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

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Winter 2001 Camp Meeting Report

Psalm 119:103 states, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Surely the words of the inspired Psalmist describe the sweet words that were heralded forth by the ministry in the recent camp meeting here at God's Acres. Being the Winter meeting it was more abbreviated than our Spring and Fall meetings. However, its brevity did not make the sounding forth of the precious Word any less sweet.

The meeting began Wednesday evening, December 26, with Brother E. David Stegmeier from Canby, Oregon, serving as the evening evangelist. He began the meeting with a rousing message entitled, *The Standard of Christianity*. Beginning Thursday morning, Brother Allen Polston from Mechanicsburg Indiana, filled the pulpit as the morning evangelist. His first message was a challenging soul-searching message from 1 John 1:5 entitled *God is Light*.

Thursday evening the Spirit of God moved in during the song service, and precious souls wept their way to an altar of prayer and gained help. We thank God for the manifestation of His Holy Spirit! We are thankful for an atmosphere where the lost can be saved and the needy can be helped. Certainly we can say as the Psalmist David expressed in Psalm 16:6: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places."

On Sunday morning the Lord again moved in our midst during the special singing and souls made their way to the altar seeking help. After the altar service Brother Irwin Seshier preached an anointed message about *The Persistency of the Enemy*.

For the closing message of the meeting and for the year, Brother Stegmeier brought an inspirational message on *Facing an Uncertain Future*. Each message was timely and anointed. The meeting was attended by saints from near and far. Though the weather was cold without, the warmth of the Holy Spirit and the fiery Word was within.

If you were unable to attend the meeting we encourage you to obtain the tapes. We are already anxiously anticipating the camp meeting in the spring. We trust that you will begin now to make plans to be in that meeting when once again we can eat the sweet Word of God that is "sweeter than honey."

2002 Camp Meeting Dates

June 16-23

August 4-11

December 26-29

Luke 9:57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

61 And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid

them farewell, which are at home at my house.

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Looking Back



Brother Roger L. Decker

The Call for Service to Christ

In our Scripture text Jesus gave answers to three statements. Each of the three individuals gave a reason for his delay in following Jesus: the comforts of home, the dearest of relationships, and family responsibility. As important as each of those commitments were, Jesus let them know that they were not as important as the Kingdom of God. The greatest thing you will ever face in this life is the Kingdom of God. No work is as important as the saving of souls.

In that same chapter, verse 56 says, "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to

another village." The work of our King is the salvation of souls, and the subjects of His kingdom have the same work that He does: the salvation of men's and women's souls. No work is greater than that of souls being born into the Kingdom of God. There is no doubt that all three commitments were important. Those people had commitments that are real to every one of us today. They did not ask to go out and trifle in sin a little while longer. Nevertheless, as close as those commitments were, they were not as important as the Kingdom of God. When you face the call for service to Jesus Christ, you are called to the greatest commitment that you will ever know, because it

involves the choice of where you and others will spend eternity. Those earthly commitments pertain to this life, whereas the Kingdom of God pertains to this life and the life hereafter. The Kingdom of God cannot wait while you take care of earthly commitments. God's kingdom must be foremost in your life, in your thoughts and in all other areas of your life.

In our Scripture text the reasons those individuals gave for their delay in following Jesus were not for spending more time in sin. Their commitments were very important, but earthly commitments must not come ahead of the Kingdom of God. Many souls are dying while ones become more involved in their own

personal welfare rather than in the welfare of others. By the second, lost souls are leaving this world. Jesus made it very plain that He did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

Jesus gave the illustration of a man who plows. In verse 62 He said, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." I have used a plow with a team of horses. To guide a plow, you have to keep it upright, straight, and deep enough. Also, you have to watch out for rocks and roots that would dull or damage the plow or cause it to jump out of the furrow. One's mind cannot be taken up with other things, but he has to concentrate on plowing.

When a farmer went into a field to plow with the horses or the oxen, he had to concentrate on making a straight furrow and making it deep enough. He could not allow his mind to wander or the plow could have jumped out of the furrow or hit a rock or one horse could have stepped in the wrong direction. It was a work that required concentration. He could not lag behind or look backward, to the side, or down to the ground; he had to look straight ahead.

The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:14: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." In other words, you must put forth much effort. You have to press to receive the prize. You cannot be lazy and make it in the Kingdom of God. You are not going to make it in because your parents served God. This is an individual call and an individual commitment. Things cannot so engulf your mind that there is no room for the things of the Kingdom of God. You should never become so involved with the things of this life that you put God in a place where He is no longer first in your life. That is happening a lot today. God is no longer first in some people's lives, and then when tragedies or trials come and they

need God, they find that He is not where they thought He was. The Apostle Paul said to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Danger Lurks With Prosperity

Deuteronomy 6:10-12 reads: "And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive frees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage."

God was about to give the Israelites instant prosperity in Canaan. A danger always lurks with prosperity. What is it? Some people forget God. Next, they get switched over to their own strength and their own securities. Remember this: whatever you are, you are by the grace of God, whether you are enjoying prosperity or you are in poverty. Any strength that you get comes from Almighty God.

David was at the height of prosperity when he transgressed against the Lord. King Uzziah got lifted up with all the blessings that God had bestowed upon him. Second Chronicles 26:16 says, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense." God blessed this man greatly. He was strong, but he got switched over from the strength of God to where he was taking credit for being his own strength. He was in a dangerous time, and he actually burned incense in the temple of the Lord. He got lifted up in a time of prosperity.

When God delivers you from sin,

lifts you out of the depths of the vile things of this world, sets your feet upon the Rock, and puts a new song in your mouth, you must be careful! Do not forget who brought you out of bondage and cleaned up your heart. Looking back is a slap in the face of Jesus Christ. It shows that you have a very short memory of what life in sin used to be.

Numbers 11:1-6 reads: "And when the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them. And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."

The things that the people mentioned would make the flesh strong, but it takes Almighty God to satisfy the soul. The truth is, what they laid aside was a life of bitterness and hard bondage. The Bible lets us know that they served the Egyptians with *rigour*, or cruelty. The word *rigour* comes from a root word that means "fractured or broken apart." That is the condition of those living in sin. Their homes are broken, their lives are broken, their hearts are broken, their dreams are shattered, and their desire to do right is shattered.

Do you remember your condition? Whether you were raised in a Church of God congregation or you are in the depths of sin or a church joiner or a club member, all are on the same level in sin. Some people who were raised in a Church of God

congregation are not doing well in their souls, yet they look down on those out in the depths of sin. Friend, if you do not have an up-to-date experience of salvation, you will go to the same lost eternity as the homosexual, the adulterer, the liar, and the thief. No matter where you were raised, if you do not have Jesus Christ, you are lost. At the foot of the Cross, all are on one level. There are no "good sinners" or "bad sinners" or "in-between sinners." You are either on the right hand or on the left. You are either following Jesus Christ or in the depths of sin, one or the other; there is no in-between. Those who were raised in the Church of God need Christ as much as the drunkard, the gambler, the thief, the lesbian, or the homosexual needs Him. Without Jesus Christ you will go to the same hell to which they go. Church joiners are lost if they do not have an experience with God. It makes no difference how many churches they join, if they have not been born again, they are lost.

Sometimes there is a tendency for people who have been raised in church to put off their salvation, thinking that just because of where they were raised or because of who their parents were, God is going to take care of them and work out everything for them. Well, God has worked it out, but it is through Jesus Christ. The Jew had to come in the same way the Gentile came in, and that is by faith in Jesus Christ.

The High Cost of Looking Back

Numbers 14:1-4 states: "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness [that certainly was not their cry when they were down in Egypt]! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us

unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

Those who want to go back into Egypt (or bondage) have to have a leader to take them back. They have to make themselves a captain, not a God-appointed one, but one appointed by people who are dissatisfied with the way God is leading them. Friend, when you make yourself a captain, he is going to lead you to only one place, and that is back into bondage. God divinely calls and divinely places His leaders. You cannot run them off. They will be right where God placed them. Why? They are placed there by the grace of God, not by man.

When one looks back, it stirs the heart of God and provokes Him to judgment. One who looks back says within himself, "I had it better when I was living in sin." Friend, that is not what you told God when you came out of sin and you were burdened down with a broken heart. That is not what you told God when the reaping of sin was engulfing you. It stirs God when one complains and murmurs and grumbles about the way He is leading. Looking back to the filth, the degradation, and the hopeless life that you once lived stirs God.

Numbers 14:11-12 reads: "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they." Speaking of Lot's wife, the Scripture says in Genesis 19:26, "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." The words of Jesus are found in Luke 17:32, which reads, "Remember Lot's wife." Remember the one who looked back and

became a pillar of salt.

It may seem like a small thing to look back, but Lot's wife was there as a monument for all. Jesus said in verse 33, "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." When you seek to preserve this earthly life at the cost of your soul, you are going to lose it. Instead of being the salt that makes men thirsty, Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. She came out of Sodom physically, but her heart was still there. When God makes a move to deliver you from the depths of sin, you must come out of it with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. When you come out, do not leave anything behind; make a clean break with sin.

The Danger of Unbelief

What are some things that cause people to look back? Unbelief causes some men and women to look back. Lot's wife might have thought, "What if God changes His mind about Sodom? What if He doesn't really intend to destroy the city? I wouldn't have to lose all my earthly friends and all my earthly possessions. I could still dwell there. I want to obey God, but does He really require all of this? I am leaving Sodom, but what if God changes His mind? I have friends there. If God changes His mind, I have made this trip for nothing."

Paul, writing to the Hebrews, said in Hebrews 3:12, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Unbelief got Eve in trouble, and it got King Saul in trouble. All who give place to it get in trouble and are still in trouble if it is not out of their hearts. Unbelief causes one to say, "Does God really mean what He says? I see people doing that, and nothing has happened to them." When you do not see people being struck down because of things they are doing, it may cause you to wonder, "Does God really mean

what He says? Look at what they are doing. They seem to be getting by with it." Do you know the worst thing that can happen to individuals when they are wrong? It is having God turn them over to a strong delusion and letting them believe a lie and be damned. He lets them believe they are right when they are wrong. That is a terrible judgment.

Unbelief has caused many to question, "Does God require me to dress a certain way? Is all this modesty necessary? What are all these restrictions that the people of God follow?" The next thing they knew, they started looking back and saying, "We can go back and dress the way we want, act the way we want, and behave the way we want." Their eyes have become blinded to spiritual truths.

Friend, when you are in sin, you are in bondage and bitterness. The devil is a hard taskmaster. Unbelief will blind you. What did the children of Israel bring up? They spoke of the melons, the onions, and the leeks. Those were things that pertained to the flesh. They forgot the bitterness that affected their souls. When people start looking back, they start looking back to the things they think they are missing. They remember having good times or partying, but they forget the cry of their souls for deliverance.

A State of Discontentment

What else causes one to look back? Discontentment. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." You have gained something when you are content serving God. Was there a time when you could sing the songs of Zion and be blessed? You may still sing them, but do they bless you as they once did? Are you dissatisfied and discontented? When people become discontented, they criticize the preaching, the singing, the spending, the mission fields, and everything else. There was a time when they could sing,

"My Soul Is Satisfied" and stand to their feet and wave their hand, but now it is just a song, because they are discontented.

When people become discontented, they start looking back. No matter what others do, they cannot please them. Even God cannot please them when they are discontented. They always feel that things could have been handled better had the plans involved them. A state of discontentment is a miserable condition. They become discontented with serving God and with life in general. Discontentment causes people to look back to what God delivered them from.

What else causes people to look back? The devil causes them to envy those who do not serve God. He causes them to get their eyes on the sinner and think, "He always seems to have money, but here I am serving God and don't have any money." Or the devil will say, "They look so happy. They always look as if they are having such a wonderful time. Yet, you serve God, tithe, give offerings, and give to the mission field, and you don't have anything left." Then he will cause you to begin to feel sorry for yourself. You need to remember that their reward is in this life.

Christian friend, you need to be careful of envying those who do not serve God. You need to see through the cheap veneer that some people put up. Jesus sees right down into their souls, and that gets deeper than those things that are put up as a front. The Word of God can help you. Proverbs 24:1-2 reads: "Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief." What will they gain? Verses 19-20 tell us: "Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out."

The Psalmist David said in Psalm 37:1-2: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou

envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." When people leave God out of their lives, they are insecure, unhappy, and unsuccessful; they do not prosper with God.

Looking to the Things That You Left Behind

Some look back because they have not sold out completely to following God. They talk about it and seem dedicated, but they continue to look back as though they have left behind something good. Though they talk about serving God, they are not willing to part with their old friends. To keep company with those who are in trouble spiritually is to commit spiritual suicide. No one is strong enough to stand and constantly keep company with those who commit spiritual fornication. Someone may say, "Well, I can handle myself." That is not according to the Word of God. First Corinthians 10:12 warns, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" You need to do as the Bible says and take heed. To keep company with those whom you know are in trouble spiritually is to commit spiritual suicide. Somewhere along the line, you will begin to believe some things they say.

You may say, "Well, I don't believe what they say." Then, why do you keep company with them and keep listening to them? Some people do that because they want to hear all the gossip. If some have left a Church of God congregation, yet they are still professing, the Bible instructs you not to eat with them and not to fellowship them. You will help them much more by praying for them. The Bible says to pray for your enemies. You can do more through prayer than through talk. You cannot tally anyone out of being wrong. If they get out of their condition, it will be because God delivers them out of wrong and

brings them to what is right. Some are not doing well spiritually because they will not cut the lines of communication with those who oppose the work of God. It makes no difference if one is a preacher or who he is, if he is wrong, he is wrong. Some have a room in their hearts that is unknown to those around them, but God sees. You cannot walk straight when you are looking back. You cannot make straight paths for your feet when you are looking back.

What else causes people to look back? The lack of love. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." When love waxes cold, the heart becomes cold. You know how it is when you get cold physically. It may start in just a small area, but the next thing you know, that chill will spread, and you become cold all over. It is the same way spiritually. When your heart begins to get cold, the next

thing you know, all you have is a form of Christianity, but the love of God is gone from your heart. This causes many to look back.

When your love waxes cold, you are no longer patient with those who have struggles. You are no longer patient in the battle, and you can no longer stand against the things you once did. You need to be very careful of that condition.

Jude, verse 21, says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." If your love waxes cold, you will start looking to the things that you left behind to replace the fire that you lost serving God, but it takes God to rekindle that fire. No one gets by with looking back.

Ecclesiastes 8:12-13 says: "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it

shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 reads: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The Christian does not look back. Looking back shows a desire to go back, and the Christian marches forward and upward; he presses toward the mark.

Have you been flirting with going back? Have you been looking back with the desire to go back? If so, you need to come to Jesus Christ and let Him help you. He will lift your burdens and supply your needs so that once again you can march forward and upward serving Jesus Christ.

(Cassette C-4018M)

A Parable

Behold, two men went to the house of God to pray—or so it seemeth. The first man calleth his neighbor before going and asketh, "What cooketh at church today?" They inspire each other by criticizing the church and the pastor, but agree that it is important to attend the house of God to see that all goeth well. The children also hear the conversation and wonder too, "What cooketh at church?"

The first man entereth the church with an air of importance that announces his presence. He singeth the songs, he prayeth the prayers, he placeth a penny in the plate. When the preacher standeth to preach, he listeneth to every word to see that all he saith agreeth with his standard of truth. Even the Pharisees did the same with Jesus, and they had their reward.

After the service endeth, he maketh a pretense of being friendly, but his spirit speaketh otherwise. Upon returning home, he calleth his friend the second time, and together they expostulate about the weaknesses of the service of the day. The whole church senseth this and is sad. The children also feel the effects, and they are sad. This man receiveth nothing because he giveth nothing. Behold, he shall have his reward.

The second man also goeth to church. However, before going he calleth his neighbor and saith to him, "Why not visit our church today?" The neighbor promiseth to think it over. The second man, before leaving for church, calleth his family together for prayer. They pray earnestly for the neighbor and for the preacher. Then he leaveth with his family for the house of God. He entereth the church with a deep concern for himself and his neighbor.

Others also feel his concern, and a deep spirit of concern and prayer settles upon the church. He singeth the songs with zest, prayeth with humility, and giveth faithfully God's holy portion, and he is glad. He seeth his neighbor there, and he is glad.

As the preacher standeth to preach, this man breathes a prayer to God for him. The preacher feeleth the effects of the prayer, and he is glad. He preacheth with freedom. As he preacheth, the man says in his heart, "I am glad my neighbor is here." At the close of the service his neighbor raiseth his hand for prayer, and again this man is glad.

When the service is over, all men feel the warmth of his Christian fellowship, and they all are glad. This second man goeth home blessed. He and his family rejoice together over the morning service, and all are glad. This second man giveth much, and he receiveth much. I tell you, he went down to his house justified. This maketh us all glad!

Isaiah 44:13 The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house.

14 He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it.

15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm

himself yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.

16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:

17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.

18 They have not known nor understood: for he bath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.

19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof, I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?

The Consequences of Going Beyond the Point of No Return



Brother Esau Brooks

"Behold, I Come Quickly"

You need to learn more about Jesus, because one of these days, child of God, you are going to be living with Him. One song says, "When I spend my vacation in Heaven," but Heaven will not be a vacation land. If you should be blessed to get there, you would not want to come back. You do not have to spend a vacation there, but you can go to Heaven and live there forever. Often I have wondered what it will be like to live in Heaven, to have the angels as neighbors and to be in church all the

time, throughout eternity. I feel that the Lord has us in training here so that when we get to Heaven, we will fit right in. I am sorry to say that many people are going to be disappointed, because they are not striving to get heavenly down here. Many are so taken up with the affairs of this life and the things around them that they do not feel that it is time or even necessary to become heavenly. Imagine the way you feel during a Holy Spirit filled service. How would you feel if you were to be transported to Heaven before that service closed? Do you think you would be at home? Do

you think you would really enjoy it or would you want to come back?

We each are going to die eventually. However, if you do not allow salvation to do the work for you down here, death cannot do it for you. If you lack salvation here, you are going to have to do without it throughout eternity. Jesus said in Revelation 22:12, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." He said in verse 11, ". . . he which is filthy, let him be filthy still . . . and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

God, knowing the possibility of

your missing Heaven, though you have started and perhaps have gone a long way, ordained the preaching of the Gospel to keep you in touch with spiritual things. If you ignore or disregard the preaching of the Gospel, you are doing yourself a disfavor. It would not be the preacher who would get hurt, but you. My job is to preach the Gospel. God told Ezekiel, in so many words, "When I send the sword through the land, speak to warn the people. If they heed the warning, then they will deliver their souls." It is one thing to hear the Gospel preached and another to heed the Gospel. When Paul wrote to the Hebrew church, he said to give the more earnest heed and to fear, lest after the promises being left, they should come short of entering into His rest. God has a purpose for everything He does. You have a purpose for being here. We each need to find out what purpose God has for us, and then endeavor to fulfill that purpose. Then, if you should leave this life before sunrise tomorrow and be transported from earth to Glory, you will be ready. Matthew 24:44 says, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"

The devil is on the loose. The Scripture tells us that he is out to devour those whom he can. We have much to take up our time in serving God. It is not a matter of getting saved and sitting down and relaxing and growing tired of it. The Christian life is exciting and thrilling. I pray to God that if you have not discovered the thrill of salvation, you will put forth earnest effort to make sure that you make it your very own. Child of God, thank God, you have a hope that will endure after the passing of time. If you remain true to God, you have a future in Heaven for sure. I pray that you will see how worthwhile it is to give God your all. You need to stop getting conditioned to this life and the world. If you are conforming to this life, you need to get out of step with this world and get in

tune with Heaven Too many are losing sight of their goal and getting entangled with the affairs of this life, and they are coming short of pleasing Him who has chosen them to be His soldiers.

Failing to Depend on God

Now we want to consider the consequences of going beyond the point of no return. A person can go so far that he has no hope of ever returning to God. That is what the Prophet Isaiah portrayed in the words of our Scripture text. Despite all God's dealings with those people and despite all that He had done for them, they could not discern what God was demanding or expecting of them. They got to the place where they were doing nonsense, yet they did not see it as nonsense. As far as they were concerned, they were acting wisely.

Today many people are caught up in the same condition that those people were. People are doing many religious things, and by doing so, they are looking forward to making it to Heaven. Nothing in the Bible and nothing the preacher preaches can convince them that what they are doing is nonsense. Many believe that as long as the Bible or a Bible verse has been quoted, it is of God, and it is all right. Their attitude is, "Don't worry about the particulars; just go on."

Someone told me some time ago, "Do you know what I am depending on when I arrive at the end? The Bible says, 'He whom He finds trying, I will pity and take into My kingdom.'" On the contrary, that is not in the Bible; but somewhere along the way, he picked up that notion. That particular person is a church member, yet he is running the risk of losing his soul by relying on something foreign to the Bible.

What was the condition of those people in our Scripture text? Verse 13 tells us, "The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass,

and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house." What is this verse saying? It is talking about people making an idol or a god from a piece of wood. They made it after the figure of the man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house.

This reminds me of a story I once heard about a person who was traveling to America from a Scandinavian country. During his journey, something happened to the ship, and it began to sink. The captain called all hands to prepare to abandon the sinking vessel. One particular man, being an idol worshiper, ran to his room, offered a prayer to his god hastily, and then ran back to catch the lifeboat. As he was about to climb over the rail and get into the lifeboat, he remembered that he had not brought his god along, so he ran back to his cabin, picked up his god and came running back. By that time, the lifeboat had already left the side of the ship. The only thing he could do to secure his life was to jump overboard, and he did.

The people in the lifeboat kept encouraging him to keep swimming, so he kept trying to catch the lifeboat with his god in his hand. While swimming and exerting much effort, he looked at his god and said, "Instead of your saving me, I had to save you! What kind of god are you?" and then he threw it away. Today many are in that same position: they travel through the course of life, depending on false gods to save them instead of depending on the true and living God to save them.

The Danger of Postponing Salvation

What is the chief worry that comes to many people's minds? They worry, "I would like to be a Christian, but I am afraid I might lose my salvation, so I am going to wait a little longer until I get further

down the course of life, and then I will try." Friend, if you are looking for a salvation that you have to keep, that is not salvation. Real salvation will keep you. That is the reason many people are being misled and deceived about sin. They feel that making it through this life without sinning is utterly impossible. If you have that idea, you have a misconceived idea about real salvation. I do not like to use the words real salvation, because if it is salvation, it is real. However, knowing the way many people think, often we feel compelled to use that expression. If it is salvation, it is real, and it will keep you.

As the Scripture text is telling us, the carpenter had to use his rule, mark it out with a line, fit it with planes, and mark it out with a compass and make it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a mart, that it might remain in the house. Going into the particulars about this action, he said in verses 14-15: "He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to bum: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto."

Too many people are worshipping things instead of worshipping God. They are giving much more attention and affection to other things than they give to God. Why would intelligent people who can read and who are in a position to know the Truth go through life in such a totally unacceptable way? That is where our Scripture text comes in. Verse 18 says, "They have not known nor understood: for he bath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand."

People are lost today and are going to be lost eternally because they cannot help themselves.

Someone may say, "Well, do you believe a person can be lost if he can't help himself?" It depends on what placed him in that condition to where he cannot help himself. Many things that happen to people spiritually are a result of what they have done to their own selves. Many times I have heard people say as they come to revival services, "I don't feel anything. God is not talking to me. I want you to pray that God will talk to my soul." What has made God stop talking to that person's soul? That is what you should think about. Why are you not feeling anything? With all the Gospel that is going forth, why are you totally or completely unaffected? It could be, as it was with those people, that you have brought it on yourself.

The Bible teaches there is a limit to how far a person can go in sin. Never believe that as long as the lamp is burning, the vilest sinner may return, because that idea is not based on facts. Judah was very much in health and had good things going for him, yet that did not signify that he still had a chance. Consider King Saul in the Old Testament. After he disobeyed God's voice, Samuel gave him this message from God: "I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel" (1 Samuel 15:26). The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him.

You need to beware of how dangerous it is to postpone your salvation continually. You must become aware of the risk that you are running by putting off getting your spiritual needs supplied. Just because people feel good about themselves does not mean that God feels good about them. The Bible teaches us in Matthew 7:22, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" His

response will be, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (verse 23).

Being Unprepared for the Bridegroom

Do you remember the story of the ten virgins? The Bible says that five were wise and five were foolish. Those who were wise took oil with their vessels. Those who were foolish took their vessels without any oil. Many feel, "That could never happen to me." No doubt, that is the way they felt too. The Bible says while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. Jesus gave that parable to warn of the conditions that would confront us in these evil days.

Anything that you prefer above the God of Heaven is likened to the idols those people made from the wood that they were using to bake their bread and warm themselves, yet they were worshipping them as if they were God. Verses 16-17 of our Scripture text read: "He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: And the residue thereof." Then he made a god out of it.

Matthew 25:6 says, "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." All ten virgins got up, trimmed their lamps, and prepared to go forth to meet the bridegroom; but the foolish woke up to the realization of their foolishness.

Many who have been born in these modern times may not fully understand how important oil is to a lamp. People had to use oil lamps in their houses to see. In order for the lamp to give off light, one had to put oil in it. Jesus used that illustration to symbolize the Christian and his experience. The oil is the Holy Spirit. The lamp is your profession of salvation. You need to make sure there is oil in your vessel.

We read in Matthew 25:8, "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." The wise said no, lest they would not have enough for themselves. They told the foolish virgins to go and buy from those that sell, so they did. They must have found some oil, because they came back; but it was too late. The bridegroom had come, and the door was shut. Nevertheless, that did not deter them. They started to pound on the door and, in essence, said, "Open to us! Open to us! We were waiting for the bridegroom, but we ran into some problems and got delayed. We have our lamps burning. Open the door for us." The bridegroom answered from within, "Depart from me, I never knew you." He was saying, in so many words, "While you were making a profession and pretending that you were waiting for the bridegroom, I never knew you."

Did you know that it is possible for people to go through life with a religion that Heaven knows nothing about? We have to make sure that when we arrive at the end of the road, Heaven will know something about us. One songwriter said, "It made news in Heaven when I got saved." Dear one, it is not enough to be a church member or to claim to be a Christian. You need to hear from Heaven now and then to make sure that God knows you. To go through life without having one prayer answered from Heaven or without experiencing God's direct intervention is the most foolish way to go through life.

The Fearful Consequences of Disobeying God

The Scripture text informs us that those people were foolish because they did not know or understand that God had shut their eyes. That is dangerous. You may hear people say, "I don't see that," though it is so plain and simple. Is it because God has shut their eyes?

Acts 28:23-27 reads: "And when

they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

When God sent Moses into Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Pharaoh refused. He cried out, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh refused to hear God, and He hardened his heart. If you read that story in the Book of Exodus, you will discover that after a while, instead of Pharaoh hardening his own heart, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Friend, when you have a chance for the Holy Spirit to soften your heart and lead you into an experience with God, should you choose to harden your heart, rebel, and disregard the Lord's mercy, then you must beware, lest God take that action into His hands.

In Matthew 13:10-11, right after the parable of the sower, we read: "And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." Does God make a difference? Yes, He does. Is God

partial? No. You may ask, "Then why would He let some hear and know and others He would not? They chose their condition by their rebellion and disobedience to God. Instead of softening their hearts, they choose to harden their hearts, and then they could not believe.

Matthew 13:12-15 reads: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Someone may say, "It appears that God does not want people to be saved." That is not so. He said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezekiel 33:11). The Lord is not willing that any should perish; but because of people's opposition to God, they bring it upon themselves. Friend, you do not have to be confused. God expects obedience. The wise man said, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1).

You may say, "I do not believe that God is like that." You can believe what you like. I am only telling you what the Bible says. The Bible says what it means, and it means what it says. Some people are not counting on the reality of a devil being around. Many times people think that everything that moves around in religion has to be of God. Fearful consequences follow disobeying God.

The Danger of Ignoring God

The people in our Scripture text went on with their idol worship and continued to ignore the words of the Prophet. God said it was because they did not know and had never known or understood. Furthermore, the Lord said they would never understand, because they had shut their eyes. (I have wondered many times if that is not what is happening to men and women today.) God was portraying a people who had allowed themselves to reach a place where God ceased from dealing with them. He decided to stop dealing with them because they ignored Him. You see, God was not doing it to them; they were doing it to themselves.

Have you ever noticed that sometimes when it comes time for the altar service, instead of ones getting up and walking forward to seek God, they get up and walk outside, ignoring all that was said? Why is that? Because they do not want to get saved and serve God. Often the devil tells people, "Your life is so messed up. You need to wait until you get yourself out of the mess that you are in before you can think about serving God." Friend, salvation is to take you out of the mess that sin has gotten you in. If you reject salvation and look to yourself and circumstances instead of looking to God to better your condition, your condition will get worse. Dear one, putting off Christ does not draw you closer to Him, and putting off salvation does not bring you nearer to salvation. Delaying or postponing salvation is only going to make it easier for you to lose your chances for salvation.

Note that the condition that came upon those people came about because they decided on a course of opposition against God. Today many are allowing themselves to be influenced in this same direction. It is becoming popular now to put off salvation. The moment the altar service begins, some people walk out. Others get up and leave as soon

as the song service is finished and the message begins. They feel that somehow God is obligated to save them, but He is not. Romans 9:18 reads, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" Serving God calls for diligence. The Bible says to give all diligence to make your calling and election sure. No one can undo what God has done. If God should decide never to speak to your soul again, all the prayers of the world could not change that.

God gave the Prophet Samuel the message concerning King Saul because Saul had forsaken His words. Saul cried out to Samuel and asked Samuel to pray for him, and Samuel did. He prayed for a whole night, begging God to give Saul another chance; but when the rays of the morning sun arose, God told Samuel to get up, because He was not going to hear anything about Saul. Then the Lord told Samuel to go and anoint one of the sons of Jesse that He had chosen to replace Saul. In the end Saul took his own sword and fell upon it.

Dear one, danger and death lay ahead of you if you are disobedient to God. Whenever God speaks to you, you need to obey and submit. Something is happening to people today. They can go through revival after revival and hear message after message and remain unmoved. God will put His knowledge beyond the reach of men who reject His way. They may go on with a religious profession, but they are barred from receiving the knowledge of God.

God multiplied His signs before Pharaoh, but it had no effect upon him. Momentarily he would ask Moses to pray and ask God to take away the plagues, but as soon as they were gone, he went back to the same hardness of heart.

Dear one, if the message does not bring you closer to God, it is going to take you further from Him. That is the reason many are in that state today: they cannot feel or hear anything from God anymore.

Sometimes a person will go from church to church and from altar to altar and from meeting to meeting to try to find God. You may say, "I believe that whenever anyone decides to seek God, He will come to his rescue." He will, if that person has not reached the point of no return.

Failing to Know the Time of God's Visitation

We have examples right in the Bible of people who, instead of seeking God, opposed Him and set themselves up against Him. That condition is working on men's hearts today. They will listen to anyone and anything, do anything that anyone says, and do anything that comes to their minds to do; but when it comes to obeying God, that is another question altogether. They have not known God, and by not knowing Him, they never really prepare their hearts to seek Him.

We do not have services just for the sake of having services, and we do not preach for the sake of entertainment. We preach to warn you, and the warning is given for you to heed. You cannot go on ignoring, disregarding, and rejecting, and then walk away free. No, dear one, it is going to backfire on you.

The people in our Scripture text kept up the practice of taking trees, making their own gods, and bowing down before them and worshiping them, despite the messages that God directed their way through the Prophet Isaiah. They simply closed their eyes and their hearts against it, and they went on to do what they thought was best for them. The outcome was that God shut their eyes and stopped their ears so they could not hear. He told the people back in Zachariah's time, when they stuck their fingers in their ears and refused to hear God, "It is going to come to them just as they have done. When I call, they refuse to hear; therefore, when they call, I will

refuse to hear."

I want you to read another warning found in Proverbs 1:24-29: "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."

This is Bible, and it is just as true as John 3:16, which states, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in [not on, but in] him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Do not fail to note that this verse says "whosoever believeth in him." You can believe on Him and still remain unsaved, but you have to be saved to believe in Him. That is speaking of an experience of being in Him. This is much more serious than what the average person is taking it to be.

Only Heaven knows, but this could be your last call, your last chance, your last warning. You should not sit around and let what happened to those people back in Isaiah's time happen to you. In essence, God said, "Do you know why they are taking the same tree of which they took a part to bake their bread, to get warm in the time of winter, and then make a god and fall down and worship it? Because they have not known, and they have not known because I have shut their eyes."

Take care, dear heart, with as far as you have gone that you do not lock yourself out from God and away from an experience of salvation eternally. Consider the Jewish nation for a few moments. They were God's beloved people. God worked many miracles for them, wonderful works and signs. If you go back to Psalm 78, you will find an outline of the marvelous works that God did for them, yet they continued to harden their hearts, rebel, and reject God. Today the same type of people are around, yet some are still calling them "God's beloved people." Nevertheless, they stand rejected by God.

Jesus said in Luke 13:34-35: "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." Another time He warned, "Your enemy is going to cast a trench around you and lay you even to the ground because you knew not the time of His visitation."

God is wanting you, friend. It does not matter how much you have to give up or how much joy you think you are going to lose to serve God, it will pay you more than you can imagine if you will give in to God and surrender to Him. Please do not take this message as mere entertainment. It is God's way of telling you, "I love you. I do not want you to perish. I want you to be saved." However, God cannot do what He cannot wisely do. He said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). Won't you let Him into your heart now? If you let Him into your soul, you will never regret it. God bless you.

(Cassette C-3362E)

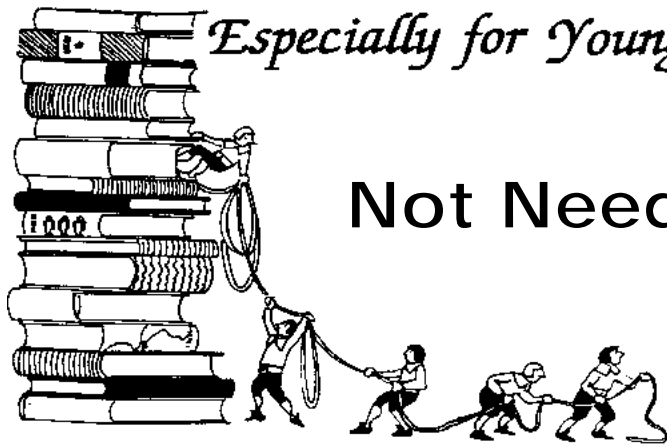
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LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Wellston, Ohio	WJJB-FM 92.5	Thursday	8:05 a.m.-8:35 a.m.
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Especially for Young People



Not Needed



Les hooked one finger over the side of the box of nut shells and quickly passed it on to Howard without taking one.

At the end of the row Ernest took the box and rattled the one nut shell left around. "Who did we miss?" he asked as he scanned the group. But Les set his jaw and looked straight ahead. He hated these "Service in a Nut Shell" services, and this was not the first time he had passed the box of shells on without taking one. In fact, the first service of this kind that they had had was the only night when he opened his shell. The little slip of paper inside said, "Lead song service." Whether it had said, "Lead testimony service" or "Give a three-minute sermonette," it would have been all the same. For it was the sad truth that Les lacked talents, and there seemed to be absolutely nothing that he could do—nothing, that is, but take up the offering.

Les did not have a musical bone in him, to quote Les himself; and a bright red wave swept up into the roots of his hair as he remembered the night he had consented to speak to the group. They were having three speakers that night, and Howard had assured him that it would not be half bad. But standing before the group that way, everything he had studied left his mind an embarrassing blank. Even his notes did not throw any light on what he had

planned to say, and after blurting a few unconnected sentences to the sea of suddenly strange faces before him, he had sat down and wished a thousand times during the rest of the service that the floor would somehow open up and swallow him. It was the same way when he testified or led in prayer too. Words just did not hover around Les Townsend's mind ready to be used when the time came; that was all there was to it. As he sat through the service, he found himself growing bitter toward the ones who took part and did their parts so well.

That was the reason he fumed Howard down after church when he asked if Les was going to be able to make it to jail service the next night.

"I'm not needed," Les shook his head. "I would be doing more good at home studying than trailing along with the group."

"What makes you think you're not needed?" Howard wanted to know.

"What would I do?" Les drew himself up to his full height. "I could lead the song service in a monotone—or even better than that, perhaps I could sing a solo."

"Now listen," Howard backed away a step and looked at him. "Just because you don't happen to have that particular talent is no reason you're not needed. The Lord has a place for you at the jail service, and you know it." But Les

still shook his head. They would probably feel sorry for him and call on him to do something just as sure as he went, and he would rather not take the chance. Nothing Howard could say would change his mind.

As Les walked slowly on down the street after leaving Howard at the corner, he was not as relieved as he thought he would be. "Lord," his heart cried as he walked along, "why is it that so many people have a lot of different talents, and I have none? What is there that I can do for You? Oh, let me do something."

A light shining from the dining room window as he came nearer the house, though, switched his thoughts. "I wonder what is up?" he thought as he bounded up the steps. "Surely the boys aren't still studying."

"Oh, a jigsaw puzzle," he laughed as he closed the door behind him and came into the dining room. "You boys would stay up all night to get one together, wouldn't you?"

His two younger brothers looked up. "It's a picture of an airplane," Tommy explained.

"And the pieces are cut so much alike, they're hard to fit," Ronald added.

Les pulled his tie over his head, and dropping it in the pile with the tablecloth at the end of the table, proceeded to help put the puzzle together.

Finally, it was all in but one piece, and that piece was nowhere to be found. The piece was a part of one of the propellers, and the picture was just ruined without it. "Oh, it's just a little one," Ronald decided as he rubbed his eyes. "Let's just forget about it."

But Tommy could not. "It just ruins the picture," he argued. "An airplane couldn't run with the middle of a propeller gone," and he dove under the table to look.

"Oh, here it is," Les said a few minutes later as he poked his finger under a table leg that was not quite on the floor. He straightened up and looked at the picture with the piece gone. Then

he slipped the piece in, and a feeling surged through him that he had never experienced before.

"Now I can sleep," Tommy said as he took a last look at the airplane and ran after Ronald. "I don't think I could if we had not found that piece."

Les stood there a long time after his brothers had gone to bed. It seemed that every time his eye scanned the big picture that he had helped to make, his eye fell on that tiny piece in the propeller—the piece that "the plane couldn't run without," as Tommy had said so emphatically. It was a little piece, that was true, and it was not a corner or an outside

piece; but it was needed.

"Sorta makes me think of myself," Les mumbled. "We all can't be the corners and outside pieces that keep the thing together, but we all have a part in the Lord's work." He ambled over to the telephone. "If my part is taking up the offering, Lord, then that's what I'll do." He looked at his watch. Howard would not be in bed yet. He had planned to do some studying. "Yes," Les said into the phone. "I've changed my mind. I'll help in the jail service tomorrow night. I'll do my part."

Selected

STAYING POWER

REMEMBER THAT AN OAK TREE IS NOTHING BUT AN ACORN THAT HELD ITS GROUND.

Obstacles Should Be Stepping Stones

We have listened with interest to the story of a horse that had become too old to work. Since he could be of no more service, his owner tamed him outside the pasture to die by the roadside. The poor fellow, having poor eyesight, fell into a pit. The neighbors, it is said, decided the best thing to do would be just to bury the poor fellow and a group gathered with their shovels for that very purpose. As they shoveled dirt into the pit, they turned their sympathetic eyes in another direction until the pit was full, and they thought the poor horse was fully covered with dirt and out of his misery. How surprised they were when they turned their eyes to see the blind horse walking safely and victoriously out of the pit.

The large lumps and shovels full of dirt that were calculated to bury the poor fellow had one by one become stepping stones for him. That which was calculated to bury him brought him out of the pit. Those who had come to murder him had become his deliverers. Had he gone to sleep, he would have been buried alive, but he kept awake and walking and made stepping

stones of his obstacles and of the rubbish piled upon him. Thus, he lifted himself from trouble.

Christians, likewise, should not go to sleep because they feel hemmed in or when obstacles have discouraged them, but should make each obstacle and discouragement a stepping stone to life them higher to realms of usefulness and to bring them out of the darkness into liberty and freedom by God's grace. Persecution, bitter words, ungodly threats, and all types of experience, by the grace of God, can become stepping stones to higher heights and greater usefulness in the Kingdom of God. It was thus that obstacles lifted Paul even to the first heaven and finally enabled him to earn a crown in the Heaven of heavens. For true, simple-hearted Christians, there need be no defeat if they will trust implicitly in the never-failing, miracle-working power of the Christ of Galilee who, in the hardest conflict, is able to make us more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Selected

Matthew 14:25 And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

26 And when the disciples saw him walling on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

27 But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid.

Keeping Your Eyes on Jesus



Brother Irwin Seshier

Hearing the Master's Voice

Christian friend, you must have the determination in your heart and soul that you are going to win this Christian race no matter what situations come your way. The devil is real. He is not a character in a fairy tale or a make-believe story. He is causing many people to give up living for Jesus. That is the reason you must keep your eyes on Jesus. The devil does not have to use something big to cause you to quit serving God. He will use a little thing if he can get you to think about it so much that it keeps your mind off Jesus.

Any baseball player who wants to be a successful hitter must keep his eyes on the ball. A baseball hitting instructor will tell a batter, "You have to keep your eyes on the ball." As a Christian, you must keep your eyes on Jesus. To get a clear image of something, you have to focus your eyes on what you are looking at.

The U.S. government hires people to look for counterfeit currency; that is all they do. However, they do not train those people to look for the counterfeit money; they train them to look at the real thing so they can spot the counterfeit instantly. Bringing that into the spiritual realm, when you have the Truth laid out before you, you can spot the counterfeit automatically. As a Christian, you need to be rooted and grounded in the Truth of the Gospel so that you are not carried away by every false doctrine that comes your way. The problem today is that so many other religious organizations offer an easier way. The true Church of God does not want that false way. The true Church of God wants it straight, holy, clean, narrow, and pure. The saints want to be Christlike, or more like Jesus and less like the world.

People are sick of nominal religion. They are looking for those who act right, talk right, walk right,

and dress right. All the characteristics of the true Church of God are what Jesus is like.

In our Scripture lesson Jesus had to identify Himself to His disciples when they saw Him walking on the sea, because He was at a place where they least expected Him. Peter said in Matthew 14:28, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Peter stepped out of the boat and started to walk on the water toward Jesus, but he began to doubt. Sometimes doubts will trouble you. You might have times when you get your eyes a little off the course. When that occurs, you need to get your eyes focused on Jesus again. Situations and circumstances might cause you to have doubts, and you will have to fight the spirit of unbelief. If you are not careful, unbelief will take you down. That is the reason you need to have personal contact with Jesus. When He speaks, you need to know that it is He who is speaking. To do that, you must spend time with

Him.

When I was a child, often I played football with other boys in the neighborhood at the far end of the street. When my dad wanted me to come home, he had a very distinct whistle, and I knew it was my dad. When he whistled, I did not stand around on the corner with my hands in my pockets wondering if that was really my dad's whistle. I knew his whistle because I had spent time with him. Christian friend, do you hear the Master's voice when He speaks to you or has it been a while since you have heard His voice? You must keep your eyes on Jesus and commune with Him daily.

Stay Focused on Christ

Matthew 14:29 reads, "And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." If you have the power of God in your life, nothing is impossible when it comes to what you can do for Him. He is Almighty, and He is a strong, high tower. He is bigger than all your problems: He is bigger than the tobacco habit, the alcohol habit, and the drug habit. He is bigger than the gossiping habit, bigger than the spirit that wants to cause you to run down the pastor, bigger than the habit of making critical remarks, and bigger than the spirit that causes division. He is bigger than all those things, and He even walked on the water.

The Scripture says that Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus. He had a distinct plan in sight, because he knew where his help came from if he kept his eyes on Jesus. Friend, if you walk toward Jesus, that means you must have your eyes on Him, and you must stay focused. Also, you have to keep your eyes on the goal and be determined to get where He is. You should not waver in your decision to live for God or in keeping your eyes on Jesus. Do not let anything

hinder your contact with Jesus. The devil will use many things to try to entice you to take your eyes off Jesus.

Verse 30 states, "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." The word *boisterous* means "rowdy, violent, noisy." The wind is very unpredictable. You cannot see it, but you can see its effects. The wind picks up debris, dirt, garbage, and trash. Spiritually speaking, the wind can stir up many things that can cloud your vision of Jesus. Truth is not going to change because you want it to change. Jesus did not let anything move Him away from His stand for Truth. Likewise, the true Christian keeps His eyes on Jesus.

If you let things cloud your vision of Jesus Christ, you might not see things as you used to, dear one. Some people out in the world used to be the true Church of God, but now they say, "Well, you don't have to dress or look that way to let people know that you are Church of God." How can the world detect the difference when they look upon one who claims to be a Christian who dresses the same way they do. What kind of message is that person sending to the world? If that is your condition, what answer will you give the world when they want to know why is it now okay for you to wear shorts when before you did not? Or they may ask, "Why are you cutting your hair now, when before you did not, if you are true Church of God?" or "Why do you go to places that you used to shun?" Friend, I ask you, is it because your vision of Jesus has become clouded by the boisterous wind?

Boisterous wind is very unpredictable. It could come from ones in whom you had faith and confidence and held in very high esteem or from family members. Also, boisterous wind can intensify at any moment, and it can die down as quickly as it picks up. Sometimes

when you think it is over, it kicks up again. That is the danger of a hurricane. On one side of a hurricane, it has raging, boisterous wind and torrential rain; it is very violent. However, in the middle of a hurricane is what we call the "eye," and the eye of a hurricane is very calm. However, people have to be careful on the back side of that storm, because the wind is boisterous.

Christian friend, there is no time for you to let down or give up in your Christian experience. You must keep your eyes on Jesus. When you live the life of a Christian, you had better hold on for dear life, because you are not going to go through this life without persecution or ridicule. When you tell people that you are a Christian, you are marked. Someone may say, "Well, let's just see how much of a Christian he really is." Sometimes when you think things are going smoothly, you need to watch out, spiritually speaking. Boisterous wind can pick up at a moment's notice in the form of affliction or financial difficulty. Now, I am not preaching a gloom and doom message; I am just preaching reality. If you do not keep your eyes on Jesus, you may not be ready when a sudden storm comes upon you.

Christian friend, you have One who is stronger than the storm. When the enemy tries to toss you about and rough you up a little, you need to remember that you have a Savior. When you were down and out, you had no one to whom you could turn, but now you have the Savior. He is the Master of the sea. When people get their eyes on the circumstances around them, often they become discouraged. The devil would just love for you to dwell upon your circumstances and forget the good things that Jesus has done for you. You might have to lighten the load a little for your spiritual craft to stay afloat.

Things That Hinder Spiritual Progress

We want to consider a few of the weights that will hinder your spiritual progress. The first one we want to consider is worldly friends. Dear one, having worldly friends will not uplift you spiritually. You can have plenty of friends right in the Church of God. Your heart has to be right to have Christian friends. If your heart is right, they are your brothers and sisters, and they are closer than worldly friends.

Worldly friends do not see things the way the Christian does, nor does the Christian see things the way the world does. Their views are as different as night and day. Second Corinthians 6:14 instructs, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" Dear one, you must be careful of worldly friends. Now, I am not saying that you should not even speak to them. That would not be the right Christian attitude. I am speaking of keeping company with them regularly and doing the things that they do.

You may say, "Well, I can handle it." Many have said the very same thing, but where are they today? They are not in a Church of God congregation. I would rather not have any friends at all in this life and know that I am going to Heaven than to have many worldly friends and be lost in the end. Many young people get so hung up on this issue.

Another tactic the enemy uses to hinder spiritual progress is to work in the mind. He will take the little seed of doubt or the seed of discouragement and water it until it grows. The devil will tell you, "If you don't have any worldly friends, you will not have any friends at all," but he is so wrong! The best friends you have are in the Church of God. Why do you have such good friends

in the Church of God? First of all, you see things alike, and you think alike. Also, you want to go to the same places. A war is not going on in your soul concerning what is right and what is wrong, and that brings peace and contentment. Dear one, if you are struggling, you need to stay right in the race. Sometimes young people have a difficult time keeping their eyes on Jesus in school, but He will help them, guide them, and lead them to do what is right. Also, He can lead you to the one that you need to talk to about his or her soul.

Dear one, if you are struggling or undecided about what to do, stay right in there. This is not a time to start missing the church services or give up. You need to think about all the good things that God has done for you and pray. The Lord will instruct you.

The world is not going to give you any help for your soul. The world is against God and godly principles. Why should you give up on the Lord? He did not give up on you. The main thing that you need to do is keep your eyes on Him. Do not focus your eyes on other situations or circumstances. The enemy does not want you to keep your eyes on Jesus. He knows that is where you will receive your strength and power.

Psalms 18:1-3 says: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." Does that sound like something that would come from someone who wants to give up on God? He has given you all that you need to get your strength from Him.

Weights the Christian Must Shun

What is another weight that the Christian must avoid that will

hinder spiritual progress? You must be careful of wrong attitudes. The enemy will do his very best to drive a wedge between you and your brothers and sisters in Christ. The enemy knows he cannot get you to go out in the world and do vile sins. Therefore, he is doing his best to try to cause problems between brothers and sisters in Christ. If he can, in the end he is accomplishing the same as if he had you sitting on a bar stool or taking drugs in a back alley.

Dear one, you are going to have disagreements. Everyone is not going to see things the same way you do, but that is not the time to develop an old, ugly spirit and say or do things that are hurtful, demeaning, cutting, or damaging to someone's character. Remember, I am preaching on keeping your eyes on Jesus. It is sad when those types of things creep in. We expect those types of things in the world, on the job, at school, or in the mall parking lot. It is amazing how little it takes to set some people off. It is almost unsafe to get on an expressway ramp or to change lanes in the middle of rush-hour traffic. You never know what some wacky individual might have under his front seat ready to use just because you did not see him.

Why should you be so careful in your conversations today? An individual might be swayed by your actions and just about ready to make a move for Christ. However, if that person hears you speak negatively about someone or hears you put someone down, he or she may start questioning your stand for Jesus. Most people out in the world do not pick up the Bible and read it. Many of them do not know the true doctrines of the Church of God; however, they see what you represent and what you have witnessed to them. If you make a move that is not right, they may decide that they want nothing to do with the church. In some instances, you are the only Bible that some people read. Some people say, "It's no one else's business how I act or

what I say." Well, it is God's business. He knows all about us. Nothing is secret to Him.

Another hindrance to spiritual progress is having a bad attitude. Some people want to cause problems or division. Dear one, a true child of God will not cause problems within a congregation. I would not want to cause a problem for my pastor. A true child of God is dependable and a help to his brothers and sisters and the pastor. The pastor should not have to worry about having to bring you in for a counseling session because you did something or said something to hurt the body of Christ. A pastor has a full-time job. A child of God would not want to take unnecessary time away from his pastor's busy schedule. He has a great deal of responsibility. The enemy is working overtime to try to tear down true men of God.

I saw a sign once that read, "Hell is Satan's job, and his assignment is your soul." That is so true. The enemy knows who he can work on and who he can work through. None of us is immune to the devil's tactics. Second Corinthians 2:11 reads, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices." You should be wary, saint. The devil's job is to get your eyes off Jesus, and your job is to keep your eyes on Jesus. This is not a time to look for a church where they do not follow the Bible standard. As a Christian, you are not to win man's popularity, but you are to please God and put Him first. Your attitude should not be, "What can I get by with?" It should be, "Am I pleasing God?"

Too many people want to follow a group of people. You need to ask yourself this question: Is that group led by the Holy Spirit? A spirit might lead them, but is it God's Spirit? Do the people act as Jesus would act or do they lean more toward worldly principles? If you receive more light on the Word of God, you will look and act more like Jesus. You will not look more like

the world. You are not going to dress, act, or talk as the world does, and you will not go to worldly places.

Staying True to the End

First John 3:1 states, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." As I said earlier, the world is against God. If you are living a godly life, the world is against you. First John 2:16 says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

As saints of God, we each have a job to do. There are no big I's and little you's in the true Church of God. God has a work for each of us to do. Ephesians 4:16 reads, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." God wants His people to be together. He does not accept division. He never has and He never will. The enemy works on the weak ones, and he will do anything he can to change your ideas.

God's Word has been and always will be the same; it never wavers or changes. Romans 16:17 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." You should not show a wrong attitude toward them, but the Bible says to avoid them.

Dear one, how do you see Jesus? Have you been guilty of things that might put a shadow over His presence in your life? You cannot blame others for your own actions. Today many people do not want to take responsibility for what they do. Nevertheless, everyone is responsible for his or her own actions.

Dear one, either you believe God's Word or you do not. Unbelief is saying that God is not in control and that God cannot do something. If you allow unbelief to work, you will harden your heart, and that will lead to spiritual death. Friend, you must have Jesus Christ in your life. Just as Peter was beginning to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me." Sinner friend, when you come to the point that you are sick of sin and you want help in your soul, He will be there. Christ is the only answer for your soul; however, you must make the first move. Matthew 14:31 says, "And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Dear one, you must stay true to the very end. It is no time to give up on God. You must keep your eyes on the Master and in His Word. You need to let Him guide and control you every day. Do not let the world's circumstances guide you and cause you to make unwise decisions. If you do, you are not going to be on stable ground; you are not going to be on the Rock.

Verse 32 reads, "And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased." This verse lets you know that peace and contentment are in Jesus Christ. Where Jesus is, there is tranquility like you have never known. John 16:33 says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Do you want to be an overcomer? Do you want to stay true to God? We are living in a world where people are so tossed. Many people have no idea where to go, who to lean upon, or who to talk to when it comes to spiritual help. Christian friend, aren't you glad that one day you answered His call? Aren't you glad that you do not live in sin any longer? The Christian life is the best life that one could ever live. Dear one, if you have a need in your soul, won't you let the Lord supply that need?

(Cassette C-4458A)

Revelation 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up

hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.



AND ONE SAT ON THE THRONE

Brother Allen Polston

Some Preach a False Christ

The Book of Revelation was written in symbolic form. God chose to use symbols, pictures, and visions to bring spiritual understanding to His people. When people see things that look desirable, they begin to seek them. The world makes sin look very alluring to people; but sin is deceiving, and the devil is a deceiver. He tricks people and blinds their eyes. Yet when we look around at the ways that sin is portrayed in the world, the devil makes it look good. However, most people do not consider the latter end, but as the Prophet said, they need to.

The things of God are not what you see on the billboards as you drive down the road, but there are some beautiful things about God. If we can get people to see how wonderful it is to live for God and

serve Him, then we will start seeing more people go His direction.

Many young people are enticed to drink alcoholic beverages and use tobacco products. Many are led astray in the party life and fall into the compromising positions of immodesty and nakedness and other things. They are led that way because it has been made to look inviting, thrilling, and attractive. God has something much better to offer when we see Him as we ought. Revelation 1:1 begins, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . ." This book contains many symbolic expressions. If you read over them hurriedly, you will not understand the meaning. God wants you to see Jesus Christ as He really is. After all, many false Christs are in our world. In Matthew, Chapter 24, Jesus' disciples were carried away when they beheld the beautiful temple. Therefore, Jesus said, in so many words, "Do not get too attached to

earthly things. Those things are temporal. One day they are going to be destroyed with fire." Rather than focusing on earthly things, He wants you to see the things of God.

Jesus went on to say that many false Christs would arise. Someone may say, "Do you mean there are false Jesuses in the world?" Absolutely. When a person stands up before people and describes Jesus as a sin-more-or-less every day type of individual, he is preaching a false Christ. When someone gets up and says that Jesus does not have enough power or ability to wash you and keep you free from sin, he is preaching a false Christ. He is not preaching the true Gospel.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (2 Corinthians 11:2). Why was he jealous over them with a godly jealousy? He said someone

may come along and preach another Jesus. Verse 4 says, "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him." Someone may come along who preaches another Jesus, one whom you have not heard. In other words, he may preach a watered-down Gospel, something that is inaccurate. What he preaches may contain some things that are right, but he will mix things in the message that are definitely not right. A Jesus of division is not the Jesus of the Bible, and a Jesus of compromise is not the Jesus of the Bible.

People need to see the Jesus of the Bible. He is the only One who can connect them to God and get them to Heaven. You have only one way to get to Heaven, and that is through Jesus Christ. You cannot make it any other way. You may do good deeds and wrap yourself up in religious works, but you can only make Heaven your home through the Jesus of the Bible. That is the reason God wants Him to be revealed to you.

There are christis that people preach of that do not line up with God's Word. Some people preach a Jesus who causes people to forget about being clean on the inside. They hold a strict outward standard, yet they act just as mean and nasty on the inside as Satan himself. Friend, that is not the Jesus of the Bible. Others say, "As long as we have love, who cares if we strip down and go to the beach? Who cares if we become immodest, as long as we love one another." That is not the Jesus of the Bible.

There is a true Jesus, and He is the Son of God. He came from a Virgin Birth; He was that stone cut out of the mountain without hands. He has power to save, power to deliver, power to cleanse you from sin, power to keep you free from sin, and power to take you to

Heaven when this life is over. This Jesus needs to be revealed to men and women. God loves you, and I love you too. He is concerned about you and wants you to see the Jesus of the Bible.

You may say, "I am not going to make a move for God today." Nevertheless, God wants you to see the Jesus of the Bible. It may be that down the road you will come to your senses as the prodigal son did. Then you will say, "I want to go home to Father's house." Should that be the case, God wants you to know where to go. He wants you to know the Jesus of the Bible. Should you come to the place of making a decision to serve God, you will know Who to serve, and you will not be mixed up in falsity.

False religion is doing such a damaging work. It is damning the souls of men and women who follow their deceptive teachings. I am glad there is a true way. God has a holy way, a strait and narrow way that leads to life everlasting. It will thrill your soul and bring to you what you really need in this life. That is what life is all about.

"A Door Was Opened in Heaven"

In our Scripture lesson in verse 1, John wrote, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven." He saw an opportunity to experience something divine. A door was opened in heaven. Most of us understand the purpose of a door: it is a means of access. We all go through doors to enter our homes. I do not think anyone wants to crawl through a window. A door is a way to access something.

God wants you to access something divine. He is not interested in your seeking after the pleasures of sin, but He is interested in your accessing and understanding the wonderful things of God. He does not want to keep the things of God secret from you.

In Revelation 4:11 we find that the one who received the Revelation said, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to

receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Whatever he saw through that door caused him to have a testimony unlike he had before. When you really dig into the things of God and hearken to them, it will cause you to have a testimony. If you will listen to your pastor and the ministry as they preach the Truth, it will cause your testimony to be similar to John's: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power."

The latter part of verse 11 says, ". . . for thy pleasure they are and were created." Here we find that John had the understanding after those truths in Chapter 4 were revealed. The understanding was that we are and were created for God's pleasure. We are not here to make a million dollars and retire to some warm climate of the world. We are not here to rise to the top of the charts. We were created for God's pleasure. Many people do not understand that simple concept. God has allowed you to live today, and if He allows you to live tomorrow, it is for a purpose. He wants to get pleasure from your life.

How does God receive pleasure from the Christian's life? What are some things that bring God pleasure? The Prophet Ezekiel told us in Ezekiel 33:11, "Say unto them, As I live, with the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." This Scripture tells us that God does not get pleasure when a wicked person dies. A wicked person is an unsaved person, a person who has not made things right with God. When he dies, that does not bring God pleasure. He does not get enjoyment from such things. He gets pleasure when the wicked turn from their wicked ways. Whether they are involved in big things or little things, God gets pleasure when they turn from their wicked ways, seek Him, and live for Him.

The Keys of the Kingdom

Luke 12:32 says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." God gets pleasure from giving His people the kingdom. What does it mean for Him to give you the kingdom? Giving you the kingdom is something that brings God pleasure. However, He was not talking about turning all control and ability over to you or your becoming the one who makes all the decisions. Also, He does not want the ministry to get in a little huddle and vote on what we are going to do and what we are going to teach. He was talking about revealing the things of God to you, the things that you may not understand about time and eternity. We all have things in our minds about the Scriptures that we do not have much understanding on. God wants to give you the kingdom and give you understanding.

It pleases God to give you understanding and instruction concerning the kingdom. Matthew 16:19 says, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The Kingdom of God is not a literal kingdom. Jesus was not speaking of a land in the Middle East. His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, and it is a kingdom of peace. When God saves you, you are given a dwelling place in the kingdom. You are in the kingdom if you are saved. Again, He said in Matthew 16:19, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom." We all have keys to unlock doors and things we need to access. He said He will give you the keys to unlock understanding of the things of God.

Do you want to please God? You need to seek Him for understanding and growth, read His Word, and do what is right. You must sit under the Gospel to hear what God has to say. You should not go into the worship services thinking, "What am I going to say to this one?" or "Will I be able to go out with that one?" or "Will I still be able to do

this or that?" You should go into the services with the desire to hear from God and to know more about Him. A saint of God does not go into the services with a shield up, just waiting to reject something that has been said.

What are the keys of the kingdom? Keys open doors and can open things that otherwise are locked or kept back. Luke 11:52 talks about the key to knowledge. It enables you to learn more to please God by growing in His Word.

We read in Ephesians 1:15-18: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

Here he lets you know that the spirit of wisdom and revelation are necessary. These keys can be given to you. They are the keys of the Word and the Spirit and the knowledge of God. With these keys, you can unlock and understand the things of God so that you can live as you could not live before. When you understand what God wants, then you can live it. Living something that you do not know is difficult, but when God begins to open His Word to you, it is a wonderful way to live. Then you begin to walk in the light. One song says, "I walk in the precious light, in the constant light." It is blessed to walk in the light of God and live in a way that is pleasing to Him who created you for such a purpose.

Our Scripture text says a door was opened in heaven. This door offers an opportunity for you to advance in God's kingdom. You can advance by studying His Word and moving closer to Him. Your relationship with God does not have

to stagnate or become dry and dead. It can be something real and sweet to your life, and it can be ever refreshing. Serving God and continuing to live for Him can be the most blessed experience in your life.

God wants to bless you and make you feel good. He likes to bless the lives of His people, just as we, as parents, like to see our children enjoy good things. It blesses me when I see my children doing things that they enjoy doing. My little boy loves to go fishing, and I really enjoy watching my little girl ride her bicycle. She enjoys that, and it makes me glad. Children are wonderful; they are a blessing from the Lord. The Bible says happy is the man whose quiver is full of them.

Just as we enjoy our children and enjoy watching them enjoy good things, God likes to see His people blessed and enjoying the good things of God. Christian friend, He did not give you salvation so that you would stand around with a sad look on your face or complain about having to dress modestly. God's people love to dress modestly, and they love to go to church. It is a blessing to serve God and do what is right. It is wonderful to know that if, while on your way to church, someone crosses the line on the highway and takes you out of this world, you are going to a better place. I love being in camp meetings and revivals and doing what God wants me to do. Serving God is not a drag; it is not boring or terrible. It is wonderful when God lives on the inside, shows you the light and lets you walk in it. It is a blessed thing to live for God! Do not pity me, because I am living right, dressing modestly, and doing the will of God. I am enjoying it. Every camp meeting is like a door opened in heaven and another opportunity to advance and go deeper into divine things.

The Sounding of the Trumpet

Revelation 4:1 says, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was

opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." He said there was a voice. He said a door was opened in heaven, and this first voice he heard was as a trumpet talking with him. In Revelation, Chapter 1, we learn that he was speaking of the voice of God, or the voice of Jesus Christ. Jesus' voice is described in Revelation, Chapter 1, as the sound of a trumpet. He is still speaking.

John 5:25 tells us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." He let us know that the voice of God was sounding out then and would continue to sound out even this hour. How is it sounding out? It is sounding out by the preaching of the Gospel, which has been likened to the sounding of a trumpet in many Scriptures throughout the Word of God.

In Isaiah 58:1 the Lord said, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." He was talking about sounding forth the Word of God, and He used the symbolic expression of a trumpet.

Ezekiel 33:34 says: "If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head." Again, the sounding forth of the Gospel to warn the people is expressed as the sounding of a trumpet. That is what you hear when God gives you an opportunity. A door has been opened in heaven. In our day the trumpet is being sounded and people are hearing the voice of God. Have you heard God's voice speak to you? Has God been speaking to you concerning your life?

We are living in a time when there is a real need for people to fully consecrate their lives to God. We are not seeing many young people really get stable and consecrate their lives to God, and say as the Scripture says, "Send me." Isaiah 6:8 reads, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." People of all ages can be used of God. God can use people who are consecrated to reach souls. Has He been speaking to you? I trust that He has. The Revelator said, ". . . the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me" (Revelation 4:1).

God has a voice that speaks to us, but there is also another voice that speaks. When the sower sowed the seed on different types of ground in Mark, Chapter 4, one particular instance says, "Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts" (verse 15). Many times when God begins to speak to people, immediately the devil comes along and says the things he has to say. He does not speak in a literal sense, but he speaks in the thoughts that he gives to you. Often when God begins to burden a person's heart with the things he needs to do, the devil begins to put thoughts in that person's mind against what God wants that one to do.

You need to do as Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." You need to cast down such thoughts so that you can obey God. Other voices also work to hinder the work of God. Sometimes the devil works through individuals to hinder and keep you away from the services and from doing what is right; they would like to hold you back. The devil tries to work in many ways. You cannot fellowship and have close relationships with people who are trying to work against your

spirituality and draw you away from God. You must be cautious.

"Come Up Hither"

This Revelation message tells of an opportunity. John said a door was opened in heaven. He heard the voice of Jesus speaking, and the voice had something to say. He does not do things in vain. What was the message that He had? "Come up hither." God is not interested in beating you down or getting you in a position where He can tear you apart, destroy you, and ruin your life. God is interested in lifting you up and calling you up into something that will cause your life to be blessed. He does not speak to try to destroy you or to take away your enjoyment. He calls you up to a higher plane.

While He was in His earthly ministry (it is recorded in Luke), Jesus let us know there has never been anything that someone has given up (such as family, houses, friends, or possessions) that God has not restored many times over. When you give up something for God, He will bless you abundantly for it. You might have to take some stands and make some moves. You might have to make decisions to go with God that will cause relationships to be severed. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly tells you that when you do it for the Lord, He will restore you many times over; He will bless you thirty, sixty, and even a hundredfold. He will give you more than what you had to forsake.

The message was to "Come up hither." God does not try to destroy you. When He talks to your heart and you feel His presence working inside you, it is to call you to a closer walk with Him, a place where your life can be more blessed. The Psalmist said in Psalm 40:2, "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."

John got a better vision of several things in Revelation, Chapter 4,

including the One who sat upon the throne. Friend, you need to see God and what He has to offer. He has many things to offer you. The world is full of offers. We receive junk mail about every day. One credit card company offers 0 percent interest for six months, another offers 2.9 percent, and so on. Likewise, the devil has his offers all laid out to ensnare you, but the pleasures of sin are only for a season, and then comes the reaping. Saint, you ought to let people see how wonderful it is to serve God and live for Him. Surely it is the best way to live. Serving Him is blessed all the way through. Salvation does not take away all your problems. You will still go through storms, but He can help you through every situation of life. Serving God is the best decision a person can make. You need to lay out that offer before others so they can see.

You need to consider what John saw as he was called up to that heavenly atmosphere, because it reveals the beauty of God. Verses 2-3 read: "And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." John saw this individual on a throne, denoting that He has power.

There is power in the blood of Jesus Christ and in living a life for God. God can give you power to do what you thought you could not do and power to overcome the feelings that you thought you could not overcome. Jesus said in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He has overcome the world. You can have power to be an overcomer and you can be more than a conqueror, not just a conqueror. You can enjoy the blessings of God when He gives you power. He can give you power over sinful habits, wrong attitudes or feelings, and things that you have

been unable to control. Child of God, God has given you power over all these things.

A Reigning Christ

John did not see Christ hiding or as a weakling. He was on a throne, and His throne was set in Heaven. I am glad that we do not have to try to live this way in our human strength, because we could not do it. Humanly, living free from sin is impossible. It takes more power than human ability; it takes the power of God. John saw the One in that position with power.

In our Scripture text Jesus said in verse 1, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." I thank God that this has not changed. The divine things that John was about to behold are going to be that way as long as time lasts. People change; they go this way and that way. Some come and others leave, but God stays the same. These divine realities have not changed. Though the world has become more wicked and men and women have determined to do things in more wicked ways, the things of God remain the same. If you can bring yourself to believe in God and what His Word says, they are the same for you today as they have always been.

We are serving the same God who spoke the world into existence and did many other mighty miracles. We find in His Word that He worked miracle after miracle. We are serving the same God today, and He is still in a position of power. People have changed, but God is still the same. The divine principles and realities that He set in motion are also still the same. Thank God, He is in the midst of His people.

John saw a throne in Heaven. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. A king is a ruler, one who reigns. Many things get hold of men and women in this life and reign over them, but Jesus is King of those

things. God has power over all things. His position is much greater and much higher than any of those things could ever be. That is one of the many blessings of serving God. John saw a vision of One sitting on a throne. I am glad this is not an empty religion, and we are not just following a man-made head or some organization. Organizations follow their human founders. Our Head is still alive and well. He still has the same power and the same position of ability that He always has. He has help for you today, whatever your need may be. He is still on the throne. John saw One sitting on the throne.

How did John get a vision of the One who sat on the throne? What is your vision of Him? We do not have a literal picture to follow. Some artists have come up with their own renditions of Christ, but I do not follow them. How do you see Him? You can have an accurate vision of Him. Verse 3 of our Scripture text says, "And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." There is something very intriguing and very beautiful about those stones, because of who they describe.

We read in Exodus 28:2-4: "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office."

Those verses of Scripture describe the garments of the priesthood. Remember that the Spirit of God and the experience

that we are enjoying today had not yet come. God had a desire to have communication with His people, so He provided a way in which they could communicate with Him, which was through the priest. God had a specific manner for the priest to go in before His presence. He could not go in old, ragged clothes or any old way he pleased. He was to go in with garments that had been made for beauty and glory. Those garments set him apart. He was different from the rest of the people.

God's people are still different from the world. We are still a people set apart and consecrated. We are not the same as the world. The saints of God do not blend in with the world; we are in the world, but not of the world. Child of God, you should be thankful that you are different from the world. Those garments set apart Aaron and his brothers from the rest of the people. That enabled them to go into the presence of God.

Characteristics of Christ

If you were to read on in Chapter 28 of Exodus, you would find that those stones mentioned in Revelation, Chapter 4, were a part of the garments that the priests wore. They were to have on holy garments. Part of the garment around the heart had to have those stones.

One must be set apart and free from sin to go into the presence of God. You must be born again to have an audience with God. His eyes and His ears are open to the cries of the righteous. Christian friend, you cannot hold hands with the world and run all day with the devil. You have to be consecrated, live carefully, and think about the things you do. You should not get ahead of God and make all kinds of plans; you must pray about what you do and ask yourself, "Is this something pleasing to God?" Even when you go shopping to purchase garments to wear, you must be

consecrated and set apart, and you must think about what you buy. You must be careful of the way you live.

Exodus 28:15-21 reads: "And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes."

Those beautiful stones that were a part of that garment represented the tribes of Israel. Each tribe of Israel had characteristics concerning their names, such as praise, joy, peace, and strength. This is found in the Book of Genesis, when Jacob blessed his children, the twelve tribes of Israel. He gave them certain things for an inheritance.

Those different traits, if you follow them through the Scriptures, bring out some beautiful characteristics of Jesus Christ, and those characteristics are present in the lives of His people. Again, those stones were set in the garment for glory and beauty. God saw those stones as beautiful, glorious things. In our Scripture lesson, that is the way John envisioned the God of all Heaven. John saw Him as one of those stones that God Himself had required for glory and beauty.

God had called them glorious

and beautiful, and what God calls glorious and beautiful is. On the other hand, what God says is wrong, is wrong, and what God says is right, is right. Nothing you can do will change that. It does not matter if a whole group of people agrees to change it or agrees that it will be a different way, if God says it is wrong, then it is wrong. You can agree to disagree with God, but that will not change God.

In Revelation, Chapter 21, we find those stones mentioned again. This time we find them in the foundations of the wall of the city of God. Someone may ask, "Are you talking about Jerusalem over in Palestine?" No, that was not what God was talking about. He was telling us that those stones are now found in the foundation of the beautiful Church of the Living God, the city of God, the new Jerusalem, or the heavenly Jerusalem.

What is the foundation of the city of God? It is Jesus Christ, the Prophets, and the Apostles; that is the foundation that we stand upon. We are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets, and Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. A chief is the one who is set over all the others. God has set a chief over each congregation; he is the pastor. The pastor has the say. Now, that is not to say he brings about man-rule or bondage, but he is over the members of that local body. The Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. He has all the characteristics of those stones in Himself.

When John saw God sitting on that throne, he was seeing something beautiful. He saw characteristics of Jesus Christ. The Bible is to help us to understand God. As John looked, he said One sat upon the throne like a jasper and a sardine stone. He was telling us of the beauty and the glory of the One who was sitting there.

When an individual who is bound by drugs, cigarettes, and the sinful habits of life sees the One who can lift him out of that

condition and deliver him and set him free, that is beautiful. When a person becomes free from feelings of hatred and bitterness, it is beautiful. He might have tried different means of reform, but to no avail; then he sees One who can deliver him and set him free. That is a beautiful thing to behold, and that is the reason we, as Christians, need to tell others about God. He is glorious, and He can do what no other can do. We have a Savior who loves and cares. When family and friends have let you down and it seems that no one understands, you can look to One who loves and cares for you. That is a beautiful thing!

A person who has sought satisfaction and peace in the things of this world might have thought, "If I work three jobs, save money, and save up ten thousand dollars, I will have peace." However, after a short time, he will realize that his soul is still just as disturbed. It is beautiful when a person sees there is One who can calm the troubled waters. It is a beautiful thing when people begin to see the characteristics of Christ in God, the One who sat on the throne.

Seek the Lord While He May Be Found

Friend, there is One who can give you what you have been missing all your life. He can bring to you what you have not found in the world. When it begins to come together in your mind that there is a

power, a force, a God who can supply you with whatever your needs are, it is beautiful.

We all face some serious needs at times. Different things come against us that are very serious. Sometimes we cannot seem to find a remedy, but there is One who can supply all our needs. When someone has a disease in his body, he can go to God on the throne and receive a divine touch; that is a beautiful thing. It is just as easy for Him to say, "Take up thy bed and walk" as it is to say, "Thy sins are forgiven."

There is no doubt in my mind that when the woman who had the issue of blood and had sought many physicians for many years came to Jesus, she went away telling others how beautiful and wonderful He was. There is no doubt in my mind that blind Bartimeus who sat by the roadside begging had a real testimony of God's beauty after he came into contact with Jesus. There is no doubt in my mind that the lame man who sat by the gate, when he had an encounter with God, went away telling others how beautiful He was.

God is wonderful, glorious, and beautiful to behold. The world needs to see and understand that. The devil is doing all he can to cause sin to look enticing and attractive. People need to understand that God has something much better to offer. We sing a song that says, "My wonderful, wonderful Lord." Another song

says, "He's more than wonderful." That sums it up well. He is more than wonderful! I want to encourage you to seek the things of God. There is help, strength, encouragement, blessing, power, love, mercy, grace, and beautiful things there. God can bless us with the things that the world cannot give. He can help us. How I wish that I could cause you to see in a greater way how blessed it is to live for God.

John got a revelation of One who sat on the throne, and it was a beautiful picture. If you devote your time and self to God, to listening to the Word of God and to being faithful to the services, you will have the same kind of testimony that John had: "Thou art worthy, Lord." God is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. I can tell everyone I meet how glorious God is. I can give Him honor in my own life in the way that I am living by being obedient. He has power to work right in my heart and life and to reckon. God is beautiful; He is wonderful.

If you are not living for Him, remember there is a beautiful One to whom you can turn. The Bible says to seek the Lord while He may be found, while He is near. God is wonderful; He is too great to miss. The Bible lets us know that we get a little bit of a down payment down here, but there is much more to come. May God bless you.

(Cassette C-4676M)

NEEDED: MORE PRAYERS

The church has many organizers but few agonizers in prayer; many who pay but few who pray; many resters but few wrestlers; many who are enterprising but few who are interceding.

Two requirements for a dynamic Christian life are vision and passion, and both of these are generated in the prayer closet. The ministry of preaching is open to a few, but the ministry of prayer is open to every child of God.

Tithes may build a church, but tears will give it life. In too many cases, the emphasis is on paying when it should be on praying.



WINTER 2001 CAMP MEETING TAPE LIST



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UPCOMING MEETINGS

NEWARK, OH
February 11-17

REVIVAL: Church of God, Newark, OH
Evangelist: Brother David Watson, Lenoir City, TN
Service times: Sunday 10:45 a.m. & 6:00 p.m.; Monday-Saturday 7:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Roger L. Decker, 83 Decrow Ave., Newark, OH 43055. Telephone: (740) 344-2543

MECHANICSBURG, IN
March 4-10

REVIVAL: Church of God, Mechanicsburg, Indiana
Evangelist: Brother Roger L. Decker, Newark, OH
Service times: Wednesday- Saturday 7:00 p.m.; Sunday School 9:45;
Sunday Morning 10:30 a.m. & Sunday Evening 6:00 p.m.
For further information contact: Pastor Allen Polston, 2020 Ralph St., New Castle, IN 47362. Telephone: (765) 521-8284