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

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

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

THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:

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

SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH

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

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Guest Editorial

Cremation

For the last few issues we have been studying subjects considered social issues. In this article we want to conclude this study with a subject that many may not consider an issue. Nonetheless, it is one upon which the Scriptures are plain. To begin this study, we must address questions such as these: When did this practice originate? Among what societies has it been prevalent? Is there a reason or a meaning behind it? What do the Scriptures teach concerning this matter?

First, let us consider the origin of the practice. The Cremation Association of North America states in an article entitled "The History of Cremation" that "Scholars today quite generally agree that cremation probably began in any real sense ... around B.C. 3000 and most likely in Europe and the Near East." This article goes on to say, "Prevalent though the practice was among the Romans, cremation was rare with the early Christians who considered it pagan." The *Concise Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, Third Edition*, states in its definition of cremation that it is the "Disposal of a corpse by fire,' widely practiced in some societies, notably India and Ancient Greece and Rome. The rise of Christianity ended the custom in Europe."

As we can see, that practice originated in ancient times among pagan cultures. *Funk and Wagnell's New Encyclopedia*, Volume 7, page 133, says, "Cremation was widely practiced in antiquity ... the early Jews forbade cremation, believing it was a desecration of the work of God. Similarly, later Christians prohibited the practice...." We can clearly see that this practice originated in pagan cultures, and both Judaism and the early morning church stood against it. Why? Note that it was prevalent in India, Greece, and Rome, in cultures that were highly superstitious and pagan. The Apostle Paul told those in Greece in Acts 17:22, "... ye are too superstitious."

What is the belief behind cremation? *The Illustrated Columbia Encyclopedia*, Volume 6, page 1624, tells us: "[Cremation's] use is often related to a belief in the properties of fire as a purifying agent. Its object may also be to light the way of the soul to the other world, or to prevent the return of the dead." Why do the Hindus of India and other heathen religions cremate? They do it in the belief that the dead are not resurrected. They believe that the dead will be reincarnated; therefore, to destroy the bodies is to release the spirits of the deceased, allowing them to come back in another form. Also, some who practice cremation with the heathen think that by destroying the body of the deceased, the fear of that individual staying in the vicinity and haunting the loved ones is diminished. Can you see how heathenish and pagan such a practice is?

What do the Scriptures say? First, we will look at some general principles such as, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). A true saint of God should not want to be associated with the mythologies of the Greeks, the paganism of the Romans, and the Hindus of India. Second Corinthians 6:17 admonishes, "... be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. ..." Sad to say, with the decline of time-honored Christian values in American society, this practice is resurging and becoming more prevalent, but the Scriptures plainly teach, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil ... " (Exodus 23:2). In all ages the Lord has wanted His people to be a separate and distinct people who followed Him and His will and not the customs or practices of the heathen. In Jeremiah

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Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

So Close—Yet Ones Miss It

Part 2 of 2

Brother Roger Decker

Seeking Eternal Life

You cannot serve God through partial obedience. You have to serve Him from the heart and obey Him in all the light you have. You cannot meet only half of God's conditions; you must meet the full conditions that the Gospel sets forth. You can find many examples in God's Word of those who came close to making it into the kingdom, but as far as we know by the Word of God, they missed it. The rich, young ruler who came to Jesus to seek eternal life was so close to the Author of Life that he could have taken Him by the hand, but he went away sorrowfully because he had great riches.

The Word of God lets you know that King Agrippa was "almost persuaded." The Apostle Paul testified and spoke to Felix about his soul and reasoned with him, and Felix trembled at God's Word. Both King Agrippa and Felix came so close, yet they missed it. King Saul in the Old Testament received warnings from Samuel and was rebuked, yet he missed it. Korah, Datham, and Abiram heard pleadings from Moses, but they missed it and received a just recompense of reward for their rebellion. The city of Sodom had a righteous man dwelling there named Lot; yet the people of the city missed it. The antediluvian age had a preacher of righteousness, whom the Word of God says was Noah, yet all the people except Noah and his family missed it.

Israel of old had the promised Messiah walking and talking and working right among them, still most of the people did not receive Him. The Bible says He came to His own, and His own received Him not.

If you are not truly saved and living for God, you are without excuse. You are not going to be able to stand at the Judgment and point a finger at anyone. This thing has been tried in the fire. Down through the ages of time, men and women have stood against more than all of us have, yet they finished their course by faith, and their names are inscribed in God's hall of fame, the "Who's Who of Faith." They stood against many obstacles, difficult circumstances, and hardships that you and I know nothing about. Some were cast into the fiery furnace, put in a den of lions, cast into prisons, beheaded, and run through with a sword; yet they finished their lives with victory. They endured to the end, and they have gone on to their reward. Child of God, if you will be faithful to the end, you will receive a reward in Glory in the fullness of Christ forever.

Some people labored and were faithful for years and then allowed things in their hearts that they should not have allowed. Just as a little piece of dust can cause a short in an electrical box, so their

communion with Christ has been shorted. They are continuing without real victory, and if they do not get help in their souls, they are going to miss it. Friend, you will not be able to stand before God and point out your good works, and say, "I did this and I did that." The Bible lets you know that if you have not departed from iniquity, the Lord will say, "Depart from Me; I never knew you."

Many people make moves in the right direction, but those moves should not be mistaken for real salvation. Friend, do not get switched over to thinking that good works will get you into Heaven. The Bible says, "The just shall live by faith." You must not allow anything to hinder that faith. If you have sin in your life, you cannot have faith in God. The Word of God is full of testimonies of people to whom God spoke and warned, but they went the way that seemed right to them and missed it in the end. Friend, God wants to warn you, because He does not want you to miss it. Why labor in church work all your life and then miss Heaven in the end?

Mark 12:32-34 says: "And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question." Why was he not far from the Kingdom of God? He recognized Truth. That is what you must get saved with–Truth. Read what the scribe said: "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth." This scribe was face to face with Truth. Jesus said, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

Some people started to leave the path of destruction, but they did not go far enough and ended up lost. Others started on the right path, and it looked as if they were going to finish right, but they ended up on the path of destruction.

Rejecting the Messages Sent From God

Luke 17:26 reads, "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." What kind of day was that? It was no different from any other day. People were buying and selling, building, eating and drinking, and making merry. Verses 27-28 read: "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded." Not one of those things can be labeled as sin; however, when people get so wrapped up in those things that they hinder them from serving God, then they have sinned.

Verses 29-32 continue: "But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall he upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." Who spoke these words? Jesus did. Lot's wife is a perfect example of one who did not go far enough. She was on the right path, but she looked back. She received the same warning that her husband received, and the Bible lets you know she had a righteous husband; but she stopped to look back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Second Peter 2:4-8 states: "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, [Noah was more than just a builder of an ark; he was a preacher of righteousness. God spoke to those people and gave them opportunity to be saved from destruction.] bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an over throw, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation o the wicked: (For that righteous mar dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.)"

According to the Word of God Lot was righteous, but he was vexed by the sin going on around him Now, he should not have pitched hi tent toward Sodom, but it did no overcome him. Lot's wife had the privilege of entertaining angels, and she heard the warnings, just as men and women hear the warnings ye today.

Many people come to the Church of God and hear men of God bring forth the messages that God has laid upon their hearts, yet they reject the messages sent from God, just as the people did in Noah's day and Lot's day, and they are without excuse. This is more serious than people want to take it; in fact, it is more serious than people can comprehend. The Word and the Spirit have been reaching out to souls to deliver them from the conditions they are in.

Failing to Heed the Warnings

Genesis 19:12-13 says: "And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou her any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and what soever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it." Lot's wife heard the

angels' warnings, and she was even led out of the city by the angel's hand.

Verses 15-16 read: "And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." Those angels did not allow them to linger any longer. They actually took them by the hand and brought them forth. Lot's wife heard the message of destruction, and she had a righteous companion. Though the angels led her out, that still did not save her.

Friend, how often has God dealt with your soul? How many times has He given you opportunities to do what you know you ought to do? How often has He come really close to you and troubled your heart and you knew beyond any doubt that He was speaking to you? God does not have a special plan just for you, to allow you to get by with things He will not allow others to get by with. No, you must go the same way everyone else goes–according to God's ordained plan.

Lot's wife was out of the city of destruction, but still she was not saved. What was her sin? Genesis 19:17 tells us, "And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." Lot's wife lingered and then looked back. She took her last breath in an act of disobedience. What a way to meet God! She is a testimony that you cannot do wrong and get by. Her belongings were back in that city. No doubt, she thought about her relatives and friends, but more than that, her heart was there. Lot's wife left the city because of the angels and her husband, but she was a Sodomite at heart.

Sodom was accused of very vile sins, but the worst sin of Sodom was not homosexuality. The Bible lets us know what the worst sin really was. Ezekiel 16:48-49 reads: "As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom [what was it?], pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

What is knocking out people today? Pride, fullness of bread, idleness, and being self-centered. That was the prevailing sin of the people of Sodom, and that is the prevailing sin of many people yet today, even of many who profess to be Christians. Pride goes before a fall. You cannot sit in a Church of God congregation and expect to be idle and make it in. It did not happen in the Word of God, and God is not going to change His mind for you and me. This sin gets hold of people yet today, and it always leads to destruction.

Again, their sin was pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did they strengthen the hands of the poor and needy. Their sin was self-centeredness and having no desire to help others. If people would only reach out and labor for souls as hard as they labor for the things in this life, but idleness has taken hold of many congregations. We sing a song that says, "I cannot be idle, for Jesus says go."

Looking Back

What was the punishment for Lot's wife? Genesis 19:26 tells us, "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." God did not waste any time in bringing judgment upon her. Her punishment was sudden and quick. One thing that God hates is for people to start on the way of deliverance and then look back.

Like Israel of old, some people look back on the old life and say, "We would to God we were back in Egypt." What was it really like for the Israelites when they were down in Egypt? They cried out for deliverance because they were under a hard taskmaster. Their groans continually came up before God, so He sent a deliverer. Then after He delivered them, they murmured and complained and said they wished they were back in Egypt. God hates that kind of attitude. If they had it so good in Egypt, why did they leave? Friend, if you think you had it so good in sin, why did you come out of it? There was nothing good down in Egypt, there was nothing good in Sodom, and there is nothing good in sin. God hates sin.

Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. To think that she had to stand before God in the act of disobedience! Why was what she did disobedience? God told her not to look back, but she did it anyway. Some people act as if God does not mean what He says. Just because some people are not struck down instantly for their sins, they feel that they will get by with them. Remember, God's memory can go back thousands of years, and He can recall the past as well as if it were today.

If you are coming out of the path of destruction, do not look back. Jesus said in Luke 9:62, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Why is God so against looking back? Looking back shows a longing to go back. After all that God had done for Lot and his wife and daughters, after all the mercy He had shown them, looking back was almost like spitting in His face and saying, "I do not believe what God said. I believe He will spare this city." If you look back, it is as if to say, "I would rather have sin than Jesus." I do not know of a more

terrible sin. For Lot's wife, there was no space for repentance and no time to say, "Wait a minute, Lord. I did not mean it." The time on her clock stopped. Destruction came upon her so quickly that she did not even have time to ask for mercy. The Bible lets us know in Ephesians 2:4 that God is rich in mercy, but she could no longer receive it. She lost her life and her soul forever. Her opportunity was gone, and her destiny was sealed with death.

Halted Between Two Choices

Notice that she was almost saved. She was outside the city of destruction, but she missed it. Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." Right on the road to deliverance, she was lost. Sodom was behind her and a place of refuge was right out ahead, but she hesitated between the two places. What were her two choices? She could go with her husband and believe the Word of God or she could return to Sodom, her friends and loved ones, and her material possessions. Right in that condition, she was lost.

Dear one, God does not want you to hesitate between the decision to serve him or not serve Him. He does not want you to start on the road to deliverance and look back. If God is God, serve Him with all your heart and obey Him completely. Do not allow the dirty devil to get anything in your heart. The devil has no mercy. He is a destroyer of souls. God does not want you to halt between two opinions. First Kings 18:21 reads, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Bringing the words of this text up to date, it would read: "If the Lord is your God, serve him; but if something else is your god, then follow it. Do not try to mix the two." No doubt, as Lot's wife slipped from this time world into eternity, she could hear the angels' warning,"Don't look back! Flee for your life!" She was lost on the road to deliverance. Many people are going to be lost on the road to safety, sitting right in a Church of God congregation where they could have been delivered. There is mercy, longsuffering, grace, and strength abounding all around them, yet they are going to be lost. God dispatches His angels to help get them on the road to deliverance, but they are going to miss it if they continued to go the way they are heading.

Do you remember what the scribe said? He let Jesus know that He spoke the Truth, but just knowing that will not save you. You have to put it on, walk in it, and obey it. Some people hear warnings repeatedly; nevertheless, they hold out for their own way, and they are going to miss it. What a tragedy! My friend, you have no excuse for not serving God. Now, you may give someone a reason, and the person may sympathize with you, but your excuse will not get you into Heaven if it is hindering you from serving God. This is no time to play around. If you are going to serve God, you need to serve Him now. Do not keep playing around and then miss it.

Some have had the privilege of being raised by godly parents, yet they are unsaved. They have shrugged off their parents' godly influence and made their choice. They stepped away from Mom and Dad and stepped out on their own, and if they do not turn around, they are going to miss it. Children cannot go to Heaven on their parents' experience. They must have their own experience with God and remain faithful to Him to the end.

Can the Lord Count on You?

Having godly parents and a godly grandmother affected Timothy. Second Timothy 1:1-5 states: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also."

Some today have had godly parents and grandparents, but they just shrug it off. God wants them to affect their lives. Having godly parents or grandparents will not save you, but having their influence upon your life is a special privilege. Parent, you should talk to your children about dressing right and abstaining from fleshly lusts that war against your soul. If you do not live right and talk right in the home, you will lose your children. Timothy was affected by his mother and his grandmother. What were they known for? Their faith in God.

If God brought judgment on Lot's wife, how will you appear when you stand before Jesus on judgment Day? Now Jesus is on His throne of mercy, but one day He will be on His throne of judgment. You still have mercy as long as He is on the mercy throne. God has enough grace, mercy, patience, and longsuffering for you so that you can make it. Do not allow disobedience to get into your life. How is it in your soul? Do you really have Jesus within? Can the Lord count on you? Can the Lord speak to you and say, "I want you to go to your neighbors and talk to them about their souls"? Or would you first have to repent and get straightened out? Are you so busy with the affairs of this life that the Lord would have to get someone else? If God has spoken to your heart, please let it draw you to Him.

(Cassette C-2829C)

Matthew 18:21 Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

23 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.

32 Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I laid pity on thee?

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

God's Mercy With Conditions

Brother Daniel Webster

God's Mercy Endures Forever

Our Scripture text is a wonderful example of God's mercy. Several lessons are in this parable, but I want to look at just one the wonderful mercy of God. This servant owed a large debt that he could not pay. That is certainly how every sinner comes to Jesus Christ. Sin is a debt that we cannot pay; however, because of God's great mercy, He is willing to forgive that debt. Oh, the wonderful mercy of God! The Psalmist wrote, "His mercy endureth forever." Knowing that we serve a merciful God is wonderful. Those who have never heard the Gospel can find mercy in the Creator.

Mercy is compassion to an offender. If someone offends me and I have compassion toward that person, then I show mercy toward that one. I might have every right to be offended and justified in not having compassion; yet, to show mercy is to have compassion for the one who has offended me. God is the same way. He had the right to strike each of us dead the first time we sinned. He is our Creator and can do what He pleases with us. Still, right from the start, He instituted a plan of mercy, and He was ready to put it into action when the time came. God is a God of great mercy, One who looks at a world filled with offenses toward Him, yet in His mercy He has compassion.

When I was unsaved and cursed God, I am so glad that He did not strike me dead! When I made mockery of the things of God and doubted His Word, He had mercy

and spared my life so that I might have an opportunity to hear Truth and be saved. It is a wonderful blessing to comprehend the mercies of God.

Although God is great in mercy, He also lays out judgment and wrath. The mercies of God are beyond our thinking. Without God's love, we could not be merciful toward those who offend and wrong us. Though we may feel justified in retaliating, God says to have mercy. In fact, God says we roust show mercy; He desires mercy. In Hosea 6:6 He said, "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." God desires His children to be merciful. He loves mercy.

Micah 6:8 says, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what cloth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" God not only loves mercy but He also wants us to love mercy and to be compassionate toward those who wrong us. You may say, "I can't do that." Well, in myself I cannot do that either, but when Jesus moved in, He gave me a heart that can. He will help you too. When people speak evil of you, you can still care for their souls. You can be like Jesus, Who said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). You should keep in mind that people do not really realize that the devil has hold of them. You can pray for the offenders, have compassion, and show mercy toward them because God is merciful.

Second Chronicles tells us that God's mercy endures forever. In 2 Chronicles 7:3 we read, "And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the LORD , saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." The Lord is good because His mercy endures forever. When God looks on a person, He looks beyond that person's faults and sees one who could possibly be used of Him. therefore, He has compassion on that soul. That is what He did for me. He looked beyond the sinful life that I was living and saw one whom He could mold into something useful. God looks at each of us that way.

The Bible lets us know that God is not willing that any should perish. He does not want one soul to be lost. So He is going to do everything in His power to see souls saved. Through the gift of His precious Son, He offers mercy to whosoever will receive it.

The government has made available different kinds of grants to assist a person in paying college tuition. Though these grants are available, if you do not apply for them, you will not receive them. The same is true concerning God's mercy. It is available for you, but unless you apply for it, you will not receive it. Not only do you have to apply for that mercy, but also you have to qualify for it, just as you must qualify for certain grants. I had to apply for God's mercy. I said, "Lord, are You willing to forgive me?" and He said, "Yes, if you meet My conditions."

God has mercy, but it is conditional. It is not for people to use however they want to use it. God has mercy for whosoever will, if they meet the conditions that He has established in His Word. To receive God's mercy, you must go God's way. It is God's will that everyone takes advantage of His mercy and is saved. However, many people do not take advantage of His mercy.

David wrote repeatedly that God's mercy endures forever. Psalm 136:1-4 says: "O give thanks unto the LORD ; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever. O give thanks to the LORD of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever." Throughout the Psalm, David tried to get the point across that God's mercy endures forever. What is His mercy? Jesus Christ is His mercy, and He endures forever.

The Wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is not dead; He is very much alive today. You may ask, "How do you know that?" I know because He lives in me. He moved into my heart in February 1980 and made me a different person. I never dreamed that I could ever be as I am today, yet God changed me. Before the Lord saved me, I did not go to church, and I had no desire to go to church. I had no inclination toward God or the things of God, but God got hold of my heart one day. He started dealing with my soul and let me know that I was heading for a devil's hell and that I was going to be lost forever if I did not repent. I needed God's mercy, but I did not know that I could be delivered. I thought I was only going to receive forgiveness, but I heard better news! I found that not only can one be forgiven but also one can be delivered. That was the best news I had ever heard! That is the reason the Gospel is called the "good news." Salvation is not just forgiveness; that only makes you feel a little better. The really good news is that you do not have to sin anymore! I thank God for the wonderful Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Sinner friend, God can change your life and make you something you never dreamed you could be. That is His specialty! The devil will tell you that living this way is impossible, and in a sense that is true, because you cannot live it in your own strength. However, God specializes in the impossible. When you ask Him for mercy, He will give you the power to live this life.

Micah wrote that God delights in mercy. Micah 7:18-19 states: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the trans gression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his

anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." That is wonderful! God can take your sins and cast them into the depths of the sea. Many of God's people are ashamed of what they were involved in before the Lord saved them, and they hope that no one ever finds out. Sometimes people will try to dig up your past sins; however, once you are saved, they are all under the blood. As God's Word says, they have been buried in the depths of the sea, and they are gone forever. God will never remember those things against you again. Occasionally the enemy will bring things back to your mind, but God does not remember them.

God's Great Compassion

Micah 7:18 tells us, "Who is a God like unto thee?" Only God can pardon you and erase your transgressions so that He does not remember them against you. You cannot do this for yourself. Some people have a hard time forgiving themselves. The devil hounds them about the things they have done. Child of God, if that is happening to you, you need to take hold of the knowledge that God has forgiven and forgotten your sins, and then dismiss the issue from your mind, and leave it behind you.

Paul said to put your past behind you and walk on with God. God is of great compassion. He has removed your sins as far as the east is from the west. Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." As far east as you can go, you just keep going east. You cannot get to the west from the east because it is unreachable. Thank God, that is how far away God has put your sins! When you come to Christ and ask for forgiveness through Jesus' blood, He will par don you and cast those sins so far away that you will never find them again.

God's mercy is wonderful! God has great mercy on the sinner. Lamentations 3:22 says, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." If you do not know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, it is the Lord's mercies that you are not consumed; His compassions fail not. Sinner friend, God wants to save you. He wants you to give your heart and life to Him so that you can serve Him and be free from the terrible sins that have you bound. Lamentations 3:23 says, "They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." God is faithful to every soul. He lets you know exactly where you stand with Him in the light of eternity. He does not want anyone to be lost.

Saint, your being saved is no guarantee that you will make Heaven your home. God is faithful to your soul, day after day, witnessing to you and checking your spirit, your attitude, and your life. He checks the things you get involved in and the things you talk about. He is checking all the time because His compassions do not fail, and He is not willing that you perish. We read in Lamentations 3:24-26: "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD." God has all the mercy you need, and He is waiting for you to call upon Him. As you call on Him, just quietly wait and you will see that He will bless your soul. It does not take long for Him to forgive your sins. Removing your sins is just as easy for God as pressing the delete key on a computer keyboard. Once you delete something, it is gone. That is just how God forgives your sins. They are gone forever. Thank God, He wants to do that for every sinner. God's mercy and compassion fail not, but His mercy is conditional. The mercy of God is not to be used as you please. If you want to take advantage of it, you must meet God's conditions. Some of His conditions are found in Isaiah 55:1, which reads, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Verse 3 says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

In verses 6-7 he said: "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." If you try to go any other way, you will not find mercy. The only way to find the mercy of God is to be willing to forsake your ways, your thoughts, and your ideas about what you think is right and turn to God's way. When you turn to God's Word and God's way, you will find abundant mercy. The Bible says to let the wicked forsake his way and God will abundantly pardon. If you are willing to meet that condition, you will find mercy for your soul.

"The Sure Mercies of David"

Again, Isaiah said in Isaiah 55:3, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." God's sure mercies to David are recorded in 2 Samuel. When God makes a promise, it is forever. God's Word cannot be changed.

In 2 Samuel 7:14-15 God said: "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before

thee." These are the sure mercies of David. This was a promise that God made to David. In other words, He said, "I am going to establish mercy that will never be taken away." If you turn to the Son of David, Jesus Christ Himself, you will find everlasting mercy. He is willing to forgive every sinner so that he can take hold of the sure mercies of David.

God said, "I will not turn away from you as I did Saul." Saul's transgression is recorded in 1 Samuel, Chapter 15. He got involved in things that God disapproved of. He disobeyed God and did things as he thought they should be done instead of the way God said to do them. Saul's way seemed right. On the surface it appeared to be a good idea, but it was not what God told him to do, and that is what got him in trouble. The Prophet Samuel came to him and said, in essence, "Sail, what do I hear? I hear something that 1 should not be hearing."

In essence, Saul's answer was, "Well, the people decided that they would spare the best of the flocks and the king."

Samuel reminded Saul, "Didn't God tell you to destroy all?" Saul blamed his lack of obedience on the people, and that is the reason God did not forgive him. Had Saul reacted as David had when Nathan confronted him and said, "I have sinned," God would have forgiven him.

Saul kept putting off taking the blame. When you want to blame someone else for your transgressions, a wrong spirit is working. Long before this ever happened, a wrong spirit was working in Saul, and it got hold of him. Finally, Saul said in I Samuel 15:24, "1 have sinned: for 1 have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice." What caused Saul to confess? After Samuel said, Your kingdom will be taken away from you; you are finished," then Saul said, "Oh, well, I'm sorry! I have done wrong." However, it was too late then. God's mercy was extended to him. He had a chance to say, "l am the one who was responsible for this terrible deed," but instead he blamed the people.

In comparison, consider David's confrontation with his sin. When Nathan told him, "You are the man;" he said, "I have sinned. God, forgive me for that sin." Sinner friend, that is the only way you can find the sure mercies of David. You must be willing to acknowledge, "I am the guilty party. I am the one who has sinned against God." Sadly, people in general always want to blame someone else. No matter what some people get involved in, according to them, it is always someone else's fault. Instead of acknowledging their transgressions, they constantly blame others or make excuses. Friend, when you do that, you are not going to get anywhere with God. You cannot make excuses to God for sin. When you sin, it is your sin; it is your responsibility. Saul was not repentant until Samuel put him under pressure, but it was too late. For God to help you, you have to take responsibility before you are put under that kind of pressure.

Meeting God's Conditions

God's mercy is available for whosoever will meet the conditions that God has set forth. The Bible says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). If you come to Christ humbly and acknowledge before Him that you have sinned, He will be faithful and just to forgive you of those sins. John wrote in 1 John 2:1-2: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sits: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is through Jesus Christ that the sinner finds forgive ness of sins; He is the atonement for sin. Friend, sin is always a transgression against God. Every sin you commit is against Him, but you must first seek His forgiveness.

Should the need arise, God will lay it on your heart to ask someone's forgiveness for the things that you have done. Also, God will make it very plain when it is time for you to make restitution. You may ask, "Why would He want me to make restitution?" One reason is to keep you humble. No one else may know anything about it but God. Often He plans to use that in some way. When God speaks to you about it, soon you will realize, "Until I get this done, I am not going to have any rest; so I must get this done!" Finally, you will say, "All right, Lord, I will do it." Do not fear what might happen. When I was a new convert, I went to a revival service, and the preacher said, "We still believe in restitutions, don't we?" I went home and studied it, and it was not long until the Lord showed me some things that I had to do. So I did them, and God got all the glory and the praise, and I was strengthened. It was wonderful because God was in it!

While the Bible plainly tells us that God's mercy is for whosoever will, even as the ark door was closed, so the mercies of God will be shut off one day. God's mercy endures forever to those who meet His conditions. If you refuse to meet His conditions, the door of mercy will be closed for you. Many people get the idea, "Well, I will get saved whenever I feel like it and everything will be fine." No, you must get saved when God is talking to you, because you may never hear Him again. The Lord said in Genesis 6:3, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

Sinner friend, when God is dealing with your soul, do not take it for granted that He will continue to deal with you. You can harden

your heart so much that you cannot hear Him speak to you. I have heard of people pleading with a pastor or the saints, "Please pray that God will talk to me again so I can get saved." They do not hear God's voice because they shunned it, turned aside, and went their own way, thinking, "When I am ready, I will accept Jesus." Friend, you cannot get saved whenever you are ready. You need to move when He talks to you. In Isaiah 55:6 we read, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found." This Scripture lets you know that there can be a time when He will not be found. From time to time, even a servant of God may feel that he cannot find God, so how can a sinner think, "I will find God whenever I want Him"? At times God's people go through trials and cannot sense the presence of God. During Job's trial, in so many words, he said, "I looked to the left and the right and could not find Him." One consolation for us as saints is that God knows where we are. Child of God, He knows what you are going through, and He cares for you. However, a sinner has to get saved before he can claim that promise. Sinner friend, if you will listen to Him and seek Him while He may be found, He will save your soul. His mercy is for whosoever will.

Choosing Heaven or Hell

Jesus is pictured in Revelation 3:20 as One who stands at the door and knocks. It says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Sinner friend, the Lord has mercy for you, and He is standing at the door of your heart knocking and waiting. He wants to come into your heart, but if you do not open the door, He will go away. He will not force Himself in.

If you want deliverance and forgiveness of sin, Christ is there to forgive you and deliver you. The message of God's church is that God will forgive you, deliver you, and keep you. You should not be afraid that once you start living this life, you cannot live it. One day at a time and through every trial, God can keep you. If you are willing to let God have His way in your life, He will help you to overcome. Dear one, take advantage of the great mercy, care, and help that He has for you.

Revelation 22:17 says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." That is what the Lord wants. He is not willing that any perish. He is knocking at your heart's door, saying, "If you are willing, come, and I will take you in. I will sup with you, and you can sup with Me. We will be one."

We read in Revelation 22:11-12: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Jesus is not an intruder in people's lives. If you want to live in sin, then you can live in sin. If you want to live holy, you can live holy. That is what He was saying here in Revelation. He that is holy, let him be holy still; but if you want to stay in sin, God will let you stay there.

For people who take advantage of this mercy, God will forgive them, set them free from the bondage of sin, and give them the privilege of living for Him. Yet, that same mercy and compassion causes God not to force Himself on anyone. He will give you the opportunity to choose mercy. If you do not, the Proverb writer recorded what your end will be in Proverbs 1:24-31: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

That is a sad picture. God is not willing that any should perish, but He will not force Himself on one soul. People must come to Him of their own choosing; it must be their decision as He pleads with their souls. Sinner, as He pleads with you, the choice is yours. As the songwriter wrote, "Heaven or hell you are choosing." It is your choice to either serve God or turn Him aside. Remember that if you turn God aside, He has the ultimate right to say, "All right, the next time you call on Me, I will not hear you. I have given you your last opportunity."

You may say, "Those are very harsh words." Well, those are the words that God spoke to my heart before I was saved. He said, "It is today or never. This is your last chance."

Sinner friend, if God is dealing with you, this could be the last time you ever hear what God has to say. However, there may come a day when God says, "I called you, but you would not listen; now I will leave you alone." Jesus spoke similar words when He looked upon Jerusalem. He first came to save the Jews as He promised in the Scriptures, but they rejected Him and refused to believe His Word.

In Luke 13:34-35 Jesus said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye

would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They had rejected Christ and said, "We do not want Him; we do not believe in Him." They treated Him just as they did with all prophets that God sent their way. So, He said, "O Jerusalem, had you listened, I could have helped you, but now your house is left to you desolate, and you cannot get hold of God." It does not have to be that way with you, friend.

Taking the First Step

Jesus said in Luke 15:17-20: "And when he came to himself [speaking of the prodigal son], he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and 1 perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father [again, these are the conditions that one must follow to find mercy], and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

When a sinner looks to God for mercy, God does not stand back and say, "Well, it's about time!" No, He is waiting for him to move, and when he does, He will run toward him because He wants to save him. You may say, "Oh, it's so hard to take that first step;" but the first step is the last step you will remember, because He will run toward you, put His loving arms around you, and spiritually carry you to the place of salvation. He did that for me, and He has done it for others. It is wonderful!

Just as the prodigal son's father had compassion, your Heavenly Father has compassion and cares for your soul. Do not let the devil talk you out of getting saved. All you need to do is take the first step, and He will run toward you and embrace you. The Scripture says that the father ran and fell on his son's neck and kissed him. He showed great compassion, because he loved him. That is what God did when He gave His Son for us. He gave us all the love that could ever be manifested in Jesus Christ. "Whosoever will" can come and be saved. If you hunger for this mercy, you can take advantage of it. All you need to do is meet His conditions.

Samuel told Saul, in so many words, "When you were little in your sight, God could do something with you." When you are willing to be humble and become as a little child, humble and needy, Christ can save your soul. If God is dealing with your heart, you need to listen to Him. This could be your last opportunity.

(Cassette C-3961M)

Radio Log

LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Newark, Ohio	WCLT-AM 1430	Sunday	7:35 a.m.-8:00 a.m.
Akron, Ohio	WHK-FM 98.1	Sunday	2:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Cleveland, Ohio	WHK-AM 1420	Sunday	2:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Anderson, Indiana	WQME-FM 98.7	Sunday	7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.
Little Rock, Arkansas	KMLT-AM 760	Sunday	5:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Rochelle, Georgia	WQIL-FM 101.3	Sunday	7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m.
Gaffney, South Carolina	WAGI-FM 105.3	Monday	8:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m.
Harriesburg, Mississippi	WBKM-AM 950	Sunday	12:00 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.

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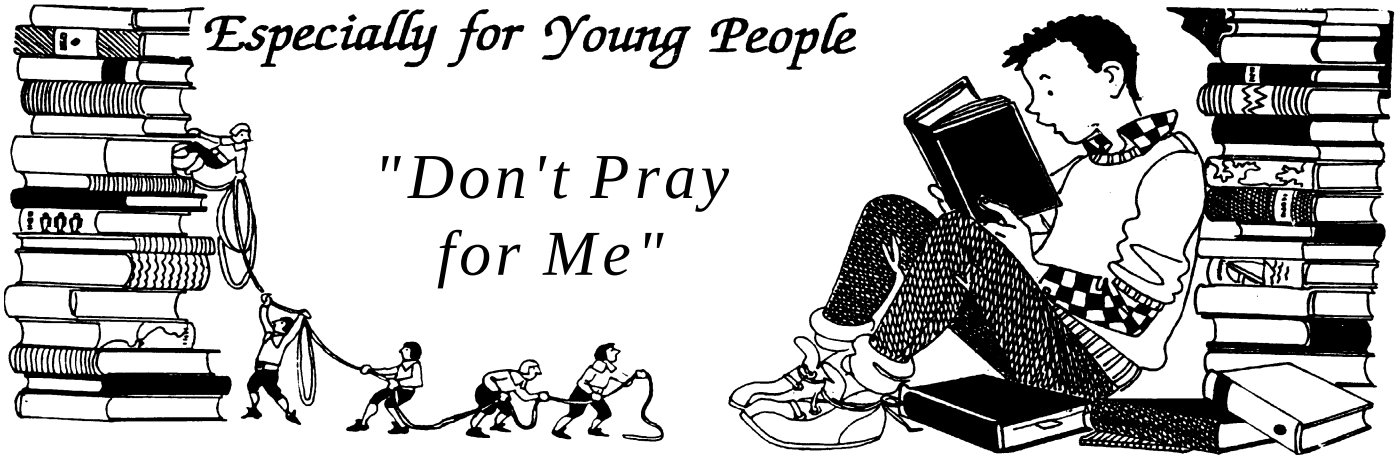


"Don't Pray for Me"

I once witnessed the most heart-rending scene I have ever seen in my life. It was at the big Union Depot on a cold, November morning. I had come to see a friend of mine off. As we stood there, talking and shivering in the early morning mist, I noticed the next door neighbors of mine were standing just across the station platform from us.

I noticed that their son, who was a soldier, was with them. I assumed that he had been home on a furlough and that they had come down to the depot to see him off. His folks were very good Christians. Their name was Barton and we had been friends for years, but I had not seen much of them recently for I had been very busy.

Just then Mrs. Barton turned and saw me, so she motioned for us to come over. My friend and I stepped over and introductions were made. I hardly remembered her son Ralph. He certainly had changed since he had been in the army. He was still as tall and handsome as ever, but the old, frank, smiling countenance was gone. He was nervous and irritable. He kept pacing back and forth while waiting for the train to pull in.

Mrs. Barton explained that Ralph had been home on a furlough and was anxious to get back to camp. As we stood talking, the big streamliner came roaring in and the crowd began to surge through the gates to the coaches. Ralph turned to say goodbye to his folks. His mother's lips began to quiver, and the tears welled up in her eyes. She looked up at her boy with tender, loving eyes and with a voice full of compassion, she said, "Goodbye, my son, remember, we'll be praying for you all the time."

A strange look came over Ralph's face, a deep red color surged up from under his collar. Something seemed to actually snap inside of him and anger and passion blazed out of his eyes.

He spoke sharply, almost blurted out his words, "Don't pray for me;" he said, "I don't need your prayers. I can take care of myself. I've gotten along without God this far, and I guess I can make it the rest of the way!" His tone was sharp and bitter. I felt so sorry for poor Mrs. Barton. You could see that his words were fairly cutting and tearing out her heart.

Then he continued, "Anyhow, if God cared anything at all about me, He would have kept me out of the army. He doesn't care about me so why would I care about Him? And, don't pray for me, Mom. I don't need it, and it wont do any good."

He glanced at his mother and saw the tears pouring down her cheeks and the heartbroken look on her face. It was more than he could stand. Without another word of farewell, he turned quickly on his heel and strode, almost ran, to the waiting train. Without a backward glance or farewell wave, he swung on board and disappeared from view.

I left then. I couldn't stand to stay there and see Mrs. Barton as she stood so crushed and silent in her grief. To think that her only boy of whom she had been so proud and who had once been a fine Christian, now spurned God's love and mercy.

I saw Mrs. Barton several times after this incident, but we never spoke of that awful moment in the depot that morning. Mrs. Barton seemed to age years in those months, but I knew she was still living close to God and making intercessory prayer for her son.

Then one day she called me over. She said she had a letter from Ralph that she wanted me to read. I noticed as she handed me the thick envelope that there was a changed look on her face. A calm, serene light glowed in her eyes. "My, it's a long one," I remarked.

"Yes, it's very long," she answered. "He had a lot to tell me."

I hastily unfolded the pages and read the strange story that Ralph had recorded there. It said:

Somewhere in the Pacific

Dear Mom,

It's going to be kind hard to write this letter. We weren't allowed any lights out here, so I have to scribble by twilight and whenever I get a chance, which isn't often.

Another thing that makes it rather hard is that I don't know just how to say what I want to. How I wish I could sit in the living room with you tonight and just talk. Remember how you used to sit in the old arm chair and

[continued on page 25]

Nehemiah 4:10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you.

13 Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.

23 So neither I, nor my brethren, nor mil servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing.

Be Encouraged

Brother Bob Mikesell

God Is Greater Than the Devil

I want to bring a message of encouragement to help you to resist the enemy of your soul. The devil wants to cause division and get the saints to stop working. You need to cause the devil to flee. He will be around to tempt you, but you do not have to listen to him or talk to him. You can tell him no. God is greater than the devil.

Our Scripture text says in verse 10, "And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed …." The burden bearers of the Church of God are those who bear the burdens of the people. This verse says their strength was decayed. Many things were in the way. When you get up in the morning to start the day, the devil will set things in your way to cause you to stumble. He wants you to say, "Too many things are in the way, so why should I bother?" That was what the people in our Scripture lesson were saying. They looked around at the ruined and burned down wall and said, "Look at all the rubbish. There is so

much of it. Why bother trying to rebuild the wall?"

The same devil that was working back then is working today. He will try to discourage you, but the Bible says not to be weary in well doing. As you trod along in this Christian life and live as God wants you to live, not seeing your family members saved can cause you to become weary and say, "What's the use? This world doesn't want salvation. People don't want to give up the habits of life, the filth, and all the things the world has to offer." You need to remember that the Bible admonishes you not to become weary in well doing. It may take years of consistent living before your family, your friends, your co-workers, and your children before you see any results. Slowly but surely, all your labors will work for good if you continue to press on and do not allow the devil to get you down.

Verses 10-11 of our Scripture text read: "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease." The devil will talk to you just as he talked to them. The adversaries told the people that they were going to come in among them to slay them and cause the work to cease. The devil was trying to discourage them and bring fear upon them.

Today sometimes the devil tells people, "You are not even saved. Why are you trying to live holy?" He will try to cause you to become fearful to get your mind off the things of God. His purpose is to cause the work of God to cease. The devil wanted the work to cease back then just as he wants it to cease today. That is the reason he works on the saints of God. If he can get us to stop working and stop living holy, then who is going to be saved? The Bible says you must hear the Word through a preacher to be saved, so if the devil can get people to rebel and rise up against the pastor, the work will be hindered.

Be Not Afraid of the Enemy

The Bible says the spirit of this age is lukewarmness. Most people do not just give up and quit going to church. They still go to church every Sunday and say amen, but when they leave the service, they do not think about God again until the next service. They merely go through the motions of doing the things they know they need to do. Serving God becomes a form to them. That is the spirit of lukewarmness that the Bible speaks of. Everyone does not have this spirit, but it is the spirit of the age, and you need to resist it.

Verses 12-14 of the Scripture text state: "And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you. Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, [In other words, he was saying, 'The enemy will try to oppose us, but I am going to be up on the wall to watch for the enemy so you can continue the work.'] I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them . . . ."

The message was, "Be not afraid of the enemy," and the message is the same today. Do not be afraid of the people who are opposing the Church of God, because they cannot hurt you.

As this world goes on, we can see a decline in morality, and opposition against the Church of God is growing greater. Babylon is gaining a higher place among the people of this world. It will not be long until more people will try to stop holiness preaching. They do not want Church of God ministers to stand up and cry out against Roman Catholicism and other devilish sects.

The writer in our Scripture text said in verse 14, "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." The word *terrible* here was not a bad thing; it was a good thing to the children of God. On the other hand, if you are not saved, it becomes a bad thing. When the devil comes upon you with trials, heartaches, or discouragement, you need to remember the Lord. Too often when something comes upon God's people, they want to call on man. When afflictions come, the first thing some people do is call the doctor, without thought of going to the Lord in prayer and saying, "Lord, I have something wrong with me. Will You heal this condition for me?" Many people want to call the doctor or the lawyer for help and advice. If a problem arises in your life and you think you need legal counsel, Jesus is just as much a lawyer as He is a doctor. He can change people's minds and their hearts. He can change situations around in ways that you never thought were possible. He can meet your every need.

If you are not careful, God is the last one to whom you will go. Often people try all other avenues first, and then after they have exhausted every earthly means they can think of, they become discouraged. God is saying, "Listen, child, I am still on the throne, and I can still move on your body and clear up any disease."

In the Old Testament you can read about the disease of leprosy. Being diagnosed with leprosy was like receiving a death sentence. It was a terrible disease that ate up a person's skin and insides, but God healed that condition many times for many different people. He told Naaman, "Go and dip yourself seven times in the Jordan River, and you will be made clean." We serve the same God today! He can do all things.

Stand Still and See the Salvation of the Lord

Another instance where God brought miraculous deliverance is found in Exodus 14:10-13, which reads: "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD."

These people served the Egyptians for four hundred years. They were in bondage, and they were beaten and whipped. Pharaoh made them do extra work, yet they said to Moses, "You should have left us alone. It would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

No matter how well the devil portrays the pleasures of this life, spending eternity in hell is something so terrible that your mind cannot even comprehend it. Hell is a terrible place of pain and agony, but you cannot even begin to realize the torments there.

The people said to Moses, "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses [being a man of God, he cared for the people] said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." God parted the waters and brought the children of Israel through to the other side. The Lord performed a great miracle, but he told them to "stand still."

Too often when people get saved, they think the Christian life is going to be a life with no burdens, or a life of ease. They think, "I'm saved now. God is the Captain of my ship, and I'm not going to have any burdens or problems or trials. They are not going to come upon me now that I'm serving the Living God." Well, that is not the way it is. When you get saved, your trials and burdens will begin, because the devil will not rest until he can win your soul back to him. Up to your dying hour, he will try to get your soul back. So you need to look to the Lord for salvation and do not become fearful. God will be there for you.

The Lord Can Reveal the Enemy's Plans

Verse 15 of our Scripture text says, "And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work." God revealed the enemy's plans to the people.

You can read of another instance in the Bible where God revealed the enemy's plans. Second Kings 6:8-12 reads: "Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." God works the same way today. The devil lays traps for each of us. You need to realize that when you get up in the morning, the devil is already setting traps for you. He is going to try to ensnare you somewhere along the way. If you will seek God's face and say, "Lord, I know the devil is out there setting traps for me. He wants to get me to say or do something that I should not. I need You to direct and guide me around those traps. Steer me clear of the enemy so that I can make it through this day living free from sin." God will do that for you. He will speak to you in the morning and say, "This is what I want you to do." If you do what the Lord says and follow Him throughout the day, He will steer you clear of the traps that the devil has set for you.

God can reveal the enemy's plans to His people. The key is, you have to seek Him. You cannot get up in the morning and know what is going to happen. Now, you might have well-laid-out plans for the day, but you do not really know what will happen. I am thankful that God can look through the corridors of time and know what each of us is facing. He knows where your steps are heading and He waits for you to call on His name and seek His guidance. If you do not want to seek God, He will not force you to go against your will. If you want help, He will give it to you. Again, the key is, you have to ask Him, and then He will steer you clear of the enemy throughout the day.

Determined to Fight the Good Fight of Faith

Verses 16-17 of our Scripture text read: "And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his

hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." God's people kept right on building the wall, and the work of God continued. Each had a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. They were determined to get the wall built no matter how the enemy came against them.

The saints of God today are building a wall, and it is a wall for all the people in the surrounding communities to look upon. They can say, "Look at those people work! Look at their determination. Look how they live, day in and day out. They are determined to live for the Lord." That is something the world does not have.

If you watch some people who profess to be Christians long enough, you will see that they are determined to live for God. Some want merely to appease their consciences and put on a show for the rest of the world. The saints of God are determined to fight the good fight of faith. They are determined to see the work of God finished so that souls can be saved and won to the Kingdom of God.

While God's people worked on the wall, they had their building tools in one hand and their fighting weapons in the other. They were determined to continue working no matter what it took. Each builder had his sword girded about his side. The Bible says the Word of God is the sword. You need to keep God's Word with you wherever you go. Pocket-sized Bibles can fit in your pocket like a wallet. You should carry one with you because you never know when you might have an opportunity to witness to souls. Are you asking the Lord to help you witness to souls? Or do you go through a day and not even think about witnessing to anyone? Do you go about your business, pass people on the street, or eat beside people at a restaurant and not even think about witnessing to them? If you will seek the Lord and say, "Lord, I want to be a witness," He will open doors of opportunity for you to witness to others about how He saved you. When was the last time you told someone about how the Lord saved your soul? He wants you to be a witness for Him and to spread the Word. If you are not careful, you will get so wrapped up in your own little world and the things that you have to do that you do not take time to spread this Gospel Truth.

Bringing Your Body Into Subjection

The devil keeps people so busy. We have many modern technologies. It used to take hours to prepare a meal, but today you can just place a meal in the microwave oven and within minutes it is ready to eat. Women used to spend all day washing clothes and hanging them out on a line to dry, but today you can throw a load of clothes in the washing machine, turn it on, walk away, and go back a little later and they are clean. When you remove them from the washing machine, you can place them in the dryer, turn it on, walk away, and when they are dry, you can put them away.

Despite these modern conveniences, it seems as though we still do not have enough time to spend for the Lord, and we are always in a rush. The Lord may ask, "Why don't you visit Brother and Sister So-and-So?"

"Well, Lord, I just have to get this done."

Next, the Lord may say, "Well, then, how about calling them and telling them that you appreciate them, that you have been thinking about them, and that you are praying for them?"

"I will, Lord, just as soon as I get this done." However, before you know it, time slips away and you never make the call.

That is displeasing to the Lord. He wants you to set aside time for Him. There are twenty-four hours in a day, but too often people do not give Him much time at all. They say their prayers just as quickly as they can, they bless their food as quickly as they can; then when they get ready to go to bed at night, before they finish praying they are asleep. Friend, you have to set aside time for God every day. If you let one day go by, you will let two days go by. You must bring your body into subjection.

The flesh could care less about serving God or doing anything for Him. Therefore, you have to bring under your body and say, "This flesh is going to pray, not just a formal prayer but an earnest, fervent prayer." The Bible says in James 5:16, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Now, it does not say, "A quick prayer availeth much;" although sometimes you have to pray quickly. If you were about to have an accident, you could say, "Lord, help me!" and He could steer the car out of the way of danger. That would be a quick prayer, and the Lord could answer that. Nevertheless, you need to have fervent prayer to unburden your soul to the Lord.

Hearing the Sound of the Trumpet

Verses 17-18 of our Scripture text say: "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me." The watchman on the wall looked for the enemy, and the one who sounded the trumpet was right by his side everywhere he went.

God still has trumpet blowers today. He said in verse 20, "In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us." You need to be wherever the trumpet is being sounded. That is where you will get your soul fed. If you start

missing the services, the enemy will sneak up on you and overtake you. Wherever the trumpet is being blown, that is where you need to go, because that is where the people of God are. They will help you fight the enemy. If you get off by yourself somewhere and the trumpet blows, the enemy can easily overtake you. When you are among the people of God, you can put the enemy to flight.

We go to church and get edified through the singing, the testimonies, and the preaching of God's Word. When the trumpet is being blown and you are not there, you cannot get your soul fed and be encouraged to press the battle on; so you need to get into the services. You are required to be in every service that you possibly can. A child of God does not like to miss the church services. The desire of my heart is to be where God's Word is sounding forth. When camp meeting time comes, I know the trumpet is being blown there, and that is where I go. It is the same with revival meetings. I want to go where I can get my soul fed.

Verse 20 of our Scripture text says, "In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us." Child of God, if you want God to fight for you, then you must do some things. When you got saved, you made a covenant with God: "God, I am going to live for You and lay everything I have on the altar." You must hold up your end of the bargain, and then God will be your God and fight for you. However, you cannot get down on your knees and honestly say, "God, I need You to fight for me"; when you know you have something in your heart and life that you need to take care of. First, you need to get your life straightened out, and then He will fight for you.

There is no time for rest or relaxation in the things of God. You must continue to work. The Bible lets you know that the enemy will come. It does not say if the enemy comes, but when the enemy comes. The devil is going to try to defeat you. Nevertheless, if you keep working, keep building the wall, and keep your weapons in your hands, God will fight for you. He will defeat the enemy and put him to flight every time. It may not be in the time frame you think it should be, but if you will hold fast the faith, God will put the devil to flight; He said He would. He said He would not allow you to go through any temptation that you cannot bear. I rely on that promise often. When the burdens are pressing me down and the devil is pounding me, I always think on that promise. Then I say, "Lord, if You think I can handle this burden, I am going to keep pressing right on through." God always delivers me in time.

Sometimes burdens come upon you for the sake of others who may be looking on so God can show them how a true child of God handles certain situations. Sometimes you need to go through things for the benefit of others. If you try to run and hide from every burden that comes along, other souls will not receive help or be edified. Remember, God said He would not let you go through anything that you could not bear.

Verses 21-22 read: "So we laboured in the work [Church, that is what we need to do today. We need to labor in the work of God and keep the things of God moving forward.] and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem . ..."

You need to tell the people, "Come, lodge within the city of God, or the Church of God, where you can be safe from the enemy of your soul." Church of God, we have something that is so valuable and so precious, yet some seem afraid to tell others about it. They are afraid that others will ridicule them or stop thinking of them as being their buddies if they expound to them the things of God. However, that is what God wants His people to do. If you are really a friend to someone, you will want to see that friend saved and come into the Kingdom of God. If you are not careful, you will not tell anyone about it.

Keep Building Up the Work of God

Verses 22-23 state: "Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing." Those people knew they had a work to do.

There is still something to be accomplished for the Church of God. Do not think there is less work to do today. If anything, there is more work to do. We are getting closer to the day of the Lord. One of these days, the Lord is going to split the skies and take us to our long home, whether it is Heaven or hell. That thought should keep you motivated to see lost souls won into the Kingdom of God. It causes me to want to see my family saved. When I think about my family going to a lost eternity in hell, it stirs me, and it should stir you if you have lost loved ones.

Often people say, "Don't even bother me with the things of God. Don't ask me about my soul. You are just going to drive me away from the things of God, and I will never get saved." Well, do you think that they are talking or is the devil talking through them? Too often Christian people say, "I don't want to talk to them and drive them away from God. I don't want to ask them to go to church too often, otherwise they will get fed up and not have anything to do with it." Are they having anything to do with it now? You need to keep inviting them even if they say they do not want to hear it.

You need to say, "I am not going to give up on you. Even if you don't want to hear it, I am still going to ask you." We are duty bound to carry a burden for souls and invite them to hear the Gospel message, even if they do not want to hear it.

If you read the New Testament, you can read how Paul and others preached to people who did not want to hear the Gospel, but they were duty bound to try to win these souls. That is what God wants you to do today. He wants you to continue to build this wall. You need to keep building up the work of God until the Lord comes.

You can read in Nehemiah, Chapter 5 and most of Chapter 6, about the opposition that came against the people of God who were rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem. Despite the opposition, they kept on building no matter what the devil threw their way. The man of God used wisdom and kept the enemy at bay from the people.

Nehemiah 6:15 says, "So the wall was finished." The devil threw all kinds of opposition at the people of God, but they were determined to see the wall built. That is how you need to be today. You need to be determined that no matter what the devil throws your way, whether it is the sickness of your pastor, division and strife among the people, or whatever, do not let those things affect you. Keep right on building, keep your determination at a high level, and keep working to see souls won to Christ.

You cannot help what the next fellow does. You do not have any control over what your family, your spouse, and your children (once they are grown) do. However, you can make sure that you are right with God and that you are in a place where God can use you. If God needs ,another brick put on the wall, make sure you are m a place where you can say, "I'll do it." If you have that kind of spirit and determination, you will get to where you, too, can say, "So the wall was finished." Your desire should be to see the wall I finished and the city of God built up and souls saved.

Are You a Willing Vessel?

Nehemiah 6:16 says, "And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God."

Church of God, we need to keep right on preaching against Babylon, sectarianism, and false religion. The Bible says that when the wall was finished, their enemies looked upon it and were cast down. They perceived that God had built the wall.

If you are not careful, you will be too quiet about this business of serving God. Many people think, "All that's important is that I'm saved and going to Heaven." If that is your attitude, you are missing it. God did not save you just so you could go to Heaven; He saved you to do a work. You need to continue to build the wall, and when someone walks by and sees the wall, you can say, "This is the wall that the Lord has built, and I am part of it. I know I am going to see many people today. There has to be one that I can witness to. Lead me to that one, Lord, and I will be willing to say a kind word to that person and spread the Gospel. I am willing to do what You want me to do, Lord." When you do that, you will see souls saved.

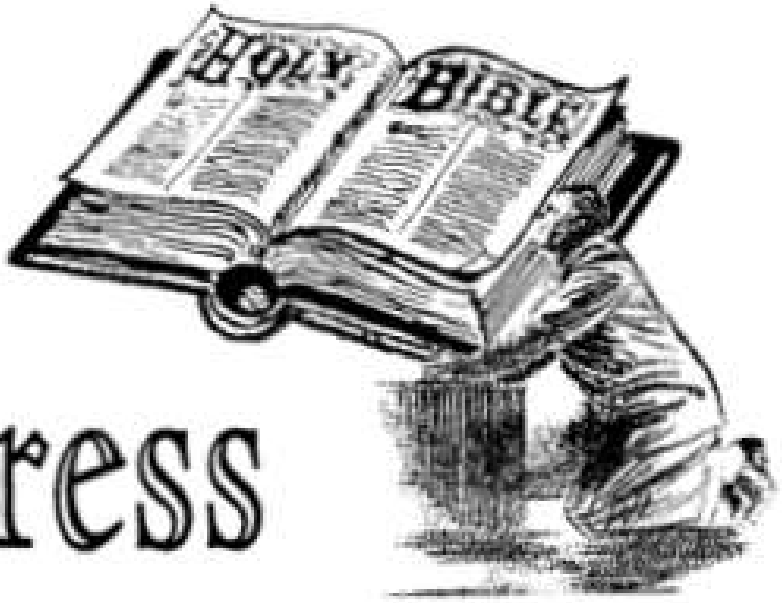
The Lord is going to come back soon, and I want to see souls saved. When God gives you a real soul burden for the lost, that will be your desire too. You will not be able to go through a day without thinking about witnessing to someone and working to see souls saved. If you are careless about seeing lost souls saved and won into the Kingdom of God, you have gotten off track in the things of God, and you need to get turned around. Too often people do not take time for others. If each saint would work on just one soul throughout a year, what a great work the Lord could do. We would see congregations start to break out in places where the Word of God is not preached.

God wants His people to get down to business in the work of God and put self aside. He wants you to say, "Lord, I am Your vessel. You paid for me on the Cross of Calvary; You bought me with Your blood, and I belong to You. Do with me what You will." He wants to use you, but you have to be a willing vessel. Without a willing vessel, God cannot work. Jesus went as far as to say that the rocks would cry out if His people failed to praise Him. You need to make sure that you are in a place where God can use you. Make sure you are building on the wall and that you continue to build on the wall. You need to set your mind and say, "Lord, I am determined, by the grace of God, to work for You. I want to see souls saved. Lord, help me, lead me, and direct me to souls," and God will do it.

If you have left a task undone, something that God has laid on your heart to do and you have not done it, then you are going to be in trouble with God. You can get yourself to a point where God will not call on you to do anything for Him. If you turn Him aside too many times after He tells you to visit someone, make a phone call, or whatever, God is going to say, "I cannot rely on you anymore. I used to be able to talk to you in a still, small voice and ask you to go visit this one in the nursing home and you went right away. Now you have gotten so caught up in your everyday living that I cannot rely on you anymore." Then He will go to another saint and use that person to visit people and make the phone calls. You never want to be in the place where God cannot rely on you. You need to be in a place where God can say, "Go," and you go. If you have any needs, won't you allow God to meet those needs?

(Cassette C-4054E)

Let Us Press the Devil Back



Brother R. L. Mullen

God Has an Army

God will give His people the victory if they call on His name. He is mighty to deliver and strong to help. Saint, He is on your side, and He is more than all that can be against you. So, be of good courage, and the Lord will strengthen your heart. If you are trusting God for healing or for a job, stay right in there and keep trusting Him; He will see you through. If you have unanswered prayers, God can answer your petitions. Just hold on and have patience. Do not say, "Lord, answer now or I'll quit and go back into the world." God's people are like an army on the battlefield. As a Christian, you are in a hot battle, and the devil does not like it when he is losing. He hates it when you are happy and likes for you to go on feelings, not faith. He does not want you to go very far for the Lord; he wants you to hold back a little.

The songs of Zion will encourage you, and the prayers of the saints will put you on higher ground. We need to help one another. I like to compare it to being on a football team. When someone is carrying the ball, others are running interference (they are praying, asking God to make a way so the one with the ball can go through and win the goal). Satan has an army, and God has an army. In Old Testament times the "ites" were always trying to fight against Israel. Israel would get through with one battle, and another battle would come up. Thank God, the devil is a defeated enemy. You can have the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

I do not know much about being in a literal army, but I believe that the Church of God is like an army in some measure. I have heard people say, "We want to spearhead the enemy." In other words, they wanted to gain some ground on the enemy. The Christian should be gaining a little ground. You cannot go on feelings, but you have to step out on faith. God can do great things for you if you will trust Him. We have a strong battle going, but the old devil can be put over the hill. God is strong and mighty; He is mighty in battle and strong in promoting His great cause.

We, as the children of God, have to put pressure on the devil. He puts pressure on us. Sometimes I get so disgusted with the old fellow that I feel like kicking him. Saint, you can get angry with the devil. When he oversteps his bounds and goes to far, I say, "You dirty old devil, you have nothing worthwhile to sell. Get out of here!" I rebuke him, and he

has to leave. God wants you to have great victory. Ask God to help you to be a better soldier. He will help you if you stand on His promises. The devil does not like the promises of God. He is a mean, old devil, but God is mighty.

There are great rewards in the army of the Lord. There are great battles, but there are great victories. You may say, "I don't know whether this battle will ever be won." Friend, hold on to God and do not give in. Remember that your unsaved loved ones are watching you. Sometimes the most unlikely people will get saved. They may not seem interested, but they are watching you. No doubt, I looked that way before I was saved, yet God saved me. I had not planned to get saved when I went to a revival meeting the night I got saved. (By the way, the devil does not like revivals.) I had no desire to go inside where the meeting was being held, but I did not want to sit outside alone. The boy who was with me coaxed me to go in, and I came out saved. So, you see, the fellow you can hardly get to church may be the one who gets saved.

Some people get saved the first time they go to the house of God. They do not fool around. They want to go all the way with God, and they want to get saved quickly. God supplies their needs. They might not have been to church for years and years, and when they come it is a surprise to the saints. No doubt, the saints had prayed for me. The arrows of prayer and the sword of the Spirit convicted me. It made me angry, but when God gave me salvation, everything was new. In a moment of time, God changed me completely.

Claim the Promises of God

I want to walk in the light. When you walk in the light, then you can claim the promises of God and defeat the enemy. When you do God's will, you can ask Him what you will, and it shall be done. John 15:7 says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." God has greater power than the devil has. You are in a battle, and the old devil does not get discouraged easily. He puts pressure on the church. However, if you start running away from light because of that pressure, he will follow you and get you down and tromp on you, spiritually speaking. He will even try to get you to commit suicide; He has no mercy.

When you get old, he will say, "You are not good for anything. Why don't you quit praying? That old idea of going to Heaven is hogwash." Also, he will tell you, "You are too old to go to revivals anymore" or "You are too old to preach God's Word." He does not care if you do something wrong. If I were not preaching, I would be doing things that would be ten times harder on me. I would go all out for something. The devil does not care how hard he uses you. It is when you use yourself for God that he says, "You need to be careful and take it easy." Concerning God's work, God says, "Do it with all your heart, and I will be with you." You can put Satan and his power under your feet. After David killed Goliath, he probably stood and said, "By the grace of God, I have conquered him." That account is in the Old Testament, but today you can also be on top of situations. You have to fight against all the powers of the enemy, but God can help you to win every battle.

God's people need to put pressure on the devil. He will either chase you or you will chase him away. He will try to get you out of the camp of God, but you have to stand firmly. This battle against Satan is similar to being on a football team: you have to be offensive and defensive, but you have to be strong in the offensive and keep him on the run. I heard about a fellow who was once a prize fighter, and he was quite successful. He said he did not watch the other fellow's hands, but he looked his opponent right in the eye and bluffed him. He said, "If I can bluff that man, I can win." That is the way the devil works. If he can bluff you, he will defeat you. He knows that he cannot whip you if God is with you, but he will try to bluff you. I once had a little dog that seldom got in a fight, but occasionally it chased the biggest dog in town. As long as that dog would run, my dog would chase it. Yet, if the big dog stopped, my dog would stop and look around as though nothing had happened.

The devil is a bluffer, and he will tell you that he can do things that he cannot do. Also, he will tell you that you cannot do things that God knows you can do. He is very persuasive. He will put pressure on you and try to prove to you that he is right. However, God is the One who is right. The Scripture says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." God does not look at the muscles in a man's legs or arms; that is not what makes one a good man. It takes something more than human strength: God wants His power to work through you. He encouraged me with these thoughts. He said, "No matter what your age is, the power of God within you is what helps you to preach."

Be Courageous and Full of Faith

One can be young and good looking, but unless he has God in his heart, he is spiritually dead. You may put your collar on backward and have long titles after your name, but without God you are nothing. On the other hand, you may look like an old hayseed, but if you have God, you can live victoriously for Him and defeat the devil. The outward appearance is what men look at, but God looks upon the heart.

God's Word says, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." The Lord can take away timidity and defeat. With God's help you can conquer the enemy. You do

not have to be afraid to go in the name of the Lord. Do not go on what you feel, but go on what faith in God can do for you.

Child of God, you are a child of faith, and you should have more faith. The devil will try to push you back. When that happens, do not turn back the least bit, but go forward. If you take ground spiritually along some line, someone is watching, and he or she might become courageous and push the devil back. Thus, the work of God goes forward. Then someone else may see him and become encouraged. That person may say, "If he gained the victory, I can gain the victory." Seeing others overcome the enemy is encouraging. On the other hand, if you are cowardly in spiritual things and run from the battle, the devil will defeat you and others will be discouraged. Someone is watching your courage. Serve God with all your heart, and when staying on the battlefield becomes difficult, God will be right there to help you. You must either stand and go forward or you will lose ground.

God's people need to increase in power and victories for God. Saint, has God ever shown you that you need to watch what you say? You have to be spiritual to control your tongue. God's people should keep still when God tells them to, but when He tells them to say something, they should say it. As a Christian, you can have a powerful testimony for God if you let the Lord have His way. You can win the victory through your testimony, through the blood of the Lamb, and through the power of God.

God's army is marching forward. You may not gain ground quickly, but do not lose any ground and do not run. Hold your ground and stand fast. When you see a chance to move up spiritually in any area of your life, move up and be a good soldier for God. You have a post to watch and a position to fill.

The United States army is quite strict about many things. The officers in charge do not let the soldiers go home any time they want to go. There are reasons for having such strict rules. An army officer once told me, "If all the soldiers do not follow the rules, it may cost someone his life." The same is true in the spiritual realm. If you are not at your post of duty to serve God and pray, it will cause souls to be lost eternally. However, by being workers together and taking our places in this army, we all can gain the victory.

God Gives Sufficient Grace

We read in Romans 14:4, "Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." God wants His people to stand; He can enable each of us to stand. His grace is sufficient, but you need to grow in grace. How much grace do you have? You ought to have more grace at the end of today than you had at the start. Attending revival meetings will help you to grow in grace. I thank God for the marvelous, wonderful grace of God; it is a reality! God gives more grace and more power to the humble. In the Old Testament day when there were shouts in the camp, people knew that God was moving among the Israelites. Today the devil knows when the church has a revival, because he is run over the hill and shut down for a while. Do not surrender to the enemy; just keep marching forward.

We all can move up in this Christian life. One area in which we can move up is divine healing. Saint, you will not necessarily get healed as soon as you have been prayed for. It is wonderful when ones are healed instantly, but sometimes we may be tested severely. God has not always moved on me as fast as I wanted Him to move.

Perhaps you have cancer, and the outcome does not look good. Having cancer has a tendency to bother a person and cause one to worry. I am reminded of a story about a little bop who had a toothache. Someone prayed for him and said, "Don't you know that God is going to take it away?"

"Yes," he said, "but He is slow about it." You may think that God is slow, and you may say that you do not have enough patience to wait. Your attitude may be, "If God doesn't heal this condition today, tomorrow I'm going to do something else." Are you going down to "Egypt" for help? Are you looking for a man to help? God can do better than man. He is a great God!

Are you going to ask God to help you to be careful in your life and be watchful of the enemy? Fighting against the enemy of your soul is treacherous business. You have to watch. Sometimes you might have to lose a little sleep. Be watchful and ask God to protect your life.

Friend, are you going backward spiritually? Do not do that! Are you going to stand? Sometimes that is all you can do. At times in my spiritual life, I could not advance; I just had to stand. Though I have been a Christian for many years, I still have room to advance. There is much room to have faith and do things in a powerful way for God. There is much to learn about being a Christian soldier. You must get that old sword sharp and let the Word of God dwell in you richly, because it is powerful. When the enemy comes against the Word of God, he has to back off. When Jesus met the devil, He said, "It is written ..." That is the way God helps you. As you go into the Word of God, it is sharp, and you win the battle through the sword of the Spirit.

Revelation 6:17 reads, "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" God's people must endure hardships for the Lord, but there are great rewards for serving God. One reward is eternal life. You can talk about your pension plan, your hospitalization benefits, and the benefits of being a soldier in the United States Army, but those benefits cannot compare with the benefits of living for God. The Scripture says, "Great is your

reward in Heaven." If you serve God all the days of your life, you will go home to live with Him. God has a home for all the faithful who have been in the battle.

Be Faithful Unto Death

When I see Babylon rage, I know there is victory over the devil, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The church is marching right on. A true prophet has so much more power than a false prophet. God's people have something real; salvation is real. It saves you from all your sins, and you can have a home in Heaven forever. Revelation 2:10 says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." What more could you ask for? God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him and follow Him, and He is always good on payday. He never shortchanges anyone. We get more than we deserve. If you gave your life, it would not be too much. I have read about people who have worked so hard that they gave their lives for God. Friend, you are not going to lose by doing that.

Child of God, you need to grow in grace and knowledge. Do not be short on the grace of God. Stand in the liberty that you have already attained. There is work to serving God, but there is also much enjoyment and accomplishment. When you see a person delivered from the powers of the devil and come over to God's side, it is a great victory. It makes this life worth living.

I am so glad someone preached when I was unsaved. I am so glad they held that six-week revival meeting. I went to the meeting on a Sunday night because I did not have any place else to go. The dances were closed down, and the Sunday afternoon ball game was over. I had been drinking beer, and I had spilled it all over my clothes. I was in bad shape, but the Lord picked me up. I was saved because some one had a revival meeting and the saints were fasting and praying. The preacher looked me right square in the eyes and said, "You fellows who have been out drinking just a little bit think you are controlling it, but you are worse off than a drunkard. More people will follow you." I thought the women had been telling him about me. I thought to myself, "It makes me sore to think that those old women in the church would tell the preacher about me." The more that preacher said, the angrier I became. However, I got under greater conviction, and thank God, I got saved that night.

It pays to serve the Lord. I want to tell you, putting God first is worthwhile. That revival was worth it for me. The saints worked hard to put up a big tent and have revival for six weeks, and as a result, I was saved.

Stand in the Holy Place

Matthew 24:15 reads, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation...." That is the spiritual condition of our world today. There are many towns where you cannot hear the Truth preached. Many places could have a true pastor and a work of God, but no one is interested. There is a spiritual famine in the land.

Again, Matthew 24:15 says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [when we see these things occur in the last days, what should we do?], stand in the holy place." What does that mean? Get in the holy Church of God, stand for holiness, and stand for godly standards. Do not be a fanatic, but be holy, be sincere, and be filled with God's Holy Spirit. That will make you what you ought to be.

The Holy Spirit does not make people fanatics or formal; that is the work of the devil. The Holy Spirit is not to blame for hypocrites either. To put on something that you do not have is deceitful and of the devil. God has better things for people. He can make you so that you will not be deceitful or formal. Again, the Holy Spirit can make you what you ought to be.

God is marching His army with orders, and the orders are to go forward and take a stand against the devil, saying, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, get out of here, Satan. Depart!" The early church did that. The seventy that went out came back and said, "The devils are subject to us." Why? The devils were subject to them because they took a stand against the enemy. Saint, do not run; stand in the holy place. There is protection in God. No matter how the devil howls and growls and shoots off his firecrackers, God has bigger ammunition than he has. Though the devil may be shooting firecrackers and scorching you, through Christ you have bigger ammunition to shoot at him. Praise God, when you say, "Thus saith the Lord," it wipes out the enemy, but you have to fight the good fight of faith. The devil will not run if you are just bluffing. Do not be like the fellows who tried to cast out the devils and could not. The devils said, "We know Paul, and we know Jesus, but who are you?" You cannot do anything in yourself. The devil knows when you mean business.

There are places to go forward and become more diligent in this spiritual battle. Be happy about what you do for the Lord; do not pity yourself. Old self-pity bothers many Christian people. In reality, you have not done anything to be babied about. You may pity yourself because you did not get to sing as much as someone else, play the piano quite as much, or testify. Too many get sour and slump back. They quit fighting, quit praying, and quit testifying. That is terrible! Saint, you need to keep sweet and stay full of joy.

Preacher, you must learn to sit down sometimes and let someone else preach. Do not say, "I am the best, and if they don't want me, I will go someplace where they will." You have to learn to stay in your place in the army of the Lord. Stand

perfect and complete in all the will of God and go forward in Him.

The Way to Have Victory

Wavering faith does not get an answer from God. Also, giving up or putting God on a time schedule will not get an answer from Him. If you will be patient, God will give you the victory and bless you. I think of the fellows who carry the football on the football field. They make that line tight. Two or three fellows will group together to keep the opponents away from the ball. Church of God, we need to stand together. Let us get together and pray about our problems. Let us not have any differences or any separation in our love for one another. We need to be together in love and in agreement in prayer. The Bible has much to say about agreement in prayer.

Husband, wife, you have things in your home, such as raising your children, that you need to be in agreement about. Pray together for the will of God. When the children get sick in the night, if you have been arguing with your companion and separated in your love for each other, you cannot pray the prayer of faith. A couple can pray for their infant child, and God can heal the child without calling the preacher. You are heirs together, and you need to love each other so that your prayers will not be hindered. The devil likes to see people separate. Some couples divorce over little things. The devil is looking for a place to wedge in and destroy your power. Division and quarreling are the work of the devil. There is much power in agreement among the ministers and with the husband and wife in the home. Unity is beautiful, and being in one accord in one place is powerful. On the Day of Pentecost it was said that they were in one accord in one place. Some may say, "No church is like that" or "No home is like that"; but some are, and where there is unity, there is power. I heard a husband and wife praying when I was just a young fellow going out with their daughter. I heard them praying in the bedroom and wondered if they were praying about me. It got hold of me. There was something about their voices in prayer that I knew they were not arguing or grumbling. They were on their knees about midnight praying. They were agreeing in prayer for someone. I could not hear exactly what they said, but I knew they were praying.

Having someone in the place of duty is wonderful, watching unto prayer. The Lord wants you to take time to pray and put your whole heart in it. That is worth something! It will boost you over the hardest hill. Prayer will take you over the steepest climb the devil can put in your way and give you the victory. You cannot have victory any other way!

Saint, you need to stand for God. He stands for you. He is with you in the battle. Do not be ashamed of the Gospel. God will go forward with you, and you can go forward in the things of God. God's people need to have more courage, faith, and patience. Some people say, "My patience is so short," and I would not doubt that it is. We are living in a pushy world. Everything has to be done in a hurry. Your patience will run out unless you get a fresh supply of grace daily.

How is your patience? People have heard of the patience of Job, but have they heard about yours? There are dangers in getting too impatient. Christians need patience. It is not becoming to be impatient. By being more patient you can learn many things, you can win victories, and you can be a better example.

We all need improvement and more of the grace of God. The old devil is mean, and he is the cause of all sorrow and sin. He troubles nations, causes brothers to kill brothers, and causes young couples that are sweetly married to separate. Marriage has so many beautiful things about it, but if sin comes in and couples begin to cuss at each other and talk mean to each other, love just vanishes. If the devil comes in, the one he or she loved above all others will be hated. Before Cain killed his brother Abel, he had brotherly love, but he let Satan come in. Friend, do not let the devil come in and destroy relationships. Let us defeat the old devil. If you have a need, take it to God in prayer and He will give you the victory.

(Cassette C-2622E)

Step By Step

He does not lead me year by year,
  Nor even day by day;
But step by step my path unfolds,
  My Lord directs my way.

Tomorrow's plans I do not know,
  I only know this minute.
But He will say, "This is the way,
  By fath now walk ye in it."

[Espec. for Young People-continued from page 13]
mend, and I would sit on the footstool at your feet? Those were the happy days, weren't they, Mom?

I guess something kind of came between us then before I had to go to the army. Guess I kind of got soured on life in general, then. I could not see much ahead in the future for me. Everything seemed so black. Guess I thought I was the only boy in the world who was having to sacrifice a promising career for the army. I could not see why God allowed me to have all the tough luck.

Then I got to looking at church members and lost confidence in their experiences. Well, you know how it was, Mom. Things went from bad to worse, and I kept drifting farther and farther away. I guess you didn't know it, Mom, but after I got in the army training camp in Texas, I went into actual sin. Yes, I was just like the other boys. I smoked, danced, and gambled. All the time I kept thinking about you, Mom. I knew it would crush your heart if you could see the way your son was acting–the boy that you had tried to raise so carefully in the straight and narrow way. I thought about how good you'd always been to me. I thought about the time when I had scarlet fever and the doctor gave me up, and how you stayed with me night and day and nursed me back to health. I just couldn't get you out of my mind. Every time I'd take a drink, I'd see your face, and something would say, "What if your mother could see you? Would you drink that beer in front of her?"

However, the world had gotten a tight grip on me, Mom, and even though I hated myself for doing it, I kept on in the paths of sin.

Then I got that furlough. Remember, Mom? It came as a surprise just before they were going to ship me across. Well, then I found out that I could have a furlough, I didn't want to go home because I couldn't bear to have you find out about me. But, oh, I was so homesick, and I wanted to see the old home place once more!

So I made up my mind, I'd reform. I quit all my bad habits for your sake, and I'd be so good, that you'd never guess about all the sin I had committed.

So I went home, and you did everything you could to make those few days full of happy memories for me. But instead, they were days of torment and torture. I suffered agony of soul, mind, and body. For one thing my whole body cried out for the liquor and cigarettes that it was accustomed to.

As the days of my furlough dragged slowly by, my conscience bothered me more and more. I grew irritable, grouchy, restless, and nervous. I just couldn't conceal my feelings even around you, Mom. I was glad when the furlough was up and it was time for me to leave.

That morning before we went to the depot, I could hardly sit still. Time seemed to stand still. I wanted to go to the train alone. I hated to have to say goodbye. I guess I've always hated farewells. Then after we finally got there, it seemed ages before the train pulled in. I was so nervous I could hardly keep my hands from shaking. When I started to move toward the train and you kissed me and began to cry, I felt like I was going to cry too. To relieve my intense feelings, I began to swear under my breath. But, Mom, when you said you would be praying every single day for me, it seemed like something snapped inside me.

The devil took full possession of my heart, and I found myself saying harsh, embittered words. I don't know now just what all I did say; I only know that all the sin and conviction that I had been storing up just spilled out.

I stopped when I saw the pitiful heartbroken look on your face. The tears were streaming down your dear, old face, and I couldn't stand it any longer. I turned on my heel and stumbled toward the waiting coach. Scalding tears were burning my eyes, and I felt as though my heart would burst. My only desire was to get away as soon as possible.

The events that followed are all like a blurred nightmare to me. I got back to camp and was shipped across in a few days. Then it was that I began to know the awful terror of the lost, unsaved soul. I don't think I'd ever known before what it was to be afraid–afraid of being torpedoed, drowned, of freezing to death in the icy ocean waters, or of burning to death in flaming, oily waters.

After we arrived in the jungle islands, I was afraid of bombing raids. There was screaming, falling shrapnel and sneaking snipers hiding in every tree, or so it seemed. Most of all, I was afraid of dying and going to hell with no Christ to help me and save me ever again.

Then came the night I want to tell you about, Mom. The one night that changed my whole life. Our company was attempting to move up and occupy the enemy's position. We had advanced some, but there was one bad machine-gun nest that kept raking us. We had already lost a lot of men because of it. Finally, our commander called for volunteers to go ahead and destroy it. I didn't want the others to know what a coward I was, so I volunteered along with three others.

We started out, loaded with hand grenades. The going was slow and laborious. Most of the time we hugged the ground and advanced on our stomachs.

Bullets whined all around us. One hit one of the men in the leg, and we were forced to go on without him. We had gone a few feet further, when a shell burst directly in front of me. The terrible concussion seemed to crush my whole body, and everything went suddenly black.

When I regained consciousness, all was still around me. I could not figure it out. I opened my eyes but couldn't see a thing. All was blackness, yet I could feel the scorching, tropical sun on my face. It finally

came to me that I was blind-utterly, helplessly blind. Then I tried to move, but my body seemed numb. I was paralyzed and powerless to move a muscle. I couldn't even talk. The muscles of my throat refused to function.

It was then that I knew what real terror was. This was to be a living death. I would lie there under the burning rays of the sun with the insects eating me, and poisonous snakes all around me until I slowly and horrible died of thirst and gnawing hunger.

I did not know what happened to my company. In the distance I could hear fighting, but whether I was in enemy territory or not, I could not tell, I had no way of knowing.

I lay there for some time, trying to collect my thoughts. Conviction gripped me as it never had before. Here I lay, slowly dying, in agony and suffering and misery; but this present agony was not to be compared with the agony and suffering I would soon be enduring in hell. This agony would only last a short while; in hell it would go on endlessly!

Then and there I saw the need of the God whom I had forsaken. All the Scripture verses I had ever learned about repentance surged through my mind, and I began to silently pray to God to save me. Oh, how I prayed! I was desperate.

Time passed slowly. I felt the warmth of the sun decrease, then it began to rain. Oh, what a cold, chilling rain it was! The sun did not shine so I knew it must be night. I lay there on the wet, cold ground, My clothes were drenched, and I chilled constantly. All around me I could hear the stealthy sound of jungle animals.

Still I prayed on and on. I confessed every sin I could think of and begged God's forgiveness. Night passed by. I felt the rays of the sun once more and the sweltering heat as it rose from the ground, moist from the cold rain during the night.

All at once my prayers got through to Heaven. I seemed to see Jesus dying on the Cross for me and for my sins. I knew God had forgiven me and that I was once more a child of His.

A queer, ringing noise pounded in my ears and I began to lose consciousness. Just before I passed out, I heard voices, American voices. I thought I must be dreaming.

When I awoke, Mom, I was lying on a hospital cot in a hospital ward on board ship. I could see and move and speak. The nurse told me I would be all right. I had only been temporarily shell-shocked. However, if the litter bearers hadn't found me when they did, I would have died from exposure. She told me that the Americans had won a glorious victory and had captured the islands. My heart was so full of joy that I began praising the Lord right there in front of the nurse, and I'm still praising Him, Mom, for what He has done for me.

The doctor says I'll be fine, Mom. They are giving me a thirty-day furlough, so I'll see you soon.

Also, Mom, when this war is over, I'm going to prepare for the ministry. I want to tell other people how to find God. Until then I'm going to keep on witnessing for my Savior right here in the army. Well, Mom, I'll be seeing you soon. Don't forget to pray for me. I found God, but I still need your prayers.

Your loving son,
Ralph

I handed the letter back to his mother. "Praise the Lord," I breathed.

His mother sat with bowed head and folded hands. A quiet smile hovered on her lips.

"Thank God, I kept on praying for him," she murmured.

Selected

[Guest Editorial-continued from page 2]
10:1-2 we see this principle reiterated when the Prophet Jeremiah penned: "Hear ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen ...."

We can see that on the basis of general biblical principles, this practice should be avoided as heathenish and pagan, one with which saints of God should not want to be associated but rather one from which we want to be separate. Is the Bible specific about this? What is God's will in this matter? What do the Scriptures specifically teach? Jesus taught in Matthew 19:8 that if one desires to know the perfect will of God, he needs to go back and view that which was from the beginning. Genesis 2:7 tells us, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground . . . ." In Genesis 3:19 the Lord revealed His perfect will when He said, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Here we can see very vividly expressed that man is to "return unto the ground," alluding to the act of burial. God Himself instituted the practice of burial as His will. This text also reveals to us that God's design is that, just as man was "formed of the dust" (Genesis 2:7), "unto dust shalt the] return." The divine will is for man to return, through natural processes, to the original state from which he came. To negate or circumvent this process is to circumvent the will of God. This divine will is reiterated in the writings of Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:7, which states, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Cremation is diametrically opposed to this process.

Let us consider the biblical practice concerning the dead. No-where in the annals of Scripture is cremation practiced by the people of God. The biblical practice has always been

burial. In Genesis 25:8-10 we find the account of the death of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Verse 9 says, "And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him . . . ." Burial is recorded as the only method practiced throughout the Scriptures by the people of God. Consider the references to the burial of not only Abraham but of Sarah (Genesis 23:14), Rachel (Genesis 35:19-20), Isaac (Genesis 35:29), Jacob (Genesis 49:33, 50:1-13), Joseph (Genesis 50:26), Joshua (Joshua 24:29:30), Samuel (1 Samuel 25:1), and David (1 Kings 2:10).

Burial was an Old Testament practice, and the New Testament saints regarded it as the only proper procedure. Among those mentioned are John the Baptist (Matthew 14:10-12), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5-10), and Stephen (Acts 8:2). We are instructed in 1 Peter 2:21 that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." What was His example regarding the handling of the dead? He said in Matthew 26:12, "For in that she bath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." Christ was buried, and He is our example in all things.

Biblically, for a person not to have a proper burial was considered a dishonor. In 1 Kings 21:23-24 it is recorded: "And of Jezebel also spoke the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat." Not being afforded a proper burial was considered a curse and a dishonor.

Even in adverse circumstances, the people of God practiced burial. Consider the case of Joseph. His body was kept for over four hundred years in Egypt, transported for forty years in the wilderness, and then buried in the promised land (Genesis 50:24-25, Exodus 13:19, and Joshua 24:32). How much easier it would have been for them to cremate Joseph and carry his remains in a small urn, but they never even considered this. Why? Joseph was a follower of the one true God and had hope of the resurrection. Thus, he was afforded an honorable burial. This illustration conveys a great and practical truth to us: even if cremation is easier, more convenient, and less expensive, it is still to be rejected, just as the Israelites rejected its more convenient and more economical way of transporting Joseph's body.

The Scriptures denounce treatment of a body being burned or cremated. Amos 2:1 declares, "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime . . . ." Here we can see that this action (cremation) invited severe punishment from God.

Consider the body of a child of God. The Apostle Paul said, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The body of a saint is the temple of the Holy Ghost and should be accorded special reverence and respect as befitting a temple. Notice that verse 19 says that "ye are not your own." Since we do not rightfully have ownership of our bodies, it is not a matter of our will but that of the Owner–God; it is a matter of His divine will. Romans 14:8 says, "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Christian burial portrays the truth of the resurrection. Acts 24:15 tells us, "... there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." When one dies, the body is sown, or planted. The physical body is called the seed for the resurrected body. When a literal seed is planted, the seed decomposes and a new plant comes forth; so it is spiritually. When the body of a child of God is buried, the seed is planted for the resurrected body that shall come forth one day.
Look at the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:35-38: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it bath pleased him, and to every seed his own body." Verse 42 says, "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption."

When a farmer plants his crops, he does not destroy the seed or burn the seed, but he plants it in the hope of a harvest. So it is with Christian burial: the body is sown in hope and serves as a testimony of unwavering faith in the belief of a harvest, the resurrection. Contrast this with the cremation practiced by the heathens. They have no hope of a resurrection and no knowledge of a God who allows the holy to be "sown in weakness ... raised in power" (1 Corinthians 15:43). The heathens are a people steeped in darkness and superstition, but "we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5); therefore, let us not practice deeds or acts that would associate us with those that have no light and no hope. Ephesians 4:20 says, "But ye have not so learned Christ." We need to do as Christ our example did and, even in our death and burial, show forth our faith in Christ and the resurrection which is to come. Thank God, we have a glorious hope of a coming resurrection, and should death overtake us, let our burial, the seed being sown, serve as a witness of our hope and faith in the words of Jesus in John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life. ..." We have a blessed hope and should not desire to do anything that would associate us with those who do not. Cremation is heathen and pagan, and it should be shunned by every believer. We should portray our blessed hope of the resurrection to the world, not only in life but in burial.

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