

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

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

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

**THE CHURCH OF GOD BELIEVES IN:**

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

**SOME SPIRITUAL FACTS**

**PERTAINING TO THE CHURCH**

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

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**CONTENTS**

A Real Christian .....	3
This Hope .....	8
Prayer Turned Back Their Flood .....	13
Especially for Young People .....	14
A Burden for Souls .....	16
Radio Log .....	18
The Conclusion of the Whole Matter .....	19
The Bell Rope Conversion .....	24
Spring 2004 Camp Meeting Tape List .....	26

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# Spring 2004 Camp Meeting Report

"Zion heard, and was glad: and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD" (Psalm 97:8). These inspired words of the Psalmist could well be applied to the recent Spring Camp Meeting here at God's Acres. Zion, or the church (Hebrews 12:22-23), certainly heard from the Lord as the Word of Truth was heralded by a faithful ministry throughout the course of the meeting. Surely, the judgments were sounded forth in the messages brought by the brethren.

The meeting began with admonition from Pastor E. David Stegmeier of Canby, Oregon, who preached concerning "Choosing a Good Name." Sunday evening the host pastor, Brother Roger L. Decker, dealt with "Presumptuous Sin." Monday morning Pastor C. H. Dickerson of Medina, Ohio, brought an enlightening message on the subject of "Fatigue." Monday evening Pastor Decker went into the Revelation and paralleled it with the parables of Jesus in Matthew, Chapter 13, and beautifully portrayed the "pearl of great price" as the truth concerning the message of the church.

Pastor Allen Polston from Mechanicsburg, Indiana, followed up Brother Decker's message the next morning with the thought "Heaven Here On Earth," dealing with Revelation, Chapter 22. Many other good brethren brought outstanding messages throughout the week.

The evening evangelist for the camp meeting was Brother Esau Brooks. Brother Brooks is a pastor, evangelist, and overseer of the work of God in both the Republic of Honduras and the Cayman Islands in Central America. He delivered some very soul-searching and sobering messages such as, "Are You Astray Today?" and "The High Cost of Sin." Brother Brooks has a unique gift and ability to bring souls face to face with eternity. In the last morning service, Brother David Stegmeier preached an inspirational message concerning divine healing entitled, "Pressing Through Till You Get Your Need Supplied." The Lord so inspired the saints that the altar was lined numerous times with saints making their claim for the promise of healing and coming to have the prayer of faith offered in their behalf.

The meeting was very well attended with saints from throughout the United States as well as the countries of Canada, Kenya, and Tanzania. The spirit of this gathering was permeated with a harmony and sweet unity that could be felt by all. Several new people were in attendance. They so enjoyed the presence of God and the precious truths being sounded forth that they are already making plans for the Fall Camp Meeting and planning to bring others with them. The spirit of the meeting was rich indeed, and the saints rejoiced and were glad, as the Psalmist proclaimed. The fellowship was sweet, and the Spirit of God faithful in our midst. Precious souls received help, bodies were healed, and saints received enlightenment and encouragement. Yes, it was indeed a time when "the daughters of Judah rejoiced." If you were unable to attend the Spring meeting, I heartily encourage you to put it in your plans to be in our Fall Camp Meeting. The dates for that meeting are August 1<sup>st</sup> through August 8<sup>th</sup>. If you were unable to be in the Spring meeting, we recommend that you secure the tapes of the services. A listing of the tapes of both the songs and the messages can be found in the back of this issue on page 26.

We trust that you will put it in your plans to come and be with us in the August meeting so that you can then be one of those "daughters of Judah" who rejoice!

*Acts 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.*

*20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.*

*21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number be-*

*lieved, and turned unto the Lord.*

*22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.*

*23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.*

*24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and*

*much people was added unto the Lord.*

*25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:*

*26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*



# A Real Christian

*Brother Roger L. Decker*

## **The Dividing Line Between Christianity and the World**

We are living in a day when the Ten Commandments are offensive to people instead of being a blessing. Why have they become offensive? Because they speak to the souls of men. Paul warned young Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:13, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." Evil and deception are

proceeding at a rapid pace today. When people are deceived, it appears to them that wrong is right and right is wrong.

The moves being made by our court systems and certain protest movements are taking this nation in a wrong direction. Marches and protests are being held often, and the media joins in and makes a big splash of it in the newspapers and over the airwaves.

Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 5:20-24:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Therefore as the fire devoureth the

stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

People are so mixed up today. In too many cases, they cannot tell where Christianity ends and the world starts. They cannot see a dividing line. Nevertheless, there is a dividing line between Christianity and the world. The Scripture says the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. The name Christian was given to the Apostles, the disciples, and the brethren because they were followers of Christ; they were friends of the Messiah. The name *Christian* is not a name of dishonor. Christian friend, you do not have to be ashamed of being called a Christian or of being singled out in a crowd as a Christian. You should be proud of the fact that God has called you and brought you out.

The word *Christian* is not used much in the Bible. It is used in only two other places. It is found in Acts 26:28, where Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Then, it is found in 1 Peter 4:16. Peter used the term when he stated, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." It is an honorable name, and it is the most commendable name that can be given to a mortal in this world. If someone puts the label *Christian* on you, that is the most honorable name you could receive as a follower of Jesus Christ. It is a name that unites all nations and binds them together. It suggests character to the one who bears it. Also, it brings to mind doctrines, hope, and joy. This name implies that something about that individual is different from those of the world.

As Christians, we all are on one level. It connects the poor with the rich, the young with the old, and all races as one body of Christ. It puts us all in one big family that loves the Lord Jesus Christ. One who

bears that name and deserves it is blessed beyond any other mortal.

### A Time of Transition

When we look into Acts, Chapter 11, we can see that something almost took place: Christianity was close to becoming just like Judaism. There was still the feeling among the early church that God considered only the literal Jews to be His people. That feeling was strong among the Apostles and the brethren.

There was much tradition in the early church. It was a time of transition, or a time of change, from the old Law and the traditions that the Orthodox Jews lived day by day. Those traditions had to be overcome. God's Holy Spirit gradually moved the early church along the path of truth, step by step. They assembled together, still with thoughts of God having respect of persons, so God allowed them to be scattered to various parts of the world. In this New Testament dispensation, God is no respecter of persons. Those who fear God and work righteousness are accepted by Him.

Peter was probably the most prejudiced of all the Apostles. He was highly thought of, and he had the gift of healing, yet he was the most prejudiced. In the beginning of Acts, Chapter 11, we can see that Peter went up to Jerusalem, right to the heart of Judaism, and he ran into trouble. Peter had perceived a truth when he went to Cornelius' house. Cornelius was seeking the Christian church; the church certainly was not seeking Cornelius.

There was contention among the Apostles and Peter. Acts 11:2 reads, "And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him." In other words, they separated, or broke away, from him. They had heard how Peter had gone down to Cornelius' house. Acts 11:1-3 states: "And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gen-

tiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them."

I want you to notice that they did not care who got saved or that the church was blessed. All they wanted to know was why he had fellowship with Gentiles. They acted the same way many people do today. They are just interested in whom you fellowship with, not what the wonderful works of God are. In Peter's day they did not ask, "How did it go, brethren? How many got saved?" No, in essence, they said, "You went in and ate with those who were uncircumcised." Look at how tradition can overstep the burden that should be on each one's heart for the lost.

### How God Worked to Break Down Traditions

I am sure that Peter knew he was going to run into this problem, because the Scripture tells us that he rehearsed the matter from the beginning. No doubt, he had gone over this matter in his mind, thinking, "What am I going to say to the brethren? I know what they are going to ask me. They don't care about what happened down at Cornelius' house, other than the fact that I went to his house." Verse 4 says, "But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order [or each step] unto them." Peter let them know how God worked with him.

God worked with Peter to get him to the place where he would be obedient to the Holy Spirit and not follow the traditions of men. In Acts, Chapter 11, you can read about Peter telling the Jews what took place. He told them of the lowering of the sheet with those things that a Jew was not allowed to kill or eat and of the voice saying to him, "Arise, Peter, slay and eat." He let them know how he refused to do it

and that it took place three times. Then he told them about the three men who came to the house where he was lodging and asked for him and how the Holy Spirit spoke to him and told him to go with them, doubting nothing.

Next, Peter told them what Cornelius had to say, to show them that God was working on both ends. God was working with Cornelius, a Gentile, and he was working with Peter, the most prejudiced of all the Church of God preachers. God wanted to bring them all together. Peter had the most influence at that particular time, so he was the man that God chose to go to Cornelius' house.

If you read through the Gospels, you will read of many times when Jesus had to rebuke Peter. Peter was very zealous for the Lord, but he was very prejudiced, so God had to work with him. This took place so the Gentiles could hear the Gospel, and God wanted the Gospel to spread. God let that news leak to the brethren in Jerusalem, where the Sanhedrin met. Those brethren really had a time with it. They could not understand why Peter, of all people, could have done such a thing. Perhaps they would not have been so contentious had it been one of the other brethren. Therefore, Peter rehearsed it from the beginning and expounded to them how it took place.

God wanted the Gentiles to hear the Gospel. Dear one, the most important thing for you to hear in your life is the Gospel. If people would turn off the rap music and listen to the Gospel, their souls would be in better shape. They have so many things that come up on the day of worship. The devil really works on the day of worship or on Saturday night. Things may break down or the enemy works by getting you to stay up really late so that you do not feel like dragging yourself out of bed on Sunday morning. You were not tired on Saturday night; you had all kinds of energy. The enemy is doing his best

to keep you from hearing the Gospel.

### **The Power of the Gospel**

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." There is power in the Gospel when one believes it. If you are fortunate enough to get into the worship services, the devil will work another way: he will put a sleep on you in the services. Also, you may be able to stay awake for hours at night while reading a book or a magazine, but often you will find that you cannot stay awake while trying to read the Word of God.

Peter went on to tell the brethren how God spoke through him and how Cornelius and his household were saved. Then he mentioned that while he was preaching, something came to his mind. In Acts 11:16 Peter said, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." In verse 17 he explained how God gave the Gentiles "the like gift" as He did to them (that gift was the Holy Spirit, not tongues). It was the Holy Spirit who brought those nationalities together, and it is the Holy Spirit that brings nationalities together yet today. You can read in Joel, Chapter 2, that God said He would pour out His Spirit, not tongues.

Peter went on to say in verse 17, "What was I, that I could withstand God?" Traditions had caused Peter to resist what God was working to accomplish, but God was long-suffering and worked with Peter, and Peter finally admitted, "What was I, that I could withstand God?"

Peter said something else that convinced the Jewish brethren. Look at the wisdom God gave Peter in Acts 11:12, when he said, "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six

brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house." What six brethren went with him? They were six Jewish brethren just like Peter, not six Gentiles. Peter had a reason for having those six brethren accompany him. Under Egyptian law, it took seven to prove a case, and the Jews knew that law well. Under Roman law, seven seals were necessary to validate a document, and they also knew that law well. Notice that Peter did not argue with the brethren; he merely presented the facts.

You do not have to argue about Christianity; you need only present the facts. What are the facts that you present in Christianity? You cannot argue with results. It works: it changes the lives of men and women. Those who are bad become good; those who are unclean become clean. Salvation brings to man the Holy Spirit, and he becomes a follower of Jesus Christ. This is what makes a man a Christian. Many discredit Christianity when their deeds do not line up with their words. On the other hand, when a Christian's deeds and his words are together, there is no argument that can stand against him.

### **The Grace of God**

At Antioch the Gospel was being preached deliberately to the Gentile. Down at Cornelius' house, God had to do some motivating with Peter. He had to work extra hard with Peter to get him to budge. However, at Antioch it was a little different. Our Scripture text states in verse 19 that the Apostles were scattered because of the persecution that arose about Stephen. The Scriptures say they traveled as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching to none but the Jews.

Then, something happened. Verse 20 says, "And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus." At Antioch they had Greek-speaking

Jews. There were Gentiles, Greeks, and men from Cyprus and Cyrene that began to speak to them. We do not know who they were from Cyprus and Cyrene, but they did a mighty work for God. (Many times a greater work can be done for God if people would leave names out of it.) Then Peter mentioned the church at Jerusalem again.

Tidings of these things came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem. When they received this news, they acted a little differently. They did not send someone to contend with the brethren for going to the uncircumcised. They sent Barnabas down to check it out. They had a reason for sending Barnabas, known as the son of consolation. Verses 22-23 read: ". . . they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, [Barnabas was not envious, jealous, or upset that he was not a part of that. No, he was glad when he saw the grace of God.] and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave [or cling] unto the Lord."

Those converts at Antioch had begun well, and Barnabas could see the grace of God in their lives. Barnabas knew that they needed the grace of God to continue and that they could only have access to that grace if they would cleave to the Lord. The reason some people run out of the grace of God today is that they do not stay with the Lord. You get the grace of God in the beginning, but you must cleave to the Lord to have that grace continue to work in your life.

### **Having Purpose of Heart**

Barnabas recognized that in order for them to continue to be effective, they needed a strong leader. What better man could they have gotten than one who had been a big persecutor of the church, the Apostle Paul. He was well versed in the different languages, and he was a man who could handle the

Gentiles, the pagans, and the Grecian Jews. Therefore, Barnabas went to Tarsus to seek Paul. The Scripture says they assembled with the church there a year and taught much people.

The end of verse 26 of our Scripture text says they were called Christians first at Antioch. Persecution was a way of life for the early church. That is what scattered the people and spread the Gospel from city to city. It was not something new that was happening. God help us. The Apostles lived under constant persecution, but many people cannot stand even a little persecution today. They cannot stand it when someone makes fun of them. What a testimony that is compared to the early church that lived in persecution with threats upon their lives day in and day out.

The Apostles knew the persecution that Jesus endured, and they also knew that Jesus had warned them that persecution was going to be a part of their lives if they had allegiance to Him. In John 15:20 Jesus said, "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly [not everyone will] in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

In the midst of persecution the Word went forth, and God raised up a church where you could see the grace of God. Barnabas saw the grace of God. The name *Christian* is so watered down today that it encompasses most anything that even mentions the name Jesus Christ. If a rock star mentions the name of Jesus, people say, "Oh, he must be a Christian. He must have gotten saved." Many of those same people sing songs with filthy lyrics. If they had truly gotten converted, they would have destroyed the songs and departed from that way of life. They would have come out of the honky-tonks and the bar-

rooms and stopped making ungodly recordings.

In the early church people could see the grace of God. They had purpose of heart, and they stuck with the Lord. Oh, how these attributes are lacking today. In too many people's lives, you cannot see the grace of God, but you do see people who are religious.

### **Living Soberly, Righteously, and Godly**

What did Barnabas recognize when he went to Antioch? Our Scripture text states in verse 23, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad." Whatever Barnabas saw made him happy. When the grace of God is working in conversion, it makes others happy. How can you see the grace of God? When you see people doing what the grace of God teaches, you see the grace of God.

Titus 2:11-12 reads: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." What did Barnabas see? He saw a people who separated themselves from ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly. That is how you see the grace of God.

As a saint of God, what makes you happy? It is not when you see that someone has gotten religion. When you see one who has been truly converted and has denied ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly, godly, and righteously in this present world, that makes you glad. Barnabas did not know those brethren. He knew they were Gentiles and pagans, but he saw something that made him glad.

What is one thing that makes the Christian happy in the services? It is when he sees the sinner come down the aisle, burdened down with sin, and then sees him become converted. That is the grace of God in action. Paul wrote in Ephesians

2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

The grace of God teaches us all the same thing. Many things going on in churches that call themselves the Church of God are not of the grace of God. There are distinct attributes of those who have the grace of God working in their lives. They will dress differently. They will not dress like a Jezebel or as the man in the tombs did before his conversion. They will dress the way he did after the devil was cast out of him. He put clothes on, and he was in his right mind.

When one becomes a Christian, he or she will renounce ungodliness and worldly lusts. I do not know what all those pagans were involved in, but Barnabas knew that what he saw was the work of the grace of God. The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 1:16-17: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

The temple has to be made clean before the King moves in. That is the reason there had to be a Cross first before the Holy Spirit moved in. There had to be a sacrifice to take away sin. Why? The Holy Spirit will not live in an unclean temple.

### **A Two-Fold Work of Grace**

I want you to see a two-fold work of grace. It works two ways in the life of an individual. Again, Titus 2:12 reads, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." First, grace teaches denial, the denial of past sins. Second, the grace of God gives power to the Christian to live in the same world he was delivered from. When you deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, then you can live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

God does not move you to another world. No, you work in the same factory, you attend the same school, you work the same job, and you shop in the same places, yet you live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Praise God, I have found it so! Praise God for His goodness! Saint of God, do you remember when you got saved? You knew there were some things that you had to deny, so you went to an altar of prayer; grace moved you there. Paul said, "By grace are ye saved."

When you were saved, God did not transport you to another world or move you to another area. No, the same grace that saved you gave you the power to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. People are running around full of religion, but they lack the grace of God to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Some pastors drop the standard because they have no grace and no power. They tell the people, "You can wear earrings and some make up, and you can do public bathing; just keep coming." Friend, the grace of God goes deeper than that. The grace of God will teach you to deny all ungodliness and

worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

If you have sin in your life, regardless of what your sin might be, grace will give you the power to deny it and to be delivered from it. That is wonderful! Can you say that the grace of God is active in your life? Can you say that you are a Christian, according to the Word of God? If not, would you like to be a Christian? It is nothing to be ashamed of. The shame comes if you are not a Christian.

There is an abundance of grace to help you to deny ungodliness. God has an abundance of grace to help you to live right. Even though ungodliness is all around you, you do not have to be touched by it. The grace of God comes through the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. What was poured out on those brethren at Pentecost, at Cornelius' house, and at Ephesus? The Holy Spirit was poured out upon them. The Holy Spirit gives you the power and the grace to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly.

*(Cassette C-5144E)*

### **THE DANGERS OF DRIFTING**

The Book of Hebrews declares that "we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1). Another way of translating the final phrase of this verse is, "Lest we drift away."

Nothing in the world is easier than drifting. No person ever drifts upstream, only downstream. It is so easy. All you do is sit back and relax and let the boat go. You are soon lulled into a lazy stupor, not caring where you go. You may not even be aware that you are drifting until it is too late and the boat is on the rocks. Satan is very wise. He seldom urges a Christian to leave the church or to give up his faith in the Lord. Instead he causes one to relax, rest on the oars, and drift along in the Christian life.

All around us are those who have drifted into a state of coldness and indifference. They have stopped caring about others who need to hear the message of God's saving grace.

Are you just drifting? Wake up now! Grab the oars and pull. Your active concern is needed as we seek to lead others to find Christ and His will for their lives.

*1 John 3:1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

*2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

*3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

# This Hope



***Brother Allen Polston***

## **"While We Were Yet Sinners, Christ Died for Us"**

I am thankful for the hope that God gives. The Christian life is not a life that is filled with sorrow and sadness. We all face hard times, but the Christian life is a life filled with great hope. Since becoming a child of God, no matter what circumstance I am in and no matter what trials come my way, something within me encourages me and upholds me. The Bible lets us know that it is hope, a hope that is sure and steadfast. When an anchor is dropped over the side of a

boat, it will hold that boat in place. The Scripture lets us know that this hope that we have is an anchor to the soul, and it will hold us. No matter what the devil brings upon us, God has permitted it for our good, and we know that God has something better ahead for us. He has never left us, and He always comes to the rescue just in time.

In verse 1 of our Scripture text, John called attention to something that he wanted us to understand. One thing that he revealed was the love that God has bestowed upon us. God's Word is truly the greatest love letter that was ever written.

The manner of love that God has bestowed upon us is wonderful. John said in verse 1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Another Scripture that portrays the love that God has bestowed upon us is Romans 5:8, which says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." A Scripture that tells of the care that God has for us is Luke 12:6-7: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the

very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." God has such a tremendous love for you and me, and He is aware of the most minute details. He even knows the number of hairs that you have upon your head. He knows your situations, your troubles, and your places of hardship. God cares very much.

You can be sure that if God loved you and commended His affection toward you when you were against Him, He is commending it toward you while you are with Him. God loved you when you took His name in vain. He loved you when you were indulging in sin and engaging in practices that were not right. You can be sure that He knows where you are and what you are dealing with. Nothing is out of His sight. It is a real help in times of hardship to know that God loves you in such a way.

Our Scripture lesson describes His love as the love that a father has for his children. If you have children, you know of that special relationship that a father and a mother have with their children. It is wonderful! There is something special between a father and his son and daughter, and there is something special between a mother and her children. God ordained it to be that way. A special bond formed because we have taken care of them and nurtured them. We love our children very much, so we try to look out for their best interests. When I go to crowded places, I try to keep track of my little children, because God has given me a special love and concern for them. We try to help them and protect them from harm and danger. God loves us so much, according to 1 John 3:1, that He took us in as natural born children.

### **Becoming a Son of God**

Our Scripture text states in verse 1, "Behold, what manner of

love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. . . ." What a privilege it is to be one of God's very own children and for Him to be so concerned about us that He would take us in and care for us, just as an earthly father does. John went on to say, ". . . therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." Since we are members of God's family, we are unknown by the world. Have you ever listened to someone try to describe who a certain individual is? He may say, "He is Bob Jones' grandson." Because a person knows Bob Jones, he can relate to who that individual is. Undoubtedly you have heard that kind of conversation. Well, it does not work that way with the family of God. You must know God to be acquainted with God and to really know the members of His family.

First Corinthians 2:11-12 states: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." It is vain for people to try to understand the things of God without the Spirit of God. He is our Teacher and our Guide. He is the means by which we understand spiritual things. Without the Spirit of God, people cannot understand the ways of God.

The Bible tells us in our Scripture lesson that we are the sons of God. We do not have to wait until we get to Heaven to be delivered from sin. I am glad that we do not have to continue in a defiled, unregenerate condition. Those who choose to continue in sin are not going to make it to Heaven. Romans 6:1-2a states: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." God forbids us to continue in sin. It is certain that we need the grace of God to abound. We need it today, we will need it tomorrow, and we

will need it as long as we live. The way for that to happen is to cease the sin business.

You must not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness, and you have to be willing to stop sinning. Thank God, when you are willing to do that and repent of the way you have been living, right then you become a son of God, not in some future millennial age. If you have repented of your sins and have the Spirit of God in your life, you are already riding that white horse, which is symbolic of victory. God's people are already going forth conquering and to conquer. Yes, we have enemies and we face difficulties, but thank God, in all these things we can be more than conquerors.

We can overcome every foe by the grace and power of God. If you have repented and turned from your sins, you are a son of God. It is not because you are a citizen of a particular nation or because your parents were Christians. Each of us must get this experience. It is not something that one can get on a family plan, but it is something you must get individually. You must come to the place where you are honest with God. What a blessing it is to be a son of God!

The devil likes to get people to put off living for God until a future day. He specializes in causing people to procrastinate. Friend, if you are not saved, the devil will tell you to put off getting saved until another time, and he will string you along as long as you let him. He tries to convince young people that they have their whole lives ahead of them and that they have plenty of time in the future to get saved and to get close to God.

Sometimes the devil may try to make it appear that you will not be able to overcome sin until some time in the future, but God wants you to know that you can have victory now. There is victory in Jesus, praise God! You can triumph over all this world. In all your tribulations, you can be more than a



conqueror, by the grace of God. The devil likes to tell the sinner to wait. He told me that, but I am glad that I finally wised up. God kept dealing with me and had mercy, and I finally stopped listening to the devil.

### **Serving the Lord Gets Better**

This experience does not have to diminish. When I first got saved, what God did for me was absolutely wonderful! It was such a marvelous blessing that I could not describe it. I thought everyone would want this experience. I thought all I would have to do was tell my friends about it, and they would want it, but they did not see it quite that way. Nevertheless, it has gotten better for me since God has become my King. It has gotten sweeter as the days roll by. God has continued to bring blessings. He did not take away every problem, and I still face difficulties, but living for God has gotten richer, sweeter, and better. The Bible assures me that the things I will experience while living for God are going to increase.

Saint, you may be going through some hard places now, but I want you to know that it will get better. God has better things in store for you as time goes on. Look at the miracle that Jesus performed at the wedding in Cana. Let me share something that God showed me about this miracle. John 2:11 says that He "manifested forth his glory." What did He do? He made the wine better. The wine they were drinking tasted good, but when they drank of the wine that Jesus made, it was better than what they had before. The Bible says Jesus was manifesting His glory, showing us through that miracle that salvation gets better as we live for God. However, we must stay faithful and stay on the firing line.

With that in mind, knowing that now we are the sons of God and that it will get better, I want you to read verse 2 of our Scripture lesson again: "Beloved, now are we the

sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: [There are some unknown things about eternity. There is much that we do not know about it because God's Word does not tell us a great deal about it, but this does not have to bring fear upon our hearts.] but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

We do not know exactly what is awaiting us, but we know it is better and that it is much of what this hope and our anticipation is about. We do not seek to end our lives so that we can go to Heaven. One songwriter expressed that we are winners whether we remain here or go home. However, we can know that if we are where we should be with God, the next life will be better. That brings real anticipation to us. It is exciting! I am glad for things that bring us hope. Salvation is the sweetest thing. It satisfies the soul, but right in the midst of all that satisfaction, we know that it is brighter further on. There is something even better, and we anticipate it. It causes us to have hope.

### **Defeating Every Foe**

Again, John wrote in the latter part of verse 2 of our Scripture lesson, ". . . we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Someone may ask, "What is He like?" I believe that one thing John was talking about was that we shall be like Him in defeating every foe that comes against us. The Bible lets us know that Jesus faced great struggles throughout the course of His life on this earth. He endured great difficulties, turmoil, and trouble. If you have lived for God very long, you probably have faced some of that. Jesus came as our example, and He went through those things. He faced different forms of opposition and overcame every one of them. He had a body just like yours, yet He overcame

every enemy, and He conquered death. He defeated death until it was destroyed completely and had no binding or discouraging power over Him. That is how God brings us through things in this world. He comes through for us just in time and gives us the victory. He enables us to conquer things that otherwise would control us.

The devil has to get God's permission to try us, but God allows us to face some things. Just as a trial becomes hard to bear and seems to be taking its toll on us, God brings us through it with victory. God is just the same in the valley as He is on the mountaintop. Sooner or later, He comes through and delivers us, and we have victory over it. It does not bother us anymore. Church, no matter what we face, we have God. He is not going to change. Sometimes we go through sicknesses, but God is still with us. Sometimes in the hardest places of life, He is closer than ever. God will not forsake us. We might have to suffer for a while, but God will not leave us. He will bring us through with victory. You may fear the trial and think, "Oh, I do not want to go through this hard place," but God will give you victory. He can enable you to say, "Whatever comes, I can defeat it." We can be more than conquerors because He is by our side. Jesus has defeated every foe.

There are things we do not know about death, but we can know that if we stay ready, even death cannot defeat us. We will defeat it; we will conquer death. This lesson helps us to see that. It causes us to have hope because we know that Jesus conquered death, and He is our example. He is the One to whom we look. He defeated every enemy and triumphed. Jesus said in John 16:33, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." In this world you are going to have tribulation, but as a child of God, you can put a smile on your face. You can cheer up, because Jesus has overcome the world. Jesus let us know that we would face some

things, but with God's help, we can overcome every foe if we will stay faithful.

If you are in the midst of a trial, you will get victory in just a matter of time if you will stay true to God. He will help you. If you will hold on to Jesus, you will not be defeated. God has conquering power for you. Church of God, we are the sons of God. He will not let His children be overtaken and destroyed. He will help us through every situation.

A godly father does not push his children off to the side, but love for his children causes him to take care of them. He protects them no matter what they have to go through. Praise God, God has not forsaken His children. He is by our side as a true father. A true father stands by his children. He does not leave them out in the dark. He does not leave them in some dangerous position. When he sees danger coming, he is right there to help them. They are his children, so he wants to take care of them. Likewise, God will help us.

### **Conquerors Over All**

We can overcome by the grace and power of God. Verse 2 of our Scripture text states, ". . . when he shall appear, we shall be like him [victorious]; for we shall see him as he is." There are enemies working against God's people, but I am glad for what David said in Psalm 23:5, He wrote, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Right in the presence of our enemies, God sets out a table. There may be enemies all around you, and doubts and fears may flood your mind, but God will prepare a table for you right in the midst of those enemies. You can put your feet under the table and eat of God's goodness. When He appears, we know that we will be like Him: we will be conquerors over all. All our enemies will be behind us, defeated.

When the Apostle Paul was getting ready to depart from this

world, having a good testimony and a clear conscience, he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:7-8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

God's people love His appearing. When He appears, we will know that we have finished our course and won the race. All enemies will have been defeated and put behind us; no more can rise against us. The battle will be over. Imagine how good it is going to feel when Jesus comes and we know that every possible thing that could have taken us down and defeated us and challenged our faith is behind us. His appearing is something to love because it brings such a blessing with it.

Paul wrote in Colossians 3:4, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." Notice that he said that we will appear with Him in glory, not in discouragement, not singing the blues and wanting revenge on others. When Christ appears, we are going to appear with Him in glory. That means in goodness, in happiness, in exaltation, and blessed in a mighty way.

Titus 2:13 says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." It is a glorious appearing because of what it brings with it. When one graduates from high school or college, that is a good feeling. He has all those years of study behind him, and then he receives a diploma. Imagine how much better you will feel when you have finished your course and defeated every enemy. Then you will be free to live with God forever in eternity. What a blessing! What a blessed hope and an anchor to the soul! It is both steadfast and sure. We have a great hope. It is a bright

anticipation! One songwriter said it is "brighter than the perfect day." It is wonderful!

### **Purify Yourself, Even as He Is Pure**

We need to consider what John said in verse 3 of our Scripture text. He wrote, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." This hope is wonderful and glorious. We love His appearing, but friend, you need to be aware of the fact that it requires you to be pure. Just as Jesus ended up where He is today because He lived a pure life, this hope that we have calls for the same thing in order for us to end up with Christ. We are looking forward to going up where He is. We are anticipating being like Him, victors over every possible foe. If you are looking forward to this, then you need to purify yourself, even as He is pure. You cannot do that on your own. John was talking about letting God's Word wash you, change you, and straighten you out. You need to let God's Word inspire you and get you moving so that you do not procrastinate. You must be a doer of the Word and not a hearer only.

Babylon gives people a hope, but they do not put any requirements with it. Their songbooks are filled with songs about going to Heaven, but you do not find much about really getting down to business and letting God search their hearts. Most of it is just a message of "We all are going to have a wonderful time in Heaven." Friend, you have to make it there first, and in order to make it there, you have to purify yourself, even as He is pure. That means responding when God speaks to you and letting God do for you what you need done; that means letting God change you.

The Bible says in Romans 12:2 that you are "transformed by the renewing of your mind." We are not conformed to the world, but we are changed to be more like Christ. That

was what John meant when he said, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." That is one reason we gather together in worship services, revivals, and camp meetings. We must purify ourselves. You do not want to miss this, friend. It is a bright hope, a bright anticipation, but you must be like Christ if you want to end up with Him.

I want to encourage you. God

is still on His throne. He has not forgotten you. He has a love for you as a father has for His children. With this hope that we have, we can look forward to a time when God will give us complete and final victory over every problem and every circumstance. One by one, we face our giants, and one by one, those giants fall as we keep our faith in Jesus Christ and keep our lives surrendered to Him.

Dear one, if you have this hope, you must purify yourself. When God shows you something, you must measure to His Word and do some purifying. Your attitude should be, "Lord, I am Yours. I am going to walk closer to You and move up. Won't you let God do a work in your life? God bless you.

*(Cassette C-5045M)*

## God Used a Dog

The Bethel Mission News relates an incident of how God used a dog to bring about a revival among Chinese soldiers. Across the street from the Bethel Mission, in a particular section of China, was a barracks where thousands of soldiers were trained. The workers of an evangelistic group had tried many times to gain access, even to leave portions of the Scriptures or to go in and preach and pray, but they had been driven out each time. The missionaries asked God to open that training center to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This became a burden of their concerted prayers. Suddenly God took a hand in the affairs and answered that petition. It came about in this manner:

One day a worker was cleaning out the cupboard in the kitchen. He threw out the small fragments of papers and whatever else was there. At length his fingers grasped a few pages torn from the Bible. Not thinking anything about it, he picked up that small portion of the Bible in Chinese and tossed it out of the window with the other papers. When this paper fell to the ground, a dog rushed up and grabbed the torn pages in his mouth. Much to the missionary's surprise, as Chinese children chased the dog out of the compound, he ran into the military barracks.

The missionary thought nothing more of the incident, until at the close of the following Sunday service when a Chinese official in full military regalia entered the church. He was accompanied by two uniformed soldiers. The officer took from his pocket the torn pages of the Bible. This is the story he told: "A dog ran into our barracks the other day with this in his mouth. The story is very interesting. It is the campaign orders of a warrior, and we would like to ask if you know where we can get to whole book. My men want to know the rest of the story. So we came here, thinking you might have it."

When the missionaries read the story, they discovered that it was part of the military orders of Joshua, as recorded in the Book of Joshua. Finding a Bible, they presented the officer with the Word of God. As a consequence, the gates of the barracks were opened to the Christian workers, and constantly they went back and forth with the Gospel of redemption. During that winter, eighty-two officers and privates were converted and baptized, and they attended regularly the Bible classes at the Bethel Mission.

Years afterward, one of those missionaries stepped off a train into the snow and ice of a Manchurian region. He was greeted by a tall, broad-shouldered Chinese. He asked, "Do you not remember me?" When the missionary said that he did not, the preacher said, "I am one of the eighty-two soldiers converted through the dog with the torn Bible pages. I left the army, and I am the pastor of the church here. I sent for your group to help us in a revival in this city.

Selected

# Prayer Turned Back Their Flood

Rain, Rain, Rain! Was there no end of it? For two days and two nights the sky had poured forth its deluge on the drowning hills, and this, the morning of the third day, offered only a black sword in its teeth to aching eyes that strained wearily for a sign of truce.

The night had been livid with lightning flashes and thunderbolts. Sleep was impossible. Whimpering at each fresh crash of thunder, we three children had huddled together in Mother's big bed. She had watched beside us all night, fully dressed, a Bible opened on her knees; only leaving us momentarily when muffled voices in the kitchen told her that Father and the ranch hands had come in for a cup of hot coffee. For them there had been no rest—a tale of bogged cattle, swelling streams, and soaked earth slides drove them on wearily.

Morning found us with noses glued to the kitchen windows, staring out at the havoc night had wrought. Dimly through the curtain of rain, we could see the black gashes of slides in the low hills opposite the ranch house, and—awesome to behold!—at our very feet was a roaring, muddy torrent! A far cry this was from the peaceful trickle that rippled lazily by in the summertime! The creek had become a menace of hurtling boulders, up-torn trees, and fence rails, all plunging madly downstream with a great crashing and rumbling, or splintering against the massive trunk of the giant eucalyptus that still stood defiantly midstream.

As we watched and listened with a silent chill in our hearts, Father rode up on his big gray horse. He dismounted and stood surveying the widening stream. Even as he watched, the footbridge that led to the cattle corrals was

whisked away on the branch of a careening tree.

Father turned to enter the house, head bent and shoulders strangely drooped.

He beckoned to Mother and whispered hurriedly, desperately. Then, he was gone again, but Mother's face was ashy-white as she turned to us.

We clung to her skirts, weeping, questioning, "What had Father said?"

"Nothing, nothing! Only be brave, no matter what happens."

"What's going to happen?" we clamored, following her into the bedroom. She went to the closet, took out our little woolen coats, and laid them on the bed. Then she brought her own and laid it beside ours. "Where are we going?" we wailed, as she opened a big bag and began folding garments into it.

Mother explained there was nothing to fear yet. The creek was cutting in toward the house, but Father and the men were going to try to turn the force of the rushing water away from the caving bank. In the meantime, we must be prepared to leave quickly.

We saw as we rushed back to the kitchen windows that the men were already at work rolling boulders, driving poles, and laying crosspieces. The work was dangerous and heartbreaking, for the current swept away more than it left. It was like casting pebbles into a boiling sea. There was nothing solid and stable to which the timber could cleave. The waters sheared with giant force and all effort seemed futile—nothing would take permanent hold!

Then from the bedroom Mother called. She was standing by the window, looking out at the sky, and there was a soothing, quiet clarity in her voice as she put her arms about

us and began to speak.

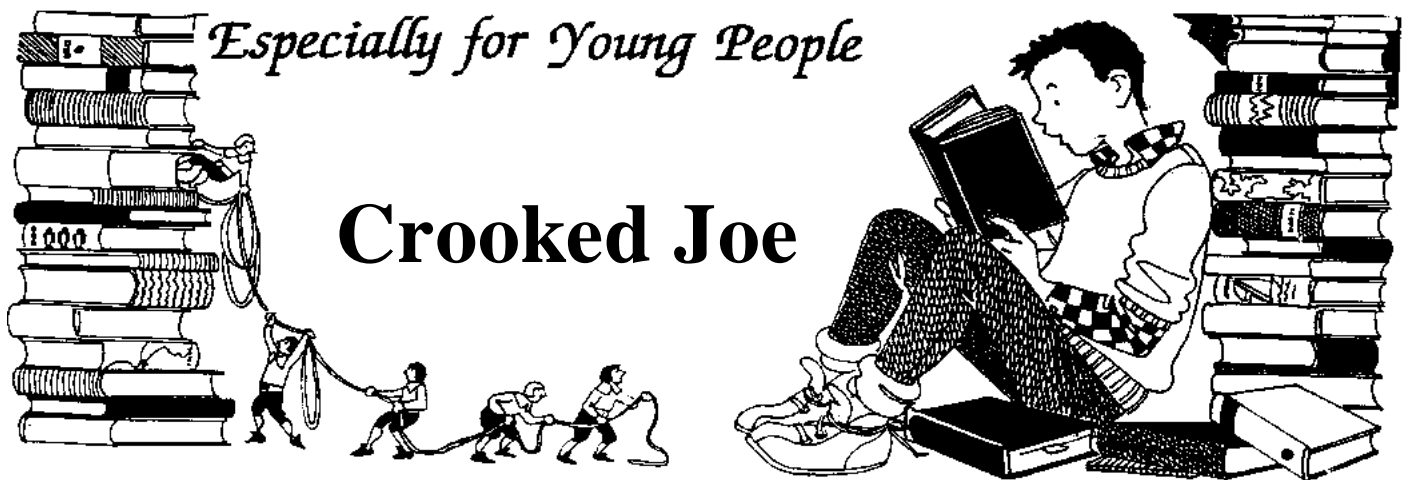
"My children, in this our hour of need, there is One who can aid us, our Heavenly Father. In the past He has been very good to us. He has given us love and health and much happiness. He has given us good land, good cattle, and a good home. We know it is not a loving Father's way to give and then snatch away. Let us pray to Him now with all our hearts, and He will help us."

Then she knelt on the bare floor, and we three went down on our tiny knees beside her. We prayed—simply and fervently, believing with every part of our small beings that God was present and listening and compassionate. With the clear faith of childhood we knew that He saw our need, and now that we had asked, would grant our plea. After all, our own particular deliverance was but a small thing for so all-powerful a God.

And He did hear! The short silence that followed our "amen" was broken by a great rending and crashing, followed by happy shouts from without. We ran to the windows.

There, its huge trunk flush against the bank and its great branches overlapping, lay the giant eucalyptus that had been standing in midstream. It had been uprooted and flung against the bank, where it had wedged securely and was deflecting the course of the stream away from the house. It was not a moment too soon! A short three feet of ground was all that remained between the house and the crumbling bank. "Praise God!" Mother repeated again and again, as she put our coats back into the closet. "We have seen a miracle."

Selected



A great railroad depot may not be the best school for a boy, yet Joe Bryan had scarcely known any other. He could not remember when the long waiting rooms, with their tiled floors and dreary rows of stationary settees and crowds of people, were not quite as familiar to him and more homelike than his mother's small, bare house, which he knew as little more than a place for eating and sleeping.

At an early age, when an ordinary baby might have been frightened into convulsions by the shriek of a locomotive, Joe securely fastened in his crib, would stare for hours through the great window, undisturbed by the incessant rush and roar of arriving and departing trains.

He had been only six months old when the dreadful accident happened which, at one fell stroke, made him fatherless and transformed him from a strong, well-developed infant to a pitiful creature, which even death refused to take.

The old yardmen tell the story even yet how young Michael Bryan, as straight and manly a fellow as ever, who left this green, old native island for the better chances of the new world this side of the sea, came whistling out of the roundhouse that morning and stepped hastily from before an incoming locomotive, neither seeing nor hearing another rushing up the parallel track. His mates hurried out to him, but too late! Nobody who saw it would ever forget the look of agony which distorted his

handsome face in that horrible instant when he recognized his doom, or the perpendicular leap into the air, from which he fell back beneath the crushing wheels.

In the excitement and consternation of the time, no messenger had been sent in advance to prepare the poor young wife for her trouble. She stood in the doorway with her baby crowing in her arms, when the stout bearers paused at her gate with their mangled burden. She uttered a terrible cry and fell fainting, the child's tender back striking the sharp edge of the door stone.

"What a pity that it was not killed outright!" said everybody but the mother. She herself always insisted that only her constant watching over the little, flickering life kept her from going mad in the first dreadful months of her bereavement.

The officers of the railway company were kind to poor Mary Bryan. They paid the expenses of the burial, and after little Joe had slowly mended, employed her about the depot to scrub the floors and keep the glass and woodwork bright and neat.

When Joe was seven years old, his mother sent him to school. He went patiently, day after day, making no complaint, but she awoke one night to find him sobbing on the pillow beside her. Only by coaxing was she able to find out the cause of his grief. Some of the rougher boys, more thoughtless than cruel, let us hope, had called him Humpy and asked if he carried a bag of meal on his back.

Mary flamed with the fierce anger of motherhood.

"You shan't go another day!" she declared. "The ruffians! I won't have my darlin' put upon by the likes of them!"

So Joe's schooling had come to an untimely end. Yet, meager as was his stock of book learning, the development of his mind far outstripped the growth of his stunted and deformed body. Everybody liked the patient little fellow, tugging manfully at his mother's heavy water buckets and running willingly at every call of the station men. At twelve years old, he had picked up no small amount of information, especially on railroad topics. He knew every locomotive on the road, understood the intricacies of sidetracks and switches, and could tell the precise moment when any particular train might be expected with accuracy of a timetable.

Yet the very quickness and ardor of his nature deepened his sense of his infirmity. The glances cast upon him by stranger eyes, some pitiful, some curious, other, alas! expressive only of annoyance or disgust, rankled like so many arrows in his heart. Not one missed its mark. How wistfully his eyes followed boys of his own age, straight, handsome, and happy, who sprang lightly up and down the steps of the coaches, or threaded their way along the crowded platforms. For one day of such perfect, untrammelled life he would have bartered all the possible years before him. Yet, he never put his yearning into words, even to

his mother.

Mr. Crump, the telegraph operator, was Joe's constant friend. It was he who, at odd moments, had taught the boy to read, and had initiated him into some of the mysteries of the clicking instrument, which to Joe's imaginative mind seemed some strange creature with a hidden life of its own.

It was growing toward dark one November afternoon. Joe, never an unwelcome visitor, sat curled in a corner of Mr. Crump's office, waiting for his mother to finish her work. He was laboriously spelling out, by the light, the words upon a page of an illustrated newspaper, quite oblivious of the ticking, like that of a very jerky and rheumatic clock, which sounded in the room.

Mr. Crump, too, had a paper before him, but his ears were alive. Suddenly he sprang to his feet, repeating aloud the message which that moment flashed along the wire.

"Engine No. 110 running wild. Clear track."

He rushed to the door, shouting the news.

"Not a second to spare! She'll be down in seven minutes."

The words passed like lightning. In a moment the yard was in wild commotion. Men flew hither and thither, yard engines steamed wildly away, the switches closing behind them.

The main track was barely clear when 110 came in sight, swaying from side to side, her wheels threatening to leave the track at each revolution. She passed the depot like a meteor, her bell clanging with every leap of her piston, the steam escaping from her whistle with the continuous shriek of a demon, and the occupants of the cab wrapped from view in the cloud of smoke.

"They're gone! A miracle can't save 'em," said one, voicing the wordless terror of the rest. "If they don't fly the track on the upgrade, they'll go down as soon as they strike the trestle."

The crowd began to run along the track, some with a vain instinct of

helplessness, some by that morbid curiosity which seeks to be "in at the death."

But look! Midway along the long rise, the speed of the engine suddenly slackened.

"What does it mean? She never could 'a' died out in that time!" shouted an old yardman.

Excitement winged their feet. When the foremost runners reached the place, the smoking engine stood still on her track, her great wheels still whizzing round and round amid a flight of red sparks from beneath.

"What did it? Who stopped her?"

The engineer, staggering from the cab with the pallid face of the fireman behind him, pointed without speaking to where a little, pale-faced, crooked-backed boy had sunk down, panting with exertion, beside the track.

At his feet a huge oil can lay overturned and empty.

The crowd stared, one at another, open-mouthed. Then the truth flashed upon them.

"He oiled the track!"

"Bully for Crooked Joe!"

They caught the exhausted child, flinging him from shoulder to shoulder, striving with each other for the honor of bearing him, and so, in irregular, tumultuous, triumphal procession they brought him back to the depot and set him down among them.

"Pass the hat, pards!" cried one.

It had been payday, and the saved engineer and fireman dropped in each their month's wages. There was not a hand in all the throng that did not delve into a pocket. There was the crisp rustle of bills, the clink of gold and silver coins.

"Out with your handkerchief, Joe! Your hands won't hold it all! Why, young one, what's the matter?" for the boy, with scarlet cheeks and burning eyes, had clenched both small hands behind his back—the poor twisted back, laden with its burden of deformity and pain.

"No! No!" he cried in a shrill, high voice. "Don't pay me! Can't you see what it's worth to me, once, just once in my life, to be of a little use like

other folks?"

The superintendent had come from his office. He laid his hand on the boy's head.

"Joe," he said. "We couldn't pay you if we wished. Money doesn't pay for lives! But you have saved us a great many dollars besides. Won't you let us do something for you?"

"You can't! You can't! Nobody can!" The child's voice was almost a shriek. It seemed to rend the air with the pent-up agony of years. "There's only one thing in the world I want, and nobody can give me that. Nobody can ever make me anything but Crooked Joe!"

The superintendent lifted him and held him against his own breast.

"My boy," he said in his firm, gentle tones, "you are right. None of us can do that for you. But you can do it for yourself. Listen to me! Where is the quick brain God gave you and the brave heart? Not in that bent back of yours—that has nothing to do with them! Let us help you to a chance, only a chance to work and to learn, and it will rest with you to say whether in twenty years from now, if you are alive, if you are Crooked Joe or Mr. Joseph Bryan!"

Many years passed. Not long ago while visiting a friend, he said to me:

"Court is in session. You must go with me and hear Bryan."

The courtroom was already crowded at our entrance with an expectant audience. When the brilliant young attorney rose to make his plea, I noticed with a shock of surprise that his noble head surmounted an undersized and misshapen body. He had spoken but five minutes, however, when I had utterly forgotten his physical defect; in ten minutes I was eagerly interested and thereafter, during the two hour speech, held spellbound by the marvelous eloquence which is fast raising him to the leadership of his profession in his native city.

"A wonderful man!" said my friend, as we walked slowly homeward. Then he told me the story of Crooked Joe.

Selected

*Mark 8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?  
37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

# A Burden for Souls



*Sister Karen Wilks*

## **"He That Winneth Souls Is Wise"**

I read this statement: "There is nothing great on earth but man, and there is nothing great in man but his soul." The eternal soul of man is the greatest part of him. The physical body is made of dust and water, and it is mortal, but we have an eternal soul. How can you calculate the worth of a soul? Can anyone put a pricetag on it? No, it is priceless. Is there anything that you could really give in exchange for your soul? No, the soul is worth more than anything you could give.

Lost souls are all around us. We have children, wives, husbands, brothers, and sisters who need Christ. Child of God, do you really have a clear vision of the worth of

souls or has your vision become dim? God is trying to stir His people. He wants our vision to be clear. God wants us to realize the worth of souls. It seems that too many of God's people have become self-satisfied, unconcerned, and lighthearted when they should be heavyhearted. The cares of life are pressing in upon us. We have places to go. We are busy with life, while all around us is a field of dying souls. Saint, by your actions, are you saying to souls: "I don't have time for you right now. Maybe tomorrow or the next day I can take some time for you"? God has made each of us personally responsible for the souls of our families, our friends, and our neighbors.

The Bible says in the latter part

of Proverbs 11:30, "He that winneth souls is wise." It takes much wisdom to win souls, but God said to ask and He would not upbraid us. May God help each of us to have a greater burden for souls. It is wonderful how God works with His people. He tells you what you lack, and then He says, "Come to Me, and I will help you." We have a wonderful Savior!

The most important question concerning having a soul burden is, Are you willing, *really* willing, to let God put a burden for souls on you? First, you must love God supremely. He must be first in your heart and life. He has to have your whole heart. Second, you have to be walking in the light. Third, you must love His Word. I do a lot of

reading, and I especially enjoy missionary stories. While reading of missionaries who lived during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, two things stood out to me: first, they loved God supremely; second, they had such a love for souls that they were willing to lay down their lives for others.

Psalm 126:6 states, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Is there any greater joy than seeing a soul that you have been working with and praying for bow at an altar of prayer? There is no greater joy than that. God is using His people as helpers. When you have helped save a soul from hell, you have helped to deliver a soul from death and helped that one to gain eternal life. Someone may ask, "Is it worth all the tears?" Oh, yes, it is worth all the tears! The end of that Scripture says, "... bringing his sheaves with him." All souls belong to Christ, but He is so good that He will let you bring your own sheaves with you to let you share His joy.

### **Are You Willing to Care for the Lost?**

The Scriptures tell us that Christ despised the shame of the Cross, but it was for the joy that He did it. Hebrews 12:2 reads, "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." He will let you share the joy of winning souls. Winning souls reaps great dividends; it has eternal reward. It is a lasting work, Church of God. However, many Scriptures warn us about the lack of having a soul burden, or being at ease in Zion. Amos 6:1 warns, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion."

Zephaniah 1:12 states, "I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees." God does not miss

anything. You cannot hide from Him. He said He would punish the men who are settled in complacency. Dear one, if you have become complacent, you need to get out of your house of complacency and petition God: "Lord, I need a greater soul burden. My loved ones are lost and on their way to hell. If You do not have mercy and help them, they will be lost forever and ever." Oh, Church of God, how we need to shake ourselves! There is too much work to do to play around. We need to get rid of things that have no eternal value. Friend, you need to quit looking at things that you ought not to look at and quit watching things that you ought not to watch. Many are wasting time, and all around us souls are dying and going to hell. The Prophet Joel wrote in Joel 3:14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision."

The devil sings the song, "Let me entertain you." Oh, how the flesh wants to be entertained and have the easy way, or the "good life." I am afraid that in too many cases people are letting the enemy of souls entertain them and keep them off their knees. They think the house of feasting is better than the house of mourning, but that is not what the Bible says. Ecclesiastes 7:2 reads, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting." Oh, how we need mothers like Hannah who lose their appetites and weep before the throne of grace for their children. We need fathers who will wrestle with God for their unsaved loved ones. May God help you to feel the weight of a lost soul.

We must be willing to carry a soul burden. It is a heavy load, and it is with you day and night. We have to be willing to sacrifice our time. It takes time, time spent on our knees before God. This is not a fifteen-minute prayer. We need to spend hours agonizing before God for souls, pleading their case. We must be willing to be inconvenienced, be faithful, and be

committed to the winning of souls. Jesus said in John 4:35, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." Who will go? Who will ask God for a soul burden? You cannot go without a soul burden. Who will carry this heavy load? Who is willing to care for the lost?

Child of God, when someone has fallen, do you care? Are you reaching out to the lost? Do you really care about your loved ones who are living in deep sin? If you have a choice between praying for a soul and doing something that the flesh wants to do, which way are you going to go? I am not saying that you do not need a vacation or time to rest, but for the most part, where is your heart? Having a soul burden takes wholehearted service. Your whole heart has to be in this.

### **Will You Go Before God Empty-Handed?**

David wrote in Psalm 142:4, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." You do not want your testimony to be that you did not care for anyone's soul. As a saint, you ought to feel the burden for the lost, you ought to fast and spend time in prayer alone with God. Oh, what a difference it would make if more people would carry a greater burden for souls and spend more time agonizing for souls! There would be a difference in the worship services. Heaven is waiting on you, child of God. We need prevailing prayer. Do not forget why we are here: it is to help souls, to win souls to Christ.

One man once said, "I can't comprehend anyone trying to win souls and being satisfied without results." God help us not to be satisfied. On that final day when you stand before God, are you going to stand empty-handed? What about your loved ones?

I live near a high school, and when I look on young people today,



it makes my heart so sad. They have no purpose in life. They do not know where they are going or what they are going to do. They try this and try that with no satisfaction, but all they need is Jesus Christ.

What a difference Jesus can make in a heart and life! At one time, I was worldly and steeped in sin. No one was more worldly than I was, but then I met Jesus, and, oh, what a difference He made in my life! It was the best change I ever made, and it gets better. Salvation is the greatest gift! Church of God, we have something to give to others. We have a message for them. May God help us not to stand before Him empty-handed. We want to bring our sheaves with us and be able to say, "Lord, look, here is my daughter, here is my son, here is my husband [or wife], here's my

neighbor. Here they are, Lord." What great joy it would be to take them with you!

Child of God, if you do not sow in tears for your loved ones, that is like consigning them to hell. There are too many dry eyes; there is not enough weeping for souls. We need mercy, and we need help. The good part is that God wants to help us, and all Heaven is back of us. The table is spread. What do you need, child of God? You can just reach up by faith and take it off God's table. God wants you to be a soul winner. He is waiting on you. If you lack wisdom, you can say, "Oh, Lord, I don't know what to say. I don't know how to do it," and He will help you. God said if you lack wisdom, ask. He will not upbraid you or tell you off. May God give you wisdom so that you can reach

out to others and win souls.

I am going to close with this little story: A missionary sat by the bedside of his first convert, who was dying. The dying man said, "Brother, I hear you preached a sermon about Heaven last evening. I couldn't hear you, but I'm going to Heaven itself. When I get there, I shall go find the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will thank Him that He ever sent you to tell me of His love. And then, brother, I shall come back to the gate and sit there until you come. And when you come, I will lead you to the Savior and say, 'Here, Lord, is the man who told me of Thy love.'" Saint of God, God wants to work with you and help you. Will you have anyone waiting at the gate for you?

(Cassette C-3572M)

God doesn't look for great ability as much as He looks for usability.

# Radio Log



LOCATION	STATION	DAY	TIME
Wellston, Ohio	WAJB-FM 92.5	Thursday	8:05 a.m.-8:35 a.m.
North Little Rock, Arkansas	KMTL-AM 760	Saturday	2:00 p.m.-2:30 p.m.
Little Rock, Arkansas	KAAY-AM 1090	Saturday	9:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
Newark, Ohio	WCLT-AM 1430	Sunday	7:15 a.m.-8:00 a.m.
Anderson, Indiana	WQME-FM 98.7	Sunday	8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m.

*Tune in to the radio station nearest you to hear an inspiring message from the Word of God. If you enjoy the broadcast, let us hear from you!*

# The Conclusion of the Whole Matter



**Brother Charles Ferguson**

## **"The Wicked Are Like the Troubled Sea"**

The founding fathers of our country composed a great constitution to guide our country. The colonists proclaimed America to be "one nation under God." If it were possible to take God totally out of our nation, we would have nothing, for without Him there is nothing good. Without Him there is no love, no justice, and no morality.

Our legislators and our judicial system are slowly chipping away at our constitution, taking our freedoms away gradually. Brother Emerson Wilson once told me, "Nothing starts big; it always starts little." The devil and the religious world are chipping away at the Gospel of Christ. They cannot change the Gospel, but they can destroy the influence of the Gospel in the minds of men. Some people

may say, "Well, I don't know if that is possible." However, if we look around and see what religious people are doing today, we can see that men no longer practice many of the foundational truths.

Same sex marriages are just around the corner and have already turned the corner in some places. In the world today, sodomy is referred to as "gay" in an effort to take away the shame. Some movements say they have "gay pride." There is no such thing as "gay pride." Homosexuality is sin, and nothing is proud or honorable about sin. Some people say they practice sodomy because that is the way God made them. Others say, "If you are a drunk, it is not a sin. It is due to a certain chemical imbalance in your body." Then others say, "If you use tobacco, it is not a sin; it is just a choice of life." We can see that much of the world is trying to change the

influence of the Gospel.

Those of you who are a little older can remember a time when most people had high morals. They practiced modesty and morality to a great extent because of the influence of the Gospel upon their lives. Although they were not Christians, they were influenced by Christianity. Today many people say that if you disagree with those who commit sin, you are the one who has the problem, not them. Dear one, the truth of the matter is, they have the problem, not you.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 57:20-21: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Thank God, there is peace to those who know God, though we live in a troubled world.

The Apostle Paul said in Acts

20:29-30: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." We have many problems within, as "grievous wolves," or wicked men, enter in. It would behoove you, dear one, to draw closer to the Lord and to live for Him with all your heart. I remember the time when I gave my heart to God, and it is still a present reality in my heart and life. I am still keeping the promises that I made to the Lord many years ago. With God as my helper, I shall ever keep them.

### **Finding Rest for Your Soul**

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." I have found this to be so. The Christian life is the most glorious life that anyone can live. If you will adhere to the Gospel, God will give you the best life that is possible. If you will give yourself to Him, He will keep you. God can keep what you have committed to Him, and if you will cleave to Him, you will find rest for your soul.

If you do not commit your life to God, you will be like the troubled sea. When I went to the ocean and watched the waves roll in, I noticed that they were constantly rolling in and beating against the shore. The sea was never still; it was always moving. That is the way it is with those who live in sin. They are always troubled about something. Before I got saved, I had a fine home, a nice car, a fairly good job, a wonderful wife, and two good children. Like most everyone else, financially I was just making ends meet. I did not have anything to complain about, but I was not

happy. Something was missing in my life. I knew what it was, and when I found Jesus, I found rest for my soul. I have been satisfied ever since.

Some time ago, as I was traveling to the airport, I rode on a shuttle. A young man sat next to me who was quite friendly. As we were talking, the shuttle stopped to pick up a young woman, and she sat down in front of me. You could tell by the way she was dressed that she was a woman of the world. While conversing with the fellow sitting next to me, I told him about my wife passing away, how many years we had been married, how much I loved her, what a sweet woman she was, and what a happy fifty-two years we had together.

What I did not know was that the young lady who was sitting in front of me was listening. After a while, she turned around in her seat and said, "I'm so glad I caught this shuttle. I have never heard a person talk about another person in that way." Evidently, there was a lack of love in her life. She did not know Jesus, and perhaps she had no one to love her. She appeared to be moved by what she heard.

Dear one, everyone needs Jesus. I am glad that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He never fails. First Corinthians 13:8 tells us, "Charity never faileth." I thank God that love never fails. I have found that His yoke is easy. Anymore people marvel at a couple being married for thirty years or more. Some people have said to me, "That is a long time to be married!" When they ask, "How long have you been a member of the Church of God?" I tell them, "For more than forty years." Often they are amazed.

Today many people do not stay in one place for very long. They need to find the Truth and stick to it. Often people find it strange that anyone would attend the same church for forty years or more. When I found the Church of God, my wandering days were over. I found a home. When I found my

wife, I found a good wife; I was not looking any more. Likewise, when I found the Church of God, I knew that I did not need to look any further. Salvation satisfies my soul, and it will satisfy yours. I praise God for His goodness and mercy to me.

### **Transgressing God's Law**

Today people are looking for an easier way. When I labored in Idaho many years ago, a lady in the congregation was taking college courses to become a nurse. In her sociology class, occasionally she could invite someone to speak, so she asked if I would speak. When some of the students heard that I was a preacher, they refused to attend the class. I spoke on the ills of our society, which are caused by sin.

When I had finished speaking, I allowed time for questions and answers. One young woman asked, "Why must we choose either to serve God or not to serve God?" I wondered what motivated her to ask such a question. Later I found out why she asked that question. She had left her husband and was living with another man, so she did not want to feel condemned for doing that. She wanted another way, one that was neither right nor wrong.

Too many people do not want to pay the price. They do not want to adhere to the Bible doctrines concerning abstaining from sin. They want an easier way. Today many so-called preachers do not even know what sin is. I talked to one preacher some time ago who said he did not know what sin was. I asked him, "Do you not know what 1 John 3:4 says?" It states, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." This is a basic message, but people need to hear the basic principles of the Gospel. Sin is a transgression of God's law.

James 4:17 states, "Therefore to

him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." One can commit sin in two ways. James was speaking of the sin of omission. Jesus said in John 8:34, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." He was speaking of committing sin. You can commit sin by failing to do right or by doing wrong.

The devil has only three avenues to tempt a man or a woman, which he has used since the Garden of Eden. We find these three avenues listed in 1 John 2:16, which reads, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Notice that John mentioned the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the very temptations that Satan used to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden.

We read in Genesis 3:6, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [the lust of the flesh], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [the lust of the eyes], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [the pride of life], she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."

Sin is a transgression of God's law. One can engage in sin in two ways: by omitting to do right or by committing wrong. Again, the devil has only three ways to approach an individual: through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

### **You Must Be Born Again**

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 8:5-7: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Dear one, when you were born into the world, you were

born of the flesh. You were not born of the Spirit. Unless you come to Christ, you will be lost. First Corinthians 15:50 says that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." The Apostle Paul said that those who are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh, but those who are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. The word *enmity* means "hatred." It can be an outward manifestation or it can lie dormant, ready to spring to life at any time. If you are in the flesh, you cannot please God. You must come to Christ and be born of the Spirit of God, otherwise you cannot be a child of God.

Jesus, speaking in John 3:5-7, said: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Unless you come to Christ and you are born of the Spirit, you cannot be saved. That which is born of the flesh is going to perish. Unless you forsake the desires of the flesh, you will be lost forever.

You will live in a fleshly body until you die physically. However, you must be born again and die out to the deeds of the flesh to be God's child. Now, the flesh that you die out to spiritually is waiting for a chance to come back to life. How many people do you know who were once spiritual but today they are no longer spiritual? How many preachers who once preached the Gospel have been caught in immorality?

### **Keeping Your Body Under**

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I

myself should be a castaway." If the flesh were dead forever and had no possibility of coming back to life, why did Paul bother to say, "I keep under my body"? He had to watch himself to see that he walked in the Spirit.

I once knew a man who said, "I used to think that when a person got older, the devil didn't bother him anymore, but I haven't gotten that old yet." He was ninety-four years of age.

Dear one, as long as you are in your fleshly body, you must watch yourself. You must pray, read God's Word, and draw close to Him; otherwise, your flesh will rise up. I have learned some things about the flesh. If your flesh likes to do something that is right and lawful in the eyes of God, the flesh will be all for doing it. On the other hand, if the flesh likes to do something that is ungodly, even to the destroying of your own body, it will do that too. The flesh does not care as long as it has its way. Doctors have told people to stop smoking because they were dying of lung cancer, yet they continued to do what the flesh wanted to do. They did it to the destruction of their own bodies.

Dear one, as long as you are in your fleshly body, you will be tempted and tried. If you could come to Christ and crucify the fleshly body to the place where you never had any trouble with it, you would no longer be a free, moral agent. You would be like a robot. God is not looking for robots. He wants you to choose to do what is right because you love Him.

In Romans 6:1-3 Paul said: "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? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Paul was not talking about physical death and physical baptism. He was talking about spiritual death and spiritual baptism.

Paul stated that "so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death." Christ laid down His physical life and shed His blood so that we might have eternal life through salvation. What did He die to when He died? Christ, who knew no sin, became sin for us and died for our sins. When we become dead to sin, we no longer commit sin.

### **Walk in Newness of Life**

Paul wrote in verses 4-6: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." If you have been planted in the likeness in which Jesus was planted, you will also be in the likeness of His resurrection.

If you claim to be a Christian, but you are not planted in the likeness of Christ's death, you have not become dead to sin as He was; therefore, you are not a child of God. Paul said you must be "in the likeness of his death," and then you will also be in the likeness of His resurrection. Some people want to say Jesus was different than we are. Truly He was the Son of God, but He came into the world and took a fleshly body just as we have. He was tempted with the same temptations that we are. The Bible lets us know that He was tempted in like manner as we are.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Sometimes the devil may work on you and say, "You are in bad shape. No one has ever been tempted with that kind of temptation. You are the only one who has gone through that." The Scripture says that Jesus learned obedience by the things that He suffered (Hebrews 5:8).

Dear one, when you are tempted, you can rest assured that someone else has had that temptation too. The devil would like you to think that no one has ever had that temptation except you, but thank God, all temptations are common to man. God has not allowed you to be singled out or to go through more than anyone else has gone through.

Through the years of time, my dear wife and I went through many trials and hard places. Oftentimes we wondered about the experiences we had. Then, in our pastoring, someone would come to us with a similar problem, and we were able to deal with it simply because we had walked the road before them. Almost every problem that someone in the congregation would come to us with, I could look back and remember that we had been tried along the same line.

If Jesus had not been tempted as we are, then He would not know anything about some things. It is comforting to know that He has been down the same road. Jesus said in John 10:4, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." He does not put us out there and drive us, but He goes before us. In other words, we walk in His footsteps. How good God is!

### **Will You Give Yourself to Christ?**

Jesus cares deeply for each of us. He spoke this parable in Luke 15:4-5: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"

And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." What a beautiful picture that is!

When I lived in Idaho, behind my house was a railroad and then a creek. As I looked out one morning, a large herd of sheep was being herded up the railroad tracks. The shepherd had to hurry and get them up into the mouth of the creek and off the railroad tracks before the logging train came down in the afternoon. At the end of the herd of sheep, there was a young lamb about half grown. It would run a little ways and then sit down. It could not keep up. Finally, the shepherd reached down, picked it up, and carried it along in his arms. I have never forgotten that sight. That is what Jesus wants to do for you when you cannot walk by yourself. He will leave the ninety and nine and go into the wilderness to seek that lost one. When He finds him, He will lay him on His shoulders and carry him to safety. God is so good!

Dear one, if you will give yourself to Christ, He will care for you in a wonderful way. If you do not know Jesus, you are rejecting the greatest Savior the world has ever known. John 3:16 tells us, "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." What a wonderful display of love God has shown us!

I read a story about an account during World War II. There was a group of prisoners in a German prison camp, which included a young man with a wife and family and an elderly man. Each day the guards came and took some of those in that prison camp and shot them. One day they came to take the young man, and the elderly man came forward and said to those who were going to execute the young man: "Let me take his place. I am an old man; I have lived my life. This young man has a wife and a family. Will you let me take his place?" And they did. That was a

gallant thing to do. What condition the man's soul was in, only God knows, but I hope he made it to Heaven. He gave his life for another.

Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus came as our Friend. Jesus said in John 3:17 that He did not come "to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Christ came to give us life more abundant. You

dare not shun that abundant life and turn your back on One who so freely gave His life for us.

Again, Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments." This is the duty of all humanity. This fear means to love, respect, and honor Him. To love Him is to keep His commandments. Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Keeping

God's commandments is proof of our love for Him. Hebrews 3:8 says, "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:2 that "now is the day of salvation." Dear one, today, not tomorrow, is the day of salvation.

(Cassette C-5148M)

## *Saved From Suicide*

The following is a letter written to a dear friend after the writer had decided to commit suicide, but God reached her through a tract.

*"Honestly, Ruth, I never dreamed that I would ever feel that way, no matter what befell me. It was such a strong feeling and it persistently echoed through my head. I could not stop it. I went home one night after having it pounded through my head all day long, hour after hour, with my decision made. I decided that I would take an extra dose of sleeping pills and not wake up any more.*

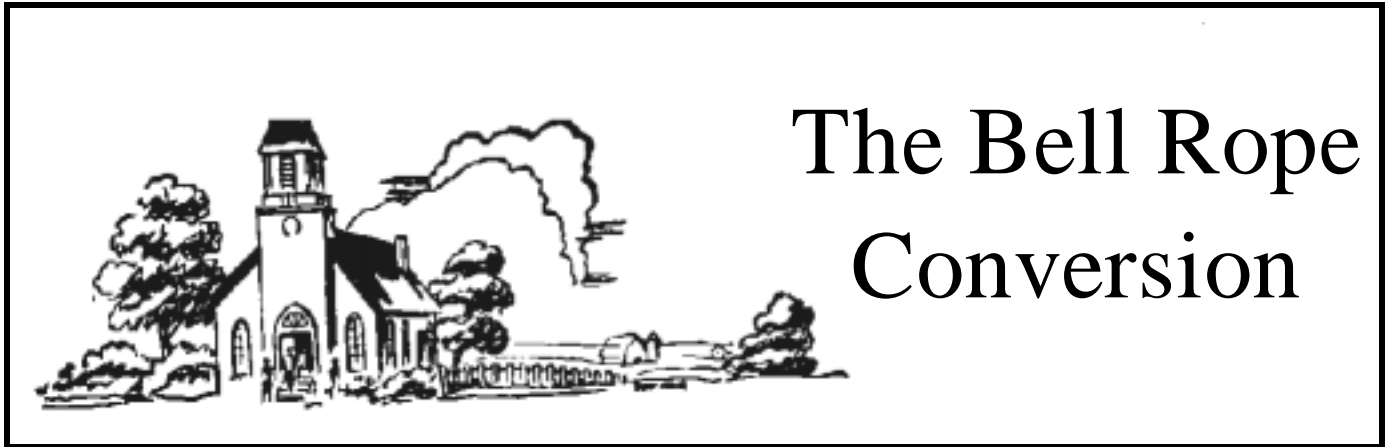
*"When I took off my coat and sat down for a few minutes to rest, all the misery and heartache that had been mine for weeks flooded over me again. I got up in despair. I would not wait for night but would take the sleeping pills then and there.*

*"As I got up, I noticed two books on the table. I reached over and put them in the bookcase. As I did so, a white pamphlet fell to the floor face downward. I became curious as to what it could be. I bent down, picked it up, and turned it over so that I could see its title. It was called, 'Why Not Try God?'*

*"I had never read it. In fact, I had completely forgotten it. But I sat down then and there and read it. Somehow I had a feeling that finding that pamphlet had something to do with your prayers for me, Ruth. What it means to really know God as a Friend, Father, and a Savior! Please keep on praying for me, Ruth, dear."*

So the lowly Gospel tract scored again in saving this dear young woman from suicide and pointing her to the Lord Jesus Christ! People say that suicide "will end it all," but nothing could be further from the truth. It only ends your miserable existence here, while plunging your lost soul into eternity where your sufferings will be increased a thousandfold.

Selected



# The Bell Rope Conversion

For thirty years Fred and Alice Dixon had been doing missionary work among the mountaineers of Tennessee. Without a call from the local people or any promise of support, they had come as newlyweds to the so-called Forgotten Valley, drawn by the desperate needs of its inhabitants. Hemmed in on all sides by mountains, the valley was literally shut away from the outside world, its only contact being a rickety stagecoach, which once a week brought mail and supplies for the valley store.

The Dixons found a deserted building in the village of Pine Ridge, which with a little repair, served as a meeting house, with a couple of rooms at the rear for their own living quarters. Here they served sacrificially year after year, doing their best to bring Christ to these benighted backwoods people.

Four children came to bless the Dixon home, but one by one, they died in early childhood and were laid to rest in the little cemetery, where four pine trees stood as sentinels, guarding the precious graves. Finally, Fred also succumbed to the lung malady so prevalent in the valley and was laid away beside the children, under the pine trees.

Mrs. Dixon now had to decide whether she would return to her own people beyond the hills. Being left alone, it seemed the logical thing to do. She pondered long over the question and finally decided to stay. Her life was so wrapped up in the people of Forgotten Valley and so much of herself was buried up yonder under the pines. Yes, she would remain here the rest of her life and do what she could to help those who had grown so dear to her heart. But, what could she do? She was not a preacher. In fact, she had never spoken in public. Her labors had been behind the scenes, where she had proved a noble helpmeet to her husband.

"If we only had a church bell," she thought. I would ring it for a half-hour each Sunday morning to remind our people that it is the Lord's Day and that they should spend time reading the Word of God and praying, even though we don't have a pastor." During all the years the Dixons had served in the valley, they had wished for a bell, but there had never been money with which to buy it. And now—now there was no money at all, so she must dismiss it from her mind once and for all.

Two weeks later Mrs. Dixon received a letter containing a check for \$200. It was a legacy that had been left to her by an uncle. Her last uncle, by the way, and the only one who had ever had any money. She began to enumerate the things she could use the money for. She could buy a new outfit and take a trip back home to see her people. When had she had anything new to wear? For thirty years the family had been clothed out of the missionary donations that came once a year from the church back home. And, she had gone back only twice during those years, when her folks sent money for her fare and specified that it was to be used for nothing else. It would be fun to surprise her family by coming in new clothes and paying her own expenses. Suddenly Mrs. Dixon gave a start as she thought of something in the past. "The bell—the bell Fred and I used to look at in the catalog—the one we wanted for our valley. Fred said it would cost \$200, including the freight."

She was talking aloud to herself, oblivious to everything about her. Bowing her head in her hands, she sat thus for several moments. Then, triumphantly she raised her eyes to Heaven as she said, "This shall be my alabaster box of ointment. I'll do it in memory of Fred."

The old stagecoach never carried such important cargo as it did the day the bell arrived. There were plenty of willing hands to carry it to the meeting house, and later to hang it up in the new belfry. The following Sunday morning, Mrs. Dixon was at her self-appointed post of duty. Mr. Benson, the storekeeper, had made a special chair for her so that she could sit as she rang the bell.

Sweet and clear the silvery tones pealed out upon the morning air. It was the first time a church bell had been heard in Forgotten Valley. As she pulled the rope, she prayed for the members of their flock—the flock that now had no shepherd. She prayed that they might remain true and grow in grace and that soon, please God, they might have another shepherd. She also prayed that the bell might speak to evildoers, restraining them in their sins and drawing them to seek the Lord in His mercy. There were so many to pray for that the half-hour had passed long before she had finished, so she dropped the rope and prayed on a while longer.

Bill Sykes, the moonshiner, heard the bell from his

retreat up in the Smokey Mountains, and as he heard it, he swore. "Why couldn't a fellow be let alone if he chose to run a still and make moonshine? Why did an old church bell have to clang at him and make him feel that he was doing something wrong?" he argued to himself. Mr. Dixon had often warned him that his sin would "find him out" and had pleaded with him not to sell the stuff to the young men of the valley. Always, Bill had made excuses for his nefarious business. Now that Mr. Dixon was dead, he had hoped to be left alone to do as he pleased, but this bell—it was like a voice from Heaven itself, charging him with the ruin of all the young men of the neighborhood. He must do something to stop the bell. Yes, he knew what he would do before another Sunday.

Late Saturday night, when the villagers were asleep, a slinking form could be seen, stealthily making his way to the meeting house. The door, never locked, yielded easily to his touch, and inside, he softly closed it behind him. Then, with a flashlight, he soon discovered the ladder that led up to the belfry. Holding the ladder with one hand as he climbed upward, he caught hold of the bell rope with the other hand, looping it around his arm as he went. Reaching the top of the ladder, he tied the loops together firmly with the end of the rope, grinning to himself in the darkness. As he was about to descend the ladder, it began to creak and groan under his 300 pound weight, and Bill began to look around for some firmer support. There was nothing in sight but the bell rope, so in desperation he grasped the upper part of the rope, while placing his feet in the loops, as he thought. Instead, his feet slipped through the loops, and with a terrific thud, he found himself hanging in the mid air, the rope holding him firmly under the arms.

The impact of Bill's heavy body pulling at the rope caused the bell to clang in a loud, noisy manner, awakening not only Mrs. Dixon but also the whole village. "What could be wrong at the meeting house?" they all wondered. "Was Mrs. Dixon sick and in need of help?" The village arose as one man to go and see what was the matter. Meanwhile, Mrs. Dixon had hastily dressed and, with a lamp in her hand, entered the meeting house. There, to her astonishment, she caught sight of Bill hanging from the bell rope. She knew him, as Fred had pointed him out to her one day at the village and had told her about his still in the mountains. At first sight of him, she was scared speechless. Then she seemed to comprehend the whole situation and said, "They say if you give the devil enough rope, he'll hang himself. I never did suppose, though, that he would use a church bell rope for that purpose."

"Oh, Mrs. Dixon," pleaded Bill, in agony, "if you'll please have mercy on me and get someone to help me down from here, I promise God I'll never make another drop of moonshine. I've been as wicked as the devil himself, and your bell has been preaching to me to repent and change my ways. I couldn't stand to hear it, so I thought I'd just tie it up out of your reach, so you couldn't ring it again, come Sunday. But I guess the Almighty tied

me up instead. Oh, please get someone to help me down. These ropes are squeezing the breath out of me."

By this time the meeting house was filled with people, and there was much speculation as to how Bill had gotten tangled up in the bell rope. Some thought he had tried to commit suicide and failed. Others whispered that it was a pity that the rope had not slipped up a little higher. It was Mrs. Dixon who told the story as briefly as possible. Because of the unsafe ladder, a scaffold had to be built so that Bill's heavy body could rest on it while they untied the ropes.

It was a very meek, repentant moonshiner who finally stood before them in the dimly lit meeting house. Some of the men were in favor of turning him over to the authorities, but Mrs. Dixon suggested that since the Lord Himself had arrested him, they could feel sure He would not leave the job half done. Bill's repentance might have seemed to some to be an emergency kind, but it proved to be very genuine. The still in the woods was forever abandoned, and Bill became one of the church bell's most devoted listeners.

The story of the bell seeped out into the outside world, and a young couple felt called to offer themselves as missionaries to Forgotten Valley. John and Sandra Larkin came, backed by their home church with funds to build a new church building and parsonage in Pine Ridge. When the beautiful white church was completed, it was Bill Sykes who asked for the privilege of transferring to bell from the old meeting house to the new one. It was he, too, who later appointed himself janitor of the new church.

The Larkins insisted that Mrs. Dixon make her home with them in the new parsonage. She was given the sunniest room in the house as her own. It was her just due, they declared, after so many years of sacrificial living. As long as her health permitted, she rang the bell for the services. Then as she grew too feeble, Bill gladly took over the sacred duty. One Sunday morning, Mr. Benson came to chat with Bill, who sat waiting to ring the bell. "Strange, isn't it," Bill said, "how many ways the Lord has of getting us into His fold. Some folks He just draws in gently, with the cords of love. With me, now—why the Lord just naturally had to hogtie me to get me in! Well, praise the Lord! He got me in, and that's the main thing."

One golden October day, Alice Dixon slipped away to join her loved ones and was laid to rest under the pine trees on the hillside. For a half hour preceding the funeral service, Bill sadly tolled the bell, as the mountaineers from far and near gathered for the service. As Pastor Larkin entered the pulpit to preach, he announced, "I have chosen as my text for this occasion Matthew 26:7, which says, 'There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.'"

Selected



## Spring 2004 Camp Meeting Tape List

TAPE NO.	DATE	MESSAGE TITLE	MINISTER	COST
C-5223M C-5224E	6-20-04	Choosing a Good Name Presumptuous Sin	Bro. E. David Stegmeier Bro. Roger L. Decker	2.50 2.50
C-5225M C-5226E	6-21-04	Fatigue When One Sees the Church	Bro. C. H. Dickerson Bro. Roger L. Decker	2.50 2.50
C-5227M C-5228E	6-22-04	Heaven Here on Earth Behold, the Lamb of God	Bro. Allen Polston Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5229M C-5230E	6-23-04	A Deep Experience The Grace God Offers Man Today	Bro. James Lovingood Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5231M C-5232E	6-24-04	Make Ready a People Prepared for the Lord God's Uncompromising Demand	Bro. Ula Bland Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5233M C-5234E	6-25-04	The Great Sin of the Jehovah Witnesses Are You Astray Today?	Bro. Calvin Foster Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5235M C-5236M	6-26-04	The Power of God The High Cost of Sin	Bro. Patrick Brower Bro. Esau Brooks	2.50 2.50
C-5237M	6-27-04	Pressing Through Till You Get Your Need Supplied (Divine Healing)	Bro. E. David Stegmeier	2.50

Music Recordings . . . Please Specify Cassette or CD

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MD-178	2004	Spring Camp Meeting Songs #3	3.50
MD-179	2004	Spring Camp Meeting Songs #4	3.50
MD-180	2004	Spring Camp Meeting Songs #5	3.50
MD-181	2004	Spring Camp Meeting Choir Songs	3.50
		Children's Song Service	3.50

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