Bible* (1539), the *Geneva Bible* (1560), and the *Bishop's Bible* (1568). Using these various versions in the Church of England became an issue because of the lack of uniformity in the various congregations throughout the realm. Therefore, King James I was approached about having an "Authorized Version" to provide uniformity. At the front of many older Bibles is a copy of the authorization to show that they

were an "authorized version." Certainly, there is much more detail, but these were the predominant facts.

The scholars commissioned to translate by King James I produced what we term as the *King James Version*. They relied greatly on the *Tyndale Version*. Tyndale used both the ancient copies and the *Vulgate Version*. The King James translators also utilized the *Bishop's Bible* and the *Geneva Bible*, which were popular at that time. Thus, the King James translators used a combination of these various renderings.

I believe the Lord inspired the production of this version and that it is the best English version. It has proven itself to be effective over the centuries in producing the saving of multiplied thou-

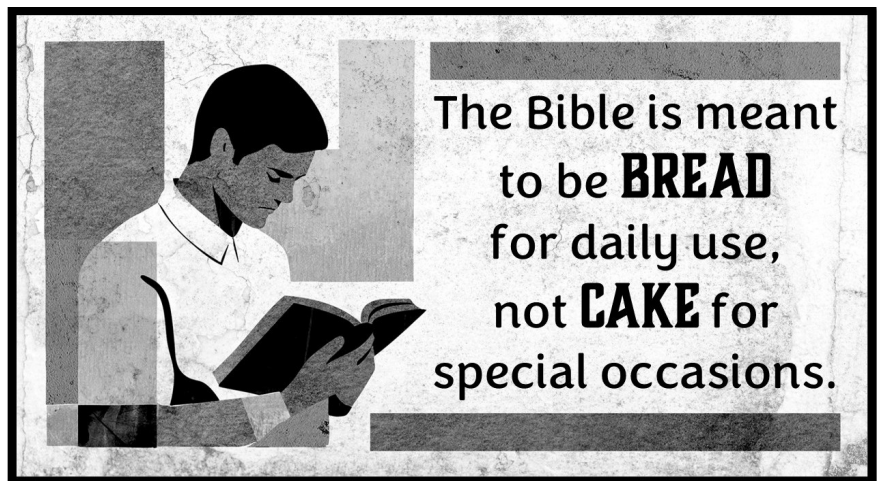
sands of souls and in bringing a people to "the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

I believe the *King James Version* should be our mainstay, or standard. The Apostle Paul penned in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," and that is so. However, the Scriptures were not originally written in English. Many words (especially Greek words) have several definitions. Unfortunately, the translators did not always translate every word correctly. Thus, it behooves us to "study" (2 Timothy 2:15) so "the Spirit of truth" (John 16:13) can enable us to be "rightly dividing the word of truth."

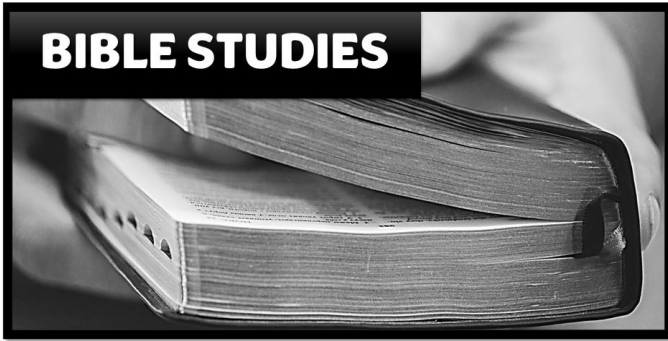
The *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* assigns a number to the Hebrew and Greek words. Then defined therein are the accurate words from the Greek and Hebrew. These may have originally been translated from the *Bishop's* or *Geneva Bibles* (or others), and then placed in the *King James Version*. It picks up, as the origin, those Greek and Hebrew words. I feel the numbers assigned and the definitions are accurate and dependable.

Brother Earl R. Borders

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



BIBLE STUDIES



THE ARMOR OF GOD: THE BELT OF TRUTH

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore [hold your ground], having tightened the belt of truth around your loins (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition).

1) Why Study the Armor of God?

The armor of God is a Biblical metaphor for the spiritual protection and defenses God provides to His children. It reminds us of the ongoing spiritual battle against evil and a call to put on God's armor to stand firm. The key to understanding the armor of God is found in Ephesians 6:10, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Every piece of armor belongs to God and comes from God.

Verse 12 lets us know we are in a battle. The conflict with Satan is spiritual, and therefore, tangible weapons cannot be effectively employed against him. We are not given a list of specific tactics Satan will use against us, but the passage is clear. If we follow all the instructions faithfully, we can stand and have victory, regardless of Satan's strategies.

2) The First Element of God's Armor

The belt of truth immediately sets the believer apart from the world since Satan is styled as the father of lies (John 8:44). Deception is an abomination to God, according to Proverbs 6:16-17. A belt is a crucial part of a soldier's gear. It secures and holds the equipment, maintains a soldier's posture, and identifies soldiers.

Without the truth, the schemes of the devil would overpower us. John 17:17 tells us, "Thy word is truth." Jesus declared Himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life," and we can only come to the Father through Him (John 14:6). Without the truth, the rest of the armor would be of no use to us be-

cause we would not have "the Spirit of truth" (John 15:26). "Just as a belt secures a soldier's armor, truth (stabilizes and) secures our spiritual lives" (*Berean Study Bible*).

3) The Belt of Truth Provides Security

In referring to "the whole armour [protective covering] of God," Paul invoked the image of a soldier ready for battle. The belt of a Roman soldier in Paul's day was more than a simple leather strap. It was a thick, heavy leather-and-metal band with a protective piece hanging from the front. The wide belt (usually about six inches) held the soldier's sword, ammunition, canteen, personal items, money, and other necessary survival tools. The spiritual belt of truth holds the sword of the Spirit, linking the truth and the Word of God.

Loins is used figuratively to represent strength, procreation, and spiritual readiness. "Gird up thy loins" is a phrase often used throughout the Bible as an urgent call to get ready for immediate action. Peter said to "gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Peter 1:13), a call for mental or spiritual preparedness for an upcoming challenge.

"Having your loins girt [fastened]" (Ephesians 6:14) refers to the type of clothing worn in ancient times. Before any vigorous activity, the loose ends of clothing, such as tunics, cloaks, mantles, etc., had to be gathered and tucked into the wide band worn around the midsection of the body. Belts secured the breastplates, keeping them from bouncing around during movement, and helped support the sword scabbard, or sheath. Proverbs 10:9 says, "He who walks in integrity and with moral character walks securely, But he who takes a crooked way will be discovered and punished" (*Amplified Bible*).

4) The Belt of Truth Provides Stability

Ephesians 6:11 tells us, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to [make your] stand against the wiles [schemes] of the devil." Hold your ground firmly. Do not give an inch to the enemy (Ephesians 4:27). The Greek word for "stand" is *histemi*, which implies standing firmly and immovably. In the context of spiritual warfare, we are to remain steadfast in the face of opposition. It echoes the Biblical theme of perseverance found in passages such as James 1:12 and 1 Corinthians 16:13.

The devil's schemes refer to the various strategies and cunning deceptions used to undermine our faith. Spiritual attacks are subtle. First Peter 5:8 describes the devil "as a roaring lion ... seeking whom he may devour." Spiritual warfare is a reality, and we need vigilance and discernment.

The promises in God's Word provide stability. Hebrews 6:19 says He is "an anchor of the soul." God embodies all truth; He cannot lie. Because God is true, we can be *stable* (firm, solid, steady, fixed, and strong) and *secure*. We need not wonder if God will change His plans. Our hope is secure and immovable, anchored in God, as a ship's anchor holds firmly to the seabed.

Hebrews 6:15, speaking of Abraham, reads, "He had patiently endured [waited]." Psalm 84:11 says, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." It was twenty-five years from the time God promised Abraham a son (Genesis 12:1-7) to Isaac's birth (Genesis 21:1-5). Proverbs 18:22 says, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing." Genesis 25:20 states, "Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife."

These principles can be applied to other areas and aspects of our lives. Our trials and temptations can be so intense that they seem to last "for an eternity." We are encouraged to wait for God to act in His timing, even when our needs seem too great to wait any longer. Romans 4:20 tells us Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God" because truth provided him with stability.

5) The Foundation of Our Experience

First Timothy 3:15 speaks about "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground [foundation] of the truth." First Corinthians 15:58 reads, "Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord [always doing your best and doing more than is needed], being continually aware that your labor [even to the point of exhaustion] in the Lord is not futile nor wasted [it is never without purpose]" (*Amplified Bible*).

Consider the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders in Matthew 7:24-27. Each of us is building a life. Verse 25 refers to "rain." Deuteronomy 32:2 says, "My doctrine [God's Word] shall drop as the rain." The devil works through people to fight against the truth. Isaiah 59:19 states, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood" Psalm 18:4 speaks about "the floods of ungodly men."

Ephesians 4:14 teaches, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." The "winds blew" refers to false doctrines or teachings that oppose the truth of God's Word. What held the wise man's house steady amidst the storms of life? It was the Rock—Christ (1 Corinthians 10:4)! There is no greater tool for Christian triumph than the truth.

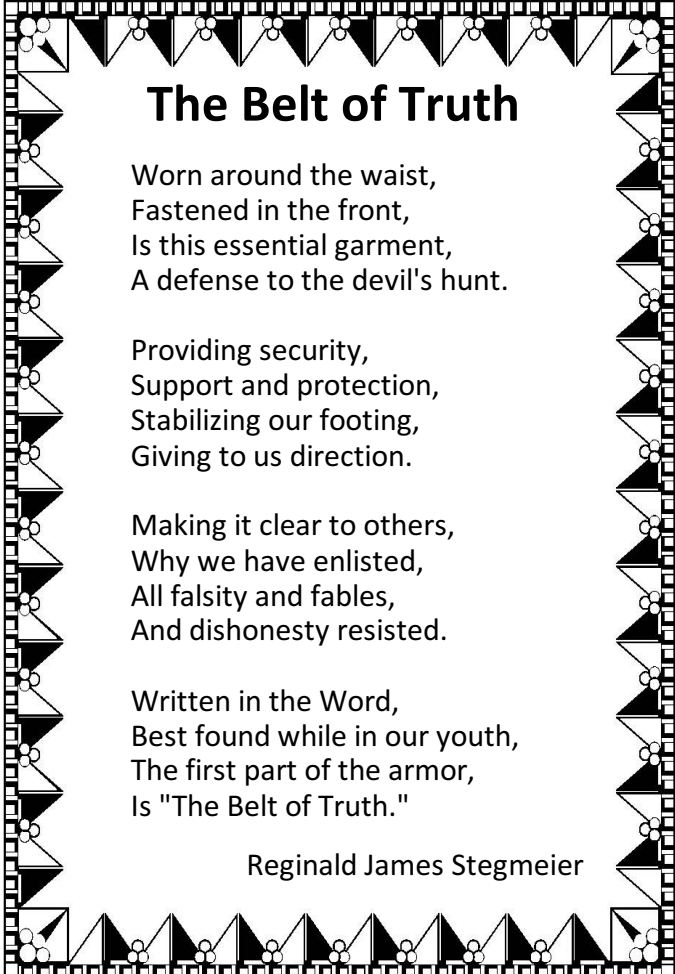
The belt of truth keeps us grounded in God's Word and helps us stand firm against spiritual attacks. It is a foundation against lies and deception.

6) The Belt of Truth Provides Spiritual Sight

Belts are identifying features of a soldier. They can serve as a visual cue. We can have a vision of the truth. In John 14:5, Thomas asked Jesus, "How can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (verse 6).

In 1 Samuel 3:1, we read, "The word of the LORD was precious [or rare] in those days; there was no open vision." Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no vision [revelation of God and His Word], the people perish." When God's Word is not preached in the pulpit and lived in the pews, the vision will be lost.

"Truth is not what you want it to be; it is what it is, and you must bend to its power or live a lie" (Miyamoto Musashi). The enemy attempts to deceive us. Second Timothy 3:13-14 states: "But evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in the things that you have learned and of which you are convinced [holding tightly to the truths], knowing from whom you learned them" (*Amplified Bible*). When we accept Christ, we come to "the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth, and sell it not."



The Belt of Truth

Worn around the waist,
Fastened in the front,
Is this essential garment,
A defense to the devil's hunt.

Providing security,
Support and protection,
Stabilizing our footing,
Giving to us direction.

Making it clear to others,
Why we have enlisted,
All falsity and fables,
And dishonesty resisted.

Written in the Word,
Best found while in our youth,
The first part of the armor,
Is "The Belt of Truth."

Reginald James Stegmeier

When people fight the truth, it is not because God has not revealed it to them, but because they are unwilling to walk in it. Depending on the translation of Ephesians 6:14, we are to "fasten the belt of truth around us," "buckle the truth around our waists," "gird our waists with truth," or "gird our loins with truth." We are actively to lay hold of the truth and use it for our benefit and for God's glory.

The belt of truth is crucial in setting us free from the bondage of sin and deception. It holds all the other armor in place. It provides us with direction and clarity, helping us discern right from wrong. It

prepares us to stand strong in spiritual warfare. Truth should be the foundation of our character. Do you have a vision of the truth? What are you doing with that vision?

Brother Reggie Stegmeier

This Bible Study is an outline of the first teaching lesson on The Armor of God brought at the God's Acres 2025 June Camp Meeting. Brother Reggie Stegmeier is the pastor of the Church of God in Canby, Oregon.

Upcoming Meetings

SIERRA VISTA, AZ

April 9-12

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Palominas Chapel Church of God, 3500 E. Fry Blvd, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
Location: La Purisima Retreat Center, 10301 S. Stone Ridge Road, Hereford, AZ 85615
Service times: Thursday 6 p.m.; Friday-Saturday 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Nathan Harding @ 520-305-9499

WARRENSVILLE, NC

April 13-19

REVIVAL: Church of God, 2042 Teaberry Rd, Warrenton, NC 28693
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
For more information, contact: Pastor Allen Borders @ 740-485-8881

MT. PLEASANT, PA

April 18

FELLOWSHIP MEETING: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Service time: 10:30 a.m. A meal will be served by the local congregation.
MOTELS: Holiday Inn Express, 724-547-2095 (This is on the same road as the church.
Please mention that you are there for the church meeting.)
Super 8 Motel in New Stanton, 724-925-8915 (on I-70W, 10 miles north of the church)

KALAMAZOO, MI

April 24-26

REVIVAL: Comstock Ave Church of God, 5578 Comstock Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49048
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
Service times: Friday 7:30 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m.
Meals will be provided following each service.
For more information, contact: Pastor John Gill @ 850-208-1541

MINERVA, OH

April 27 – May 3

REVIVAL: Mt. Zion Church of God, 13353 Lincoln Street SE, Minerva, OH 44657
Service times: Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Saturday 6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m. & 5 p.m.
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Leamon Whitehead @ 330-868-1016

SUMMERSVILLE, WV

April 27 – May 3

REVIVAL & FELLOWSHIP MEETING: The Church of God, 74 Armstrong Road, Summersville, WV 26651
Evening Evangelist: Brother Allen Polston, New Castle, IN
Service 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 congregation following the services on Friday-Sunday.
For lodging or more information, contact: Pastor Earl R. Borders @ 304-872-4047

MT. PLEASANT, PA

May 4-10

REVIVAL: Church of God, 109 Salvation Lane, Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
Service times: Nightly 7 p.m.; Sunday 10:30 a.m. No service both Sunday evenings.
A meal will be served by the local congregation following the service on Sunday.
For more information, contact: Pastor Paul W. Prinkey @ 724-547-2151

PARKERSBURG, WV

May 18-24

REVIVAL: 2620 14th Avenue, Parkersburg, WV 26101
Evangelist: Brother Larry Dishman, Hurley, MS
For more information, contact: Pastor Wayne Boone @ 304-991-3374

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