

"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)
- We reserve the right to edit and/or decline any material for any reason. Not responsible for unsolicited articles or items.

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Guest Editorial

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE

A Time Line to the Establishment of the Kingdom

Part 3 of 3

Daniel 2:31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

In Parts 1 and 2 of this article, we studied the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream and what it represents. We learned that in the figure of this metallic image, he saw the representation of four successive world empires or kingdoms. This prophecy was given to serve as a time line to reveal to us beyond any fear of contradiction when the Kingdom of God would be established. Daniel 2:44 declares, "And

in the days of these kings shall set up a kingdom." The burden of this prophecy is to reveal when the stone would make His advent and when the kingdom would be established. Now I want you to notice when the stone came, and remember that the mission of the dream was to reveal what would occur in these last days when the stone was to arrive. (Remember, the last days, according to Acts 2:16-17, are when this Christian dispensation commenced. God was using this image to get us from Daniel's day to Christ's day, when Christ was to come and establish the kingdom.)

We have gone to great lengths to show that these kingdoms were in direct chronological succession, without any gaps or postponements. So it is with this stone. Daniel 2:34 tells us, "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands. . . ." Daniel 2:45 says, "Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain. . . ."

What was the mountain? Christ came from old Judaism. The mountain was Mount Sinai. This stone was cut out of the mountain, old ancient Judaism, without hands. In other words, man had nothing to do with the matter. It was the result of the virgin birth, a divine incarnation. What is the stone? A host of Scriptures definitely prove that Christ is the stone, but let us read one. Acts 4:10-11 says: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone. . . ." Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the stone.

Daniel 2:34 says, "Thou sawest till that a stone [Jesus Christ] was cut out. . . ." Verse 45 says it was cut "out of the mountain without hands," a symbolic picture of the virgin birth.

If you look at the Scripture text closely, you will see when Christ

[continued on page 27]

Isaiah 49:13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful of earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy on his afflicted.

14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compas-

sion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.



Brother Roger L. Decker

"He Careth for You"

Our Scripture text says in verse 15, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Though you have wandered away, has God forgotten you? At times you may feel that God does not even know where you are and that He does not care.

Does God forget? The Scripture states, "Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."

In this modern age of technology, many people have computers. One can enter data and it can date back years, but can that computer go back as far as God does? People put a lot of confidence in computers. In

fact, if a company's computers go down, it shuts down that company. Can God remember? How good is God's memory? Some seem to think that God forgets just about everything.

Deuteronomy 25:17 reads, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt." Here God was speaking to Israel long after they had come forth from Egypt. The Amalekites were a tribe of people that first attacked the Israelites after the exodus at Rephidim. They were descendants of Amalek, a grandson of Esau. Israel won the initial battle, but later a coalition of the Amalekites and the Canaanites drove Israel back into the Sinai wilderness. After that, the Amalekites waged a barbaric war-fare against

Israel. The fighting continued even after Israel settled in Canaan. God commanded King Saul to destroy all the Amalekites, but Saul disobeyed. They did not defeat the Amalekites completely until late in the eighth century B.C. What does that tell us? Every persecutor, or every one who injures God's people, needs to take warning from the case of Amalek and the Amalekites. The longer it is before judgment comes, the more dreadful it will be. Amalek reminds us of the foes of our souls.

Read the words of the wise man found in Ecclesiastes 8:11-12: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet sure-

ly I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him." Some have asked, "How can people get away with wrongdoing? It seems as if they live to a ripe, old age?" That is the mercy of God, and it is going to be very dreadful for them because they have lived longer and will have had more opportunities to turn from their wickedness. There is going to be terrible dread in the end for some people. Some people are getting up in years, yet they carry on and persecute the church. Nevertheless, do not think for one minute that God has forgotten, just because they do some good works.

Can God remember? Does He forget? Amos 8:7 says, "The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." He said He had sworn by the excellency of Jacob. Who is that? It is God Himself; He is the excellency of Jacob. God will never forget you or your deeds unless your deeds are under the blood of Jesus Christ. Though it may look as if God has forgotten or that He does not care, God has not forgotten and He does care. God is close to you. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

How Close Is God to You?

You may say, "I would just like to reach out and touch God." God is as close to you as His Word is. Remember, it is by the foolishness of preaching (not foolish preaching, but the foolishness of preaching) that God has chosen to reach out to the souls of man. Jeremiah 29:13 reads, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." The enemy of souls is working to try to convince you that God does not care. The devil will tell you that no one cares whether you live or die or that no one cares about your illness or the hard place that you are in, but that is a big lie. God does care, and God has not forgotten one thing

about you. He knows all about your life. God does not need a computer to bring your life up before Him. He is God Almighty, and His memory is much greater than the most technically advanced computer in this world. God has not forgotten you.

If you once served God, He remembers that as if it was yesterday. He remembers how He used to bless you and anoint you. He remembers how He used to come really close to you when you talked to Him. He remembers revealing things to you when you read His Word. He remembers when you used to get up and testify and how He anointed you. Second Peter 3:8 states, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Can you imagine that? We get awestruck at the thought of remembering details that happened several years ago. However, in God's sight a thousand years is as a day. That is almost beyond human comprehension.

You might have thought that God did not care about your condition or that He did not care whether you lived or died. Perhaps you have been ill, and you think that God does not care because you have been going through a really difficult time in your life. Maybe you think that God has forgotten all about you and that He has left you alone to try to make it the best you can. Let me tell you, friend, God cares and He has not forgotten you.

It was God who moved upon Moses to write the Book of Genesis about the Creation, just as if Moses had been there. God remembered every detail. God also remembers the vows that you have made to Him. If you have been sick, you might have said, "Lord, if You will heal me and have mercy, I will serve You." God remembers that you said that. You might have forgotten that you said it, but God remembers the vows that you have made.

God's promises are true. You can

rest on the fact that God will back up all that He has promised. Second Corinthians 1:20 says this: "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." What God has promised, He will do.

The Covenant Between David and Jonathan

We want to look at an example in the Word that exemplifies God's mercy. At one time you might have had a really good experience with the Lord, but for one reason or another, you drifted away. Perhaps you have gotten so far away from God that you do not even think that God cares about you anymore. You may feel that you are just enduring your time until you leave this world. Well, many examples in the Word tell us of God's memory.

Bible scholars all agree that King David was a type of Jesus Christ. There was a great bond of love and a covenant between Jonathan and David. Jonathan was the son of King Saul, who was out to destroy King David. Jonathan knew and recognized that the throne of the kingdom belonged to David, so he made a covenant with David. You can read of the covenant he made with him in 1 Samuel 20:14-15: "And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth."

What was that covenant? Jonathan was saying to David, in so many words, "I would like for you to have mercy on me. I love you, and there is great love between us. While I am alive, remember me, and if I happen to be killed or cut off, I want you to remember my family. Even when I am gone, please have mercy on my family."

Jonathan had a son whose name was Mephibosheth, and he was lame from the time he was a child of

five years of age. When news had come that the house of Saul looked hopeless and that King Saul and Jonathan were dead, a nurse, despairing of her own life and the life of the king's grandson, grabbed Mephibosheth in her arms and fled. As she took off in a hurry, she dropped the child and injured him. You can read about this in 2 Samuel 4:4, which says, "And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth." He remained lame for the rest of his life. He could not work, and he had to be taken care of. He would have been considered a worthless outcast, but David did not forget his covenant with Jonathan.

If you study the wars of Israel or wars of those kings, you will find that whenever any individuals in the family were left alive, the new king killed all the family members of the previous king; he did not spare them. (Remember that when God told Saul to go down and destroy the Amalekites, He instructed him not to spare anyone, but to kill them all.)

David's Mercy to Jonathan's Son

After the armies of Saul were defeated and Saul and Jonathan had been killed, David remembered his covenant with Jonathan. Second Samuel 9:1-13 states: "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba. And when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said

unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet.

"And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. [Who was talking to Mephibosheth? The highest power in that land, a man who had God's anointing over him was talking. He was a man who not only could make a promise but also could keep the promise.] And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am? [In Palestine dogs were hated. When I read this, I see the love of God personified.]

"Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house [the kings owned vast amounts of land in those days]. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat [in other words, Ziba was a servant to Jonathan, and King David was assigning him the task of tilling the land and giving him plenty to eat]: but Mephibosheth thy master's son shall eat bread always at my table.

"Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants [he had plenty of people to work the land]. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth,

said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons. [What does God make you? A child of God.] And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet."

Has God forgotten you? No. Mephibosheth was a man in a hopeless condition; he could not work and make a living. He just had to go from mercy to mercy. No doubt, when people saw him, especially being of the house of Jonathan, or of the house of Saul, not too many had mercy upon him since they had been defeated. When King David contacted Mephibosheth, he probably expected to be run through with a spear or hanged. Instead King David extended a hand of mercy.

His Unspeakable Gift

We want to consider some thoughts concerning David and liken them to how the Lord remembers you and me. The first thing you need to remember is that it was King David who sought Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth did not seek King David. Why? Because he knew that doing so would probably bring his death. David sent for Mephibosheth and required him to come; he wanted to meet him. Mephibosheth came and bowed down before the king; expecting death, he was given life. Everything that Mephibosheth needed, the king had in abundance. He was not even required to work for it; it was a gift. I thank God for His unspeakable gift. We could not earn salvation; it was a gift. King David brought Mephibosheth to Jerusalem, and there he fed him at his own table.

Saint, that is a type of how the Lord worked with us. The Holy Spirit went looking for you and me, and it was the Holy Spirit who brought us to the King. We did not get saved on our own. No, we were

not hunting for God. The Holy Spirit worked on us and brought us to a place where we could bow down before God, just as Mephibosheth bowed down before King David. Christian friend, when we went to Him, we were as worthless as dead dogs and unfit to labor in the Kingdom of God.

Ephesians 2:1-2 says: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." We were dead in trespasses and sins, and we walked as the world walks in sin. We followed the deceit of the devil. We were children of disobedience, but when we came before God, expecting the worst, we found the best. We came in humility, confessing our sins, feeling undeserving of such kindness. How could God, after we had wounded His heart so many times, be so good to us? I can hardly fathom that. I have heard people get up and testify, "I don't even know what to say. All I know is that I once was lost, but now I'm found. I don't even know how it happened!" Job said in Job 22:29, "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person."

Dear one, you cannot get anywhere with God if pride is in your heart. You might as well humble yourself from the beginning. There is no sense in your trying to go to God with pride in your heart, whether you are proud of your name, proud of your position, or proud of who you are. The Bible lets us know in James 4:6, "But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." God opposes the proud, but He gives grace and strength to the humble. Go back to the type: David and Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth did not have any strength, and he had no pride about him. He called him-

self a dead dog. What did David do? He brought him up and set him at the king's table. God gave him grace and strength. Dear one, God has not forgotten you. Proverbs 29:23 says, "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

David had all that Mephibosheth needed to survive this life. What happened when we came to the Lord? We found that the Lord was all that we needed to get out of sin. It was not Jesus Christ *and* Alcoholics Anonymous. Christ supplied all we needed. His ability is unmeasurable.

Eating at the King's Table

Mephibosheth dwelled in Jerusalem and ate continually at the king's table. God does the same thing for you. He bids you to come to the supper, for all things are ready. Matthew 22:4 says, "Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage." Luke 10:35, speaking of the good Samaritan, reads, "And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." Though two pence was a very small amount, when it represents the Word and the Spirit, it is quite a bit. The Word and the Spirit can handle every one of us.

Mephibosheth was brought to Jerusalem. What is Jerusalem symbolic of? It represents a type of the church. The good Samaritan brought the man who had been beaten and robbed to the inn. God never joins His people to some man-made organization, but rather the Spirit of God always baptizes you by the Spirit into one body. God never joined any man or woman with a sectarian organization. No, it is right in the Bible. First Corin-

thians 12:13 states, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

Someone may ask, "What difference does it make what religion we have?" It makes a lot of difference. It makes a difference whether that religion you are in is founded on God's Word. If it is not founded on God's Word, it is nothing at all in God's eyes. If you stand on the Word of God, you must be able to find it in the Bible. Likewise, if you are a member of the church, born into her, then you ought to be able to find that in the Bible. The only one mentioned in the Bible is the Church of God. If you are a member of some Pentecostal organization, it should be in the Bible. Someone may say, "Pentecost is in the Bible." It sure is, but it is not a church; it is a day. Acts 2:1 does not say, "And when the Pentecostal church was fully come." It reads, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come." God never joins His people with a sectarian organization. People get all stirred up over that, but I am just telling you what the Bible says. It is "Thus saith the Lord."

Someone may say, "I don't believe that God is hung up on only one church." Well, how many bodies is your head on? If you were to take your head off and try to put it on two bodies, one of the bodies would be dead. Well, Christ is the Head of the church. What is the head over? The head is over the body. How many bodies does a head have? It has only one. God does not want you in the Baptist Church, the Pentecostal Church, or the Lutheran Church. Why? Because they are not based on the Word of God and cannot stand against sin. To stand against sin, you have to be kept in the Father's name, and the Father's name is God.

First Corinthians 12:13 states, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be

bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." We are baptized into *one* body. Mephibosheth was brought to the house of the king, and that was at Jerusalem. Psalm 135:21 says this: "Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD."

Receiving an Inheritance

Mephibosheth sat at the king's table, and those who were servants to his father became his servants. He had all the inheritance restored to him; he was in charge. Christian friend, God made you and me kings and priests. Praise God, hallelujah! Mephibosheth was no longer a dead dog; he was the king of that house. We read in Revelation 1:5-6: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

David gave Mephibosheth an inheritance. Likewise, you and I receive an inheritance. He received strength from the king. Where did the inheritance come from? It did

not come from Saul or Jonathan; it came from King David. King David gave it back to Mephibosheth. Any other king would have killed him. King David was a type of Christ sitting on the throne of mercy; he was a king of mercy. He turned that around and gave Mephibosheth back all the father's inheritance. Instead of Mephibosheth being a dead dog, he was a live prince. He had authority and servants. What servants did he have? The same ones his father had, Ziba and his household. Ziba still had the household going. It was not decayed and run down. No, Ziba and his sons and servants built it back up, and David gave it to that dead dog who was not worth anything, just as you and I were worthless.

Someone may say, "I think I am a really good fellow." You may think you are, but are you good enough to pass through the Judgment? To pass through the Judgment, there cannot be any sin in your life.

The Scripture says that Mephibosheth sat at the king's table and the servants planted his fields and took good care of him. We also have been given gifts in the Kingdom of God to take care of our needs. There is the gift of teaching and preaching, or prophecy. When

we are sick, we can receive the gift of healing. When we need discernment, we receive the gift of discernment. God has given all these gifts to the body. When we need someone to help, God gives the gift of helps. God gives us all these things.

Do you feel that God has forgotten you, that He does not care about the trouble that you are in, or that God does not know you exist? Yes, He does. Did David forget his covenant with Jonathan? We are under a new covenant. God has given us Jesus Christ, and He cares about us. Our Scripture text lets us know there is more of a chance that a mother would forget her little baby than for the Lord to forget you and me. Does God remember you? Yes, He does. Perhaps you tried to serve God and failed. God still remembers the effort you put forth, and He would like to help you make a clean start. Does He really care? Oh, yes, He cares more for you than anyone else in this whole world, and He is right there to help you. All you have to do is denounce your stubborn will and humble yourself before Him. If you have a need, won't you mind the Lord?

(Cassette C-4480E)

Though Doubt and Dismay Shoul d Enfol d You,
And Hope and Rel ief Become Dim,
Remember That Someone Has Tol d You,
To "CAST ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM."
If Sorrow or Troubl e O'er Take You,
And Grief Fil l s Your Cup to the Brim,
There Is One Who Wil l Never Leave You,
Then "CAST ALL YOUR CARE UPON HIM."

1 Corinthians 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

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

25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible

crown; but we an incorruptible.

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

27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means [and that means your mind too], when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [or be rejected in the final test].

Run That You May Win



Brother E. David Stegmeier

Becoming a Servant to All Men

In our society man has become very independent. Often people's attitude is, "We can just do anything we want. Who cares how others feel or how it affects that person?" Too much is done without considering anyone else. I am talking about running the race. In everything I do and say and in every move I make, I need to consider, "How will this affect my wife, my children, the work of God, my congregation, and other congregations?" No man lives to himself, and no man dies to

himself. We each are responsible for every man and woman we meet.

People have become so independent and self-centered. Before they get involved in any kind of activity or task, they ask, "What's in it for me? What will I get out of it?" However, that was not the attitude of the Apostle Paul. In essence, he said, "I have become a servant to all men, that I might win them for Jesus Christ." There are not many servants today. The Apostle Paul tried to identify himself with each individual he met. He tried to find a common ground, a common

interest, or a mutual understanding so that he could identify himself with them. He said, "To the poor, I became poor. To the strong, I became strong. To the weak, I became weak." He identified himself with everyone with whom he worked. Saints, we ought to have some empathy for people. When you see people and rub shoulders with them, do you act superior? Many do. Solomon said in Proverbs 11:30, "He that winneth souls is wise." Paul used great wisdom in soul winning.

In this race we all can win. Paul

said in our Scripture text in verse 24, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" In this race every one of us can win. Verses 24-27 from the Living Bible read: "In a race everyone runs, but only one person gets first prize. So run your race to win. [We each can obtain that first prize. I want to run this race to win. Friend, to win, you have to get in the race and give it all you have. The modern adage is, 'Give it all you've got-everything within you!' I want to see the work of God furthered, don't you? I have said many times, 'God help me never to hinder another man's work for God.' If you hinder another man of God's work, you have disqualified yourself for the race.] To win the contest you must deny yourselves many things that would keep you from doing your best. An athlete goes to all of this trouble just to win a blue ribbon or a silver cup, but we do it for a heavenly reward that never disappears.

"So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I fight to win. I'm not just shadow-boxing or playing around. Like an athlete, I punish my body, [I teach in a high school, and occasionally boys have come to me and said, 'Mr. Stegmeier, may I be excused from class today? I have to run several laps because I am a pound more than I should be, and I have to wrestle tonight. I haven't eaten for quite a while.' They really punish (or deny) themselves. We are not seeing much self-denial today.] treating it roughly, training it to do what it should, not what it wants to. Otherwise I feel that after enlisting others for the race, I myself might be declared unfit and ordered to stand aside." Paul gives us much practical advice.

I was taught that if something displeasing to God is in your life, you must overcome it. You should not live with it or try to justify it by saying, "Well, that's just the way I am. I lack patience" or "That's just my nature." You need to ask God to

help you, and then work at it; pray more fervently. God came to change your nature. The church is going on, and each of us has to keep pace. You cannot coast or rest on what you have done in the past. You must continue to grow in the Lord. Our Scripture text says in verse 25 that every man strives for the mastery.

Verse 27 of our Scripture text is enough to convince me that the Bible does not teach eternal security without complete obedience. I believe in eternal security, but only with complete obedience; everything is conditional.

Requirements for Running the Christian Race

Let us consider some requirements, or rules, for running the Christian race. First and foremost, you must be holy. Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:5, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." I don't know about you, but I pray this way: "God, help me to be the best husband and the best father I can be, and help me to be the best pastor I can be for my congregation."

Sometimes I am disappointed in myself. Have you ever been disappointed in yourself? As we look back, we should be able to see where God has brought us from and see some improvements. Sometimes I ask my wife if I have made some improvements. I believe in having healthy, wholesome homes. If people are not living in healthy, wholesome homes, then having healthy, wholesome congregations is difficult.

Again, in 2 Timothy 2:5 Paul said, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully [the center reference of the Bible says, 'unless he plays according to the rules']." We are in a Christian race, and we must follow God's rules. Another translation says, "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes

according to the rules." One big scandal in recent years in athletics has been the use of drugs. Young men have taken various drugs to stimulate the growth of their muscles and to give them more stamina, but that is against the rules.

Christians have to abide by God's rules. Again, I want to emphasize that to run the Christian race, you must be holy; you must live without sin. Every contestant in this race is holy. Holiness of life is the basic rule for running this Christian race. Those who fight the requirements of holiness have a few Scriptures that they attempt to use to refute or disprove the requirement of holiness. Nevertheless, holiness is taught throughout the Word of God, in both the Old and the New Testaments. The Word of God is replete with scriptural passages that substantiate the basic requirement of holiness for every contestant.

The angel said to Mary concerning Jesus in Matthew 1:21, "He shall save his people from their sins." One class that I taught when I was teaching full time was English. The word *from* in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* says that it is "used as a function word to indicate the fact or condition of spatial or physical absence, separation, separation remoteness, or disjunction between objects." It uses this example: "An ocean separates America from Europe." The grace of God separates the Christian from sin.

The community where we live knows quite well what the Church of God teaches, and a woman asked my wife one day, "Aren't you really proud people, because you say you live without sin?" My wife said, "Well, on the contrary, it's the grace of God that helps us; it's not in ourselves." As Christians, we have to stay low at the feet of Jesus, and He keeps us from sin. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

When a person steps onto this

racetrack, he separates himself from sin; therefore, the first rule for successful running is that you have to live without sin. If you hate or detest your brother, you are sinning. If you have something in your heart against another brother or sister, you have sin in your heart, and you have disqualified yourself from the race.

Having the Nature of God

Paul, in his writings, alluded to the Christian race. As I said earlier, the Word of God is filled with passages that prove the doctrine of holiness. Often people stop after reading 1 John, Chapter 1, and do not go on to Chapters 2 and 3. First John 2:1 says, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not [that is the rule in running this race]. And if any man sin . . ." That is the exception. We preach the rule, and we cover the exception. The world preaches the exception for the rule.

First John 3:9 reads, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." When you are born of God, you get the nature of God. They say that certain physical traits are passed on from our ancestors. If you get saved, you get God's nature, and His nature is the nature of holiness. If God is in you, you live a holy life. Babbling in a foreign language or jumping over an object of some kind is not a sign that God is living in you; you must live a holy life. Also, if God is in you, you will treat your wife or husband right, you will treat your employer or employees right, you will treat the mail carrier right, you will treat the garbage man right, and you will treat the bill collectors right.

Paul said in Romans 6:1-2: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Have you seen any people from the graveyard walking around

town doing business lately? No, of course not. Likewise, you do not see those who are dead to sin dabbling in sin.

To participate in this race, you need to know the rules. Ignorance of the requirements is no excuse. You may say, "Well, there are people who do not have the Bible." The Bible speaks and covers this as well. It states that there is a law within them. We in America have absolutely no excuse for not knowing God's requirements.

I thought of the great reformers, some of whom have given their lives so that we might have the Bible. Many great reformers, with a love for the souls of men, suffered death to translate this Book into our language—men such as John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, and Miles Coverdale. John Wycliffe became so hated by the Roman Catholic Church that after his death, they exhumed his bones, burned them, and spread the ashes on a river. They betrayed and executed him for his work in translating the Bible that we enjoy. Many people have suffered to bring us this Book, so we cannot claim having a lack of knowledge as an excuse.

Be Careful Not to Hinder Others

Next, in running this race we must be careful not to hinder other contestants. If you are running a relay or any race, there are marked lanes on the track, usually painted white or yellow, and you must stay within those lanes. Likewise, you must stay within the requirements of the Bible, and you must not hinder anyone. If what you are doing or saying is hindering a brother or a sister, you are disqualified for the race. That is just the way it is. If you are hindering a man or a woman from serving God or hindering a congregation or a man of God, you are causing him heartache, and you are hindering yourself from serving God.

You cannot do anything against

the Gospel but only for the Gospel. You are hurting yourself, not the Gospel. For example, if I were to work against another congregation, in time my own congregation would go down. Also, I would disqualify myself from this race. The same holds true in a literal race. I have seen boys become disqualified in races where schools send their boys on the racetrack. They got the baton and away they went. However, when one got in another's lane, he disqualified himself; and not only did the one young man become disqualified, but the others on his team were disqualified as well, and that was hurtful.

The Word says in Hebrews 12:1-2, 12-13: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. . . . Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." You may be the cause of some people being turned out of the way. This is more serious than I could ever describe it to you.

Laying Aside Weights

The next requirement in this Christian race is that a runner in a race must run light. He must get rid of a few things. The Scripture says to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run . . ." In a race, you do not want your speed impeded; you do not want to be hindered or slowed down or held back by unnecessary things.

What would you think if you were to see some runners with golf clubs, skis, badminton racquets,

baseball bats, or basketballs running down the racetrack? You would probably say, "That is a strange individual." A runner must get rid of all unnecessary baggage. You might have to give up some things that you possess to run this race. Some possessions may be good in themselves, but they may be a hindrance to you. Good things can become a hindrance to your winning the race.

In assessing everything about life, Solomon said, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Everything is worthless, empty, and useless when it comes to the end. Will anything you possess help you in the end? No. Again, Solomon stated, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Sometimes having too much can be an irritation or an annoyance. I tell my congregation that they should get by with as little of this world's goods as they can. We should not be married to this world. I was raised when Christians were careful of having too much. Anything that crowds Christ out of your life is a serious hindrance.

For some people, a hobby could be a hindrance. Sometimes hobbies can require too much of your time. I am not against hobbies, but if you cannot get to church because of a hobby, that hobby ought to go. If your hobby is reading, that is a good hobby. However, if you are reading the wrong things, that hobby must go. I think reading is a good hobby if you read the right things. You might have to lay aside certain books and magazines.

Some loved ones or acquaintances may hinder you, so you might have to bid them goodbye. We can read all these things in the Bible, but when they come down close, it is a little hard sometimes. I have been through some very hurtful times because of standing for Truth and righteous principles,

but I am glad that I have chosen this way. If I had it to do again, I would have done the same thing.

Aspirations and plans might have to be canceled. A paring down of your possessions may be necessary. Having too much love for the things that you possess is a type of worldliness. Worldliness takes in much more than how you dress; it also takes in having a love for material things. Where do you find your joy? Worldly attire is just one small facet of worldliness.

Negative personality traits such as stubbornness, excessive pride, and unforgiveness must be left behind. Have you ever considered whether you are stubborn? Some people are stubborn; that has to go. You cannot run in this race very long if you are stubborn. Some negative personality traits must go. The Bible says that stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. I have seen stubborn people. You cannot talk to them when it comes to telling them things that they ought to do or should not do when it comes to the Gospel, even very serious things.

As a pastor, I do not meddle in people's lives. However, in very serious decisions, it is a pastor's job to counsel people about things that will hinder them in this Christian race. For example, suppose a family is considering moving away from a healthy Church of God congregation so the husband can take a higher-paying job, but there is no congregation in that location. Or someone may say, "Well, I have an uncle or an aunt there." If you are contemplating such a move, your first consideration ought to be the welfare of not only your own soul but also the souls of your wife and children. You should ask, "Is there a healthy, prospering, wholesome Church of God congregation there? If not, then you ought to stay where you are. The Bible says in Hebrews 13:17, "Obey them that have the rule over you." You may say, "That is man rule." Well, as one brother says, "God has always had a man to rule."

Another rule in running this Christian race is that you have to run straight. You cannot deviate to the left or the right. Often when a person gets lost, he walks or runs in a circle or goes back to where he started. Many people are lost, and they are running in circles. I do not want to run in circles or labor in vain. Do you? The work of God is the most wonderful work in the world; it is awesome. The Church of God is the most beautiful institution when it is healthy and wholesome. I never lambaste congregations or people. I am lambasting the devil and ungodly principles to help people to live right and run to win.

Our lesson is to run that you may win. You need to run straight. A trial or a temptation could deter you. Remember, you are in a race, dear one. In this race you have to pace yourself, because this is a long-distance race. If you get your eyes off the mark, things will begin to happen and you will not run straight anymore. In a literal race you have to pick a mark and go for it. If you look to the side, you might run into something. You have to go straight when you plow a field. You have to pick a mark on the other side of the field and keep your eyes on it, otherwise you will not go straight. Likewise, you must keep your eyes on Jesus, not on Grandma or anyone else. Grandma or another person might veer from the strait and narrow way. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:1-2: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

The Word says you are to run. You are not to play around. You must stay in there and put forth effort. It takes effort to be a Christian. You must read and study the Bible, pray diligently, and be consistent in your church attendance. Hebrews 10:25 says, "Not forsaking the assembling of

ourselves together, as the manner of some is." You need to go to church every time the doors are open. You must run the race with patience; it takes endurance. A boy in our school was a long-distance runner. He started when he was really young. Often we saw him running around town and over the countryside. It takes endurance and stick-to-itiveness.

Keeping Your Eyes on the Goal

Last, you must keep the goal in view. There is a finish line, dear one. You must be careful of looking at the spectators and keep your eyes on the goal. Some will boo you and others will cheer you on. Some people may cheer you one day and the next day they will boo you; that is fickle. I have learned to be little tough skinned. You must keep your eyes on Jesus, Christian friend. Heaven is your ultimate goal.

I want you to read a song from the *Select Hymns* hymnal, entitled "On to the Goal." This song was written by C. W. Naylor. He suffered many things in his life. Brother Naylor was in Florida helping to put up a revival tent when a tent pole fell, hit him, and broke his back. He was confined to bed for the rest of his life. He was rather bitter at first until he realized that God allowed it and could use it to further the Kingdom of God. He wrote many beautiful songs.

*Turning thy face from all the past,
On to the goal, keep pressing;
All of the weights from off thee cast,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*See in the distance there arise
Glorious mansions in the skies,
Waiting for thee—a wondrous prize—
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*Never mind what the others do,
On to the goal keep pressing;
They cannot run the race for you,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

Whether they run or turn aside,

*Whether in sin they still abide,
Fixing thine eyes on him who died
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*Forward and upward, fainting not,
On to the goal keep pressing;
Bearing whatever falls thy lot,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*Trust in the Lord for strength
today,
"He is my helper," boldly say,
Angels will guard thee on thy way,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*Jesus a crown holds out to thee,
On to the goal keep pressing;
Heavenly glory thine shall be,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*Happiness that no tongue can tell,
Ever to praises shall impel,
Safe in thy presence thou shalt
dwell,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

*On, on, on to the goal!
Jesus will add His blessing:
On, on, on to the goal,
On to the goal keep pressing.*

You have to see whom you are aligning with. Many are turning aside. They are running on a different racetrack, but not a racetrack governed by the rules. Lots of divine rules and divine principles are being violated by laity and ministers alike today. Some say, "We are obeying one." Well, how about the others? You are not walking in complete obedience if you are disobeying any of the rules.

I would like you to read another song entitled "Victory Through Grace."

*Conquering now and still to
conquer,
Rideth a King in His might
Leading the host of all the faithful
Into the midst of the fight;
See them with courage advancing,
Clad in their brilliant array,
Shouting the name of their Leader,
Hear them exultantly say:*

*Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race,
Yet to the true and the faithful
Victory is promised through grace.
Conquering now and still to
conquer,
Who is this wonderful King?
Whence are the armies which He
leadeth,
While of His glory they sing?
He is our Lord and Redeemer,
Saviour and Monarch divine;
They are the stars that forever
Bright in His kingdom will shine.*

*Conquering now and still to
conquer,
Jesus, Thou Ruler of all,
Thrones and their scepters all shall
perish,
Crowns and their splendor shall
fall,
Yet shall the armies Thou leadest,
Faithful and true to the last,
Find in Thy mansions eternal
Rest when their warfare is past.*

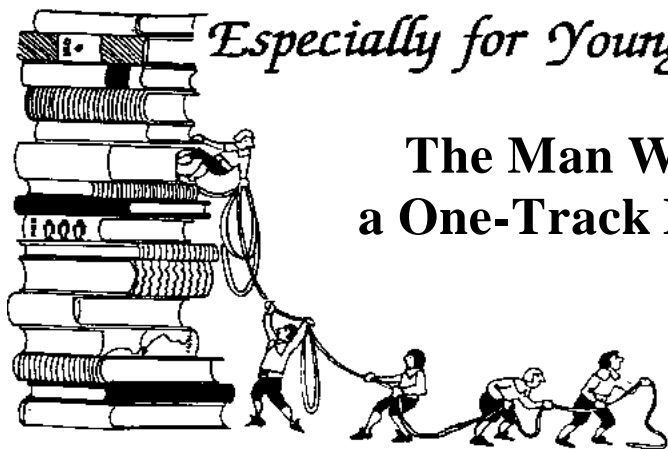
*Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race,
Yet to the true and the faithful
Victory is promised through grace.*

How is it with you, friend? If you have lost the focal point, you have lost the battle. I want to run to win, don't you? Do you know who your worst enemies are? They are the devil and self. If you keep self where you should keep him, you will win this race. Let us run to win.

(Cassette C-4305M)

It is not what we EAT
but what we DIGEST
that makes us strong;
not what we GAIN
but what we SAVE
that makes us rich;
not what we READ
but what we REMEMBER
that makes us learned;
and not what we PROFESS
but what we PRACTICE
that makes us Christians.

Especially for Young People



The Man With a One-Track Mind



Along with Walter MacDonald's newfound fame as a dancer came a thirst for anything alcoholic. Then late one night to his dressing room came a telegram which read, "Mother very low. Come if you want to see her alive. Dad." Happy (as he was called) loved his mother, but he could not go to see her without first being "fortified" from the bottle. Unsteadily, he stood by her bed. Crazy thoughts raced through his mind. "Oh, Mom, I did this. I know I've been drinking, but if God lets you get well, I'll never go back to the old life—so help me." The doctor said she would not live ten days, but she did; and Happy vowed to give up his old life. Going back to Chicago, he found a job in a stationery store and he stayed sober—that is, most of the time—for two years.

Then his old friends found him and persuaded him to return to his former life in the theater. But even after nine years in "big-time vaudeville," there was still something lacking in his life.

One day, while visiting in a hospital, a beautiful nurse asked him, "Are you as unhappy as you look? Your name is Happy? I'd say that you are kidding yourself. If you'll let me, I'll show you a permanent cure for your condition."

So Happy made a date to meet her and find out more about her cure. He was in for a real shock that night.

"Here? Say, this is a skid row mission with drunken bums off the street." He followed Birdie Schultz inside, but one look at the "bums" sent him scurrying for the nearest tavern.

The next afternoon Birdie called and invited him to return to the mission. So after his last show, he went again with her. He thought, "She is just too attractive a creature to take this Christianity too far."

Just as the invitation was being given, an old man leaned over his shoulder and said, "Are you a Christian, mister? Are you sure?"

Happy Mac complained to Birdie about "busybodies," but he was back the next night because the people sounded happy when they sang.

Night after night the old man, Casey Jones, said to him, "Are you a Christian, mister? Are you sure?"

It seemed to Happy as though Casey must have had a one-track mind, and finally he refused to go back to the mission again. That brought an invitation from Birdie, his nurse friend, to attend a local church. He did not like churches either, but he wanted to be with Birdie, and at least he would not hear

any more from Casey Jones! Happy was ushered to the last seat in that large auditorium—and do you know who was in the next seat? Yes, it was Casey Jones! Was this a coincidence?

It was then that Happy realized that it was not Casey Jones who was chasing him—it was the Lord. But the theater was his life, laughter was his god!

The next night he was back with Birdie at the mission. Pa Taylor was reading from Psalm, Chapter 2. When he came to the verse, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," it was too much for Happy. All of a sudden, tears drenched his cheeks. He realized that he, Happy MacDonald (whose chief aim was to make people laugh), would one day stand before the One who would judge his evil ways. He turned his life over to Christ. He had realized at long last that there are no coincidences with God—a pretty nurse, a happy old man with a one-track mind, and an empty seat in a packed church.

Selected

NEVER DESPAIR:
MAN'S
EXTREMITY IS GOD'S
OPPORTUNITY.

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 For consider him that endured

such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Christ—the Authorized



Example

Brother C. H. Dickerson

Laying Aside Every Weight

Every one of us is in a race; and in a race, some lose and some win. Paul expressed that we are in a race and that not everyone is going to be a winner. If you are going to be a winner, then you must keep your eyes on Jesus, follow Him, and let Him be your example. When you are in a literal contest, or race, some people are for you and some are against you; some people will encourage you and others will try to discourage you; some want to make it easy for you, and others want to make it hard for you. So it is in the spiritual race. Therefore, you must keep your eyes on Jesus and listen to those who are cheering you on.

As we look at the Scripture text, I want you to consider three individual thoughts that Paul spoke

of. If you are to run this race successfully, you have to keep three things in mind. First, you must lay aside every weight. Second, you must lay aside every sin that easily besets you. Third, you must look to Jesus. Let us consider the thought of laying aside every weight. I want to put the emphasis on the word *every*.

Many years ago, before I was saved, I spent a lot of time at a racing speedway. The race car owners stripped their race cars down to the essentials: they removed the headlights, the mirrors, the windshields, and everything else they could possibly remove from their cars. Once I asked someone the question, "Why do you remove all those parts?" He said, "We take off everything we can so there is less resistance." In races of all kinds, contestants make sure that

they have nothing but the necessities, whether they are racing, swimming, or running. This Christian race is the same way. Paul said to "lay aside every weight." You need to lay aside everything that would hinder you. Winning this race takes laying aside *every* weight, not just some weights.

If you are going to run this race successfully, you have to do some things. One thing you must do is attend the worship services regularly at the house of God. Child of God, you should want to see souls won for God. Also, you should want to help lift up, unify, and build up the church. You should be more determined to run this race than ever before. Too many people fall out on the last lap and do not finish the race. You should not allow anyone to hinder you, not

even your grandmother or grandfather or your husband or wife. You must get victory over them and keep your eyes on Jesus. Paul said that we are to look to Jesus, not to friends or loved ones. If you are going to run this race successfully, you must look to Jesus and get your eyes off other people. You must get rid of every hindrance. You cannot run the race successfully unless you do.

Living in a Deceitful Age

Let us look at a few weights that hinder people. One thing that hinders people is worldly allurements. That is what happened to Lot's wife. Sometimes people want to take one last look at sin before they turn to God. This is getting people into trouble. In the Book of Genesis we find that God sent angels to get Lot and his family out of Sodom. Lot lingered, so the angels had to take Lot, his wife, and his two daughters by their hands and take them outside the city. Then one angel said, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee"; but Lot's wife turned and looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. Too often people are on the brink of victory, but they want to take one last look or have one last fling, thinking that no one will know anything about it. Nevertheless, God knows about it. My friend, you need to remember Lot's wife. When she became a pillar of salt, she became an eternal memorial for all ages.

Though worldly allurements were different back in Lot's day than they are today, God's standard is still the same as it has always been. The hair standard is the same, the dress standard is the same, and the way we are to conduct ourselves is the same.

We are living in a deceitful age. The enemy has one purpose, and that is to defeat you, child of God. He will try to kill you, spiritually speaking. Isaiah 30:26 tells us that the light of our day is as the light of seven days. In other words, we have

the greatest light of all ages. Nevertheless, the devil is working harder than ever before to defeat us. We are down to the end of time, so the devil is throwing everything he has into spiritually killing God's people. In the last few years many people have backed away from God's eternal Truth. The only people who are going to Heaven are those in the Kingdom of God. Friend, you will never be in the Kingdom of God until you give up all. You have to let loose of everyone and everything that hinders you, and you must take a stand for God and live for Him. Also, you must defy the world and refuse to go the ways of the world.

When the Prophet Isaiah spoke of binding up the breaches, in Isaiah, Chapter 30, he was talking about the unity of God's people. The devil has set out to destroy the unity of God's people. If he can destroy unity, then he has destroyed the assembly. Unions and unity are different. A union is of man, but unity is of God. Man cannot build up unity. The only way that you can have unity with God's people is to have the Holy Spirit and to walk in the light.

We are living in a time when people want to cut comers. I say again, God's standard is the same as it has always been. You cannot cut corners on God and get by. We are living in a day of spiritual lukewarmness, a time when many people are neither hot nor cold. Jesus said in Revelation 3:15-16: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Christian friend, you need to be on fire for God. The Truth is the only thing that can save your soul. You need to appreciate the Truth, praise God for it, and be on fire for God. When a man of God preaches the Truth, it ought to set you on fire for God. You ought to love and cherish the Truth and let people

know that you appreciate the Truth.

We are living in a day of compromise, the day of the eighth beast. Some teach that the eighth beast is all of Babylon joined together and working against the Church of God. However, spiritual Babylon is not what the devil is using to draw people away from the Church of God. What is Satan using to draw ones away from God's eternal Truth? It is not the world or Babylon, but it is the people who once worshiped with God's people. The ones causing the most problems are those who once stood for Truth but have turned away from it. They are continually trying to draw the saints of God away by sowing seeds of discord. These are the things against which the church is warring.

Perilous Times

We are living in one of the most dangerous times, spiritually speaking, in which man has ever lived. Paul wrote that these last days are perilous times. You need to be ready to meet the challenges that you are facing today. You should not keep looking back to what the church faced thirty or more years ago. Unless you meet the challenges of today, you are going to go down in defeat. When I was fighting in World War II, we had the best weapons available at that time. However, those weapons would be a poor defense against today's technological advances in warfare. So it is spiritually. My friend, do not look back to what it was in the past. Today brethren are still standing for God's eternal Truth and upholding the standard. You need to stand and fight along with them.

Discouragement is a very contagious condition. If you spend much time around one who is discouraged, it will not be long until you will become discouraged. When I was a child and someone came down with chickenpox, measles, or smallpox, the doctor placed a sign on the door that read, "Keep Out.

These people have a contagious disease." We need to have a few spiritual signs similar to that today. Some people have dangerous spiritual conditions that can hinder your usefulness for Christ.

In the Old Testament you can read of how discouragement opposed men who wanted to rebuild the wall at Jerusalem. In the New Testament you can read of how worldly possessions hindered the rich, young ruler from serving God. Matthew 19:16 says, "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" We read in verse 20, "The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Jesus told him to "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor." However, verse 22 tells us, "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." He was not willing to sell out to God. In other words, he was not willing to deny his flesh, or his will, so he went away from God sorrowfully.

Many people have heard the Truth and once had a desire to serve God, but when it came to selling out and turning their lives over to Him, they went away sorrowfully. They have too many things that they want to do for themselves.

The Cares of Life

The cares of life cause many people to become careless in the things of God. Jesus said in Luke 21:34, "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." The Amplified version says, "But take heed to yourselves *and* be on your guard lest your hearts be overburdened *and* depressed—weighed down—with the giddiness *and* headache *and* nausea of self-indulgence, drunkenness, and worldly worries *and* cares

pertaining to (the business of) this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap or a noose."

Worldly allurements will always be out here, and the cares of life are a daily concern. Many people today are becoming so busy with the cares of life that they do not take time to read the Bible and pray. Often people go to an altar of prayer because they failed to read God's Word and pray. They failed in these areas because they allowed the cares of life to creep in.

Occasionally people do not take the time to assemble with God's people as they could, because they are tied up with the cares of life. Friend, you are robbing God when you let the cares of life cause you to miss the church services. On Sundays you need to be at the house of God. Unless you have to work or something beyond your control happens, you need to set that day aside to worship God. The cares of life are dangerous. That is the reason Jesus said to take heed. You must take heed that you do not get so caught up in the cares of life that those things crowd out your Bible reading time, your prayer time, and your meditative time to be with Christ. Sometimes family ties prevent some people from following Christ.

In Luke 9:57-62 we read: "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. 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. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

All these reasons seem legitimate; nevertheless, they should not come ahead of serving God. The problem was not that the man wanted to bury his father, but he did not have his priorities in the right order. Those people had the attitude, "I will follow You after I build bigger barns," "I will follow You after I bury my father," or "I will follow You, Lord, after I go and see the farm I just bought." In essence, Jesus told them, "No, I must come first." He has not changed His mind. Second Timothy 2:4 states, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Some people talk as if the days before they were saved were the good old days. Friend, if you look back at the time when you were out in sin as the good old days, something is wrong with your experience. The day I got saved was the best day of my life, and today is even better than that day was.

I love the Lord, and I am Church of God from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. I have no use for Babylon. When I got saved, I found something better than Protestantism. I found the Church of God, and I am going to stay in her. People who have truly seen the Church of God will not return to Babylon. They would rather not go anywhere than to sit on Babylon's pews. Friend, when you see the Church of God, you will not want anything else. Jesus is the Door, and when you come in, you are saved. You will not have any sin in your life as long as you are in the Church of God. Salvation changes you; it makes you a new person, and you can stay new.

Living for God requires you to lay aside a few things. Trying to be something other than what God has called you to be will hinder you. God sets people in the church as He sees fit. God only gives you grace for what He has called you to do. When I was first saved, I was a janitor for the church where I

attended, and some tasks were unpleasant. Yet, I did what needed to be done because God gave me the grace to do it. Child of God, if you try to do something that God has not called you to do, you are going to make a mess of it. If God has called you to be a helper, then you ought to be the best helper you can be. Further along, God might give you something more to do. In the army a private never becomes a private first class unless he does the best he can as a private. Then after he becomes a private first class, if he does a good job, they will make him a corporal, and so on. This is the way God works. He does not make you a captain when you first get saved. You are a private in His army, and He tells you to be faithful and to do a good job. If you do, then He will give you greater responsibilities. However, if you try to push your way into something that God is not in, it is sure to fail.

The Sin of Unbelief

Our Scripture text says to lay aside that "sin which doth so easily beset." One sin that can beset you is the sin of unbelief. It will rob you of your experience. God has never failed to do what He said He would do. Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked cities; therefore, God said that He was going to destroy them, and He did. When God said the Flood was coming, it came. He destroyed the world by water. When God said He would send forth a Savior who would save the people from their sins, He did. Anyone who wants to be saved from his sins can be, if he will meet God's conditions.

The sin of unbelief stopped Christ from doing a work among the Jews, and it will certainly stop you today. You may ask, "How did it stop Christ? Matthew 13:58 tells us, "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." He was hindered because of their unbelief.

You may ask, "How can I

overcome this sin?" You need to read the right things and set your mind on positive thinking. Philippians 4:6 states, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Where is your thanksgiving? We have much to thank God for. We can thank Him for material things, but more important, we need to thank God for the Truth. I love the Truth, and the only place I am going to worship is where the Truth is preached and lived.

Paul said in everything you need to go before God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Then, he went on to say in verses 7-8: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Friend, what do you think upon? Paul said to think on things that are lovely. In other words, you should think on things of a deeper light. Paul wrote to the saints at Colosse in Colossians 3:1-3: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." If you are saved, you are dead to sin and to the world. Your life is hid in Christ, so think on the good things of God.

Being Persistent

We are to run this race with patience, perseverance, and persistence. Many giants will defeat you unless you are persistent and determined to win. A good example of this is when Mary and Martha

went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. They knew that a huge stone was at the door of the tomb and that they could not roll it away, but they were persistent. They got an expensive ointment and went to the tomb. However, when they arrived, they saw that the stone was rolled away, and an angel was sitting on it.

Child of God, in this race you are going to find many stones. Some will be as large as a mountain, and you will not be able to move them. However, if you are persistent, God will make a way. There is a way that you can serve God. Some people say they cannot serve God because of their home, their surroundings, or their husband or wife. Nevertheless, the only reason that they cannot serve God is that they are not persistent. God can roll away any stone. In other words, He can take away any hindrance, because He is determined to do all He can so that you can serve Him.

Verse 2 of our Scripture lesson states, "Looking unto Jesus" Jesus is our example. Too often when people fail, they affect others, because they had their eyes on those individuals. This salvation is not a family plan, but it is an individual salvation. If one person in a family fails, there is absolutely no reason for the rest of the family to fail. We are admonished to look to Jesus. Friend, you must keep your eyes on Jesus. The failures of others affect too many people, because they fail to look to Christ as their example.

We read in Hebrews 12:15, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." When one fails, if he is not careful, a root of bitterness will spring up, and many people will be defiled or corrupted from that very thing. It does not have to be that way. If you keep your eyes on Christ, He will never fail you. If you will follow Him and do what the Word says, He will take you through the storms so that you can be victorious. He

took Israel through the Red Sea and the Jordan River, and He delivered them in the land where giants dwelled because they kept their eyes on Him. He will do the same for you today. If you will keep your eyes on Him, He will deliver you; that is a promise.

John 3:16-17 states: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." If you will believe in Him, then He promised that you will have eternal life.

Failing to Love the Truth

Second Thessalonians 1:8-9 tells us: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." He said those people did not know God. Why did they not know Him? The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, but the reason they did not know God was that they did not want to recognize Him. They did not obey the Gospel; therefore, the Scripture tells us that they would be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12: "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." When he said "they received not the love of the truth," about whom was he speaking?

First John 4:8 tells us that God is love. Because they refused to accept the Word of God, they would not accept God and what He offered to them; therefore, God said He would send them a strong delusion. They wanted to take a form of religion rather than to serve God. When God sends someone a strong delusion, that person will think he is doing right, all the while he is believing a lie; then he will be damned. There are people in Babylon today who once preached the Church of God message, yet they do not think they have done anything wrong. Why? Because they have been sent a strong delusion, and they believe a lie and will be damned.

We read in Luke 19:27, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." Many enemies are being knocked out, but they are not being destroyed. When Goliath fell, David was not satisfied with that, but he grabbed Goliath's sword and cut off his head; he completely destroyed the enemy. Too many times people win a spiritual battle and then they are satisfied; yet the enemy is not dead. My friend, you need to keep battling the enemy until he is destroyed. The devil does not want God to rule over you. God said to bring that enemy to Him. Our text of Scripture tells us in verse 4, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." God never said this way would be easy. It was not easy for God to turn His back on His Son. Also, suffering that horrible death on the Cross was not easy for Christ. It was not easy for the martyrs to die so that this Truth could be handed down to you and me, and it will not be easy for us either. If you ever see your children and grandchildren saved, you will have to walk through the fire.

Zechariah stated in Zechariah 13:8-9 that "two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire. . . ." Church of God, we are that third

part, and we are going to go through the fire. Fire can destroy or it can be used to refine, as gold is refined by fire. God's people must go through the fire to remove any dross so that we can be as pure gold, a shining element to this lost and dying world.

Saint of God, you need to just hold on. God is refining you so that you will be a greater light to this lost and dying world, so they will want what you have. God wants you to shine so that when people need help, they will know who to call. When you work for God, you are laying up treasures in Heaven. One song says, "Only one life, so soon it will pass; Only what's done for Christ will last! Only one chance to do His will; So give to Jesus all your days, It's the only life that pays, When you recall you have but one life!"

Dear one, what are you doing for God? What you do for God is the only thing that will last. You can be busy for twenty-three hours a day, but if you fail to read and pray, you will lose out with God. God wants you to be pure gold. He will take you through the fire. Do not think that He has forsaken you or that He is punishing you. No, He is just causing you to shine. By going through the fire, God is showing the lost and dying world that there are people who love Him more than anything else in this world. How much time do you spend for the Lord? When He is your all in all, He is first.

(Cassette C-4664M)

Faith is the assurance that the thing God has said in His Word is true and that God will act accordingly to what He has said in His Word.

One Step From Martyrdom

"God of my mother, do something!" I bargained with a God whom I did not know. "If You will let me keep my sons with me, I will raise them for You!"

"Jane, your prayers will only go as far as the ceiling," my mother warned as she tried to show compassion and yet point me in the right direction. "Because you do not want to accept Him, you have no right to call on His help!"

It was hard to believe these words were from my mother who had so recently worshiped idols with her totally heathen family. The radical transformation in her life was inconceivable to me and to everyone else who knew her.

In 1939 my mother, a Chinese born in South Africa, had passed a church and was drawn into it by the sound of wonderful singing. She stopped, listened, and walked into the church as if a magnet pulled her. She entered and asked the minister, "What is the name of that beautiful song?" She was told, "Jesus, Shall It Ever Be That Mortal Men Are Ashamed of Thee?"

In the seconds that followed, she was touched by the Spirit of God and asked Jesus to be her Savior. When she visited me soon after her conversion, she was radiating joy and peace. I stood transfixed as she expressed that she felt like singing, jumping, and shouting about Jesus the Savior. "Come with me to the wonderful meetings," she never stopped asking me. But I would have none of that sort of thing for myself.

Now I was bargaining with the Lord. It was December 11, 1947, and

my husband was getting ready to set sail for China and take away my two sons, Stanley, age 6, and Edwyn, age 4, for seven long years. According to Chinese custom, children born of Chinese parents, no matter where in the world, should receive part of their education and cultural exposure in their ancestral land to maintain their ethnic roots. The unsettled conditions in China at that time, with war clouds hovering on the horizon, made me feel ominously fearful that I might never see them again.

My husband and sons left that morning to bid relatives and friends goodbye. I sat at home, slumped with dejection, a broken young mother. This was why with sorrow and grief I had cried to the God of my mother. This was why I made a rash promise to Him, whose ways I did not even know, that I would raise my sons for Him.

In the afternoon my husband went down to the docks in Capetown, where we lived, to confirm last minute arrangements. He was greeted with shocking news: "Chickenpox has broken out on board the ship and no children under ten will be allowed to sail!" His dream of taking the boys to China was crushed. Stunned, he returned home and made the decision to go to China alone. My mother's God had answered my prayer! He was real! Now He began to introduce Himself to me.

I had learned to smoke for sociability as a young lady after meeting my husband and had become addicted to cigarettes. Two packs of fifty cigarettes were a

usual Sunday's total. That first Sunday after my husband's departure, I reached nervously for my cigarettes at my bedside. I distinctly heard a voice call, "Jane!" Startled, I looked around the room to see who called me. Only our four children were there.

I reached for the cigarettes a second time and heard my name called again, louder. Being determined to smoke, I tried it a third time, and like thunder in my bedroom I heard, "Jane! Jane! Jane!"

I jumped out of bed and stood in the center of the room, taking both packs of cigarettes in my hands and declaring, "Lord, if it is You who is speaking to me this morning, I commit myself into Your hands!" Crushing the cigarettes, I promised the Lord never to touch them again. Then I accepted Jesus as my Savior, asking Him to come into my life and forgive my sins.

"You must now be baptized," my mother encouraged. Such a public exhibition was not to my liking, but eventually God, through His faithful Holy Spirit, caused me to understand His ways more perfectly, and I requested our pastor to baptize me so that I might be fully obedient. I wanted to let others know my intention was to bury my old life and live in the newness of His life.

Four years after my husband left for China, I received a letter that he was returning. During his absence, I had grown in grace and knowledge of my Lord. My life was completely changed, and I trembled to realize that I was a different woman from the one my husband had left. I would have to take my

stand as a Christian.

When my husband arrived, I was waiting at the gate with other friends. He rushed right by, not even recognizing me! When he left for China, I was like a broomstick with a dress on, but I had gained weight and even the features of my face must have changed.

That was not the only change that my husband noticed. He did not say much at first, just looked and observed. On the third Sunday after his return, he called to me sternly, "Jane, do I see correctly that you are getting dressed again to take my children to that mad place you call church?" I admitted it was true. "I have had enough of your mad parties!" he shouted. "Obviously you have been corrupting my family for four years. Now it will stop!" He forbade me ever to go again. I realized that now was the time that I would have to trust God as never before.

I wanted to be an obedient, faithful wife, taking care of all my responsibilities, but I believed the Lord wanted me to go to His house to worship and see that our children were taught in God's ways as I had promised Him four years ago. I loved Jesus with all my heart. Yet, the crafty devil was plotting through my husband to trip me from my obedience.

On Saturday night my husband brought home four live chickens which, according to Chinese custom, one must kill, clean, cook, and eat the same day. No matter, I trusted God to help me. I got up very, very early on Sunday morning, killed, cleaned, and cooked the chickens, set the table, attended to everything dutifully and cheerfully in my household, and by 10:30 was ready with the children to go to church.

My husband had watched my every movement. "Where are you going?" he asked with clenched teeth. "To church. I have done everything you asked, and there is no reason I cannot go."

Ranting and raving, he warned

that if I went, I would regret it. "I will go and drag you out by your neck!"

Just then the bus was coming, and I pushed the children out first. In my attempt to dash past him, one of my shoes caught in the gate and slipped off, but I was determined to go to church and boarded the bus with one shoe.

Arriving at church, I confided to my pastor the threats of my husband and asked for prayer. We usually took the back seats so that if the children got fussy, I could slip out. That morning I decided to take the very front seats. If my husband really came, he would have to go the full length of the church to accomplish his snatch, and I believed that God would take control. Would he come? My heart beat wildly in anticipating the scene that might take place in church.

Shortly after the service was in progress, my pastor signaled to me that my husband was at the door. I prayed with all my heart. By that time, half the congregation was on its feet. I remained seated. He spotted me, came down, and sat beside me, saying, "I've come to take you and the children home by car." Hardly daring to breathe, I did not know what to expect next. I followed him quietly out of the church.

As we walked to the front door of our home, we saw, to our horror, that all the lovely table setting and hastily prepared food, together with the dishes and silverware had been flung into the yard. However, thank God, that sight could not rob me of my newfound peace and joy in Christ.

"Stanley," I quietly requested my son, "help me pick up the food. Let's wash the dirt and glass splinters off and thank the Lord for our Sunday dinner."

The children helped me reset the table, bowed our heads to pray, and just as we were about to eat, my husband, who had been watching us, got up and violently overturned the table, scattering and crashing

everything again.

"Gather all your Bibles and stupid literature that has the name of Jesus, and let me see it burned right now before my eyes!" he screamed.

I would not agree to do so, and my husband stamped outdoors and began preparing a great bonfire. I stood watching. Pity and love filled my heart for his deeds of ignorance in his sin. Yet in those moments, while I watched our Bibles burn, I thanked God that His Word which was imbedded in my heart could not be touched or snatched away, for it was truly hidden. Praise the name of Jesus!

The following week my husband was unusually quiet—a calm before another storm, I feared. I tried to be obedient to all that was mine to do. One evening I was bathing the children. I left them momentarily on my bed while I cleaned up the bathroom. I came into the hall just in time to see my husband march in, go straight to the bed, take a box of matches from his pocket, and strike a flame to the mattress—with all the children on the bed!

It all happened so suddenly and unexpectedly that when I saw the bed aflame and heard my children's screams for help, I realized I was helpless, because he would not let me near them, but stood belligerently between them and me. My faith reached out to my all-powerful God. I left the room, closed the door behind me, saying, "Lord, take over!" The peace I received after this action was not my own, but given by God, for it passed understand. My unexpected reaction took my husband by surprise, to think that I had left the children on the burning bed!

I lived a lifetime of agony during those next few minutes. I did not know if my children were dead or alive, but they were in God's hands, not my husband's.

When I returned to the bedroom, the air hung dark with smoke, and I could hear the children screaming from one of the corners of the room.

As I gathered them to my breast soothing their sobs, they told me that their daddy had dragged them from the burning bed after I left and flung them into a corner.

Another week went by and the following Saturday he got up early, dressed, and went off. We felt relieved from tension and felt free to read the Bible and pray again for our spiritual nourishment because he had threatened to kill us should he at any time see us on our knees. The moment we heard his car pull away, we were down on our knees thanking the Lord for His goodness and praying for my husband. I believe that was the way God wanted us to serve Him.

My husband suddenly appeared in the room, supposedly having come back for something he had forgotten. He walked right into our prayer circle. There was murder in his eyes. "So! You are still ignoring my warning! Now you will see."

He came at me kicking and throwing me down, but I struggled back on my knees, believing that Almighty God was present in that room. He went over to his own precious eldest son, Stanley, and kicked him several times. When I opened my eyes to Stanley's groans, I saw that the boy was kneeling in a pool of blood. The young boy stood up, looked his father in the eyes without hate or fear, and whispered, "Daddy, Daddy, I believe this is what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you—He shed His blood that you might get saved!"

I will never forget the sight of my husband's face as his eyes were fixed on Stanley for several moments. The words of his own son had such power in them from God that my husband turned and fled to his bedroom and locked himself in. At 5:00 the next morning, he roused me from sleep and declared, "As from this morning I want you to wake your family at 6:30, winter or summer, to pray and read the Bible." Can you imagine my joy? We truly had much to praise God

for! Yet, although he left us alone during the week, he always kept trying to prevent us from going to church. Our trials were not yet over.

The next Saturday morning, he got hold of Edwyn, our second eldest, pushed him into our shop, and locked the door. "O, Lord," I cried, "surround Your child with angels of protection." I did not realize how accurately God caused me to pray.

Our telephone was in an alcove between the shop and kitchen. I was torn with anguish at the screams of Edwyn coming from the shop, so I jerked the telephone out of the opening and looked into the shop. There I saw that my husband had tied the boy in the middle of shop floor and was crazily opening tins of methylated spirits and pouring them all around the boy.

I could not reach my son, but the God in whom I had learned to trust was able to cross any barrier. Locked doors were no problem to Him. I lifted my voice in supplication for God to prove Himself the master of this situation.

I saw my husband take a box of matches and repeatedly try to strike them in order to light the spirits! When I looked again, I saw my husband angry, frustrated, and raving that he could not get the matches to ignite. Hallelujah! This was the work of Jesus whom I had learned to live for and depend on! When my husband realized that I had been calling on my Jesus, he became confused and confounded and so angry that he kicked the door open, pushing Edwyn out with such force that I was thrown to the floor because I was standing in his way.

My husband jumped on me, kept me down with his foot on my chest, grabbed a Chinese kitchen chopping knife and held it to my throat. "You will die now for what you have done!"

I looked up into his eyes and, not of my own power but of God's, was absolutely fearless. Yes, I was even ready and willing to die for my

loving Jesus. "Unless you have authority from my Jesus," I gasped, "you have no power to draw that blade across my throat!" This was the moment between life and death. He was so utterly defeated and torn by the devil working through him and the power of God against him, that with all his might he threw the knife crashing out the kitchen window. "I will still kill you for this!" he raged. Yet, he could not touch me. I know what it means when I hear that there is victory in Jesus.

After the last test with my husband, we noticed that he had become strangely docile, quiet, and morose. He took a turn for the worse and went completely out of his mind, a sick man. He had to be restrained at home, and I was ordered out of the house for the protection of the children. We moved quite a distance away and for several weeks we neither heard from him nor saw him. We could only pray for him.

One day when I was busy in the backyard of our new residence, I was startled to see my husband coming along the sidewalk. He was able to talk rationally. "Please, leave what you are doing. I want to talk with you."

I dropped my work and listened. "Jane, if I accept your Lord Jesus, do I have to serve Him the way you do?" I told him the Lord was loving, not a hard master and that I had served the Lord as He wanted me to—with everything within me, my whole heart and soul!

Just then our pastor came by and one of our daughters ran to call him in. On that day my husband accepted Jesus as his personal Savior, quietly and surely! He requested that I pray for him and teach him more about Jesus. He said, "It was your life, Jane, in which I witnessed the power of Christ." What a privilege the Lord gave me to be the one to lead my husband to the foot of the Cross! All the sufferings were worth it!

Selected

Matthew 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

35 A good man out of the good

treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

36 But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they

shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.

The Words That We Speak



Brother Jeremy Hupp

Controlling Your Thoughts

Our Scripture lesson states in verse 34 that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Whatever is in your heart will come out your mouth. This is the reason it is so important that you do as 2 Corinthians 10:5 says: "... bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Once a thought comes into your mind, you must immediately identify whether it is good or evil. You may ask, "Every thought?" Yes, the Scripture says "every thought." You have to control your thoughts when they come into your mind, because if you accept a thought into your heart that is not of God, it could cause

your downfall. It may be a natural thought, but what you do with that thought has everything to do with whether or not you fall into sin.

Too often when a person has a wrong thought, he allows himself to dwell on it (that is where the temptation takes place), and then it enters the heart. When a temptation comes to the mind, you have two options: you can either cast it out or let it enter your heart. Too often people allow wrong thoughts to go to their hearts. Although they may never say anything about them, those thoughts grow until that which is in their hearts proceeds from their mouths. That is the reason bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

is so important. Once you have a thought, you must immediately identify whether it is good or evil and decide whether you are going to keep that thought. You cannot help the thoughts that come into your mind, but you can control what you do with those thoughts. You can cast them out of your mind or you can allow them to enter your heart. Friend, what you allow to build up in your heart will eventually flow out your mouth. May God help each of us to captivate our thoughts and decide what we should allow to enter our hearts.

Again, our Scripture text says, "... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." This can

be a good thing. Thoughts of the love of God are wonderful thoughts that do not have to be cast out. You can take those thoughts into your heart and meditate on them until your heart overflows. When that happens, what is going to come out? Praise. You will be saying, "Praise the Lord! He delivered me! I thank God that He saw fit to call me into the Kingdom of God." Thinking on good things is pleasant, because one good thought leads to another. You can take all good thoughts into your heart.

Some saints shout often. Do you know why? They continually think on the good things that God has done for them. They have a treasure chest down in their hearts with good things in it, so they overflow with praise because they are unable to keep it in.

When I think of what the Lord did for me, there is an abundance of praise in my heart because the Lord had mercy on me. The Lord impressed someone to invite me to church one day, and then God was faithful to send the message that I needed to hear. When I start thinking about that, I can hardly contain it. I praise the Lord for how He has changed my life! This reminds me of the old teapot that one filled with water and placed on the stove. When one first turned on the heat, nothing happened, but it was not long before it started to steam just a little; then a short time later the water was boiling and the teapot whistled louder and louder. That is how praise swells up in the heart of a child of God. If you control what you think on and meditate on only good thoughts, you will be just like the little teapot. You will overflow with praise. It will not hurt you to let out some praise. You can say, "Praise the Lord!"

In America we have freedom of speech, and that is wonderful. You can say "praise the Lord" with complete freedom. I drive a parcel service truck for a living, and I sing all day. Often I drive with the doors

open, especially in the summer when it is hot. People who hear me singing while sitting at traffic lights may look at me funny and scorn, but I do not let that stop me from praising the Lord for what He has done for me. If you cannot praise the Lord, you need to check your treasure. If it is not overflowing, something is wrong.

The Treasure of the Heart

Matthew 12:35 says, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." Everyone has a treasure in his heart. The collection of thoughts that we allow to transfer from the mind to the heart is amazing. Friend, is your treasure good or evil? When I think of a treasure chest, I think of the book entitled *Treasure Island*. The book tells of a big, wooden, treasure chest with a huge lock on it. They opened it, and it was full of gold, silver, coins, rubies, emeralds, and pearls. From an earthly standpoint, those things are very valuable; they are things that people cherish. Many people have safes nowadays to store their earthly treasures in. They lock up things that they cherish and consider valuable.

Let us bring that over into the spiritual realm. What are you storing in your spiritual treasure chest? What do you cherish? What treasures are the most valuable to you? You need to examine your treasure chest. Are you storing thoughts of love, compassion, and gratitude or thoughts of doubt, fear, bitterness, and sin? Whatever you are storing, you can be sure that it will be revealed by your mouth. You can try to refrain from revealing it, but mark it down, it will come out eventually.

Our Scripture text lets us know that a good man, or a Christian, has a good treasure. He has a storehouse of God's blessings. As I was thinking about the contents of my treasure chest, my mind went directly to deliverance from sin: deliverance from tobacco, alcohol,

lying, stealing, and cheating. Being delivered from those things is wonderful to think about. I have stored the thought of deliverance in my treasure chest. I want to hold on to that. Occasionally I like to open my spiritual treasure chest. Sometimes a person who has a safe full of money likes to open it and count the money. Child of God, sometimes it will do you good to open your treasure chest to see what you have in it.

Some other wonderful treasures are victory and love of the brotherhood. What is in your heart? Do you have a good treasure or an evil treasure? If you have love for the brethren in your heart, you will exhibit it, not just in words; talk is cheap. It is through deeds and actions that you show love for the brethren.

When a good treasure is in your heart, words of praise, witnessing, contentment, victory, and joy will flow. The tongue has power to speak words of death or words of life. If you have a good treasure, you will proclaim the good treasures you have. You are going to testify to people of the good treasure you have. They will look at you and think, "Wow! He has something!" Friend, do you have a good treasure? Again, our Scripture text states, "... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Controlling the Tongue

One of the biggest problems that people have is controlling the tongue. James 3:5 says, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." It is just a little member, but, oh, the problems it causes. Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Controlling the tongue is vitally important to your spiritual life and to those around you. The Scripture says that "death and life are in the power of the tongue." The words that you speak can bring death or life to yourself and to those with whom you come in contact.

This is the reason that controlling your thought life and the things upon which you meditate is so important.

Every word that comes from your mouth originates in your mind. Before I can say, "Praise the Lord," I must have thoughts of praise in my mind and in my heart. Praise for the Lord does not flow automatically. First, you have to think on and meditate on the good things the Lord has done. When you do that, the praise just comes flowing out. You will be saying, "Praise the Lord!" The thoughts that you think upon greatly impact the words that you speak.

What you think about is directly related to what you say, because words originate in the mind and in the heart. Sometimes people say, "I didn't mean to say that; it just came out." No, it did not. You do not just say things. You think upon it long before it ever comes out your mouth. The words that you speak are a direct reflection of what is in your heart. You should weigh your words before you speak. Sometimes you may be tempted to spout off a little or get a little too excited. Again, you ought to weigh your words before you speak. If sharp, hurtful, or derogatory words flow forth, that is a sign that you have more of a problem than the tongue. You have something stored in your treasure chest that needs to be dug out and thrown in the trash. You need to consider what you say and how you say it, because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Your words reflect what you have allowed to enter your heart. If you will consider your words, you may be awakened to something that you have let into your heart that should not be there. God can help you to keep your treasure chest clean so that you can be a blessing to people around you. You have probably heard the saying, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all." That is good admonition, but I will take it

even one step further than that: if you do not have anything good to say, check the treasure in your heart, because you have a problem.

Has Your Treasure Become Corrupt?

Our Scripture text says in verse 35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Friend, if you find words coming out your mouth that should not be, you should check your treasure. If you say evil things or if you like to listen to dirty or off-color jokes, you have an evil treasure.

Young person, if you talk about things that you should not be talking about, you have a problem with your treasure. Today we live in a world where sex is talked about and exposed nearly everywhere. However, just because the world wants to talk about sex all the time does not mean you should want to tally about it. If you want to talk about those things, your treasure has become corrupt. Those things do not come from a pure heart with a good treasure. Evil words, corrupt talk, and talking about things that only married couples should discuss do not come from a pure heart.

There is too much loose talk today among young people. You need to be careful, young person. If you think on things that you should not be thinking upon, those corrupt thoughts lead to corrupt talk, and corrupt talk leads to corrupt actions, which lead to big trouble. Too many young people think nothing of playing around. A prevalent attitude is, "As long as I don't go all the way, I am all right." Friend, if you think about going all the way, as far as the Lord is concerned, you have already done it. Therefore, you have a problem with the treasure in your heart. You need to check your treasure. God help each of us to keep our thoughts pure so that we can keep good treasures.

Again, verse 35 of our Scripture text tells us that "an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." Do you talk about the pastor behind his back? Do you speak against the people of God? If so, you had better check your treasure. You are speaking from the abundance of your heart. Verse 34 says that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The word *abundance* lets us know there is an overflow of the heart. Problems always originate in the heart, and as they grow, they have to go somewhere. According to the Scripture, they overflow from the heart and come out the mouth. If you speak against people, that is a sure sign that you have been thinking about them and that you have a problem with them. However, that is not the first sign of the problem.

When people work against the pastor, their problem did not occur overnight. That problem grew until it overflowed from the mouth. One little joke says: Do you know what the mama whale told the baby whale? She said, "It is only when you are spouting off that you get harpooned." Friend, if you are spouting off about the pastor, the Sunday school teacher, or anyone else, you are going to get "harpooned" by God. God help us to take this seriously. If you are not guilty of these things, let it be a warning to you.

Sowing Discord

A wrong thought may come into your mind, but that is not sinful. You may think, "I don't really care for the way that brother preaches," but you should analyze that thought and decide whether to allow it to enter your heart or cast it out. You cannot stop thoughts from coming into your mind. The devil will bring temptations. However, if you fail to captivate evil thoughts, they will enter your heart. Then they will grow until the abundance overflows and comes out your

mouth. That is how discord is sown.

Discord may start with the thought, "I don't care for the way that brother preaches." If you do not cast out that thought and allow it to enter your heart, it will not be long until you start voicing your thoughts about that brother to others. That is sowing discord, and it comes from the abundance of evil thoughts and flows from your heart.

God's people should not talk about others. The first time you want to speak against someone, you ought to have a prayer meeting instead. If someone says to you, "Did you hear what that brother said?" a good answer would be, "No, let's not talk about it; let's have a prayer meeting right now." You should not allow anyone to fill your treasure chest with junk. Many junk collectors try to fill the treasure chest of others. Friend, if you do that, you need to get saved.

If you start talking about the pastor or another brother or sister, sowing a little discord, God will be very displeased with you. Proverbs 6:16-19 says: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." This Scripture does not say that God hates the discord (although He does), but it says that He hates "he that soweth discord." If you start talking about people, letting things get out of control in your talk, you are going to find yourself on God's hate list. That is a very serious place to be.

Saint, you must be very careful of what you say. You must guard your thoughts, because they directly affect your words. I read a quote that said, "He that thinks by the inch and talks by the yard ought to be kicked by the foot." There is much truth in that. Too often the mouth runs faster than the brain, but the words you speak originate

in the heart. You must consider every word you speak.

Be Careful of Idle Talk

Matthew 12:36 says, "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." That parallels the Scripture that speaks of bringing *every* thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. To be victorious, you must captivate *every* thought and consider *every* word. That amounts to many thoughts and many words in a day, not to mention one's entire life. You must consider every thought and every word you speak, because God will judge you accordingly. There is too much idle speaking today; some people talk because they have nothing else to do. I like to talk as much as anyone else, but God showed me several years ago that I needed to separate myself a little and not talk so much. Often when you spend too much time with the same people, becoming careless with your words is easy.

Too many people talk to have something to do. They are on the telephone continually. It is no wonder that their work never gets done. You may say, "Well, I am just talking; no harm is being done." Maybe not, but you will be judged by every word that you speak. Think of every word you have said just today. No doubt you have already done much talking. You will be judged by every word. That is very serious!

James 5:12 says to "let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay." In other words, you should only say what is necessary. There is no reason to talk unnecessarily, because you are going to give an account for those words. If someone took a penny out of your savings account every time you said a word, you probably would not talk at all, would you? In that same way, you ought to consider that you are going to give an account for all the words you

say. God has them all recorded, and some are going to have to account for quite a few words.

Saint of God, people are watching you, and they are listening to the words that you speak. Some may try to catch you in your words, to see if you are going to slip. They are watching. Therefore, you need to weigh your words carefully. People will try to use your words against you. Sometimes keeping your mouth shut is better than talking.

When I go to work in the morning, before the drivers go out on their routes, they gather around and talk a little while. Sometimes I just listen to what people say. Sometimes it is good just to listen. Often I cannot help but think, "They each are going to give an account for every word they are saying." Instead of my adding to the list of words that I will have to account for, I try to be quiet. A good way to have less to be accountable for on the Judgment Day is to speak only when it is necessary. For example, it is necessary to talk when you witness, when you pray to God, or when you testify. At times you have to talk. Some jobs require a person to talk to others, but how much of that talk is necessary?

Some time ago I witnessed an accident and had to fill out a police report. The officer said to me, "I want you to write a description of everything you have seen, detail for detail. Be very careful of what you write; every word is important." So as I wrote everything down, I realized that it was important to state the facts truthfully and exactly as I perceived what happened, because a judge was going to read that report. He would decide whether the driver involved in the accident was at fault by the words I wrote.

Examine Your Treasure

Friend, you are going to be judged by every word you speak. I was very careful in writing that

police report. Likewise, you need to be careful of every word you speak. One day the Judge is going to look at your record and analyze the words you say. He will determine whether you are guilty or innocent, whether you are free to go home or whether He must say, "Depart from Me; I never knew you." He is going to judge you based on your words and your deeds. Matthew 12:37 says, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

You need to think seriously about the words you speak because God is taking notice. Sometimes I think people think the only time God is listening is when they are praying. Many people are extra careful when they pray because God is listening. Then when they have finished praying, they get on the telephone with someone and say, "Hey, did you hear what happened to So-and-so yesterday?" God never left. He has the same ear that He had when you were on your knees. He still hears and keeps a record of every word you say, whether you are praying or speaking to others.

Fellowship with God's people is wonderful; however, anytime you get together with others, you need to be very careful that you do not get too close, because the more familiar you are with others, the

more freely you talk. Then you could start talking about things that you should not be talking about. It is not good to get too close to people.

You should be close to your companion and your own family, but when you start getting too close to others, in time your conversation will end up on things such as the shortcomings or the past failures of others, even though those things were placed under the blood years ago, forgiven and forgotten by God. The devil will be sure to supply you with all kinds of topics for conversation. Remember that you will be judged by every word you say. If you get too close to someone, you may feel that you have the liberty to discuss forbidden things. You may start to feel that person is such a good friend that you can confide in that one. If you need counsel or if you need to confide in someone, God has given pastors to counsel you and help you. If you want to talk about certain people or situations, you should talk to God or consider talking to the pastor. That is a good way to check whether you should say something.

Saint, you ought to speak good things, lift up others, speak encouraging words, and most important, allow good things to reign in your heart. That way when the abundance of your heart

overflows, your mouth will pour out blessings and not cursings. Words of praise will flow, not corrupt words. You are going to be judged by every word. I want to be judged by words such as "Praise the Lord," "I appreciate my pastor," "I want to live for God," "I want to win souls," and "Jesus delivered me." Those are the words that I want to be in the Book when I get to the Judgment. When God opens the Book, I want my record to be full of good words, words that I prayed about before I spoke.

Friend, how is your treasure? Are you speaking of things that you should not be talking about? You need to examine your treasure. Allow God to reveal to you what is in the treasure of your heart. Remember, Jesus said that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If you have things in your heart that are not right, you need to get them taken care of. If you find yourself saying things you should not be saying, you have a problem with your treasure. You need to get to the root of the problem. The problem is down in your heart. If you have a problem, I pray that you will allow God to supply your need.

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[Guest Editorial—continued from page 2]

was to come and when the kingdom was to be established. Again, Daniel 2:34 says, "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay . . ." Christ made His advent when these feet of iron and clay were the ruling empire. What was that empire? It was the Roman empire. Luke 2:1 states, "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." He was the Roman emperor, and that was the empire in power when Jesus Christ made His entrance into this time world. Verse 34 says He "smote the image upon his feet," or when Rome was in power.

Verse 44 teaches us, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom," letting us know that right in the days of these kings (the ones mentioned previously in the second chapter of Daniel: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome) the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom. This did not happen two thousand years afterward. Modern millenarians have what they call a "postponement theory." They say that because the Jews did not accept Jesus Christ, God had to postpone His plans for the kingdom, that now those toes have to reach out two thousand years, and that sometime later God will establish a kingdom. No, dear heart! In the days of "these kings," the God of Heaven set up the kingdom.

The Chaldean version of verse 44 says "in the days of these kingdoms," letting us know that the Kingdom of God was set up during the domain of one of these four world empires. I repeat, millenarians and those of the dispensational persuasion want to move the toes all the way out to the end of time. Nebuchadnezzar saw a well-proportioned image. The entirety of the image does not even cover a thousand years, and yet they want to stretch the toes out 1,730 years; that would be a very disproportional image. There is no indication in the Scriptures that this image was anything but proportionate. Daniel 2:35 says, "Then was the

iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together . . ." This lets us know that when the stone smote this image in the feet, they were still historically, chronologically together: there was no separation by time or space; they were in chronological succession. It says they were "broken to pieces together."

Verses 38-40 only refer to four kingdoms. Verse 44 says, "And in the days of these kings [one of these four kingdoms, or empires] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." Someone may say, "Well, it talks about the toes here, and there are ten toes and ten minor kingdoms, and those minor kingdoms became broken and dispersed and later on, God will set up a kingdom." That is not what this text says. It does not speak of the stone smiting the toes; it says the stone smote the image in the feet. The Scripture does not bring up the thought of the ten minor kingdoms; that was merely for identifying purposes only. They were to identify the Roman empire beyond any doubt, but it was not when the ten toes were separate powers that they were smitten. The Scripture says they were broken in pieces together, when they were in chronological sequence to one another. This teaches us very plainly when Jesus Christ made His First Advent and when the kingdom was established. When did Christ come? Galatians 4:4 says, "When the fulness of the time was come . . ." In other words, when the image was full and complete, that is when Christ was to come. The image is nothing more than a time line for God to use to get us prophetically from Daniel's day to Christ's advent and the institution and establishment of the kingdom.

Daniel 2:35 says, "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together [right when they were together in chronological succession], and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone [Christ] that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." That is when the

God of Heaven set up a kingdom. This mountain is the kingdom, or the church.

I want you to see that this mountain that filled the whole earth is the kingdom that God said He would set up. The Hebrew epistle was penned in the proximity of A.D. 63 to A.D. 69. Hebrews 12:22 says, "But ye are come unto mount Sion [the writer gives several expressions], and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the first born . . ." These descriptions denote various facets and aspects of the church. In verse 22 he called it Mount Sion, but verse 28 says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom . . ." He let us know that this mountain is the kingdom, or the church. When Jesus Christ came, He said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church."

This Stone, Jesus Christ, that smote the image in the feet, came during the Roman empire. He set up a kingdom that the Scripture teaches "shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). The last world empire was the Roman empire, and when Jesus came and ushered in the kingdom, it was the last universal kingdom, and every man "presseth into it" (Luke 16:16). Thank God, this kingdom is a present reality. While others dream of an age to come, He is reigning in our hearts today!

We are in this kingdom because the God of Heaven set it up. All those other kingdoms rose and fell. They enjoyed a zenith, but then they had a demise. However, the Kingdom of God shall never be destroyed because our Ruler who is the King of kings. I thank God for this kingdom. Again, the burden of this prophecy was to be used as a prophetic time line to get us from the day of Daniel, or Nebuchadnezzar to the advent of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the kingdom. Since then, the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it. I trust that the Spirit of God has given you understanding and made this truth clear to you.

Brother Earl R. Borders